

# Cooperative review

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative   
The power of human connections®

A Newsletter for Members of Union Power Cooperative

## Make Sure You and Your Home Are Ready For Winter

The recent cold spell is a reminder that your heating system has a few months of hard work ahead of it. Heating and cooling costs typically account for 44% of a home's total energy expense according to the U. S. Department of Energy. Another 14% of a home's energy usage is used to heat water. So in the interest of energy conservation and reducing electric bills, efficiency experts from your North Carolina Touchstone Energy cooperatives offer these simple, energy-saving tips.

### Heating System

If you haven't done so already, have a qualified technician inspect and service your system to ensure it's safe and working at peak efficiency. Trim or remove grass, weeds, leaves, etc. from around the outdoor unit of your heating system. When airflow is blocked, it puts a strain on the system and lowers efficiency.

### Forced-air Heating System

Clean or replace the filter monthly and keep heat vents open and unobstructed by furniture. If you have a gas or oil furnace, consider adding a high-efficiency heat pump. It could save you up to 40% on heating costs and keep you cool next summer.

### Programmable Thermostat

Install a programmable thermostat. The energy savings will offset the cost of a basic unit in less than a year. Programming your thermostat from



72 degrees to 65 degrees for eight hours a day while no one is home, or while everyone is tucked in bed, will cut your heating bill up to 10%.

### Standard Thermostat

Set it at 68 degrees and lower one degree until comfortable. For every degree you lower the thermostat, you can gain as much as a 3% savings in energy costs.

### Insulation

Check the insulation in the attic, ceilings, floors, exterior and basement walls, or crawl space to make sure it's in tip-top shape and at the recommended levels for your area. If your home is not adequately insulated, have additional insulation professionally installed.

Insulate heating ducts and keep them in good repair to prevent heat loss. The system can lose up to 60% of its warmed air before it reaches the register if ducts are not properly insulated in unheated areas such as attics and crawlspaces. Insulating the hot water heater and hot water pipes can also provide significant energy and money savings.

### Air Leaks and Ventilation

Test your home for air leaks. You can save 10% or more on your energy bill by reducing the air leaks in your home. On a windy day, stand next to windows, doors, electrical outlets, and light fixtures. If you can feel a draft, you have an air leak that may need caulking, sealing, or weather stripping.

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# Union Power Members Enjoy 67th Annual Meeting

A crowd of more than 1,100 members gathered on the campus of Wingate University, on Saturday, October 21, for Union Power Cooperative's 67th Annual Meeting. The weather could not have been any

nicer with sunny skies and fall-like temperatures.

This year's meeting included the Health and Safety Fair, where 17 organizations were represented. Cholesterol checks and flu shots were

some of the most popular areas of the health fair. Pinky the Clown was at the Kids Festival where she entertained nearly 100 children with games and face painting. Hardin Minor also entertained at the Kids Festival with his Mime in Motion routine.

Austin Auditorium was the site for musical entertainment by the Hatley Family of Stanfield, N.C. They entertained the crowd with sounds of Bluegrass and Gospel music.

At the business meeting, incumbents, B.L. Starnes, Juanita Poplin, Jim Hartsell, and Neil Hasty were re-elected to serve three-year terms on the Union Power board. Members were shown a video production entitled, "Looking Out For You," to update them on the business of the Cooperative.

Other highlights of this year's meeting included the distribution of member dividend checks worth more than \$1.5 million to eligible members. Members who were unable to attend the Annual Meeting should have already received their checks in the mail. Ms. LaVaughn Little of Monroe, N.C. was the lucky winner of the \$500 cash prize.

We want to thank all the members who attended the Annual Meeting this year and encourage you to join us again next year.



Top left: Ms. LaVaughn Little of Monroe, N.C., grand prize winner. Top right: Members catch a ride on a golf cart to the Health and Safety Fair. Bottom: Members enjoy a complimentary breakfast at Harris Dining Hall on the Wingate University Campus.

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Ventilation exhaust fans are often overlooked, but in just one hour, kitchen, bath, and other ventilating fans can pull out a houseful of warmed air. Turn off ventilation exhaust fans as soon as they've done the job.

### Energy Star and other tips

Cut your energy bills by up to 30% with Energy Star-labeled products when replacing your heating and cooling systems, as well as appliances,

lighting, windows, office equipment, and home electronics.

When the fireplace is not in use, keep the flue damper tightly closed. A chimney is designed specifically for smoke to escape, but warm air escapes as well — 24 hours a day!

Open curtains on your windows during the day to allow direct sunlight to naturally heat your home and close them at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows. Keep

blinds of sun-exposed windows open in the daytime and closed at night. Set ceiling fans to run clockwise to draw the air up and keep warm air circulating.

By taking advantage of these helpful tips you can keep your house warm, conserve energy, and maximize your electric savings. For more energy saving tips, visit our web site, [www.union-power.com](http://www.union-power.com).

# Take Advantage of the Energy Tax Credit

Union Power shares your concerns about the rising cost of energy, from gasoline to the fuels we use to generate electricity. Tax incentives, as part of the federal Energy Policy Act of 2005, are a triple win for everyone: they promote wise energy use, help lower your energy bills, and help reduce your tax bill.

