



Efficient heating options for your home

If you are building a new home or renovating an old one, heating a home is one of the main items you'll need to consider.

The amount of heated space and the efficiency of that space determine how large of a heating system you need. Air leaks and inadequate insulation might be a major (3-34-73) cause of higher bills, and correcting these problems might enable you to install a smaller heating system.

Propane furnaces are expected to last 15 to 25 years, but if yours has been well-maintained, you may get more mileage out of it. Even if your furnace is still running well and has some life left in it, it may not be efficient. Propane, gas and oil furnace efficiency is measured by the Average Fuel Utilization Efficiency (AFUE). This is indicated on a label which may still be attached to the furnace. Your 20-year-old unit might have an AFUE in the 70 to 80 percent range. A new high-efficiency furnace can have an AFUE rating of over 95 percent, which can reduce the portion of your propane bill that goes toward heating by 15 to 20 percent. The AFUE doesn't account for any heat escaping through poorly-insulated or improperly-sealed pipes or fur-

nace ducts, so you definitely want those issues taken care of first.

Instead of replacing your old propane furnace with a new one, you have a few additional options. You could install an air source heat pump, which would use your existing duct work. Standard air source heat pumps are ducted and look like central air conditioners. Mini-split heat pumps are smaller and operate without ducting to provide zoned heating and cooling. Cooperative rebates are available due to the efficiencies of these units.

Another popular option due to its comfort is in-floor heat. This system uses tubing placed in the concrete of your home or under the sub floor. They use electric boilers to heat water that is then circulated through the tubes. Members can enroll in our Dual Fuel program, which offers a 1.4 cents credit per kilowatt-hour used.

Ground source heat pumps provide the highest efficiencies for heating and cooling. Rebates are available for \$200 per ton. Ground source heat pumps use the constant temperature of the earth to transfer heat.

Heating system upgrades have a big effect on comfort and your pocketbook for many years.

Energy saving tip

Trim your holiday energy costs by choosing energy efficient LED lights! LED holiday lights use less energy and can last up to 40 seasons. They're also easier to install – you can connect up to 25 LED strings without overloading a wall socket!

Source: energy.gov

Mark your calendar

Nov. 25 Electric bills due

Nov. 28..... Happy Thanksgiving!

Our offices will be closed November 28 and 29, but linemen will be on call for outages.



Find your location number and win a \$10 credit

If you find your location number (as it appears on your monthly electric bill) in this issue, you will receive a \$10 credit.



Manager's Message



Efficient holiday gift ideas



Steps to lower your energy costs this winter



A word from your General Manager **Adam Tromblay**

How local governance works for you!

Since Minnesota’s first electric cooperative was established in 1935, co-ops have been leading the way in serving member-owners with safe, reliable, affordable and increasingly clean electricity. From our earliest beginnings, strong governance has been and continues to be at the heart of a successful electric cooperative.

Minnesota is home to 44 distribution cooperatives, including Nobles Cooperative Electric (NCE), which are served by six generation and transmission cooperatives. (8-12-9) Collectively, Minnesota’s electric cooperatives employ more than 3,000 people and serve 1.7 million or one-third of Minnesota’s residents.

Under the successful and proven cooperative business model, we’re locally-owned by the members we serve and governed by an elected board of directors who are also member-owners of the cooperative. Committed to powering lives and empowering our communities, NCE has been guided by seven core principles since our founding. You’ll see these principles demonstrated in everything we do.

If you have electric heat, you may be sales tax exempt

If electricity is your primary source of residential heat, the kilowatts used for heating your home are exempt from sales tax. Primary means 50 percent or more of your heating. The heating season is six months long from November to April.

If you have signed a fuel exemption form in the past, your record is automatically retained. To sign up for exemption, please give our office a call at 507-372-7331, 507-836-6107, 800-776-0517 or fill out a form online.

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Members’ Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training, and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

While all the principles are equally important, one principle really differentiates co-ops from other for-profit utilities—Democratic Member Control. This principle says, cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote). As a member-owner of NCE, you always have a vital and valued say in the way we operate.

