

# Watt's New

September 2011

## Vernon Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

*"Information for our member-owners."*

## Safety is Number One

The employees and directors of Vernon Electric are committed to maintaining a strong safety culture. We are proud of our excellent safety record and safety accreditation awards. Safety is stressed in our daily job-briefings. Our lineworkers participate in monthly safety meetings, where they review safe work practices, industry-wide accidents, close calls, first aid, and emergency procedures. It is no "accident" that our employees have currently worked 266,000 hours without a lost time accident.

Linemen practiced pole rescues and bucket rescues at a recent safety meeting. The pole rescue involves using a 200 lb. dummy mannequin to simulate an injured lineman. The rescue lineman is timed as he climbs the pole, secures the dummy, and lowers it safely to the ground. The bucket rescue is a self-rescue technique where the lineman in the bucket simulates a failed boom and has to lower himself safely to the ground.

Monte Tewalt practices the rescue of an injured lineman from a pole-top.



Andy Hefel practices a self-rescue from a bucket truck

## Dual Fuel Heating Can Provide Comfortable Savings

Dual Fuel is a plan where you can have electric heat with a fossil fuel backup and gain the comfort and security of electric heat at a special low electric rate on a separate meter.

The system comprises of two fuel sources - electricity as the primary system - and an alternate fuel such as LP, thermal storage or fuel oil as the secondary source. If you presently have an electric heating system, you can still benefit by oil, thermal storage or LP. If you have an oil, LP furnace or boiler, you can benefit by adding an electric system.

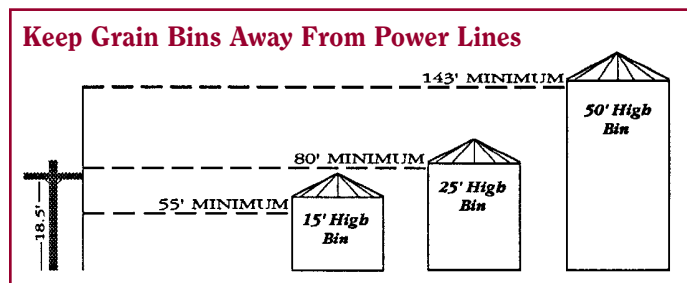
Your Dual Fuel system is then connected by a radio control to the central control station. During peak periods, when demand for electricity is highest, a dispatcher can switch your home heating system from electric to the secondary fuel for a few hours. Another signal will switch your home back to electric heat. Though rare, the maximum amount of controlling can be 12 hours in a 24 hour period.

The present Dual Fuel rate is 6.4 cents per kWh. That is equivalent to LP at about \$1.55 per gallon. In other words, if you pay more than \$1.55 for LP, you'd be better off heating with electricity. Call Vernon Electric for more details.

## Attention Grain Producers!

Do you plan to upgrade or add additional grain storage and/or drying capacity? Time is getting short! Please contact VEC so we can schedule any necessary utility service upgrades.

According to the Code-



### Grain Bin Clearances

The National Electric Safety Code has established clearance requirements to allow for the movement of large equipment near grain bins. Overhead power lines must be at least 18 feet above the tops of newly erected grain bins. The illustration depicts necessary clearances on the loading side of grain bins.

Before moving or building a grain bin, please contact VEC so we may help you determine a safe clearance envelope between the bin and our power lines.

## Visit us at the Vernon County Fair

Have you ever had a question about your electric cooperative that you never called about? Come visit our booth at the Vernon County Fair September 14-18, and ask those questions you've always wondered about. While you're there you'll also find information on our Operation Round Up program, our Evergreen program and Together We Save program. As always, check out our electric grills we sell. See you at the Fair.

Bring this coupon to the **Vernon Electric Cooperative** booth at the **Vernon County Fair** in the **Co-op Building** for a special chance at a **\$25 bill credit**.

Name (on billing statement) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Acct. # \_\_\_\_\_



Only one entry per member

# How Low Can Your Thermostat Go?

—By James Dulley

Setting your thermostat back in the winter can save energy and money—the key is finding the temperature at which you and your family are comfortable.

**Question:** I hear how important it is to lower my thermostat setting during winter. It seems it would just take more energy to reheat the house each morning. What is the best thermostat setting for the most savings?

**Answer:** Selecting the proper temperatures throughout the day and night can be a bit confusing. You want to balance comfort with energy—and dollar—savings. It is surprising how comfortable you can be at a lower indoor temperature once you become accustomed to it. Thereafter, you find yourself uncomfortable at higher indoor temperatures that used to seem normal.

