

# Natural gas safety tips for winter weather

As temperatures drop this winter, households will increase their use of natural gas to keep their homes warm and comfortable. Natural gas is one of the safest sources of energy, but it's important to recognize a potential natural gas leak and know what to do if you suspect a leak.

## How can I recognize a natural gas leak?

- **By smell:** Natural gas is colorless and odorless, but gas providers add a chemical that makes it smell like rotten eggs so any leaks can be easily detected.
- **By sound:** A hissing or roaring sound coming from a natural gas line might be a sign of a leak.
- **By sight:** If you see unexplained dead grass, natural gas might be leaking. Dirt or debris blowing in the air and water bubbling in a puddle, pond, or creek are other signs.

## What should I do if I suspect a leak?

### If you smell a faint gas odor:

- Make sure all gas appliances and burners on your stove are turned off completely.
- Open one or more windows and wait a few minutes for the gas odor to dissipate before investigating further.
- Check the pilot lights on your gas furnace, water heater, stove, and oven.
- Don't try to relight a gas appliance while you can still smell gas.
- If you need assistance relighting the pilot light, call a heating or plumbing contractor.

### If you smell a strong odor:

- Leave the area immediately.
- Do not use the telephone or cell phone until you reach a safe location away from the suspected leak. Then call Rock Energy at 866-752-4550 to report the location.



As you're shoveling sidewalks and driveways this winter, remember to check your natural gas meter and pipes for drifted snow, top, which can cause problems. When exposing the meter and pipes, avoid using a snow blower. Instead, gently remove snow and ice from the area. Also remember to clear snow away from furnace intake and exhaust pipes.

- Do not light a match or turn on or off any switches, flashlights, garage door openers, or other appliances because an electric arc might ignite the gas.

## How can I get more information?

If you have any questions about natural gas safety, we would be happy to provide you with further information. Just call us at 866-752-4550 or e-mail [questions@rock.coop](mailto:questions@rock.coop).



Rock Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Shane L. Larson,  
Chief Executive Officer

## More Power to You

# PROJECT LIFT UP DONATIONS HELP YOUR NEIGHBORS



Concern for Community is one of the guiding principles followed by co-ops throughout the nation. At Rock Energy we consider this concept essential to the cooperative way of doing business.

Above all, we strengthen our communities by doing what we do best: providing safe and reliable energy at an affordable cost. Beyond that, our concern for community reaches to every member. What's good for the member is good for the community, and that ultimately is good for the co-op.

Our Rock Cooperative Care program is one of the ways we help members who are struggling financially to pay their energy bills. It supplements the federally funded energy assistance program and benefits members who otherwise might fall through the cracks.

I'm pleased to report that more than \$250,000 has been awarded since 2010. Many of these members have incomes too high to qualify for federal programs but too low to make ends meet. If you think you might qualify for assistance through Rock Cooperative Care, you can find the income guidelines listed on page 20c.

On the other hand, if you are financially able, consider

enrolling in Project Lift Up, our voluntary member donation program designed to help people pay their energy bills. All money donated supports Rock Cooperative Care.

Project Lift Up was designed as an easy way for members to make small monthly donations by rounding up their energy bill to the nearest dollar. Members also can choose to add a set monthly amount to their bill or make a one-time donation. Most contributions come in the form of pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters when co-op members round up the amount they pay. Considered separately, that spare change might seem insignificant. But when combined with other donations, that small amount of money can make a big difference in people's lives.

Just as the name suggests, Project Lift Up helps give people a financial lift. In the process of giving, your spirit also will be lifted. "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" is how we describe the program. Co-op members have donated more than \$20,000 since its inception in 2009.

If you'd like to donate to Project Lift Up, just choose one of the options on the form accompanying this column and return it to Rock Energy. If you already participate in the program, you can help make the holidays even brighter for others



### Yes, I want to make a holiday gift to Project Lift Up and receive three free LEDs!

*(Choose only one option.)*

- Round up my monthly energy bill to the nearest whole dollar.
- Add \$1 each month to my budget billing plan.
- Add a monthly donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to my energy bill. (Please enter dollar amount.)
- Add a one-time donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to my next energy bill. (Please enter dollar amount; minimum of \$10 donation required for light bulb offer.)
- I already am enrolled in Project Lift Up but want to add a one-time donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to my next energy bill. (Please enter dollar amount; minimum of \$10 donation required for light bulb offer.)



