

BELFALLS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

P.O. Box 598 • Rosebud, TX 76570 • Phone (254) 583-7955

ENERGY CONSERVATION IS BACK IN STYLE

There's nothing like rising fuel prices to make us think harder about when and how we use energy.

Last year's hurricane season took its toll on some of the nation's systems for reaching, refining and transporting our oil and gas supplies. In the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, TV news shows carried images of vehicles lined up at gas stations and plastic bags on pump handles.

Demand for petroleum products continues to rise against a supply that sometimes cannot meet it. So we have seen prices rise at the gas pump, and that affects any goods and services whose delivery relies on transportation by cars and trucks, trains and planes, even fishing boats. We have also been seeing prices rise for the fuels that run appliances and systems in our homes, farms and businesses.

These dynamics should cause us to adjust and manage our personal use of energy.

In our business, energy conservation is never out of style. Not a month

goes by when Texas Co-op Power doesn't print something on how to conserve energy: tips for watching and controlling the operation of heat pumps, water heaters and other appliances; the importance of stopping energy leaks in homes; how to judge the efficiency of appliances; or how to build or renovate buildings to achieve minimal energy consumption.

As the price of energy fluctuates (increasing, in most cases), and as the technology of appliances and vehicles changes accordingly, Belfalls Electric Co-op will continue to emphasize smart energy use.

Why? It just makes sense. It makes sense to consumer-members because you own the utility that supplies your electric power. It's in your interest to make sure your own plans—as well as those of the cooperative—include conservative ways of using electricity and all other forms of energy you pay for.

Some of us remember when the nation's highway speed limit was lowered to 55 mph. Others may also

remember the "oil embargo" of the 1970s and the 45-mpg VW Rabbit diesel automobile, the rising popularity of wood-burning stoves and furnaces, and President Carter's plea to turn the thermostat down a few degrees in winter and up a few degrees in summer. The "old-timers" may even recall LBJ's publicized penchant for turning off the lights whenever he'd leave a room in the White House.

We're not likely to see a return to those specific events and trends, but we are likely to see a stronger emphasis on conserving energy, not only in our own consumption practices, but also in how industry designs and manufactures vehicles, buildings, community infrastructure and appliances. Such a trend can only benefit everyone.

IN EMERGENCIES

To report power failures after business hours, call:

(254) 583-7955

If no answer, call:

Kenneth Fikes (254) 583-4556

Larry Koslosky (254) 583-4555

Doug Matous (254) 583-2957

Bobby Skala (254) 583-7219

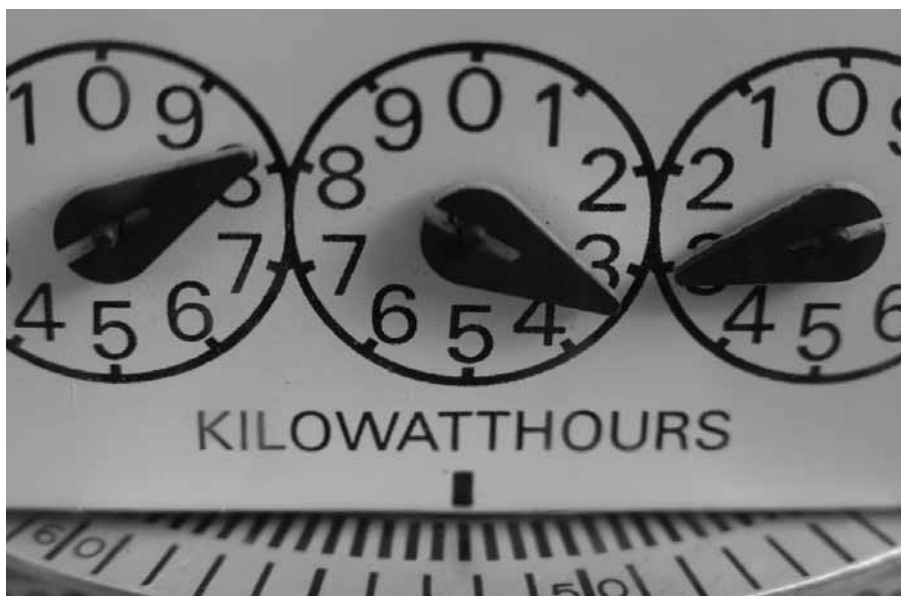
Jeremy Tepe (254) 583-2557

Jake Willis (254) 583-0191

Ernest Martin (254) 583-2219

Joe W. Marek (254) 583-4016

James Campbell (254) 583-2786



MAKE YOUR HOME MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT, GET A TAX BREAK

If you're planning to upgrade your thermostat, buy Energy Star-approved windows, or install a highly efficient central air conditioner, save your receipts. You could qualify for a tax credit in 2006 or 2007.

Starting January 1, consumers can receive tax credits of up to \$500 on home improvements that stop energy waste.

That includes up to \$200 for exterior windows and up to \$300 for energy-efficient central air conditioners, heat pumps or water heaters.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005, which Congress adopted over the summer, also allows energy-wise homeowners to take one-time credits of up to:

- 30 percent of the cost (up to \$2,000) of installing solar-powered hot-water systems that do not heat a swimming pool or hot tub.
- \$150 for installing of a highly efficient furnace or boiler.
- 10 percent of the cost of an

advanced main air-circulating fan.

- The energy bill also allows a limited number of buyers of hybrid cars to take tax credits ranging from \$1,700 to \$3,000.

But the offer is good only between January 1, 2006, and December 31, 2007. It may not be applied to energy-efficient improvements made in 2005.

The Internal Revenue Service will soon issue guidelines for claiming the credits. It's likely taxpayers will fill out an extra form when filing income taxes that shows how much they spent on specific energy improvements.

Tax advisers are cautioning homeowners that the credits come with lots of limitations and requirements, so it's



best to consult a professional when filing 2006 and 2007 taxes.

The Alliance To Save Energy estimates the new tax credits will save consumers more than \$1 billion and, because they encourage people to buy energy-efficient devices, pare America's energy use by up to 2 percent.

FOR HEART-HEALTHY COOKING, TRY AN ELECTRIC GRILL

Before you give your heart to someone this Valentine's Day, make sure it's healthy.

February is the American Heart Association's National Heart Month, and to make sure you're keeping your heart in tip-top shape, the association recommends lowering your fat intake by choosing alternatives to frying foods like baking, steaming and especially grilling.

But when freezing weather and lack of time prevent you from firing up the barbecue, consider an indoor electric grill for fast, easy and healthy cooking.

Indoor grills emulate the flavor and style of outdoor grilling, and help

reduce fat because the nonstick surfaces don't require greasing and the ridges drain fat away from meat.

Indoor grills are available in several styles. The popular two-sided contact grill offers faster grilling and locks moisture in while allowing fat to drip off through the grill ridges. Flat, one-sided grills—which can be electric or stovetop—allow for crispy food that is as close to real grilling as you can get, and still whisk away fatty juices to the outside of the cooking surface.

Try these tips to make indoor grilling simple and healthy:

- Choose a grill that is the right size for your family's cooking needs. They range from small personal grills

to large ones that can cook up to six burgers at a time.

- Look for a model with wattage between 1,200 and 1,700 for the best grilling power.

- Cook anything and everything! Grills aren't just for meat; try grilling vegetable kabobs and throw in some pineapple for juicy flavor.

- Trim excess fat off chicken before grilling and remove the skin.

Look for the American Heart Association logo—a red heart with a white check mark—when shopping for foods to grill. It tells you those foods are heart-healthy. Visit www.checkmark.heart.org for more information.