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For Today in Mississippi information,
call 800-624-3348, 877-7MY-CEPA
www.coastepa.com

**Where our members
have the power**

CEO's message

Colder weather means higher electric bills

This winter, south Mississippi saw temperatures drop far below average for several days. In fact, Coast Electric set an



Robert Occhi

all time peak during the cold weather. I am proud to say that our engineers and operations staff had a plan ready and worked diligently to ensure members did not experience outages due to system load. With so many heating systems working overtime, electric use was high for our members and that means bills will be high. I encourage you to read this month's Q&A with our energy efficiency expert about the impact cold

weather has on our bills.

High bills also mean that those who need assistance will have a greater hardship this month. If you are able, please consider donating to Coast Electric's Share Your Blessings fund. Even a small amount can make a huge difference to a family struggling to pay their bills.

If you are struggling to pay your Coast Electric bill, I would like for you to consider signing up for our Time of Use rate. This is an alternative rate that allows you to save if you use electricity in off-peak times. Yes, you will probably have to make some lifestyle changes and you will certainly have to be more aware of your energy use, but if you make some adjustments, it can really pay off. Visit www.coastepa.com/timerates.aspx to learn more about the program. The great part is, if you sign up and determine our standard rate would be less expensive for you,

Coast Electric's employee spotlight

We want you to get to know Coast Electric's employees. The men and women we feature each month are your neighbors, your friends and the people behind our promise to bring you the most reliable, affordable electric service possible. These employees take pride in serving you, our members, and we honor them for the job they do.



Ray Schmitt

This month, our spotlight is on Serviceman 1 Ray Schmitt. Ray has served members in Hancock County for more than 10 years. Ray is one of the hardworking men who brings Coast Electric members reliable service. As a serviceman, he uses his expertise to maintain the electrical distribution system and restore power after outages. Ray is one of the employees works tirelessly to bring power back to Coast Electric members after storms. Coast Electric commends Ray for his hard work and the dedication he shows to Coast Electric and its members!

"I am proud to say that our engineers and operations staff had a plan ready and worked diligently to ensure members did not experience outages due to system load."

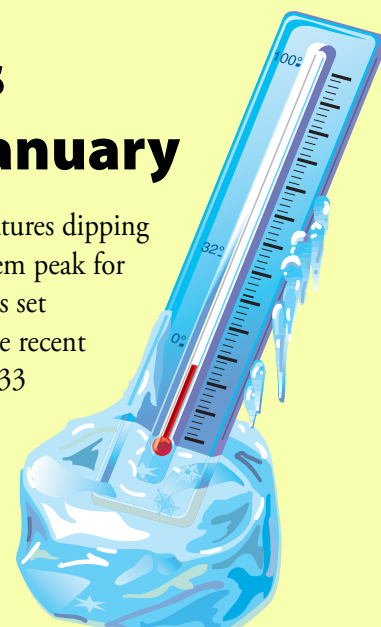
we have a six-month guarantee that would allow you to switch back to the standard rate and receive a credit for the difference. It is a great option for those who want to manage their energy use and save.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate the high school students who were chosen by

their schools to participate in interviews for our Youth Leadership program. I have been told that we had an amazing pool of talented students as applicants this year and that the judges were incredibly impressed with their intelligence and poise. Out of this outstanding pool, Brent Murphy of Waveland and Heather Alexander of Long Beach were selected. Congratulations to Brent and Heather on a job well done! We look forward to working with these students this year as they participate in the Youth Leadership program in Jackson and Washington, D.C.

Coast Electric sets all-time peak in January

Last month, after several days of temperatures dipping below freezing, Coast Electric set a new system peak for use at 500 megawatts. The previous peak was set Tuesday, Jan. 6, at 475 megawatts. Before the recent cold weather, the all-time system peak was 433 megawatts and was set in January of 2009. Prolonged freezing temperatures increased Coast Electric's members' use which in turn placed additional load at the cooperative's substations.



Q & A with your Coast Electric energy efficiency expert

Q: Will my bill be high after last month's cold weather?

A: South Mississippi winters are usually mild but temperatures last December and January were lower than average. There were several consecutive nights – and days – when temperatures barely climbed above freezing. Coast Electric set an all-time peak for use at more than 500 megawatts. That is more than 15 percent higher than the previous peak. Many Coast Electric members are concerned about what this means for their electric bills and rightfully so.

