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How extreme winter weather impacts reliability

When outdoor temperatures drop, our electricity use increases. That's because we're doing more activities inside, and our heating systems are running longer and more often to counteract colder outdoor temperatures. Factor in that we all tend to use electricity at the same times – in the morning and early evenings – and that equals strain on our electric grid.

At EnerStar Electric Cooperative, we work closely with our generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative, Wabash Valley Power, in resource and infrastructure planning to ensure you have the power you need whenever you flip a switch, but the electric grid is much larger than just us.

In winter months, when even more electricity is being used simultaneously across the country, it is possible for electricity demand to exceed supply, especially if an unexpected event like a sudden snow or ice storm or equipment malfunction occurs. If this happens, which is rare, the grid operator for our region of the country may call for rolling power outages to relieve pressure on the grid, and EnerStar will keep you informed about the situation.

EnerStar and Wabash take proactive steps to create a resilient portion of the grid and ensure electric reliability in extreme weather, including regular system maintenance, grid modernization efforts and disaster response planning, but it takes everyone to keep the grid reliable.

To help keep the heat on for you, your family and your neighbors, here are a few things you can do to relieve pressure on the grid (and save a little money along the way):

- Select the lowest comfortable thermostat setting and turn it down several degrees whenever possible. Your heating system must run longer to make up the difference between the thermostat temp and the outdoor temp.
 - ✓ **PRO TIP:** Seal air leaks around windows and exterior doors with caulk and weatherstripping. Air leaks and drafts force your heating system to work harder than necessary.
- Stagger your use of major appliances such as dishwashers, ovens and dryers.
 - ✓ **PRO TIP:** Start the dishwasher before you go to bed and use smaller countertop appliances like slow cookers and air fryers to save energy.
- Ensure that your heating system is optimized for efficiency with regular maintenance and proper insulation.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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- ✓ **PRO TIP:** Ensure your furnace filter isn't clogged or dirty. Replace it as needed.
- When possible, use cold water to reduce water heating costs.
- ✓ **PRO TIP:** Setting your water heater thermostat to 120 degrees can help you save energy and reduce mineral buildup and corrosion in your water heater and pipes.
- Unplug devices when not in use to eliminate unnecessary energy use. Even when turned off, electronics in standby mode consume energy.
- ✓ **PRO TIP:** Plug devices into a power strip so you can turn them all off at once with the push of a button.

As we face the challenges posed by winter weather, understanding its impact on energy demand is crucial for maintaining a reliable power supply. By adopting energy conservation practices during periods of extreme cold, not only can you save money on your electric bills, but you can also contribute to the resilience of the power grid, keeping our local community warm and connected.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH


Area rugs are an easy, cost-effective solution to cold floors. Adding area rugs to hard-surface flooring can add warmth to any room and keep your feet cozy on cold winter days.

Choose rugs made from wool or other natural fibers and plush or high-pile textures for the most insulation. Place rugs in areas where you need additional warmth, like the foot of a bed or under a coffee table. Area rugs can enhance the aesthetic of your home and keep you cozier.

BEST BETS FOR Winter Savings

Energy consumption spikes during winter months as we spend more time indoors and heating systems work overtime. You can help reduce demand and strain on the electric grid by conserving during peak energy times. Reducing energy use will also help lower your energy bills.

- UNPLUG WHEN POSSIBLE**
Turn off unnecessary lights and electronics when you aren't using them.
- ELIMINATE DRAFTS AND AIR LEAKS**
Seal air leaks and drafts around windows and exterior doors.
- USE APPLIANCES WHEN ENERGY DEMAND IS LOWER**
Run large appliances like clothes washers, dryers and dishwashers early in the morning or before you go to bed.
- MAINTAIN HEATING EQUIPMENT**
Maintain your heating system by replacing dirty, clogged filters and scheduling an annual inspection for necessary maintenance.
- LOWER THE THERMOSTAT**
Home heating accounts for a large portion of energy consumption. Adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting (68 degrees or lower).



