

Piedmont Electric CONNECTION

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative



Hillsborough, N.C.

www.pemc.org

September 2010

Briefly...

Deadline Nears



The deadline for area teachers to submit applications for this year's Bright Ideas Grant Program is **September 20, 2010**.

Teachers for kindergarten through grade 12 are eligible to apply for the grants, which are available for up to \$2,000 each.

Information about the Bright Ideas grant program can be found on Piedmont Electric's website at: www.pemc.org or www.ncbrightideas.com

Bright Ideas Grants are awarded for innovative and imaginative programs not funded by traditional means.

Tax 'Holiday' Set for November 5-7

The next Energy Star-qualified tax holiday will be November 5-7.

If you plan to buy a clothes washer, freezer, refrigerator, ceiling fan, dehumidifier, programmable thermostat, heat pump or central air conditioner, you will not have to pay state sales tax. Look for additional information next month.

CFL Rebates

Piedmont Electric continues to offer rebates to members who change out incandescent lights with compact fluorescent lights (CFLs). You may earn up to \$15 annually in credits on your electric bill by turning in your receipts for buying the CFLs.

Attaching Signs to Utility Poles Creates Safety Hazards

Although seemingly innocent enough, putting signs or other items on utility poles creates serious safety hazards.

Staples, nails and tacks used to hang signs—as well as the signs themselves—pose dangers to Piedmont Electric lineworkers who must climb poles when either restoring power following storms or while performing routine maintenance to ensure system reliability.

Posters or other objects (birdhouses, balloons, flags and even basketball nets) can create dangerous obstacles. Also, the nails and tacks left behind from signs can snag util-



ity workers' boots or puncture safety clothing, making lineworkers vulnerable to slipping or even electrocution.

In addition to being hazardous, posting signs or attaching other objects to utility poles is prohibited by the Cooperative's *Rules & Regulations*, which says:

"No person or organization will install or attach, or permit the installation or attachment of any wire, signs or other material or equipment to any of PEMC's poles, conductors or other fixtures, except with express written consent of PEMC."

Dust Dollars Off Your Energy Bill

The most expensive dirt in the world may lurk in your home's heating and cooling system.

Dirty filters cause a system to work harder and break down faster. That's because unfiltered dust and grime work into critical parts, creating friction that causes unnecessary wear and, eventually, failure.

As you move in your home you drive dust into the air from carpets, drapes and furniture. Pets generate dust particles by shedding, grooming and tracking in dirt from outside.

Regardless of where it comes

from, dust trapped in a heating and cooling system air filter leads to several problems, including:

- Reduced air flow in the home and up to 15% higher operating costs.
- Costly duct cleaning or replacement.
- Lowered system efficiency.

If neglected, dust collecting in the equipment's air filter could increase your energy bills hundreds of dollars every year. Be sure to change the filters each month.



From Your President...

You Don't HAVE to Wait...

R. G. Brecheisen

Chief Executive Officer & President

Other electric companies in this area have been touting its services to help their customers find out what they can do to save energy AFTER their bills arrive.

At Piedmont Electric we don't think our members should have to wait. In fact, we're offering you the opportunity to find out how much electricity you use on a daily basis.

That way, you can adapt your use patterns as you go so you can manage your electricity use BEFORE your bills arrive.

With the introduction of "smart" meters, all Piedmont Electric consumers can go online to www.MyUsage.com to see how much electricity you've used as recently as the past 24 hours.

For example, if the weather spikes, you can see how much power was used to power your electric heating or cooling system.

That knowledge gives you better control over how high—or low—you may want to set your thermostat.

Maybe you've had house guests or done a lot of holiday cooking. These things can affect the amount of electricity you use—and the amount of your bill.

Though it seems just about everyone is using the Internet for a variety of things, there are those who find the whole process intimidating.

MyUsage.com may be used to monitor your daily electricity use and have alerts e-mailed to you if your use goes beyond a pre-determined amount.

All you need for this free service is your Piedmont Electric account number and meter number when you log into www.MyUsage.com. These numbers are located on your monthly electric bill.

Then, type in your email address and select a password. Once that's done, it's just a matter of logging into the website to check your daily electricity use!

If you have multiple accounts you want to monitor, you will need to contact a Piedmont Electric representative for help in setting

up your password and email notification. After that, you can check all of your accounts online whenever you choose.

Your smart meter is both protected by a firewall and password protected to allow access to metering systems only by qualified personnel.

In addition to its smart meters, Piedmont Electric has another tool to help you manage your energy use better. And, it's also free to our members.

Go to www.togetherwesave.com to take a virtual tour of a home to see how specific tips can affect your energy savings.

This site is customized for Piedmont Electric members. Just follow these steps:

- Go to www.togetherwesave.com
- Select "Add Up Your Savings"
- Enter your zipcode and start going through the house finding ways to save.

You can also watch "how to" videos that show easy ways to insulate your home.

Piedmont Electric continues to look for additional programs and services which can empower you to manage your electricity use more efficiently.

