

# Learn about natural gas dangers to stay safe

*Rock Energy's superintendent reflects on Sun Prairie explosion*

Every natural gas leak has the potential to be dangerous, Rock Energy Cooperative's natural gas superintendent says.

Randy Gant reflected on his 42 years in the industry after the July 10 natural gas explosion in Sun Prairie, Wis., that killed a volunteer firefighter, injured several other people, destroyed three buildings and damaged many others.



Randy Gant

"It's rough on the whole community of natural gas workers and emergency first responders when something like this happens," he said.

During his career, Gant has experienced two incidents as serious as the Sun Prairie one and many others that didn't rise to that level. Fortunately, no major accidents have occurred during his 12 years at Rock Energy.

Because every leak could lead to an explosion, natural gas workers and first responders must always be prepared for the worst-case scenario, Gant said. Rock Energy crews respond to about 225 reports of natural gas leaks each year. Most are minor incidents caused by problems with gas appliances, service lines running to buildings or gas pipes inside buildings.

But an average of six every year involve damage to a high-pressure underground gas main, usually caused when an excavator hits a pipeline. These dig-ins present a dangerous situation that requires crews to use their emergency training.

Gant stressed that protecting life, and then property, is always the first step. Emergency personnel must work fast to evacuate people from the area.

Rock Energy educates area fire and rescue departments about the dangers of natural gas and the steps to take in an emergency because they likely will arrive at the scene before natural gas workers, he said.

The co-op also frequently reminds the public that a natural gas leak must be taken seriously with its message of "Smell gas? Act fast!"

Quick action likely saved many lives in Sun Prairie, Gant said. When a gas main is hit, the natural gas that escapes can migrate through sewer lines into nearby buildings, where the gas accumulates, and an ignition source can cause an explosion.

About 40 minutes passed between the time the Sun Prairie leak was reported and the explosion occurred. During that time, Sun Prairie firefighters evacuated an estimated 110 people from the immediate area. The death of one firefighter was a tremendous tragedy, but it could have been much worse without the first responders' quick action, he said.

Knowing what to do in a natural gas emergency is vital, but preventing accidents is even more important, Gant said. Rock Energy provides information to excavators in the area

alerting them to safe digging practices. The first step is always calling 811 so underground utilities can be marked, he said.

That call also must be placed by homeowners working on small projects, such as planting trees or shrubs, building a deck or installing a mailbox. Gant urged people to be proactive in preventing natural gas accidents.

"If you see that your neighbor is digging, and the area isn't marked, go over and ask if they've called 811," he said. "Tell him you're just looking out for his safety."

The Sun Prairie accident has reminded the public about the dangers of natural gas and the importance of preventing dig-ins, Gant said. He urged everyone to learn how to recognize gas leaks and, most important, what to do in an emergency. That information is available at [www.rock.coop/NaturalGas](http://www.rock.coop/NaturalGas).

"Natural gas is one of the safest and most reliable forms of energy, but it's also something to be cautious of," Gant said. "By understanding the potential dangers and working together to deal with them correctly, everyone can feel safer."



Sun Prairie first responders work quickly to evacuate the area after a natural gas pipe was hit on July 10.



Shane L. Larson,  
Chief Executive Officer

## More Power to You

# VALUE OF ELECTRICITY CONTINUES TO SHINE



What single purchase can keep all your appliances and electronics running, entertain your family for hours, and brighten your home at night?

The answer, of course, is electricity.

Think about everything in your home that's plugged in right now: lamps, TVs, computers, printers, gaming consoles, music and video players, various appliances, and plenty more. The power you receive from Rock Energy Cooperative keeps you connected to the modern world.

Electricity is so much a part of our daily routine that we usually take it for granted without stopping to think about what a tremendous value it is. Granted, the cost of electricity has increased over the years along with everything else. But its cost has not gone up as much as some other items.

Since 2012, the cost of rent, education, and cable/satellite TV have increased at rates of 3 percent or more each year. Electricity costs, however, have risen just 1.6 percent a year.

When it comes to value, electricity is a clear winner, and Rock Energy is always looking for ways to work with you to make its value even better. We promote energy efficiency and technology designed to give you more control over your energy use, so you can live within your budget.

That's going to become more important as our use of digital devices and internet-connected technologies increases. The average home now has 10 Wi-Fi connected devices. That number is expected to explode to 50 by 2020. Technology and the gateways that keep it working use electricity, so you'll continue to rely on Rock Energy to power your lives.

We're always working to provide service that's reliable, keep it affordable, and make it even more valuable to our members—you, your family, and your neighbors.

I want to thank all the kind folks who contributed to our Back-to-School Supplies Drive in July. Thanks to you, students in our area will be starting the school year with the tools they need to succeed.

I hope you have Saturday, Sept. 15, marked on your calendar for Rock Energy's Member Appreciation Day. This annual fall event allows the co-op's directors and employees to say a special thank you to our members. See all the details on page 20C.

