

GCEA News



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MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 180
Gunnison, CO 81230-0180

STREET ADDRESS

37250 West Highway 50
Gunnison, CO 81230

970-641-3520 Gunnison
970-349-5385 Crested Butte

gcea@gcea.coop Email
www.gcea.coop Web

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NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Vicki Spencer



Touchstone Energy®

Understanding How We Use Energy in the 21st Century

Moving from awareness to education and action

BY VICKI SPENCER, ENERGY USE AND COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

The media these days are filled with stories about strengthening America's energy security, reducing our dependence on foreign oil, developing renewable and energy-efficient technologies, and, reducing our carbon footprint. These are all important issues.



Vicki Spencer

But the breadth and complexity of the proposed solutions are almost beyond the capacity of any one person to fathom. Many of us are left wondering how we, as individuals, can contribute to the betterment of humankind in this ever-expanding, energy-hungry global economy.

Perhaps the greatest contribution we can make on the individual level is to learn how to use energy more efficiently in our daily lives. Gunnison County Electric Association has been promoting energy efficiency for several years now. But what does this really mean?

Awareness

First of all, it means increasing awareness of how electricity has improved our lives in so many ways, how we use electricity on a day-to-day basis and how generating, transmitting and distributing electricity creates side effects, some of which may have long-lasting social, economic and environmental impacts.

For so many years, we have taken electricity for granted. My own awareness of how electricity has improved our lifestyle came when I was extremely young and visited my grandparents' farm. The memories are vague now, but I do remember my grandmother's kitchen where we

always seemed to congregate. There was no electric stove, no electric toaster, no dishwasher, no blender, no microwave, not even a refrigerator. Grandma had an icebox. Perhaps the only reason I remember the icebox is that even after Grandma got a refrigerator years later, "she continued to call it the 'ice-box'". My sisters and I used to

chuckle about that, but I am sure we had no concept of how much work it was for Grandpa to drive a horse-drawn wagon to town each week to get blocks of ice to keep the food cold.

As a child, I also watched my grandmother do her ironing by heating the pressing iron on the wood-burning stove. I thought it looked like fun but was advised not to touch or I would burn myself. Today, I can't imagine heating and lifting a 6-pound pressing iron over and over just to iron one shirt. And back then, they ironed everything. Wash-and-wear fabric had not been invented yet.

Looking back, there is no question that electricity has made everyday life easier. But our use of electricity has gone far beyond basic conveniences like refrigeration and cooking. Today, we need electricity to power a vast array of electronic devices — computers, DVDs, iPods, cell phones — that we could not imagine living without.

If the hundreds of ways Americans have increased their use of electricity is not mind-boggling enough, just think about how China's prosperity in the past 30 years has contributed to the global consumption of electricity. In the early 1980s, ordinary Chi- [continued on page 9]



GCEA's Member Service Representative Alantha Garrison and her husband, Brian, are proud new parents of Miles Patrick Garrison. Miles was born August 10, 2010, in Gunnison and weighed 5 pounds, 13 ounces. Congratulations to the Garrison family.

GCEA CONSTRUCTION ON SCHEDULE

Early this summer, GCEA staff began an incredibly complicated move with everyone shuffling from one office space to another in just a matter of days. This “musical chairs” was necessary in order to vacate the majority of the building for the construction project. The billing department moved to the boardroom in the back of the building, the linemen moved out to the warehouse and the operations and accounting departments set up shop in the garage. In many cases, several employees squeezed into single office spaces so as to avoid the cost of renting temporary working quarters during construction.



Employees work in the current, cramped office space

Other companies probably would have had a difficult time pulling this off, but our employees showed their cooperative spirit and have continued to provide the same quality service to our members without

missing a beat.

Even the board of directors showed flexibility after losing its boardroom by scheduling meetings in various parts of the service area. The July meeting was held in Crested Butte South while the August meeting was held in Lake City. If you like the concept of rotating board meetings, please let your representatives know.

