

# YOUR NOSE KNOWS!



Natural gas is colorless and odorless. But gas providers add a chemical to make it smell like rotten eggs so leaks can be easily detected.

**If you smell  
natural gas, call us  
immediately!**

**(866) 752-4550**



**Rock Energy Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



## More Power to You OUR NEW YEAR'S WISH TO YOU:



*Stay safe and warm this winter*

**Shane L. Larson,**  
Chief Executive Officer

As we head into a new year and a new decade, it's difficult to predict what the future holds. But here's one thing you can count on. If it's January in the Upper Midwest, at least of couple months of cold winter days are ahead.

Temperatures in the last half of October and all of November were significantly below average, and the snow came early. It's not every year that Halloween pumpkins are buried in the snow. Some years we don't even have a white Christmas.

As I'm writing this column in early December, a few 40-degree days are in the forecast. But that could change in an instant and temperatures could plunge below zero. And we all know that as the temperature outside decreases, the cost of keeping the inside of your home comfortable increases.

Whatever happens, there are several ways to control your energy use. The graphic on this page offers 10 tips to help keep your winter energy bills from getting too high. I hope you'll use some of these ideas to save energy—and money—this winter.

One thing the graphic doesn't mention is the high cost of using portable space heaters. A small, 1,500-watt heater can cost more than \$100 a month to operate if used all day every day. If you want to warm up a small area quickly, you can turn on your space heater for a brief period. But in the long run, the real solution is to better weatherize your home. Take a look at page 20B for more information about how to use portable heaters efficiently and safely.

We know that bitter cold winters can make it difficult for members to pay their energy bills. If you're having trouble paying your bill by the due date, please call us at 608-752-4550 during regular business hours to see if a payment plan can be arranged. We do everything we can to help our members manage their bills, but it is imperative that members contact us so we can get a plan together as soon as possible.

Winter weather also makes driving extremely hazardous at times, and there's a possibility that your vehicle could slide off the road and hit a power pole. Knowing what to do can mean the difference between life and death.

A person's first instinct after an accident is to get out of the vehicle and assess the damage, but that's absolutely the wrong thing to do. Electric lines might have fallen on your vehicle or the ground nearby, and the area around your car may be charged with electric energy. If you step out, your body would become the path to ground for the electricity, and you could be electrocuted.

Instead, stay in your vehicle. Warn those who try to come near your vehicle to help that they must stay far away. Call

911 for help and wait until a professional from the electric company tells you it is safe to leave the vehicle.

The exception to this rule is if your vehicle is on fire. In that case, jump clear of the vehicle. It is very important that when you jump, do not touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time. It's also important that you hop away with your feet together. This way there will not be a voltage difference between your two feet, which would give electricity the chance to flow through your body. Always assume downed lines are energized.

If this winter brings as much snow as last winter, remember to check your natural gas meter and pipes for drifted snow, which can cause problems. When exposing the meter and pipes, avoid using a snow blower or shovel. Instead, gently remove snow and ice from the area with your hands or a broom. Also remember to clear snow away from furnace intake and exhaust pipes to avoid the dangers of carbon monoxide.

As we head into a new year and a new decade, we look forward to continuing to provide you with safe and reliable energy at an affordable cost. Stay safe and warm this winter, and please let us know if we can do anything to improve our service.

# 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.

U.S. Department of Energy





# SPACE HEATER USE CAN BE COSTLY

When it's cold outside, you might turn on a portable space heater for a brief period to heat up a small area. But if you're not careful, that small heater can have a big impact on your energy bill.

A 1,500-watt space heater would add about \$40 to your monthly energy bill if

you used it eight hours every day.

Generally, it's best to run a space heater when you want to heat up a small area for a brief time, like a bedroom right before bedtime, or if you need temporary heat in a normally unheated area, like a garage or shed.

If you decide to use a space heater, here are a few tips to save energy and money:

- Turn down your central heating thermostat if you're using a space heater to heat the one or two rooms

you use most. By doing this, you're not heating up unused rooms.

- Close doors to rooms being heated to avoid heat loss.
- Turn off the heater when not in use or get a space heater with a timer feature.
- Purchase a heater with thermostat settings and use the lowest setting that you are comfortable with.
- Select a space heater that is the right size for the space you need to heat. Most have a sizing table on the box.