The pancake breakfast and all the activities will take place at our co-op headquarters, 2815 Kennedy Road, Janesville. We'll have the always-popular bucket truck rides, health fair, prize wheel, jugglers, bounce house, and LED Lucy.

In addition, Family Faces Family Entertainment from the Madison area will return to create balloon figures and paint kids' faces. They were such a big hit last year that two balloon sculptors and two face painters will join us this year. This will reduce the wait time and allow more members to enjoy their talents.

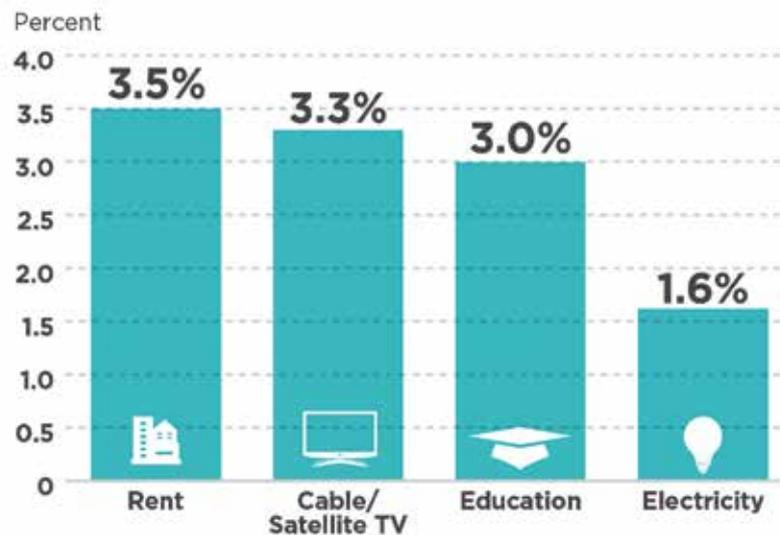
Electronics recycling and document shredding will again be held on the same day at a different location—Universal Recycling Technologies, 2535 Beloit Ave., Janesville. We moved those two popular services off site last year to improve traffic flow and provide a safer environment for our members and employees. More information is available on page 20C and at [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop).

We hope to see you on Sept. 15, and please let us know if there's anything we can do to improve our service.

## ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

The cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common expenses. Looking at price increases over the last five years, it's easy to see electricity remains a good value!

### Average Annual Price Increase 2012-2017



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Consumer Price Index



## MEMBER SURVEY ON ITS WAY

Your opinion matters to us!

Rock Energy Cooperative is participating in a member survey project through the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives.

You may be randomly selected to participate in the project. Members who complete the survey will be entered into a drawing for the chance to win a \$250 bill credit.

Neither the AIEC nor the survey vendor, Inside Information, will ask for credit card information or sell or share your private information.

Rock Energy will receive the anonymous survey results and evaluate the information to help improve our service to you. The more completed survey questionnaires we receive, the more accurate the information will be. If you're selected to participate, please take the time to answer the short survey.

If you have questions about the survey, please contact Barbara Uebelacker, communications director, at 866-752-4550 or barbu@rock.coop. We appreciate your help!

## NATURAL GAS RATES WILL CHANGE OCT. 1

The Rock Energy Cooperative Board of Directors voted at its May meeting to modify natural gas rates effective Oct. 1, 2018.

The following chart indicates changes to the monthly facility charge and the delivery charge per therm for the average residential member. The adjustment will amount to an increase of \$2.97 on the average monthly natural gas bill.

This is the first adjustment in natural gas rates since Rock Energy started providing service to the area in 2007.

	Current	New
Monthly Facility Charge	\$7.00	\$9.00
Per Therm Delivery Charge	\$0.18	\$0.19
Average Residential Monthly Bill	\$63.20	\$66.17

## DID YOU KNOW ?

Rock Energy Cooperative's Automatic Bill Payment lets you pay your bills automatically without writing a check. You won't have to worry about missing a payment, and you'll save time as well as the costs of checks and postage.

There's no charge for the service, which is available to all members, including those who are signed up for Budget Billing.

Your payment will automatically be deducted from your checking or savings account on the due date.

To get started, go to [tinyurl.com/RockAutoPay](http://tinyurl.com/RockAutoPay) and download a form. Then bring the form and a voided check or deposit slip to either our Janesville office at 2815 Kennedy Road or our South Beloit office at 15229 Willowbrook Road. The information also can be mailed to Rock Energy Cooperative, P.O. Box 1758, Janesville, WI 53547.

When we receive your request, your banking information will be pre-authorized to ensure an accurate transaction will take place. This process can take up to 30 days. Then your next bill will indicate the amount and date your payment will be deducted from your bank account.

Please give us a call at 866-752-4550 if you have any questions.



