

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.



Rock Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



More Power to You CO-OP MEMBER GRATEFUL FOR DONATIONS TO PROJECT LIFT UP

Shane L. Larson, Chief Executive Officer

We don't often get to hear the stories about people who have benefitted from our charitable donations, but Mary Dalton wants to share her story and thank the wonderful people who contribute to Project Lift Up.

Just as the name implies, Project Lift Up gives people a financial lift when they need it most. Rock Energy members can donate to the program by rounding up their monthly energy bill to the nearest dollar, adding a set monthly contribution, or making a one-time donation. Most contributions come in the form of pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. Considered separately, that spare change might seem insignificant. But when combined, that small amount of money could help your neighbor in a big way.

Co-op members have donated almost \$20,000 since the program started in 2009. These gifts help fund Rock Cooperative Care, our program that assists co-op members with their energy bills. About \$202,000 has been awarded to members who might otherwise fall through the cracks because their

incomes are too high to qualify for federal assistance but too low to make ends make.

For the past three years, Mary hasn't worked much because she's had several foot surgeries, including one that caused a bone infection and required the removal of the heel on one foot. During this time, she had always managed to pay her monthly bills—until this past summer. That's when she received a grant of about \$220 from Rock Cooperative Care.

"I was grateful for whatever help I could get," she says. "It's a great program and made it so I didn't get behind on my bills."

Mary is telling her story because she wants co-op members to know that people who receive assistance aren't looking for a handout. Oftentimes, they just are falling on hard times

and need a boost to get them back on track.

Each day she thinks about the people who have been so kind to her and helped her along the way. "Anyone who donates, I think they are the most wonderful people," she says. "They are a blessing—a big blessing."

Mary is also quick to help others when her health permits, volunteering at the Caritas Food Pantry in Beloit. People ▶



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: _____



have been kind to her, and she wants to repay the favor.

If you'd like to donate to Project Lift Up to help people like Mary, just choose one of the options on the form on the previous page and return it to Rock Energy. Those who already contribute might want to consider adding a one-time donation as part of their holiday giving. Whether you're new to the program or increasing your donation, we'll give you three free LEDs to help save money on your energy bill.

I want to express my sincere thanks to all the folks donating to this program. Your act of kindness shows the true cooperative spirit of Rock Energy members, who are always willing to lend a hand to help a neighbor facing difficult times. If you think you might qualify for assistance through Rock Cooperative Care, you can find the income guidelines listed on page 18C of this magazine.

I hope you enjoy seeing all the smiling faces on our holiday greeting this year. Before our annual Member Appreciation Day Pancake Breakfast in September, we gathered employees, directors, and their families outside our Janesville warehouse for this group photo.

All of us at Rock Energy sincerely hope that you and your family stay safe during this holiday season. We hope your special time with family and friends is filled with joy and happiness. Thanks for allowing us to be your energy provider during the past year. We promise to give you the same great service in 2018. Please let us know if there's anything we can do to improve. ☺



HOLIDAY OFFICE CLOSINGS

Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Monday, Dec. 25, and Tuesday, Dec. 26, in observance of Christmas and Friday, Dec. 29, and Monday, 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.



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 \$202,000 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 \$73,800 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 2017–2018 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	\$1,507	\$18,090	\$2,010	\$24,120	\$3,015	\$36,180
2	\$2,030	\$24,360	\$2,706	\$32,480	\$4,060	\$48,720
3	\$2,552	\$30,630	\$3,403	\$40,840	\$5,105	\$61,260
4	\$3,075	\$36,900	\$4,100	\$49,200	\$6,150	\$73,800
5	\$3,597	\$43,170	\$4,796	\$57,560	\$7,195	\$86,340
6	\$4,120	\$49,440	\$5,493	\$65,920	\$8,240	\$98,880
7	\$4,642	\$55,710	\$6,190	\$74,280	\$9,285	\$111,420
8	\$5,165	\$61,980	\$6,886	\$82,640	\$10,330	\$123,960

*Figures are based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines for 2017–2018.

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.

Household Size	30-Day Household Income	Annual Household Income
1	\$1,508	\$18,090
2	\$2,030	\$24,360
3	\$2,553	\$30,630
4	\$3,075	\$36,900
5	\$3,598	\$43,170
6	\$4,120	\$49,440
7	\$4,643	\$55,710
8	\$5,165	\$61,980

MY CO-OP



SHAPING STUDENTS' LIVES WITH COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

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 \$97,000 in financial aid to deserving students.

Online applications are available at www.rock.coop. Just go to the Community & Youth tab and click on Scholarships. The deadline for submitting applications is Jan. 3, and transcripts are due by Jan. 12. If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Uebelacker at 866-752-4550 or 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. Just go to the Community & Youth tab and click on Scholarships. The deadline is Dec. 31.

RATES WILL CHANGE JAN. 1

Effective Jan. 1, 2018, 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 2018.



MERRY, BRIGHT AND EFFICIENT HOLIDAY LIGHTING

Decking the halls doesn't have to take a toll on your energy bill! Keep your holiday lighting merry, bright and energy efficient with LED light strands.

- Consider replacing older light strands with new ENERGY STAR LED® lights. LED strands are 70 percent more efficient and last 10 times longer than the age-old standard bulbs.
- You can get the look of cozy lighting with LEDs. Just look for "warm white" on the label.
- Unlike older light strands, LED lights give off virtually no heat, making them safer for kids and pets (and reindeer).
- Save energy by setting a timer for outdoor lighting and decorations. Program the timer so the lights turn on in the evening and turn off later at night when you typically go to sleep.

Source: Dept. of Energy

Shane Larson, CEO

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Barbara Uebelacker, Editor



**ROCK ENERGY
COOPERATIVE**
Empowering Members Since 1936