



More Power to You

TEMPERATURE EXTREMES BALANCE OUT TO CREATE AVERAGE MONTH

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Chief Executive Officer

If you remember the brutal cold weather during the last week of 2017 and first week of 2018, you might be reluctant to open your energy bill when it comes.

From Christmas Day through Jan. 6, the average temperature in the Madison area was about 1, according to the National Weather Service. If you factor in the wind chill, it seemed much, much colder. In fact, it was the second coldest period for those dates in recorded history.

What you might not remember though is the unseasonably warm weather during the early part of December. The mercury soared to 62 degrees in Janesville on Dec. 4, and the temperature was over 50 during the first three days of the month.

The temperature extremes during the month balanced each other out and resulted in a fairly typical December. The chart on this page shows heating degree days, an indicator of household energy consumption, for the past 10 Decembers. The 2017 number of 1,317 is in line with the 10-year average of 1,244.

Your bill for December energy use likely will be similar to the one you received a year ago as long as your heating habits stayed consistent. Charts on the back of your statement make it easy to compare by showing your energy use for the previous month, current month, and same month last year.

But you don't need to wait until your statement comes to compare your energy use. SmartHub, our online account management system, provides that information on a daily basis. You can access SmartHub from your computer by visiting our website, www.rock.coop, or from your smart phone by downloading a mobile app. You can see your energy use on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis, compare statistics, print charts, and pay your bill.

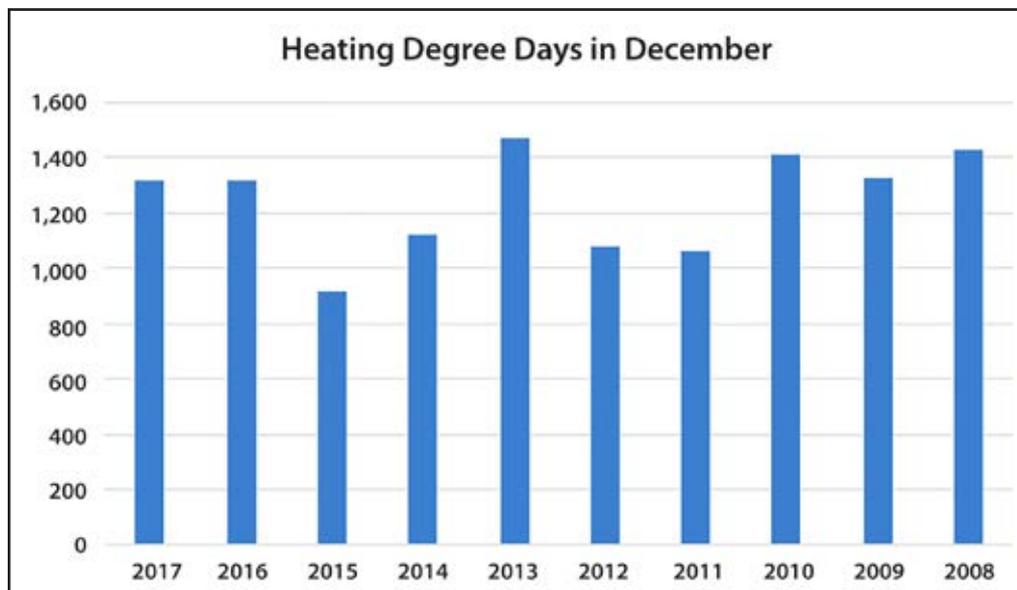
We offer a budget billing plan for members who want to even out their annual energy costs and consistently pay the same amount each month. This makes budgeting your money easier by avoiding higher bills during heating and cooling seasons. To help ensure that what you pay continues to track your true energy use, we recalculate your budget payment twice a year. If you're interested in learning more about this payment option, just call us at 866-752-4550.

As I'm writing this in early January, it's impossible to predict what the remaining winter months will bring. The January thaw could continue, or February could bring more frigid weather. We'll have to wait and see.

Whatever happens, there are several ways to control your energy use. In our January newsletter, we printed a graphic showing 10 quick tips to avoid high winter bills. These are good suggestions and are worth repeating so we're reprinting them on page 18.

One thing the graphic doesn't mention is the high cost of using portable space heaters. A small, 1,500-watt heater can cost about \$100 a month to operate if used all day every day. If you want to warm a small area quickly, turn on your space heater for a brief period, or better yet, grab a blanket.

As always, we truly appreciate the opportunity to be your energy provider and welcome your ideas about how we can improve our service.





YOUTH PROGRAMS BUILD STRONG CITIZENS

Rock Energy Cooperative offers two opportunities for high school students to learn more about the political process and develop leadership skills.

The co-op will sponsor two high school juniors on the 2018 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. The June 8–15 trip includes meetings with congressional representatives and tours of historic sites. More than 1,000 students from host cooperatives across the nation participate in the tour every year.

Another program is open to current high school freshmen, sophomores, and juniors. The Wisconsin Energy Cooperative Association’s Youth Leadership Congress will take place July 25–27 at UW-River Falls. The program introduces students to cooperative business basics, demonstrates the value of cooperation in everyday life, and offers sessions to help develop leadership skills.

Applicants for both programs must be children of Rock Energy members

and reside in the co-op’s service territory. The deadline to apply for the Washington trip is Feb. 28, and applications for the UW-River Falls event must be received by April 13.