BUSTING MYTHS ABOUT ENERGY EFFICIENCY

There is a lot of great advice on how to be more energy efficient – using ENERGY STAR®-rated devices, for example. But then there's the not-so-great advice: misinformation, mistakes and myths that could lead you astray in your efforts to save on your electric bill.

But fear not! Here are a few common myths we encounter – and the truth to bust them.

MYTH: SWITCHING APPLIANCES, COMPUTERS AND ELECTRONICS OFF WHEN YOU'RE NOT USING THEM WILL WEAR THEM OUT FASTER.

TRUTH: Nope! Modern electronics and appliances are built to perform just as well with frequent shutoffs. In fact, most computers are actually built with this in mind, and use the on-off cycle as an opportunity to install updates and perform other necessary self-maintenance. So go ahead – shut off and save power.

MYTH: YOUR HVAC SYSTEM USES LESS ENERGY IF YOU CLOSE VENTS IN YOUR UNUSED ROOMS.

TRUTH: This one seems counterintuitive, but unless those unused rooms are somehow sealed up airtight, the air is still going to circulate. In fact, closing vents can even make your HVAC system work harder than normal by causing a backup in internal pressure. You'd be better served by adjusting your thermostat or switching to a more efficient system. Sealing your ductwork, air-sealing your ceiling and band joists, and adding insulation also will ensure that your home minimizes energy use and helps keep you comfortable.

MYTH: ADDING INSULATION IN THE ATTIC WILL CAUSE MORE HEAT TO LEAK OUT THE WINDOWS.

TRUTH: Any added insulation will help your home maintain a stable temperature. Adding insulation to your attic (and more importantly, sealing your ceiling) is a great way to help make your home more energy efficient.

MYTH: NEW HOMES ARE REQUIRED TO BE MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT.

TRUTH: Not necessarily! A home's age doesn't always tell you whether or not it's energy efficient. A home's energy efficiency depends much more on the way the house was constructed.

If you'd like to learn more truths about energy efficiency, visit WWW.POWERMOVES.COM.

Know the signs of a scam

It's no secret that consumers with a water, gas or electricity connection have long been targets for utility scams, but fraudsters have changed their tactics since the pandemic. As consumers became more reliant on technology for work, school and commerce, scammers noted these shifts and adapted their tactics to this changed environment.

Imposter scams are the No. 1 type of fraud reported to the Federal Trade Commission. While scam artists may come to your door posing as a utility worker who works for the "power company," in today's more connected world, attempts are more likely to come through an electronic device, via email, phone or text.

A scammer may claim you are overdue on your electric bill and threaten to disconnect your service if you don't pay immediately. Whether this is done in person or by phone, text or email, the scammers want to scare you into immediate payment so you don't have time to think clearly.

If this happens over the phone, simply hang up. If you're concerned about your bill, call the co-op at 800-635-4145. Our phone number

can also be found on your monthly bill and on our website, www.enerstar.com. You can also use our Smart Hub to check your account status. Remember, EnerStar will never attempt to demand immediate payment after just one notice.

Some scammers may falsely claim you have been overcharged on your bill and say they want to give you a refund. It sounds easy. All you have to do is click or press a button to initiate the process. If you proceed, you will be prompted to provide banking or other personal information. Instead of money going into your bank account, the scammers can drain your account and use personal information such as a social security number for identity theft.

If this "refund" scam happens over the phone, just hang up and block the phone number to prevent future robocalls. If this scam attempt occurs via email (known as a "phishing" attempt) or by text ("smishing"), do not click any links. Instead, delete it, and if possible, block the sender. If you overpay your energy bill, EnerStar will automatically apply the credit to your next billing cycle. When in doubt, contact us.



AVOID UTILITY SCAMS

Scammers will threaten you with everything from shutting off power to your home to legal action. Don't fall victim to these types of scams.

- Our employees will never show up at your door to demand payment.
- Never give personal information to an unknown caller or visitor. Our representatives have access to the details they need to service your account.
- Demands for immediate payment by wire transfer, cryptocurrency, gift cards or cash reload cards should immediately raise red flags.
- If you think you've been contacted by a scammer falsely representing the co-op, please let us know as soon as possible.

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