To effectively and efficiently represent our 6,700 members’ interests, board directors are elected for three-year (19-4-80) terms. These directors play a crucial role in determining the strategic direction and priorities of NCE. Their input and guidance are key as the co-op keeps the lights on today and works to anticipate and meet our member-consumers’ future energy needs.

Through education and training opportunities, industry conferences and

Are you sales tax exempt?

If you use electricity for agricultural or industrial purposes, this reminder will interest you. Electricity used in this manner may be exempt from sales tax.

To obtain relief from state sales tax, file for an exemption with our office. Contact the cooperative, find the form online or drop in to complete a ST-3 form.

November Auto Pay Winner James B. Nelson

Take a minute to sign up for Auto Pay and you may win a \$25 credit on your electric bill. A winner is chosen each month. Members who are already saving time and money with Auto Pay will be automatically entered in our monthly contest.

independent learning, our seven directors invest a significant amount of time staying informed on the latest challenges, trends, regulations and technologies impacting electric cooperatives. From environmental laws to financial matters to cybersecurity and technology advancements, the electric industry is incredibly complex. In order to effectively govern, co-op directors need to have a thorough understanding of these issues and how they could affect member-owners. They are also trained to be transparent and accountable to one another and the member-owners we serve; and adhere to the cooperative’s bylaws and other applicable rules, regulations and laws.

Serving in a governance role for NCE is a privilege and one your directors embrace. If you have questions about our local governance structure or how to run to serve as a director, please give me a call at 800-776-0517 or e-mail me at atromblay@noblesce.com.



Six efficient holiday gifts to give (or keep!)

It's always a great idea to give energy efficient gifts! Here are a few ideas based on a range of prices. You might even want to keep one or two of these for yourself!

1. Smart power strip. Price: \$15 to \$100: Smart power strips are the perfect gift for your tech-savvy family members and friends because they'll likely need the extra outlets for their many devices. Smart power strips give more control than traditional ones. By plugging the main hardware item, such as a computer or monitor, into the master outlet, you can easily control the rest of the devices. When that main device is turned off, everything else plugged into the strip also powers off. Some smart power strips can also be operated through a remote control or smartphone app, and some include programmable timers.



2. Smart thermostat. Price: \$30 to \$600: A smart thermostat can adjust the temperature by learning your energy use habits over time, which saves you money and keeps you more comfortable. It can also be controlled through a smartphone app. Just make sure you're going to use all of its functionality before taking the leap.



3. Solar backpack. Price: \$30 to \$325: Walking or biking to the office, the field or a mountain lake? It may sound crazy, but you can actu-

ally make the most of the sun's energy with a solar backpack. These handy devices collect and store enough electricity to power a phone, tablet or even a laptop. The solar panels stitched onto the back of the packs are flexible and waterproof. Best of all, they have all the features and functionality of their traditional non-solar cousins.



4. E-bike. Price: \$250 to \$9,000: Electric bikes, or e-bikes, are regular bicycles with an electric motor that can be engaged as needed. E-bikes are becoming increasingly popular with people who face challenging terrain, bike to work and don't want to work up a sweat, or perhaps (26-8-64) find regular cycling too physically challenging. Studies also show that e-biking can bring many of the same physical benefits as non-assisted pedaling. They even come in foldable versions. One downside is they are heavier than regular bicycles.



5. Electric scooter. Price: \$80 to \$3,000: The \$49 foldable, foot-powered scooter that exploded onto the scene a decade ago has grown up in a big way. In some larger cities, electric scooters are now available to rent at various locations, found and paid for via app. Or you can buy one to use for your daily commute or as a fun way to simply scoot around the neighborhood. Higher-quality versions will have longer range, larger tires and better suspension – along with a higher cost, of course. The catch is that they're still largely confined to paved surfaces.



6. Energy efficient tablets. Price: \$40 to \$4,000: You may already have at least one tablet in your home, but have you considered how energy efficient it is? Try this: Instead of using your TV to binge that new show, consider an ENERGY STAR-rated tablet, and you can use seven times less power! Simply look for the ENERGY STAR label when you're shopping for new tablets.