## CALCULATE YOUR SPACE HEATER COST

**You can easily calculate the cost of operating your space heater by using this formula:**

**Wattage divided by 1,000 x hours used per month x kWh rate = monthly cost**

Most space heaters are 1,500 watts, which equals 1.5 kilowatts. So let's say you're operating a space heater 8 hours a day on Rock Energy lines:

**1.5 kw x 240 hours/month x 11 cents/kWh = \$39.60**

### Use Space Heaters Safely

**DON'T:** Leave your space heater unattended. Always unplug it before you leave the house or go to bed.

**DON'T:** Use an extension cord to plug in your space heater. It can cause the heater to overheat, and can be a tripping hazard.

**DON'T:** Place your space heater near curtains, clothing, furniture or bedding.



Rock Energy Cooperative employees and their families joined Rockton's annual Christmas Walk parade on Saturday, Dec. 7. Participating were, from left, Devin Sieling; Cal and Billie Jo Calkins; Bill and Lynn Wright with their sons in front, Owen, Reid, and Jack; and Kayla and Micah Hartley and their daughter, Makenna. The Elf on the Shelf even rode along on one of the trucks.



# YOUTH TOUR TEACHES STUDENTS ABOUT CO-OPS, POLITICS

Kyle Eggers was active in student council at Hononegah High School before visiting Washington, D.C., but his interest in government and politics increased after attending Youth Tour.

"It was really cool seeing some of the inner mechanisms of our government," he said.

Eggers of South Beloit represented Rock Energy Cooperative on the 2019 Youth Tour to Washington. He joined more than 1,800 young leaders from across the country and returned with a greater appreciation of the political process and a better understanding of cooperative business principles.

The students met with elected officials at the Capitol and visited Arlington National Cemetery, the Supreme Court, President Lincoln's Cottage at First National Cemetery, and a variety of memorials.

Eggers said he learned a lot about co-ops while on the trip.

"Cooperatives work together to help people that larger corporations do not support, and they work for no profit so they truly are in it for helping people," he said.

The best part of the trip was meeting students from all over the country, Eggers said. He encouraged students to consider applying for the 2020 trip.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience and something that no other trips can compare to," he said. "The experiences I had and people I met made it such an amazing experience."

Rock Energy will fully sponsor up to four high school juniors to participate in the 2020 Youth Tour, which will take place June 19–26. Applicants must be children of Rock Energy members and

reside in the co-op's service territory.

Funded by unclaimed capital credits, the all-expense-paid trip includes transportation, lodging, meals, and admissions to events. Round-trip travel is by motor coach from Springfield, Ill. Travel to Springfield is not included.

Interested students are required to submit an application form, short video introducing themselves in a creative manner, and a letter of recommendation.

All the details are available at [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop). Just go to the Community & Youth tab and click on Youth Tour. The deadline for submitting online applications is April 1. If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Uebelacker, communications director, at 866-752-4550 or [barbu@rock.coop](mailto:barbu@rock.coop).



Kyle Eggers met with U.S. Rep. Adam Kinzinger of Illinois while in Washington, D.C.

## YOUTH TOUR

**Who:** Juniors in high school

**What:** Trip to Washington, D.C., to meet with congressional representatives, learn about the cooperative business model, and tour historic sites

**When:** June 19–26

**Apply at:** [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop)

**Deadline:** April 1





## LAST CHANCE...

Jan. 10 is the deadline to apply for Rock Energy Cooperative scholarships for 2020. Go to [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop) for details or call 866-752-4550.



## VISIT WEBSITE BEFORE INSTALLING SOLAR

If you're thinking about installing a solar generation system on your property, make sure to learn all the facts before signing a contract.

To get started, go to [www.rock.coop/distributed-generation](http://www.rock.coop/distributed-generation). There you will find a list of frequently asked questions, guidelines for technical requirements, our interconnection agreement, and details about our Small Distributed Generation Rate. This information can be provided to potential vendors so they are aware of the cooperative's technical requirements.

If you have any questions after reviewing the information, please call us at 866-752-4550 or email [questions@rock.coop](mailto:questions@rock.coop).

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Let the sunshine in! For additional warmth, open drapes over windows that receive sunlight during the day. Close them at night, which can reduce heat loss from a warm room up to 10%.

*Source: energy.gov*



# 2020

## HAPPY NEW YEAR

**Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Tuesday, Dec. 31, and Wednesday, Jan. 1, for the New Year's holiday. Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices throughout the holiday weekend and at the new payment kiosk outside our South Beloit office, 15229 Willowbrook Road. 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.**

**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  
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Empowering Members Since 1936