The new energy law provides valuable federal tax credits for consumers who make certain, specified energy-efficiency upgrades to their homes, and purchase fuel-efficient, hybrid electric vehicles. The tax credits took effect in January, and most will be available only in 2006 and 2007, unless Congress votes to extend them further.

To find out if you qualify for the tax credits, look for the relevant IRS tax forms and consult your tax advisor. At the least, you will need to keep receipts proving that you purchased the improvements.

In some areas of the country, consumers will also be eligible for utility or state rebates or state tax incentives for the same homes, vehicles, and equipment. Reference information is provided at the end of this article.

Qualifying upgrades for your home include adding insulation, exterior doors, windows and skylights, and purchasing more efficient heat pumps, central air conditioners, furnaces, and water heaters. These must meet Energy Star and other efficiency requirements. Also available are various incentives

for commercial buildings, solar energy installations, fuel cells, and purchase of hybrid-electric vehicles.

Businesses are eligible for tax credits for buying hybrid vehicles, for building energy-efficient buildings, and for improving the energy efficiency of commercial buildings.

Small-producer biodiesel and ethanol credits will benefit small agri-biodiesel producers by providing a 10-cent-per-gallon tax credit for up to 15 million gallons of agri-biodiesel produced. In addition, the limit on production capacity for small ethanol producers increased from 30 million to 60 million gallons. This is effective until the end of 2008.

Energy savings are highly dependent on locations, type of equipment, and amount of use. For more information, please consult the following organizations or Web Sites:

#### Alliance to Save Energy

[www.ase.org/content/article/detail/2654](http://www.ase.org/content/article/detail/2654)

(ASE's site also links you to information available in Spanish.)

#### Tax Incentive Assistance Project

[www.energytaxincentives.org](http://www.energytaxincentives.org)

#### U.S. Department of Energy

[www.eere.energy.gov](http://www.eere.energy.gov)

## Play it safe

### Keeping Candles safe

Candles are an appealing way to add light or fragrance to a room. However, whether they are being used for light during a power outage or as a decoration in the home, candles can be very dangerous if misused.

Before you light a candle, make sure to trim the wick  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch each time before burning. Always use a candleholder designed for candle use. The holder should be heat resistant, sturdy and large enough to catch melted wax. The candleholder should always be placed on a sturdy, heat resistant surface. Candles should be placed at least three inches apart from one another so that they don't melt each other.

Never burn a candle on or near something that could easily catch fire. Always keep candles away from furniture, drapes, bedding, carpets, books or flammable decorations. Always burn candles in a well-ventilated room. Also make sure they are out of reach of children or pets and that they cannot be easily knocked down.

The safest way to extinguish a candle is to use a candlesnuffer; this helps prevent hot wax from spattering. A candlesnuffer is an instrument with a long slender handle and bell shaped cup that when placed over the flame extinguishes the candle. Do not extinguish candles with water because water can cause hot wax to splatter and can cause glass containers to break.

NEVER leave a burning candle unattended. If you are leaving the room or going to sleep, extinguish the candle. According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, close to half of candle fires start in the bedroom after people have gone to sleep.

When burning candles always remember these important safety tips to keep you and your family safe.



# Right-of-Way Clearing

During the next month, you may see our tree-trimming crews in your neighborhood. Carolina Tree Care and ABC Tree Professionals will be working in the following areas of Union and Mecklenburg Counties:



Lebanon Rd.

Sam Newell Rd.

Idlewild Rd.

Weddington Rd.

New Town Rd.

Clarence Secrest Rd.

Rocky River Rd.

Interstate 485

Stevens Mill Rd.

Independence Blvd.

Marvin-Weddington Rd.

Rea Rd.

For more information about Union Power's right-of-way program or tree trimming practices, please call (704) 289-3145 and speak with Wil Ortiz (ext. 3323) or Carrie Lorenz (ext. 3291).

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**Business Hours**

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday  
(704) 289-3145 or (800) 922-6840  
[www.union-power.com](http://www.union-power.com)

**24-Hour Outage Reporting Service and Account Information**

(800) 794-4423

Providing electricity and energy services to over 60,000 members in Union, Stanly, Cabarrus, Mecklenburg, and Rowan counties.

**SERVICE CHARGES:**

**Security Deposit** - charges vary  
\$0, \$175, \$375

**Late Payment Charge**

1% of the amount of bill

**Returned Check Fee**

\$25

**Meter Test**

\$75 (refunded if not accurate)

**Dual Meter Comparison**

\$50 (refunded if not accurate)

**Field Collection Charge**

\$25 (only checks or money orders accepted, no cash)

**RECONNECT CHARGES: (collected in advance)**

**Normal Hours**

\$50 (if called in *before* 4:00 p.m.)

**After Hours**

\$100 (if called in *after* 4:00 p.m.)

**Weekends and Holidays**

\$100



## How to Report An Outage

Remember, when reporting an outage to Union Power, if the phone number you are calling from is not recognized by the outage system, you will be instructed to enter additional information to help us identify the location of the problem. You can report your outage by providing us with any one of the following items that are listed on your billing statement:

☛ **Phone Number**   ☛ **Account Number**   ☛ **Meter Number**

All of this information can be found at the top of your billing statement and is required in order for you to be able to report an outage.

It is important that your phone number be listed correctly on your account. To add or update your phone number, call our office at (704) 289-3145 or (704) 485-3335 and select option 2.



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