EMPLOYEE ANNIVERSARY

Holly Palmer, billing assistant – 12 years

SIGN UP FOR A FREE ENERGY AUDIT

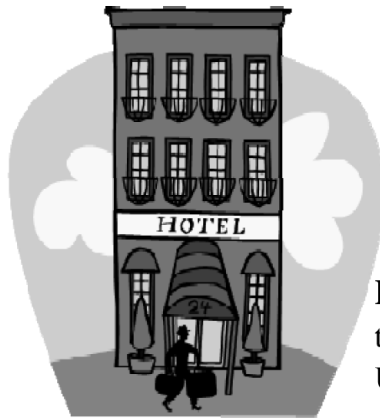
Receive a complimentary energy efficiency kit

For a limited time, GCEA's residential members will receive complimentary energy efficiency kits with their energy audits. The standard kit (available to all members) includes a low-flow showerhead, compact fluorescent lightbulb, LED night-light, refrigerator thermometer and electric outlet and switch sealers.

Income-qualified members are eligible to receive a more expansive kit valued at over \$110. GCEA is able to offer this larger kit thanks to the Office for Resource Efficiency and a grant ORE received from the Anschutz Family Foundation. The kit includes the same items as the standard kit but also includes a water heater blanket, pipe insulation, window insulation film, caulk, surge protector and programmable thermostat.

All this is available for just an hour of your time to conduct the audit. The best part of the program is that you will learn how to lower your utility bills.

Contact member services at 970-641-3520 to schedule your audit today.



COMMERCIAL ENERGY AUDITS for small businesses and agricultural producers

Low cost audits made available through a grant to GCEA from the USDA

Lessen your energy use, reduce costs, and improve your bottom line

Learn about grants and low-interest loans to make energy efficiency improvements


970-641-7359

800-726-3523

www.gcea.coop



Gunnison County Electric Association

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Understanding How We Use Energy in the 21st Century

[continued from page 7] nese citizens did not have telephones, refrigerators, electric stoves or computers in their homes. Most families huddled under a single electric lightbulb to eat dinner in the evening, and if they did not have electricity at home, students gathered under street lamps outside to do their homework. Only the elite had a television and, even then, they were restricted to watching just a couple hours a day because of the lack of programming.

In 2009, China's annual electricity consumption was estimated at 3.6 billion megawatt-hours compared to 3.8 billion megawatt-hours of annual consumption in the United States. You may wonder what China's use of electricity has to do with us. The most significant impact is that China's economy is continuing to develop, China's population of 1.3 billion will continue to demand an improved lifestyle and this will continue to place pressure on available sources of energy. Today, the average person in China consumes just 2.8 megawatt-hours per year compared to 13 megawatt-hours per year for the average American. If the average Chinese citizen consumed as much as the average American, the country's electricity consumption would escalate to 16.9 billion megawatt-hours per year — more than six times as much as it is now.

This increased appetite for electricity is being played out throughout the world. India uses just 15 percent of the total electricity that we do in the United States; and with the world's second largest popula-

tion of approximately 1.1 billion, the per capita usage in India in 2007 was less than 4 percent of ours. The per capita electricity consumption in emerging economies, such as Russia (785 kilowatt-hours) and Brazil (226 kilowatt-hours), is still far below that of the United States. Not surprisingly, per capita electricity consumption in Africa is among the lowest in the world (less than 15 kilowatt-hours in Kenya and less than 4 kilowatt-hours in Tanzania), but these countries are also pursuing economic development policies.

This data indicates that competition for the resources to generate and deliver electricity to consumers will only become more intense as the rest of the world aspires to the lifestyles enjoyed by more developed countries. What it means for Americans, as the world's largest consumers per capita, is that we need to find ways to use energy more efficiently.

Education

The second step, after improving our awareness of energy usage, is education. This is where your local electric cooperative employees play a role. We want to help our members understand the many things that can be done to avoid waste and use electricity more efficiently while continuing to enjoy modern conveniences.

Gunnison County Electric Association offers free residential energy assessments and low-cost commercial audits to help members understand how heaters, appli-

ances and other electric systems contribute to daily electric usage. Once you learn to identify how much electricity each system in your home or business uses, you can identify ways to increase efficiency or ways to conserve. This leads to the final step in achieving energy efficiency, which is taking action.

Action

This is where you can make a contribution as an individual. Don't wait until the cold weather hits and you receive higher electric bills to think about your energy consumption. To become part of the energy solution, you can call member services at 970-641-3520 to schedule an energy audit. Our auditors will help you identify a plan for reducing your energy consumption. Each residential member who receives a GCEA energy audit will also receive a complimentary energy efficiency kit to get started on your plan.

You can also find helpful energy saving tips on our website, www.gcea.coop.