Looking for an efficient gift that costs practically nothing? Enjoy a good book and a cozy evening at home, which requires no energy use at all. Don't forget to put on your favorite sweater and pair of fuzzy slippers so you can lower the thermostat a couple of degrees. Now that's an energy efficient evening worth repeating!

Simple steps to lower heating costs and keep you warm

According to EnergySavers.gov, heating and cooling account for about 56 percent of the energy use in a typical U.S. home, making it the largest energy expense for most homes. There are some simple steps, (508-37-065) such as sealing air leaks to keep cold air out, which can help you save on your energy use and energy bills:

- Use caulk to seal gaps in the walls of your home or apartment. Wherever different building materials meet, or wiring comes out of a wall, there are gaps that may contribute to the loss of heat in your home.

- Weather stripping is relatively easy and available at your local home improvement store. Stop drafts from coming in and heat from leaking out of your home through drafty doors and windows.

- If you have older or leaky windows, consider temporary fixes, such as plastic film kits that create the effect of an interior storm window.

- Open curtains to the sun to help warm a room with radiant energy. Close them at night and on gloomy days to keep heat in.

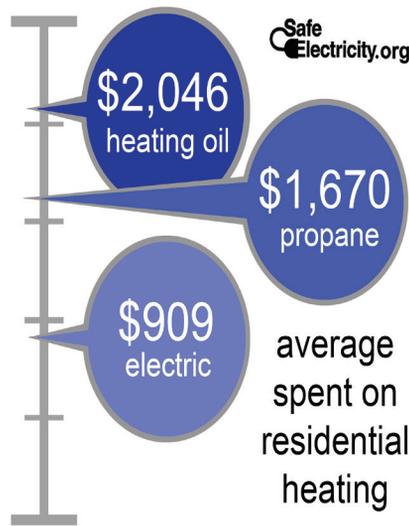
- Lower the temperature setting when you leave the home and at night when you go to sleep. A programmable thermostat can automatically make these adjustments for you.

- Replace your furnace filter monthly to save energy and improve heat circulation.

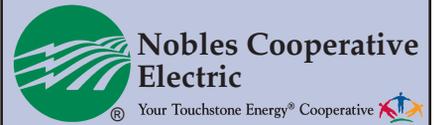
- Set the water heater thermostat to 120 degrees and if it is an older unit, install an inexpensive insulating blanket to prevent heat loss.

- If you have a fireplace, be sure to close the damper when it is not in use. This prevents heat from escaping and cold from entering through your chimney.

- Doors and vents of unused rooms can also be closed if there is a cold air return in the room; otherwise, closing them off will put inefficient stress on your air handling system.



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Next Board Meeting

November 27, 2019

This cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Country Cupboard

Festive Squash Stuffing

1 lg. winter squash - butternut, buttercup or acorn
1/2 c. butter or margarine, softened
1/2 c. brown sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. black pepper

1 med. onion, chopped
1/4 c. butter or margarine
1 1/2 c. very hot water
1 6 oz. pkg. Stuffing mix, sage flavored

Cut squash in half and remove seeds. Place cut side down in a pan with a small amount of water. Bake in 375 degree oven for 50 to 60 minutes until done. Cool. Remove skin from flesh. Flavor squash with brown sugar, softened butter, salt and pepper. Set aside. Melt 1/4 c. butter and saute chopped onion until tender and opaque. Stir in hot water and stuffing mix until fluffy. Mix together with the squash mixture. Place in 3 qt. greased casserole dish. Bake at 350 degrees for 40 to 45 minutes. Great for Thanksgiving or Christmas!

Send your favorite **crock pot** recipe to Nobles Cooperative Electric, ATTN: Tracey, P.O. Box 788, Worthington, MN 56187-0788. Entries must include your name, address, telephone number and NCE location number. All entries must be received by November 25. The winning recipe will be featured in the next edition of *Current Matters* and the winner will receive a **\$10 credit** on their electric bill.

Marlys Buddenhagen
Tracy