Q: So what can members expect?

A: Coast Electric members will see higher bills. Some may even see their use double. Typically, heating and cooling the average home accounts for about half of the cost on consumers' electric bills. Heaters in most homes have been working over time for several weeks and that means increased use, therefore, increased costs.

Q: How does cold weather affect energy use?

A: For the first 12 days of January, temperatures only rose above the 50 degree mark for two days. The remaining days were well below the 50 degree mark, with the lowest temperature recorded this year on

Monday, Jan. 11, at 15 degrees. Again, this means heating systems have been working hard, increasing the amount of energy consumers use.

The increase in energy use is linked to the amount of insulation in a home, the efficiency of that home's central heating and cooling system, the temperature setting of the thermostat and several other factors. Members who have mobile homes, homes built prior to 1965, and homes that use electric resistance strip heat and space heaters as the primary heat source, will see even greater increases in use.

I have an efficient heat pump. Q: Will my bill be high too?

A: Many homes in south Mississippi are heated by electric heat pumps. An electric heat pump is the best way to heat and cool in sub-tropical climates, but when temperatures drop dramatically for extended periods, the cost to operate a heat pump increases significantly.

For example, the normal temperature range in Bay St. Louis for January is a low of 41 degrees and high of 60 degrees with a mean of 58 degrees. Some averages say that a heat pump set on 68 degrees with an outside temperature of 55 degrees costs approximately 20-25 cents per hour to run, depending on the heat pump's efficiency rating. However, when outside temperatures

plummet to 33 degrees, the cost per hour to operate a heat pump increases to 80-85 cents on average. These numbers are not exact, but show the relational increase in cost to operate a heat pump when temperatures drop so far below the average.

Q: How can I track my use?

A: The best way to understand how weather can increase use is to take daily readings from the meter. Keeping daily logs will allow homeowners to better understand how the weather affects energy use and help consumers prepare and budget for the increase. Coast Electric members can visit www.coastepa.com and click the "calculate my bill" link to see how use will affect their bills.

Q: What can I do to manage my use?

A: Although it is impossible to control the weather, there are several ways that electric consumers can manage their use. From sealing windows to changing light bulbs, www.coastepa.com has lots of tips for members. Interactive features and calculators demonstrate savings consumers can have if they make a commitment to energy efficiency. Coast Electric residential energy representatives also work with members to see what improvements can be made in their homes and daily routines to help modify and manage use.



This month's question is answered by our Director of Residential Energy Management Mark Wallace

One innovative program Coast Electric began offering this fall gives members the ability to choose their rate. Members have the option of choosing traditional rates or the new Time of Use (TOU) rates. The TOU option offers incentive rates for members who use electricity in off-peak times, therefore leveling out demand and preventing system overload. TOU rates provide consumers with a choice to lower electricity costs without reducing the total amount of electricity used. Those who are interested in learning more about TOU rates can visit www.coastepa.com/timerates.aspx.

More information

For more tips about energy efficiency and what you can do to manage your energy use, visit www.coastepa.com.

Increased bills will create hardship for many

The current state of our economy has affected Coast residents in many ways. The number of those who need assistance with their power bills has increased while donations have decreased. When bills reflecting the higher use start arriving in mail boxes, it will create a greater hardship on consumers.

Coast Electric President and CEO Bob Occhi is encouraging Coast Electric members who can do so to donate to the cooperative's Share Your Blessings Fund. Share your Blessings allows Coast Electric members to include a donation

with their electric bills that will go to the American Red Cross. The Red Cross distributes the funds to those who qualify for assistance with their electric bills. "Share your Blessings is a great way for our members who are able to give to their friends and neighbors who are facing tough times and need some help," Occhi said. "We know it's a lot to ask since everyone's bills will be high but we hope that you will consider making a donation on your next bill. Even a dollar can make a difference."



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Turn off kitchen, bath and other exhaust fans within 20 minutes after you are done cooking or bathing. When replacing exhaust fans, consider installing high-efficiency, low-noise models.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

KICK OFF THE NEW YEAR WITH NEW CFL BULBS.

Since lighting makes up about 20 percent of a monthly power bill, we switched our incandescent bulbs to CFL bulbs. Now we are using 75 percent less energy to light our home.

