

January 2014

# Hot Watts

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Fighting winter chills? A crackling fire in the hearth warms the house, but don't let it heat up your electric bill. To cool energy costs, keep the fireplace damper closed when in use. Caulk around the fireplace hearth. Double up on wood-earned warmth by lowering the thermostat setting to between 50 degrees and 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

Learn more at [www.energysaver.gov](http://www.energysaver.gov).

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

### Congratulations!

**Courtney Barnoskie** is our online survey winner.

## 2014

**CHEC Offices will be closed January 1st in observance of the New Year.**

## We Need an All-of-The-Above Energy Strategy

Electric cooperatives are disappointed—but not surprised—that in September the Obama Administration officially abandoned an all-of-the-above energy strategy for a new, all-but-one approach that effectively removes coal from the nation's fuel mix in the future.

The policy, proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), sets stringent limits on carbon dioxide emissions from future coal or natural gas plants. Problem: the new standards are impossible to meet with existing technology.

For several years cooperatives have tested carbon capture and storage (CCS) as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, the technology doesn't make financial sense. It has never been used on a commercial scale at a power plant over a prolonged period to demonstrate its viability or cost. In a 2012 Congressional Budget Office report, engineers estimate it would increase the cost of producing electricity from coal-based plants by 75 percent.

The Administration's switch to an all-but-one energy approach would limit Americans' access to a plentiful and affordable resource. We should not gamble with the economic well-being of future generations and our nation's economy.

Already worried about making ends meet, many of Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative's

members cannot afford the significant increases in electric bills that this policy would trigger.

Historically, the price of coal remains affordable and relatively stable. The U.S. Energy Information Agency reports the United States has 236 years remaining of recoverable coal reserves. Coal generates 37 percent of the nation's electricity—our biggest energy source by far.

It seems the Administration lets history repeat itself. We saw this all-but-one game in 1978 when Congress passed the ill-conceived Power Plant and Industrial Fuel Use Act. Never heard of it? Few have, but for several years the government banned natural gas for power generation. Yes, natural gas—the fuel source being sold to the nation today as a cleaner fuel option. With gas off the table, electric co-ops were forced to choose between building coal or nuclear plants.

Back then, cooperatives were in the midst of a major power plant building cycle. With few options, they invested heavily in coal-based generating plants in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Thankfully Congress repealed its mistake, but not for nine years.

Let's not repeat past mistakes. Stand with us as we fight to keep electric bills affordable. Raise your voice through the Cooperative Action Network at [www.action.coop](http://www.action.coop). Tell the EPA we need an all-of-the-above energy strategy.



## Hot Watts

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**Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc.**  
**Hot Watts** informs members in parts of  
seven Eastern Oklahoma counties about  
Cookson Hills' programs and issues.  
Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative  
continually strives to provide quality  
electrical service at a reasonable cost  
for its members.

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**If You Find Your Account Number  
Hidden in This Issue of the *Hot Watts*  
You'll Receive a \$25 Credit on  
Your Electric Bill**

# WHAT TO DO WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT



When severe weather causes power outages, employees of Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative (CHEC) begin working immediately to restore service as quickly as possible. Primary lines serving hundreds of customers are serviced first, and then the secondary lines serving just a few customers are serviced.

When your lights go out, look outside and see if your neighbors are also in the dark. If they're not, check your fuse box or circuit breaker to see if you can locate the problem.

If you need to report an outage, call CHEC at 800-328-2368, or, if you are in the Sallisaw area, call 918-775-2211. During high volumes of calls, members may reach a busy signal. Please continue to try calling. You can report your outage and your neighbors' outages as well with a single call.

Outages that occur in severe weather, or that last for an extended period of time, can place a heavy burden on the system at the moment power is restored. Please take these steps to prevent an overload on the system and possibly another outage, take these steps:

- Turn off all inside lights except one.
- Turn down your thermostat.
- In cold weather, close windows and drapes to save heat. Pick one room on the warm side of the house (preferably one with a fireplace). Close the door to the rest of the house and use blankets to insulate your windows.
- If the outage lasts over 60 minutes, turn off your electric water heater.
- Make sure your kitchen range is off (both the surface and the oven). Never use it for heat.
- Turn off all unnecessary appliances.
- Avoid opening the freezer door. A full, freestanding freezer 139902 will keep food at freezing temperatures for several days.
- If you see a low or fallen power line, **STAY AWAY!!** Call CHEC immediately.
- Leave your porch light on so CHEC workers will know when your power has been restored.
- When power comes back on, slowly switch your appliances and lights back on and gradually return your thermostat to its normal setting.

Source: NRECA

### To Report an Outage call:

Stigler Office: 800-328-2368 or Sallisaw Office: 918-775-2211

## Newsletter Survey Winners

In the October issue of the Hot Watts, Cookson Hills Electric (CHEC) inserted a survey for our members to complete. These surveys tell CHEC what services you are utilizing and what your preferences are so that we may better serve you in the future.

