

Protect Your Family from Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Often called the silent killer because of its odorless, tasteless, and colorless nature, carbon monoxide remains the leading cause of accidental poisonings in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Each year, carbon monoxide poisoning claims nearly 500 lives and causes more than 15,000 visits to hospital emergency departments.

Carbon monoxide can be found in combustion fumes, such as those produced by cars and trucks, small gasoline engines, stoves, lanterns, coal- and wood-burning stoves, gas ranges, and heating systems. Carbon monoxide from these sources can build up in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces, poisoning people and animals who breathe it.

Portable electric generators are a source of carbon monoxide poisoning if used improperly. Many people rely on these units during extended power outages, but special care must be used. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, for example, the misuse of generators



caused five deaths and dozens of cases of carbon monoxide poisoning.

If a carbon monoxide detector in your house goes off, check to see if anyone in the house is experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning. If so, get them out of the house

immediately and tell your doctor you suspect poisoning from the gas.

Regardless of whether anyone in the home has symptoms, ventilate the house, turn off all potential sources of carbon monoxide, and call your local fire department.

Know the Symptoms

Physical symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning vary depending on the amount in the bloodstream.

Mild Exposure

- Slight headache
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Fatigue
- Flu-like symptoms

Medium Exposure

- Severe headache
- Drowsiness
- Confusion
- Rapid heart rate

Severe Exposure

- Unconsciousness
- Convulsions
- Cardiac/respiratory failure

Prevention Tips

- Have your fuel-burning appliances — including oil and gas furnaces, gas water heaters, gas ranges and ovens, gas dryers, gas or kerosene space heaters, fireplaces, and wood stoves — inspected by a trained professional at the beginning of every heating season. Make certain that flues and chimneys are connected, in good condition, and not blocked.
- Choose appliances that vent fumes outside whenever possible, have them properly installed, and maintain them according to manufacturers' instructions.
- Read and follow all instructions that accompany any fuel-burning device. If you cannot avoid using an unvented gas or kerosene space heater, carefully follow the cautions that come with the device. Use the proper fuel and keep doors to the rest of the house open. Crack a window to ensure enough air for ventilation and proper fuel-burning.
- Do not idle your car in a closed garage. Fumes can build up very quickly.
- Never use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.
- Never use a charcoal grill indoors or charcoal briquettes in a fireplace.
- Do not sleep in any room with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater.
- Do not use any gasoline-powered engines (mowers, weed trimmers, snow blowers, chainsaws, small engines, or generators) in enclosed spaces.
- Install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector in your home and check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. Look for Underwriters' Laboratory (UL) certification on any detector you purchase.



Rock Energy Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



By Shane L. Larson,
Chief Executive Officer

More Power to You

Longtime Members of Our Co-op Family Keep Rock Energy Running Smoothly

With October being National Co-op Month, I want to take this opportunity to recognize and give a special thanks to a handful of employees and directors who have been an important part of this cooperative for more than a quarter of a century. When the co-op experience of these nine people is added together, the total equals 284 years. Good gravy, that's a lot of experience!

The pictured group includes six employees, two directors, and our longtime attorney, all of whom came on board when we were Rock County Electric Cooperative Association. Individually, they have contributed to the success of the co-op in their own way. Collectively, they are part of our co-op family.

If you talk to these folks, they'll probably tell you how much the co-op has grown since their first day on the job. Twenty-five years ago, back in 1984, the co-op had just 4,028 meters. Today, that number has soared to about 27,000 meters.

Denny Schultz, director of utility operations, says his most gratifying accomplishment in his 36 years at the co-op occurred just a few years ago when Rock Energy purchased the electrical and natural gas assets in northern Illinois from Alliant. "We worked hard to make sure we were buying a good product," Denny says. "It's been a great thing, more than tripling our size and bringing our Illinois members into the cooperative family."

The longtime employees also frequently mention the positives of working for a co-op. "There isn't a better atmosphere to work in than the co-op atmosphere," Denny says. "They know how to treat their employees and their members."

The variety of work is what appeals to Denny Dolgner, who started in 1976. We call him Denny D. to distinguish him from the "other" Denny. While his title is staking engineer, he wears many hats and is seldom seen around the warehouse without one on his head.

"My job is never the same. I do something different every day," Denny D. says. One day he might be working with automated meter-reading equipment or inspecting a substation, while another day he'll be serving as a backup lineman. "It's the best move I ever made," he says about getting a job at the co-op.