Find out how the little changes add up at www.coastepa.com.

Coast Electric members save more than \$800,000 with their Co-op Connections Card

Learn about more opportunities to save your money ... another benefit of being a member of your local electric cooperative.

Coast Electric is proud to offer another money-saving benefit of our Co-op Connections Card program! We have added free coupons from coupons.com for brand-name grocery store items from cereals, drinks, magazines, beauty and health care items to snacks, batteries and Cool Whip — just to name a few. So before you head out to the grocery store, check our Web site to see what money-saving coupons are available for your use.

Visit www.coastepa.com and click on the Co-op Connections card and then click on "Show Me the Deals." The Coupons button is just under the Pharmacy Discount button on the left-hand side of the screen. Browse around the coupons and check the clip button on all the coupons you want to print. You can print only the ones you need or you can print all and share coupons with family and friends.

It is so quick and easy and the discounts are incredible. One Coast Electric employees saved \$14 and her grocery bill went from \$45 to \$32. What amazing savings – all available to you for being a member of your local electric cooperative, Coast Electric Power Association.

As an added bonus, coupons.com also provides an expansive recipe section to give you great ideas for delicious meals. There are more than 150 recipes for your summer barbecues ... and that is just barbecue!

At Coast Electric Power Association, we're always thinking of ways to help our members save electricity. And then we thought, why stop there? To help our members save money on goods and services of all kinds, we started the Co-op Connections program. To help area businesses prosper and grow, we promote them free when they honor the Co-op Connections Card.

Members can use their cards anywhere they see a Co-op Connections sticker. They save. The business gains a new customer. Everyone wins. We believe in looking out for you. To learn more, visit www.coastepa.com



When you visit our Web site, www.coastepa.com, be sure to check out the seasonal deals offered by our national vendors. Here are some great promotions for Valentine's Day (offers valid between 1/18 – 2/13):

- ProFlowers – One dozen red roses with ruby case – only \$33.99
- One dozen assorted roses with vase & chocolates – only \$29.74
- 20 Sweetheart tulips with ginger vase – only \$29.74