## BEWARE OF UTILITY TELEPHONE SCAMS

Rock Energy Cooperative urges members to beware of telephone scams where a caller poses as a co-op employee and threatens to disconnect service unless an immediate payment is made.

A member received a call last month from someone claiming to be with the co-op. The caller said the member's account was past due and she needed to purchase a prepaid debit card and call back with the verification codes or power would be disconnected. Fortunately, the member instead called Rock Energy and learned that the co-op did not make the call.

April Nichols, district office supervisor at Rock Energy, advises members to ignore suspicious requests for personal information, such as bank account numbers, credit or debit card numbers, user names, and passwords.

"Co-op employees do not call members and demand that an immediate payment be made over the phone or services will be disconnected," Nichols said. "The disconnection procedure for nonpayment is actually quite lengthy and involves several contacts between the co-op employee and member."

When the co-op's collections department calls members, they are given the option of making a payment over the phone or at the office. Members who have any questions regarding the legitimacy of a call should not provide the caller with any information.

"Just hang up and give us a call," Nichols said. "If the call was from the co-op, we'll understand that you were just guarding your personal information. Remember that if you didn't make the call, you don't know who is on the other end of the line."

If you receive a call or are unexpectedly approached at your home by someone claiming to be a Rock Energy representative and you have any doubt, please call our office at 866-752-4550 for verification.



# MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

Electronics recycling, document shredding at different location again

ROCK ENERGY MEMBERS ONLY!

Bring your old electronics and documents to Universal Recycling Technologies and your appetites to Rock Energy Cooperative's Janesville warehouse on Saturday, Sept. 15, for our Member Appreciation Day.

This is the second year that electronics recycling and document shredding will be located at a different site to provide a safer environment for co-op members and employees. These two services have become so popular that we don't have the space at our Kennedy Road location to accommodate the increased traffic.

Members can bring their items to Universal Recycling Technologies, 2535 Beloit Ave., Janesville, between 8 and 11 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 15.

The pancake breakfast and all other activities associated with Member Appreciation Day will continue to be at our Janesville headquarters from 8 to 10:30 a.m. the same day.

**We hope to see you on Sept. 15!**

## Pancake Breakfast

- 8–10:30 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 15
- Rock Energy headquarters, 2815 Kennedy Road, Janesville
- Activities: Health fair, bucket truck rides, prize wheel, LED Lucy, bounce house, face painting, balloon figures, and lots more!

## Electronics Recycling, Document Shredding

- 8–11 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 15
- Universal Recycling Technologies, 2535 Beloit Ave., Janesville (enter through south driveway)



### Accepted electronics

- TVs, personal computers, printers, scanners, fax machines, calculators, cell phones, keyboards/mice, radios, stereos, telephones, DVD/CD players, VCRs.
- **No** air conditioners, microwaves, dehumidifiers, vacuums, toasters, or large appliances.
- **No** businesses please.

### Shredding procedure

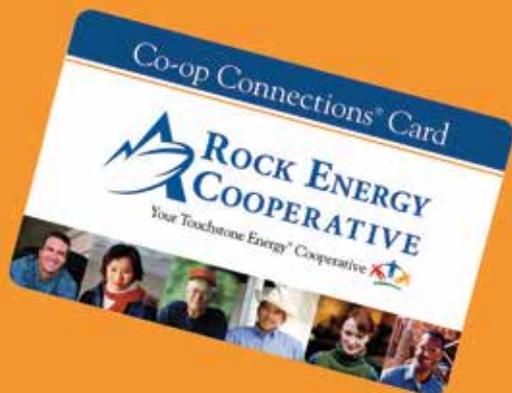
- Each member can bring four boxes or bags of material, including CDs and credit cards.
- All material will be shredded on site.
- You do not need to remove staples, paper clips, hanging files, or black binder clips from materials.
- No three-ring binders.



Maps and directions at [www.rock.coop/MemberAppreciation](http://www.rock.coop/MemberAppreciation)



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- Discounted Movie & Event Tickets
- Hotel Savings
- Cash-Back Online Shopping
- Prescription Savings
- National Partner Deals
- Savings Tracking

Visit [connections.coop/Rock](http://connections.coop/Rock) to learn more!

## HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY LABOR DAY!



Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Monday, Sept. 3, in observance of Labor Day. We will reopen at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 4. Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices throughout the holiday weekend. 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 866-752-4550.

### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Turn off kitchen, bath, and other exhaust fans within 20 minutes after you're done cooking or bathing. When replacing exhaust fans, consider installing high-efficiency, low-noise models.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



**Know what's below. Call before you dig.**

### Shane Larson, CEO

P.O. Box 1758, 2815 Kennedy Rd., Janesville, WI 53547  
P.O. Box 126, 15229 Willowbrook Rd., South Beloit, IL 61080  
608-752-4550 • 866-752-4550

### Barbara Uebelacker, Editor



**ROCK ENERGY COOPERATIVE**  
Empowering Members Since 1936