CHEC members responded in large numbers. Five members of CHEC won credits on their accounts. The winners are: Tom Neal Jr. - \$100 winner, J.L. Long - \$25 winner, Gloria Standifird - \$25 winner, Charles Nathman - \$25 winner, and Nellie Cook - \$25 winner. Thank you to all members who took the time to complete and return their survey!

## Power Theft Can Be DANGEROUS

It's often an "invisible" crime. Someone illegally connects into a power supply, connects to a line that has been disconnected, or tampers with a meter to avoid recording electricity usage. Legitimate consumers do not engage in these behaviors, so the impact of electricity theft—including the danger—is often unrecognized.

Power theft carries deadly risks. Many thieves pay for the power they steal with their lives. Electricity theft is not just dangerous for those who steal. If you are on the same power line as someone who steals electricity, you could pay the cost for their theft too. The power line could become overloaded with electric energy, which could harm your electronics and appliances that are designed to receive a certain, steady amount of electricity. Electricity theft makes power service less reliable and lower quality for paying customers.

Electricity thieves may also unknowingly feed energy back into the power line. This is dangerous for linemen who may assume that the power line they are working on is de-energized.

Safe Electricity reminds you that everyone can help prevent and reduce power theft:

- Notify your electric utility immediately if you know of an illegally connected consumer.
- Do not cut the seal on your meter base or tamper with your own meter for any reason.
- Apply for a legal connection if you do not have one.
- Remain aware of your surroundings and report any suspicious activities to your electric utility company.

Most electrical theft crimes occur through meter tampering, bypassing meters, and tapping power lines. Other less frequent crimes include tapping into neighboring premises, using illegal lines after being disconnected, self-reconnection without consent, and electrifying fences. Possessing fraudulent electricity bills is also a federal crime and is punishable by law.

Everyone is affected by power theft, and detecting and reporting illegal activity will help reduce the price paid.

*Source: SafeElectricity.org*



## Be Careful When Using Generators

If you use a standby generator during a power outage, Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative (CHEC) reminds you that an improper generator hook-up can create serious problems with safety and service.



Portable generators, widely used when power lines are down, can be fatal to linemen and to you and your neighbors when used improperly.

It is very important that your generator has the proper transfer switch. This switching device is used to transfer the electric service from the power line to the generator. The switch also separates the generator from the outside utility service. If the transfer switch is not used, backfeed from the generator voltage on power lines could endanger the lives of linemen working to restore your power.

Please contact a licensed electrician for information on installing and using standby generators. If you install a generator at your service location, please notify CHEC at 800-328-2368 or 918-775-2211.

## On Tour With Tomorrow's Leaders

Annually Cookson Hills Electric Cooperative (CHEC) participates in the cooperative-sponsored national youth tour program. This program provides rural electric cooperative students an opportunity to earn a trip to Washington, D.C. by writing an essay on a topic determined by the cooperative. This year's topic is *"Why is renewable energy important for electric cooperatives to invest in? Describe what makes it challenging for cooperatives to invest in renewable energy."*

Donna Rhodes, Youth Tour Coordinator, has visited or will visit area schools to share a presentation on the history of electric cooperatives and the annual Cookson Hills Youth Tour Essay Contest. The local high school teachers will administer the annual contest. Completed essays must be submitted by February 21, 2014. All essays will then be reviewed by a judge that is not employed by CHEC. Four finalists will be selected.



Photo by: Donna Rhodes

Mrs. Weisenfels' Junior Class from Gans High School after their CHEC Youth Tour contest presentation.

The four finalists will present their essays to the CHEC Board of Trustees and other special guests at the CHEC Youth Tour Banquet held in Stigler. The winners will be presented with a plaque and the Youth Tour trip details.

During the Youth Tour trip (June 14-19, 2014), students will join 1,500 other youth from across the nation in Washington D.C. Participants

will visit the monuments and other attractions, as well as visit Capitol Hill to learn more about how our government operates.

Youth Tour contest information is presented by appointment only. If your school is interested in participating this year, contact Donna Rhodes at (918) 775-2211.

### The Hot Watts Q&A

**Question:** What is pay.as.you.go (pre-paid program)?

**Answer:** The pay.as.you.go program allows you to purchase electricity before you use it. This option allows you to control your budget and pay how much you want, when you want. There are no security deposits or late fees. Instead of a monthly billing statement, your usage and balance is calculated daily. Track your usage through our SmartHub app or online at [www.cooksonhills.com](http://www.cooksonhills.com).

**Question:** Who qualifies for pay.as.you.go?

**Answer:** All residential members of Cookson Hills Electric and any new residential members.