RedEnvelope – Murano glass bead bracelets – only \$42.46

Shari's Berries – One dozen hand-dipped Valentine's Day berries – only \$25.47

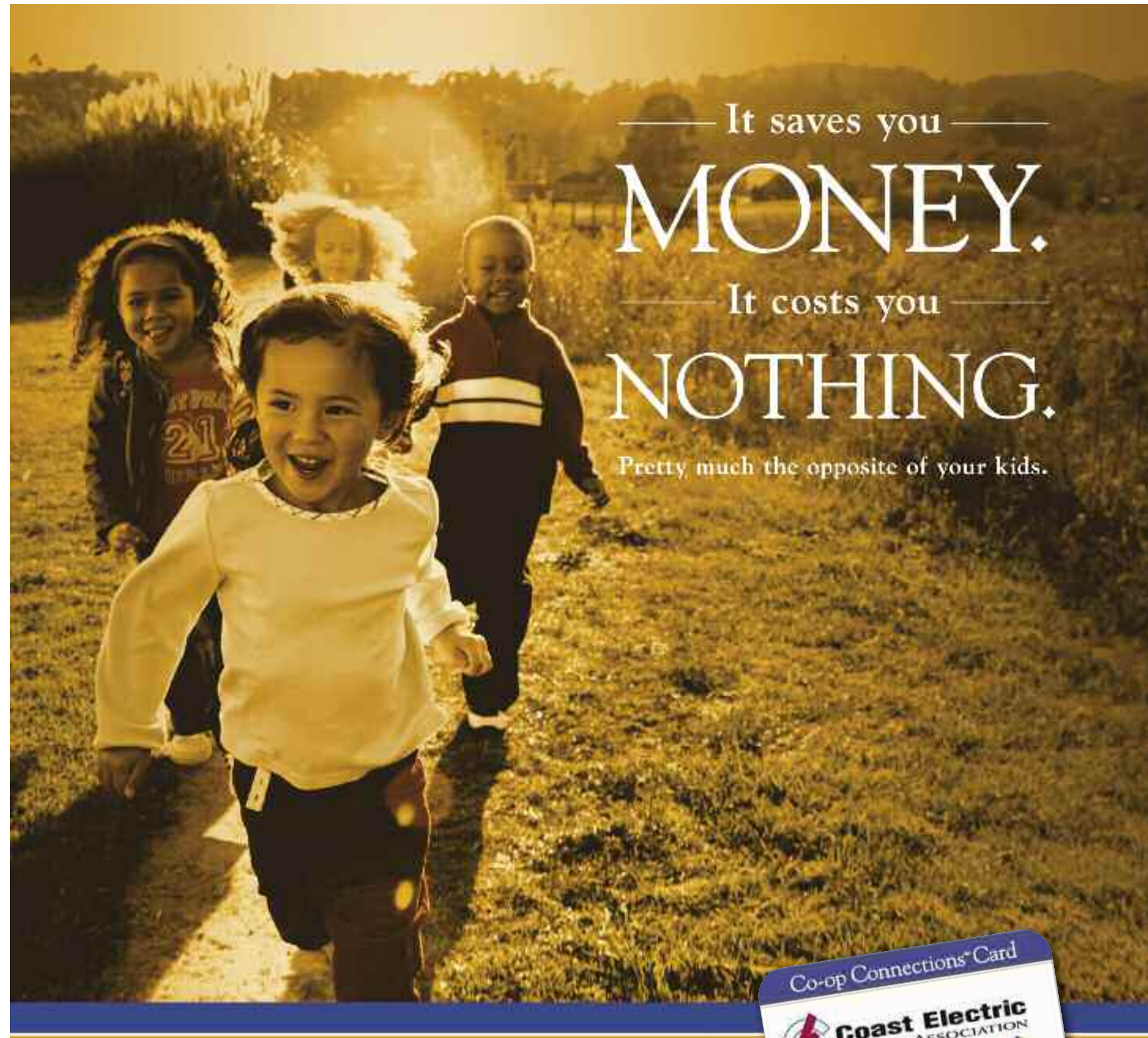
Be sure to visit our Web site for updated seasonal deals. Expect winter-themed specials from some of our major vendors!!

Testimonials...

"My wife and I have both insurance and Medicare but recently, my wife was put on a new medication that was not covered by either. Using our CCP Card we saved over \$60 on her prescription."

"I love using my Co-op Connections Card at our local coffee shop and restaurant. A 10 percent savings on their famous hamburgers is quite the deal!"

"I saved \$22 on my last trip to the grocery store. This is a great money-saving program. Thanks Coast Electric!"



To help out with the increasing cost of your growing tots, and a whole lot more, we've started the Co-op Connections program. Here's how it works: Your Co-op Connections Card will arrive in your mail. Take it with you wherever you go. Pull it out anywhere you see a Co-op Connections sticker. And say hello to the savings.

The card is yours. The savings are yours. All because you're a member of a Touchstone Energy cooperative. And we're always looking out for you. To learn more, visit www.coastepa.com



A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

Looking out for you.

Energy Star-rated appliances are beneficial for consumers

Lots of Mississippians are cutting down on energy use, improving a home's insulation, turning lights off, or exchanging traditional light bulbs for more efficient lighting options. So when consumers shop for new appliances it's common to focus on finding a product with an Energy Star rating.

But how do appliances get this rating? And why don't all appliances have them? The answer may surprise you.

Computers and monitors were the first products to receive an efficiency rating from Energy Star, a program launched in 1992 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Energy. Since then, more than 60 product categories have been added, from dishwashers to windows and DVD players. According to the program, Energy Star-rated products deliver the same or better performance as comparable models while using less energy and saving money.

"We're recognizing the top performers when it comes to energy efficiency," explains Katharine Kaplan, Energy Star program manager. She notes the initiative works closely with folks in a wide variety of areas, including industry experts, governments, non-profit organizations and utilities.

"We agree on a fair way to test products. Manufacturers test products using that procedure, submit the data to us, and we say

"This is how much energy you can use to be considered a leader by Energy Star." Generally, that means you're in the top 25 percent. These are the top performers."

For example, qualified refrigerators must be at least 15 percent more efficient than the minimum federal efficiency standard. Energy Star-rated TVs consume 3 watts or less when switched off, compared to a standard TV, which consumes almost 6 watts on average. By pushing for the manufacturing of more efficient products, Energy Star estimates the rating system saved businesses, organizations and consumers \$19 billion in 2008 alone.