Lynn Maier, operations manager-north, came to work at the co-op 32 years ago after leaving the Chrysler plant in Belvidere. He started as a meter man and groundsman but set his sights on the line crew because it looked like a lot of fun.

"There was a thrill about going out there during a storm," Lynn says. "I always got a rush when there was an outage, and we'd get out there and get people connected again. Someone always took the time to say 'thank you,' which really means a lot." He remembers being on a team of co-op employees who helped out in Iowa after a 1995 ice storm. The members were so grateful that they



Folks who have served Rock Energy Cooperative for more than 25 years are, from left, Bill Kayser, Denny Schultz, Bob Crave, Lynn Maier, Stan Dybevik, Kathy Ellefson, David Collins, Denny Dolgner, and Ron Sowles.



provided workers with meals even though they had no electricity and relied only on generators for power.

Ron Sowles, area man who started at the co-op in 1984, also was a member of the team that helped out in Iowa. “Getting the lights on for people after a storm is the most rewarding part of the job,” Ron says. “Members really appreciate what you do.”

Ron, the newest member of the quarter century club at Rock Energy, received his commemorative meter lamp for 25 years of service this summer. After his first day of work, he remembers getting a call at home during a thunderstorm. He went back to work and didn’t get home until noon the next day. When he hears thunder, he knows he might be called into work. It’s less of a burden on workers’ families now than it was in the days before cell phones. When Ron was called in for emergency work back then, he would tell his wife, “I’ll see you when I see you.” But now with cell phones, he can keep his family informed about where he is and when he might be home.

The Dennys, Lynn, and Ron are the more visible members of our co-op family because their jobs directly keep the lights on. But a team of people also works behind the scenes to keep the co-op running. Kathy Ellefson, bookkeeper since 1977, and Bill Kayser, accountant since 1982, are two people who help make sure the financial side of the co-op is in balance.

Kathy has watched the co-op grow from a tiny operation located in a dinky office to today’s co-op with two locations. She remembers the days when office workers were required to wear uniform outfits, a different color blazer and slacks or skirts for each day of the week. Back in those days, co-op workers never had to decide what to wear to work, but they worried about maintaining a consistent weight because only one uniform was replaced each year.

Bill remembers when the co-op bought its current building on Kennedy Road in Janesville in 1984. The deal included a building swap, and the co-op actually got money back at closing. That doesn’t happen every day.

When it comes to our governing body—the board of directors—we have two directors with a combined total of 64 years on the board. With dedicated directors like Stan Dybevik, on the board since 1971, and Bob Crave, a director since 1983, it’s easy to see why your co-op is so successful. Our board attorney also is a seasoned veteran. David Collins has been providing legal advice to the co-op since 1974.

During Stan’s 38 years on the board, he has served

as board secretary for 16 years and board chairman for 14 years. Bob currently serves as board secretary, a position he has held since 1987, and was chairman of the building committee for the South Beloit office and warehouse project. Along the way, both have acquired enough memories to fill several volumes and make plenty of lasting friendships.

Bob notes that the biggest change during his 26 years on the board has been in the demographics of the co-op. “Our membership is no longer dominated by agriculture,” he said. “In the past, a majority of our membership had some connection to agriculture.” That changed with the acquisition of the Illinois territory and subdivisions popping up over the countryside.

Stan says the best part is “just being part of a great national movement and the co-op family, serving with so many great directors and employees.”

As a member of Rock Energy, you’re not just a local co-op member. You’re also part of something much

bigger. Nearly 900 rural electric cooperatives operate nearly half of the electric distribution lines in the United States, covering three-quarters of the land mass. They provide electricity for more than 37 million people in

47 states. That’s just the energy part of the co-op family. Throughout the nation, about 48,000 cooperatives serve 120 million people. They offer credit and financial services, health care, child care, housing, insurance, and other professional services. They sell food, farm supplies, hardware, and recreational equipment.

This year, we are celebrating National Co-op Month with an open house for members at our new South Beloit facility, 15229 Willowbrook Road, on Thursday and Friday, Oct. 15–16, from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. We’re not planning anything elaborate, but we want to provide an opportunity for our members to take a look at the facility that we moved into this spring. It’s a chance for you—our members—to stop by, take a brief tour, learn a little more about how your co-op runs, and meet a few of the friendly people who make sure the lights are on when you flip a switch at home.