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



by adding a one-time donation to your generous contribution. Whether you're new to the program or increasing your donation, we'll give you three free LEDs to help you save money on your energy bill.

I want to sincerely thank everyone who has donated to this program. The recipients are grateful for the generosity of their friends and neighbors. Some have told us that receiving assistance paying their energy bills has helped them provide needed groceries for their families. Your act of kindness shows the true cooperative spirit of Rock Energy members.

### Think Holiday Safety

As you're decorating and planning holiday gatherings, remember to put safety on your to-do list. Every year during the two months surrounding the holidays, more than 15,000 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms due to injuries related to holiday decorating, according to statistics from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Make sure your holiday lights are in good working

order, don't overload circuits, and never use frayed or worn extension cords. If you're traditional and decorate a real tree, remember to water it frequently and keep it away from heat sources, such as radiators, fireplaces, heat registers, and televisions.

### Happy Holidays

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or another tradition, everyone at Rock Energy wishes you and your family a happy and safe holiday season. During Member Appreciation Day in September, we took a group photo of employees, directors, and their families to serve as our holiday greeting to you. I hope you enjoy seeing all the smiling faces.

As you celebrate during the holidays, we hope this special time with family and friends is filled with joy and happiness. Thanks for allowing us to be your energy provider this year, and we promise to give you the same great service during 2019. Please let us know if there's anything we can do to improve.

*Happy Holidays!*  
*Your Friends at*  
*Rock Energy Cooperative*



Member Appreciation Day 2018

## ROCK COOPERATIVE CARE OFFERS ENERGY ASSISTANCE

Some Rock Energy Cooperative members need a little help paying their energy bills. They might earn too much to qualify for state and federal energy assistance, or they might need some extra money to supplement the other programs.

Either way, Rock Cooperative Care is available to help. Since 2010, more than \$250,000 has been distributed to help members.

A one-time grant of up to \$500 is available to help residential members who are struggling to pay their energy bills but do not meet more stringent state and federal requirements.



Check the following chart to see if your household qualifies for assistance. For example, a four-person household would be eligible if the total annual income is \$75,300 or less.

The Salvation Army office administers the Rock Cooperative Care program. If you meet the eligibility requirements, call either of these offices during regular business hours to schedule an appointment: Janesville, 608-757-8300, extension 26, or Rockford, 815-972-1135. Be sure to point out that you would like to schedule an appointment to apply for the Rock Cooperative Care program.

### Rock Cooperative Care Income Guidelines for the 2018–2019 Heating Season\*

Family Size	150% of Poverty Level (eligible for up to a \$500 grant)		200% of Poverty Level (eligible for up to a \$350 grant)		300% of Poverty Level (eligible for up to a \$250 grant)	
	30-Day Income	Annual Income	30-Day Income	Annual Income	30-Day Income	Annual Income
1	\$1,517	\$18,210	\$2,023	\$24,280	\$3,035	\$36,420
2	\$2,057	\$24,690	\$2,743	\$32,920	\$4,115	\$49,380
3	\$2,597	\$31,170	\$3,463	\$41,560	\$5,195	\$62,340
4	\$3,137	\$37,650	\$4,183	\$50,200	\$6,275	\$75,300
5	\$3,677	\$44,130	\$4,903	\$58,840	\$7,355	\$88,260
6	\$4,217	\$50,610	\$5,623	\$67,480	\$8,435	\$101,220
7	\$4,757	\$57,090	\$6,343	\$76,120	\$9,515	\$114,180
8	\$5,297	\$63,570	\$7,063	\$84,760	\$10,595	\$127,140

\*Figures are based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines for 2018–2019.

## HELP ALSO AVAILABLE THROUGH STATE, FEDERAL PROGRAMS

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) also helps eligible low-income households pay for winter energy services. The program’s heat and electric assistance is a one-time benefit payment per heating season. The amount depends on household size, income, and energy costs.