Consumers are taking advantage of the program. A survey by the Consortium for Energy Efficiency — a group including members like the quasi-governmental Tennessee Valley Authority and Bonneville Power Administration, a federal power marketing administration in the Northwest—discovered 76 percent of American households recognize the Energy Star brand. Of

these consumers, 73 percent purchased an Energy Star-labeled product within the last year.

But not all products are rated by Energy Star. The program gauges the average energy efficiency of different appliance technologies and evaluates whether there's potential for increased efficiency — generally at least 25 percent higher than minimum standards. According to Energy Star, the most efficient electric resistance water heaters on the market have an Energy Factor of 0.95, about 5 percent more efficient than the minimum federal stan-

dard. Since there's little room for improvement, Energy Star does not have a category for the product.

"The technology doesn't qualify for the Energy Star program — not because it's not efficient, but because it's already as efficient as possible," remarks Steve Koep, a regional manager for REEM/Marathon Water Heaters.

"When it comes to purchasing an electric water heater, consumers should consider durability and energy factor [EF], a mandatory evaluation done on all water heaters regardless of fuel source. EF takes into account fuel use, standby energy loss, and insulation under simulated actual conditions."

Last October, the *New York Times* revealed some manufacturers of household appliances were testing products for Energy Star-certification internally instead of using independent laboratories. In response, Energy Star ramped up oversight of product ratings and by the end of the year had revoked the Energy Star label for some refrigerators while raising the bar for the efficiency expected from TVs.

Energy Star remains a driving force not just in the United States, but in other countries as well as Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Taiwan, and the European Union. Federal energy efficiency tax credits for appliances and home heating and air systems typically require qualifying products to be Energy Star-rated. To learn more about the Energy Star program, visit www.energystar.gov.



Co-ops helping Haitian relief efforts

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) International Foundation is working to bring light to those who are suffering in Haiti. After the island country was devastated by a powerful earthquake on Jan. 12 and again on Jan. 20, staff from the NRECA's International Foundation was some of the first responders on the ground. The team is hard at work to help assess damage to the nation's electrical system and help them rebuild.

Restoring service to critical needs facilities, including a Port-Au-Prince hospital was one of the first priorities as was assessing damage and power



requirements in facilities that are accepting refugees. The NRECA team is also creating standardized inspection forms in several languages for international relief teams.

Haiti and its citizens are in desperate need. Rebuilding efforts will take a long time and have high costs. If you would like to make a donation to the NRECA International Foundation's rebuilding efforts, visit www.nrecainternational.org.

Area students selected for Youth Leadership Program



Heather Alexander

Two high school juniors were recently selected from a pool of talented young leaders to participate in the Electric Power Associations of Mississippi's 2010 Youth Leadership program. Heather Alexander from Long Beach High School and Brent Murphy from St. Stanislaus College



Brent Murphy

will represent Coast Electric Power Association in Jackson this spring and in Washington, D.C., in June.

Heather and Brent were chosen from a group of young leaders to participate in the program that will educate them about cooperatives and our nation's political system.

Old electrical wiring could be hazardous

Residential electrical wiring changed during the 20th century as new appliances appeared on the scene and electricity evolved from a luxury to a mainstay. More appliances at home led to safety improvements and an increased number of room outlets, leaving older home wiring to play catch-up. Although most older home electrical systems have been upgraded over the years, safety shortcomings may still exist. Since a third of American homes were built more than 50 years ago, home buyers and folks living in older homes should be aware of how wiring changed during the last century.

Electric capacity is a major concern with older wiring systems. Homeowners in the 1930s didn't use a lot of electrical appliances, except for a refrigerator, a few lights and a radio.

An explosion of appliance purchases followed in the late 1940s and early '50s. But the arrival of air conditioning during the 1960s soon rendered many mid-century home electrical systems obsolete. More recently, residences built as little as 20 years ago might be insufficient for handling entertainment systems and personal computers.

Each year, household wiring and lighting cause an estimated average of 32,000 home fires. On average, these fires result in 950 injuries, 220 deaths, and nearly \$674 million in property damage, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

"Residential electrical systems are seldom inspected after they are installed and tend to be destroyed in house fires," explains John Drengenberg, consumer affairs manager for Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., (UL), an independent product safety testing and certification organization based in Chicago, Ill.