Rock Energy now is accepting online

applications. Just go to www.rock.coop and click on the Community & Youth tab. For more information, call Barbara Uebelacker, communications director, at 866-752-4550 or email her at BarbU@rock.coop.



Students participating in the 2017 Youth Leadership Congress learned about the value of cooperation.

KEEP YOUR HOME SAFE FROM ELECTRICAL FIRES

Your lights turn on in an instant and your plug slides into outlets without sparks or shocks. You can’t see it, and typically don’t think much about it. However, the electricity that we take for granted every day requires attention to potential hazards and taking steps to keep everyone safe.

Safe Electricity offers these tips to help keep your home safe from electrical problems and fires:

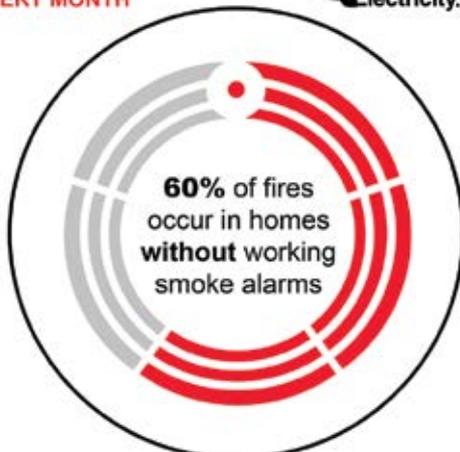
- Have all work done by a qualified electrician.
- Get regular check-ups for older homes, which have older wiring and are often designed for fewer appliances and electronics. Have the electrical system checked every five to 10 years, depending on the age of your home. If your home is older than 30 years, make sure the wiring meets updated National Electrical Code standards.
- Watch for warning signs such as hot or discolored switch plates, cords, or plugs; dimming or flickering lights; buzzing or sizzling sounds. If you smell a burning odor, check it

immediately and unplug electric items in that area.

- Immediately repair loose outlets, and discard or replace cracked, cut, or broken insulation on electric cords.
- Keep cords out of walkways and high-traffic areas so they don’t get stepped on and damaged, and cause a tripping hazard.
- Use extension cords temporarily, not as permanent wiring. Too many extension cords in one area creates a risk of overheating or overloading circuits.
- Never use cords or appliances that have exposed, damaged, or faulty wiring. Have them repaired or replaced.
- Avoid using nails or staples to secure electric cords in place. When an electrical cord is punctured, it increases the likelihood of electric shock and fire.
- When you replace light bulbs, ensure that you match the recommended wattage for your lamp or other light fixtures. Using an incorrect wattage increases the likelihood for electrical fires.

TEST smoke alarms EVERY MONTH

Safe Electricity.org



research collected from the Red Cross

82nd ANNUAL MEETING



Monday, March 26
Eclipse Center, Beloit

Be sure to mark your calendar and join us for the meeting and dinner.

Look for complete details in next month's magazine.



MY CO-OP





10 Quick Tips to Avoid High Winter Bills

Looking to lower your bills this winter? Use the 10 tips below to conserve energy.

- 1  Seal air leaks and insulate well to prevent heat from escaping and cold air from entering your home.
- 2  Reduce waste heat by installing a programmable thermostat.
- 3  Turn off lights when not in use.
- 4  Lower your water heater temperature. The Dept. of Energy recommends using the warm setting (120 degrees) during fall and winter months.
- 5  Unplug electronics like kitchen appliances and TVs when you're away.
- 6  Open blinds and curtains during the day to allow sunlight in to warm your home.
- 7  Close blinds and curtains at night to keep cold, drafty air out.
- 8  Use power strips for multiple appliances, and turn off the main switch when you're away from home.
- 9  Wash clothes in cold water, and use cold-water detergent whenever possible.
- 10  Replace incandescent light bulbs with LEDs, which use at least 75 percent less energy.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy



ELECTRICITY THEFT: NOT WORTH THE RISK

Every year, energy cooperatives across the country cope with thieves—folks who deliberately tamper with their meter to steal power.

Not only is this practice extremely dangerous, it's a serious crime that could result in hefty fines and jail time. Power surging through a compromised meter can cause an electrical catastrophe, according to the Cooperative Research Network, a division of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

A short circuit could produce an arc flash bright enough to cause blindness and powerful enough to launch fragments of shrapnel-like, red-hot debris. Serious injury or death from electrocution, explosion, or fire often results from meter tampering.

Electricity theft is not a victimless crime. Rock Energy Cooperative loses revenue and expends resources to investigate meter tampering. These costs are then passed on to the entire membership.

National estimates vary, but *The Washington Post* cited revenue protection officials who claim between \$1 billion and \$10 billion worth of electricity is stolen from utilities annually.

Since everyone pays for lost power, please let us know if you suspect meter tampering. Call 866-752-4550 to report possible theft of service. All information can be given anonymously.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Consider insulating your hot water pipes. Doing so can reduce heat loss, allow you to lower the temperature setting, and save an additional 3 to 4 percent per year on water heating.

Source: energy.gov



DO NOT TAMPER WITH YOUR ELECTRIC METER

Meter tampering can result in electric shock, is illegal, and increases electricity rates for other co-op members.



-  Never break a meter seal.
-  Never open a meter base.
-  Never remove a meter or alter an entrance cable in any manner.

If you know or suspect that someone has tampered with their meter, please contact us immediately.

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Barbara Uebelacker, Editor



**Rock Energy
Cooperative**
Empowering Members Since 1936