Sources: U.S. Energy Information Agency, Independent Statistics; CIA, World Factbook

Wind Power Is Coming to GCEA

The Governor's Energy Office recently awarded GCEA a \$24,024 grant to erect a wind turbine at its Doyleville radio communications site. The wind turbine will provide backup to GCEA's radio communications system and will increase safety in the event of an outage. Any excess energy generated will be fed into the grid.

Funding for this project is provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and will benefit the local community by providing work for local contractors.



Energy Efficiency Tip

If you have central heat, get ready for winter by installing a programmable thermostat. According to Consumer Reports, lowering your home's temperature by 5-10 degrees at night while you are sleeping and when no one is home can slash your heating costs by up to 20 percent a year. With a programmable thermostat, you can save energy without thinking about it.

What does it mean to be a cooperative MEMBER?

It's a matter of **PRINCIPLES.***

**(Seven, to be exact)*

**LOCAL.
TRUSTED.
SERVING
YOU.™**

Open Membership | One Voice, One Vote | Member Benefits | Independence
Education | Cooperation | Community

Learn more at go.coop

COOPERATIVES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Nearly 30,000 cooperatives in the United States account for more than \$3 trillion in assets, over \$500 billion in total revenue and nearly one million jobs. Those are just some of the numbers totaled in a comprehensive study of cooperatives by the National Cooperative Business Association.

Other key numbers included:

- 29,284 co-ops in the U.S.
- \$652 billion in total revenue
- \$133 billion total income
- \$75 billion in wages
- Co-ops represent about 1 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product

For a full copy of the report, visit www.ncba.coop/ncba/about-co-ops/research-economic-impact.

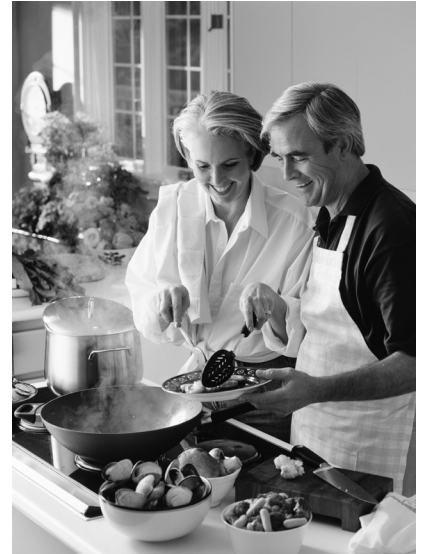
Support Green Power

If you want to support renewable energy but installing your own solar system is not practical, you might want to sign up for Green Power. Members can purchase one block of green power (100 kilowatt-hours) for just 25 cents. Call GCEA at 970-641-3520 to find out how many blocks it would take to offset your electricity usage. You will be surprised to find that you can “go green” for a dollar or two each month.

Use Safety Checklist to Make Home a Safer Place

Last year, more than 1 million people 65 years and older were treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries associated with accidents at home. Since most of these episodes resulted from a lack of maintenance, walk through your home today and use the following checklist to spot possible safety hazards. If you notice a potential problem, arrange for it to be fixed immediately to prevent accident or injury.

- **Kitchen:** Make sure all of your appliances carry an Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. (UL) seal, which means the item was tested and found safe to use. Check electrical cords for fraying or cracking; step stools for splitting or cracking; and throw rugs for tripping hazards like bumps and turned-up corners.
- **Living room:** Check rugs and runners, electrical cords, lamps and other lighting. Inspect the fireplace and chimney for fire hazards, and make sure all passageways are clear.
- **Bathroom:** Make sure small appliances are marked with a UL seal. Check the bathtub, shower, rugs and mats for slipping hazards, and inspect cabinets for safe storage of medications.
- **Bedrooms:** Examine rugs, runners and electrical and telephone cords, and make sure the area around the bed is clear of items that could cause you to trip.
- **Basement/garage/workshop:** Make sure all power tools bear the UL mark. Check fuse



and breaker boxes for possible malfunction and shock and fire hazards. Inspect extension cords and cords on tools and lawn and garden supplies. Check for proper ventilation and make sure flammable liquids are stored properly.

- **Stairs:** Make sure there's proper lighting on and around stairways. Examine handrails and steps for possible defects or weaknesses, and test stair coverings for possible tripping hazards.

Taking a few minutes now to use this checklist could save you from injury and mishap this fall. Spend the time now and be safe.