You are eligible for heating assistance through LIHEAP if your household’s combined income is at or below the levels shown on the accompanying chart.

For more information and application details, please contact your local office:

- Winnebago County (South Beloit, Rockton, and Roscoe residents only): 815-389-0914 or 815-624-7788, Rockton Township, 1315 N. Blackhawk Blvd., Rockton.
- Boone County: 815-544-3144, United Way of Boone County, 220 W. Locust St., Belvidere.
- Stephenson County: 815-232-3141 or 800-883-1111, Northwestern Illinois Community Action Agency, 27 S. State Ave., Freeport.
- McHenry County: 815-338-7752, McHenry County Housing Authority, 1108 N. Seminary Ave., Woodstock.

### Illinois LIHEAP Income Guidelines for the 2018–2019 Heating Season

Household Size	30-Day Household Income	Annual Household Income
1	\$1,518	\$18,210
2	\$2,058	\$24,690
3	\$2,598	\$31,170
4	\$3,138	\$37,650
5	\$3,678	\$44,130
6	\$4,218	\$50,610
7	\$4,758	\$57,090
8	\$5,298	\$63,570



## SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED TO HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

Rock Energy Cooperative again is offering scholarships of \$500 to graduating high school seniors who enroll at an accredited school. Students whose parents or guardians are active members of REC are eligible.

Our independent scholarship committee will judge applicants based on general merit, cooperation, leadership abilities, financial need, and class ranking.

Since 1989, Rock Energy has awarded more than \$102,000 in financial aid to deserving students.

Online applications are available at [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop). Just go to the Community & Youth tab and click on Scholarships. The deadline for submitting applications is Jan. 9. If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Uebelacker, communications director, at 866-752-4550 or [barbu@rock.coop](mailto:barbu@rock.coop).

In addition, scholarships of \$2,000 will be awarded through the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program. These scholarships are available to high school seniors who are the sons or daughters of an Illinois electric cooperative member receiving service from the co-op. Applications must be completed online at [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop). Just go to the Community & Youth tab and click on Scholarships. The deadline is Dec. 31.

## Happy Holidays

Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Monday, Dec. 24, and Tuesday, Dec. 25, in observance of Christmas and Monday, Dec. 31, and Tuesday, Jan. 1, for the New Year's holiday. Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices throughout the holiday weekends. Even though our offices are closed, standby crews are always available 24 hours a day. If you need to report a power outage, please call 608-752-4550 or toll-free 866-752-4550.



## RATES WILL CHANGE JAN. 1

Effective Jan. 1, 2019, the monthly facilities charge on most electric accounts will increase \$1. This adjustment moves the monthly charge slightly closer to the actual fixed cost of serving an account and will allow the per kilowatt-hour energy charge to remain relatively steady in 2019.

## SAFE DÉCOR FOR A HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON

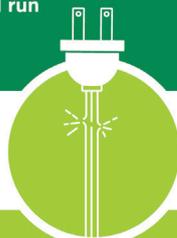
It's almost time to deck those halls! Statistics show that home fires and electrical accidents typically increase during winter months, so keep these holiday lighting tips in mind for a safe holiday season.

**Carefully inspect all electrical decorations before you use them. Cracked or damaged sockets and/or loose or exposed wires can cause serious shock or start a fire.**



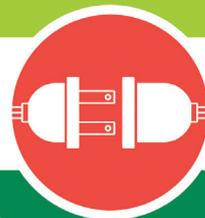
Consider purchasing LED lights, which use less energy and run cooler than traditional incandescent lights.

**Never mount or support light strings in a way that might damage the cord's insulation.**



Make sure that cords are not pinched in doors, windows or under heavy furniture, which could damage the cord's insulation.

**Always unplug electrical decorations before replacing bulbs or fuses.**



Turn off all indoor and outdoor electrical decorations before leaving home or going to sleep.

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International

### Shane Larson, CEO

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**ROCK ENERGY COOPERATIVE**  
Empowering Members Since 1936