It actually does save energy overall if you lower the temperature setting on your central furnace or heat pump thermostat. The actual amount of dollar savings depend primarily upon how low you set the thermostat, how long you have it set back, and, to a lesser degree, your climate.

There are also other advantages to lowering the thermostat setting during winter. If your house temperature is lower, it requires less moisture indoors to keep the indoor air at a given relative humidity level. The fact that your furnace or heat pump runs less at a lower indoor temperature means the equipment will last longer and need fewer repairs.

It is a common myth that it takes as much energy to reheat a house, in the morning for example, as was saved during the temperature setback period overnight. The amount of heat a house loses through its walls, ceilings, and floors is directly proportional to the difference between the indoor and the outdoor temperatures. Air leakage into and out of your house also increases with larger temperature differences.

When the indoor temperature is set lower, the indoor-to-outdoor temperature difference is smaller, so less heat is lost from your house. During the summer, the same is true in reverse. If less heat is lost from your house, your furnace has to use less gas, oil, or electricity to create the heat to replace it. The amount of heat used to reheat the house, therefore, is less than the amount saved over the temperature setback period.

The only time a temperature setback may not be wise is if you have a heat pump with backup electric resistance heat and an old thermostat. When it is time to reheat the house and you set the thermostat higher again, the expensive backup electric resistance heater may come on. For a long eight-hour setback, you will likely still save overall, but not for just a short couple-hour setback.

If you have a heat pump, install a special setback thermostat, designed for heat pumps. These heat pump thermostats have electronic circuitry to keep the backup resistance heating elements off after the setback period. My own heat pump thermostat works this way, and it also allows me to block out the resistance heating when the outdoor temperature is above a certain temperature. I have mine set at 20 degrees.

There is not a “best” thermostat setting for all homes and climates. The lower you set it, the greater the overall savings will be. The amount of savings per degree for each nighttime eight-hour setback period ranges from 1 percent to 3 percent. Because many people are also gone during the daytime, the temperature can be set lower for about 16 hours per day. Unless there are some health problems in your family, 62 degrees is comfortable if you are wearing long sleeves or a sweater.

In moderate climates, let your comfort dictate how low you initially set the furnace or heat pump thermostat. As you get used to the lower temperatures and wear a sweater, you will be able to gradually lower it more. In colder climates, excessive window condensation often limits how low the indoor temperature can be set. In order to set the temperature lower, you will have to reduce the indoor humidity level.



*Setting back your thermostat in the winter can save energy and money—but finding the temperature that's comfortable for your family is the key.*

Source: Touchstone Energy

## Can you tell if your home is energy efficient?

**Find out by having a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® evaluation.**

A Focus on Energy partnering consultant will find where your home is losing energy and money, recommend money-saving solutions on how to make your home more energy efficient, and tell you about qualifying Cash-Back Rewards. Vernon Electric will help pay for the evaluation up to \$250 if you follow through with the recommendations made.

**Act now and start saving! Here is a list of local, Focus on Energy partnering consultants:**

- ▲ Energy Wise Home, David Ware, Westby, 608-634-3028, [dware@mwt.net](mailto:dware@mwt.net)
- ▲ Hearth & Sol Construction and Energy Services, David Romary, Viroqua, 608-637-6747, [snowmountain@frontiernet.ent](mailto:snowmountain@frontiernet.ent), <http://www.kickapooogreen.org/davidr.html>
- ▲ Renewal Home Energy, Inc., Karl Oldenburg, La Crosse, 608-786-3232, [karl@renewalhomeenergy.com](mailto:karl@renewalhomeenergy.com), <http://renewalhomeenergy.com/>
- ▲ Residential Energy Services, Tom Wilson, Viroqua, 715-829-3512, [resenergy@mwt.net](mailto:resenergy@mwt.net)
- ▲ Skinner Construction, Inc., Eric Skinner, La Crosse, 608-792-5018, [eric@renewalhomeenergy.com](mailto:eric@renewalhomeenergy.com), <http://renewalhomeenergy.com/>

## Energy Efficiency “Tip of the Month”

When buying a new appliance, check the black and yellow EnergyGuide label. This label provides an estimate of the product's energy consumption and efficiency. It also shows the highest and lowest energy efficiency estimates of similar models. Most major appliances—such as refrigerators, dishwashers, and clothes dryers—are required to have these labels.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

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New**

The information in this newsletter has been prepared for you by David Maxwell, Marketing and Communications. Comments or questions regarding information contained here should be directed to:

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