"Homeowners should not assume all is well simply because fuses aren't blowing, circuit breakers tripping, or they're not receiving shocks or smelling burnt plastic. Inside the walls, wire insulation could be cracking and crumbling, especially if wires are drawing more current than they were designed to handle. The wood frame above plaster ceilings could also become charred by lightbulbs that are too close to the ceiling or higher in wattage than the light fixture's rating."

To avoid such hazards, consumers should understand the limits of home

wiring systems. Often, this depends on when a home was built or if the electrical system was upgraded. In other cases, though, telltale signs may indicate a problem.

"Anytime you receive a shock from an electrical appliance, outlet, or wall switch in your home, it's a warning that you should talk with a qualified electrician," Drengenberg cautions. "If a fuse blows or a circuit breaker trips right after you replace or reset it, you have trouble somewhere. Flickering or dimming lights could mean loose connections, overloaded circuits, improper wiring, or arcing and sparking inside walls."

In older homes, heat means too much electrical current's being drawn through outlets. "If your receptacles or plugs are hot to the touch — you can't keep your hand on them for more than five seconds — you may have an overload," Drengenberg advises.

When too much current gets drawn, wires heat up, baking and eventually weakening the insulation. Wires with damaged, decayed or brittle insulation can lead to shocks and fires.

Another issue associated with older home wiring systems is the number of receptacles in each room. Today's electrical code requires outlets be placed every 12 feet of running wall space, about one per wall in the average 10-by-12-foot room. Houses built before 1956 were required to have outlets placed every 20 feet, while homes built before 1935 weren't required to have wall outlets at all.

"Relying on extension cords is not the answer," indicates Drengenberg. "Extension cords are meant for temporary use only and should not be a substitute for permanent wiring."

Proper grounding, meanwhile, prevents painful or even deadly electrical shocks when electricity flows through an improper path. Every home electrical system should have some type of grounding.

Newer homes are wired with cables that include a ground wire. The ground wire allows for use of three-pronged receptacles needed to power certain appliances, particularly ones with metal shells, such as refrigerators and washing machines.

Many wiring systems installed in the

1950s and earlier used non-metallic wiring, which lacked a ground wire. Homes from this era boast only two-pronged outlets, unsuitable for many modern conveniences. Simply replacing two-pronged receptacles with three-pronged receptacles violates the National Electrical Safety Code if no ground path exists.

In some cases, older homes may feature newer wiring systems. But the era when the wiring was upgraded impacts electrical limitations. Before buying a home have someone certified in electrical work inspect the system to be safe. Visit www.inspectorseek.com for referrals.

Source: Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.

Myth or fact?



Be sure you know the truth about power line safety

If birds can touch electrical wires, are they safe for people, too? If you're not on a metal ladder, are you clear of danger from power line electrocution?

Know for sure before you take a chance with your life. First the facts: Electricity is always looking for the shortest and

easiest path to the ground—including people and objects that touch or come too close to power lines. Electricity is fast, and it can cause severe burns or death if it flows through the human body. Take power line safety seriously. Read on to find the facts on the following myths:

Myth: Wires must be safe to touch if birds can land on them.

Fact: Birds don't represent a direct path to the ground, giving electricity nowhere to go but back to the wire. It's easier for the current to simply stay in the wire. So touching a power line is not safe for humans.

Myth: Power lines are safe to touch because they're insulated.

Fact: Most lines are insulated only to protect against slight tree contact, but not enough to prevent human injury. Don't touch them!

Myth: Non-metal ladders are safe to rest on a power line.

Fact: Anything that can get wet can conduct electricity, and many non-metal ladders still contain metal parts. Keep your ladder away from

power lines, no matter what it's made from.

Myth: Ladders are safe near power lines as long as they don't touch.

Fact: Electricity can "jump," especially when a good conductor like a metal ladder comes close. Keep a safe distance of at least 10 feet.

Myth: Trimming trees around power lines is safe if I don't use a ladder.

Fact: Electricity doesn't need metal to conduct. The moisture in the tree is enough. If a tree comes into contact with the line while you're trimming, it has a direct path to the ground through the tree, your pruning tool and you. Call your electric cooperative when it's time to trim trees near power lines.