Again, I want to give a big thanks to these terrific employees and directors who have given so much to the cooperative over so many years. Whether an employee has worked for Rock Energy for three months or three decades, we consider it our privilege to serve our members’ energy needs. As always, if we can do anything to improve our service to you, please let us know. I hope to see you at our open house. ■

**COOPERATIVES:
STRONGER
TOGETHER**

Rock Energy Helps School, Businesses Reduce Energy Use

Rock Energy Cooperative helped five members who represent five types of energy needs—a public high school and four South Beloit businesses—conduct energy audits in August to show how they can identify and implement measures that will save energy and ultimately reduce their energy costs.

At the request of Rock Energy, the Smart Energy Design Assistance Center (SEDAC) conducted energy site assessments at five Illinois locations:

- Hononegah High School in Rockton
- North American Tool, maker of custom taps and dies
- Cinetic Landis Corp., manufacturer of industrial grinding wheels
- Top Die, an aluminum die casting company
- Flying J truck stop and restaurant

SEDAC, which is based at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, provides advice to enable businesses and public facilities in Illinois to increase their economic viability through the efficient use of energy. The service is sponsored by the Illinois Department of Community and Economic Opportunity and is provided to clients throughout the state, including those in the Rock Energy service area.

“In these difficult economic times, we want to ensure that our members have all the tools necessary to keep their energy costs as affordable as possible,” said Shane Larson, CEO of Rock Energy. “This is especially important for a school like Hononegah that is supported by tax dollars and businesses that provide jobs for area residents.”

Energy engineers Andy Robinson and Eileen T. Westervelt from SEDAC first spent some time talking to the members about their energy use and then conducted a walk-through analysis of the facilities. Afterward, they developed recommendations for how energy can be used more wisely with the goal of reducing energy costs.

At Hononegah, Robinson and Westervelt praised Ehren Jarrett, principal, and John Fallon, director of



Above: Discussing energy use in the boiler room at Hononegah High School are, from left, Rick Pettibone, energy consultant; Dale Kessinger, energy services manager at Rock Energy; and John Fallon, director of building and grounds at the high school. Left: Andy Robinson, energy engineer at the Smart Energy Design Assistance Center, checks out the heating and cooling system for the high school's dome.




building and grounds, for steps they already have taken to reduce energy consumption and lower their costs.

“The more dollars we save in maintaining the building, the more money we can put into educating students,” Jarrett said.

Fallon and his crew already have put in energy-efficient lighting in most areas, removed some light bulbs from hallways, painted walls a light color to improve lighting, and installed motion detector lighting in hallways, classrooms, and rest rooms.

Robinson and Westervelt also recommended installing LED exit signs and low-flow showerheads, checking computer settings to make sure screensavers aren't running, changing some hallways from uplighting to downlighting, and making sure there aren't a lot of energy-sucking devices like coffee pots and refrigerators being used in individual rooms.

“At all five sites visited, the energy auditors complimented members for undertaking many cost-effective energy conservation measures already,” said Dale Kessinger, energy services manager at Rock Energy. “SEDAC also offered a number of new opportunities for increased savings. Wherever possible, we want to help our members not only save energy, but also reduce their costs.” ■

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Beware of Phone Scams

If you get a call from someone claiming to represent an energy company, do not provide your credit card information or Social Security number.

“Rock Energy will never call members to request this type of information,” CEO Shane Larson said. “If you receive a call like this, please hang up and immediately call your local police department to report this scam.”

In one instance, the caller said service would be disconnected if the member did not provide credit card information. In another call, a member was told that lower rates were available from ComEd, but the member needed to provide credit card information. Unlike phone companies, utility providers have a defined service territory and do not solicit consumers to switch services. ■

Director Nominations Open

The Rock Energy Cooperative Nominating Committee will be selecting candidates to run for board of director positions that will be up for election at the March 29, 2010, annual meeting. Districts up for election are:

- District 2: Milton and Lima townships
- District 4: Harmony and La Prairie townships, city of Janesville
- District 9: Magnolia, Center, and Janesville townships

Active members who are interested in running for a position on the REC Board of Directors must permanently reside in one of the areas up for election. Please contact REC headquarters at (608) 752-4550 or (866) 752-4550 or send an e-mail to questions@rock.coop by Dec. 1. ■



New South Beloit Facility Open House October 15-16

Visit our new facility and take a brief tour.

7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 15, and Friday, Oct. 16

15229 Willowbrook Road • South Beloit, Ill.

*We're located less than a mile south of the Flying J,
Highway 75 exit off I-90.*

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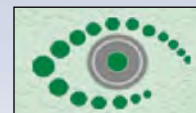


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