September Right-of-Way Maintenance

Caswell County

Cherry Grove Road
Marshall Graves Road
Badgett Sisters Parkway
Boy Scout Camp Road
(and surrounding areas)



Member Speak-Out

Do you have a question or comment about Piedmont EMC? If so, we want to hear from you. Questions about specific accounts will be answered personally instead of appearing in the newsletter.

Because of space limitations, Piedmont EMC reserves the right to publish any comments and to edit comments at its discretion.

Send your comments and questions to: Todd Pope, "Member Speak-Out," Piedmont EMC, P.O. Drawer 1179, Hillsborough, NC 27278-1179. You may also include it with your monthly payment, or send an email to: todd.pope@pemc.org.

Good Landscaping Can Help Reduce Energy Use

You've upgraded your appliances, insulation and lighting to help lower your monthly electric bill. What else can you do?

Plenty, if you have a yard with landscaping options. The right combination of plants and trees can unearth hidden energy savings.

The U.S. Department of Energy claims landscaping with energy efficiency in mind, on average, could save enough energy to recoup your investment in less than eight years.

There are several ways to think about planting for energy savings: *Climate*, *Shading* and *Windbreaks*.

Climate determines the direction your landscaping planning should take.

Our area is a hot and humid climate, so summer breezes are welcome. We need to make the most of summer shade, but use trees that will eventually lose leaves (deciduous) to let winter sun shine through.

You might be protected from the hot summer sun in your home, but your electric bill isn't.

Solar heat absorbed through windows and your roof causes your air conditioner to work harder.

Shading a home with trees could drop the surrounding air



temperature by as much as 9 degrees Fahrenheit.

It gets better closer to the ground—since cool air sinks down, the air under trees may be up to 25 degrees cooler than the air over the driveway.

Different trees serve unique purposes. To block summer solar heat but let the winter sun through, use deciduous trees.

Evergreen trees and shrubs are ideal to provide continuous shade and block heavy winds.

Don't forget about shrubs and groundcover plants. These short but sturdy shade-givers reduce heat radiation, cooling air before it reaches your home's walls and windows.

If you have an air conditioner, shading the unit can increase its efficiency by as much as 10%.

Shading takes time. For example, a 6-foot to 8-foot deciduous tree planted near a home will begin shading windows in a year.

Depending on the species and the home, the tree will shade the roof in five to 10 years.

Windbreaks

Shrubs and trees create windbreaks—essentially walls to keep the wind chill away from a home.

Wind speed lowers outside air temperatures. A windbreak reduces wind speed nearby, saving your home from higher heating costs.

It's best to block wind with a combination of trees and shrubs with low crowns—foliage which grows close to the ground.

Evergreens are ideal, and when combined with a wall or fence these windbreaks can deflect—or even lift—wind over a home.

For the best protection, plan on leaving between two to five times the mature height of the trees or shrubs between the windbreak and the protected home.

Remember, your landscaping plan depends on your climate and how your home is situated.

You can find out more about your climate, microclimates, shading dos and don'ts and windbreaks at www.energysavers.gov.



Lauren Tilley

Sarah Long

Correction

The photos of two of Piedmont Electric's scholarship winners were inadvertently switched in last month's Connection. We apologize for the error.

By the Numbers...

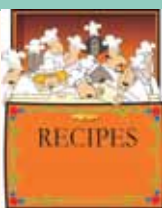
- 1,144 members have signed up for the use monitoring portion of www.MyUsage.com
- 431 members are participating in the FlexPay Program
- 362 members have turned in receipts for 3,589 CFLs, representing a total of 1,231,027 kWhs saved toward our Senate Bill 3 Mandate
- 23 solar water heater rebates given to members
- 462 electric water heater wraps sold
- 520 residential members on Time-of-Day Rates

Pass It On...

This month's recipe for "Lemonade Icebox Pie" comes from Lenora M. Corbett of Burlington.

If you have a favorite recipe you want to share with other Piedmont Electric members, please send it to: Pass It On, c/o Piedmont Connection, P.O. Drawer 1179, Hillsborough, NC 27278, or you may include it with your monthly payment. If it is printed in the newsletter, you will receive a copy of the Cooperative Council of North Carolina's *Sensational Sweets* cookbook.

Please remember to check all ingredients and instructions carefully.



Lemonade Icebox Pie

- 1 2-quart package lemonade mix
- 1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 16-ounce container Cool Whip
- 2 regular size graham cracker pie crust (or 1 large crust)

Combine lemonade mix and sweetened condensed milk. Stir in Cool Whip. Continue stirring until everything is well mixed. Pour into pie crust. Refrigerate for 8 hours before serving.



**Piedmont Electric and ElecTel
CCU offices will be closed**

LABOR DAY



**Monday,
September 6,
in observance
of Labor Day.**

**Employees will
be on call. Please have a safe,
happy Labor Day.**

Keep Cold Food Safe During Power Outage

We've all been there: a storm rolls through, toppling trees and damaging power lines. The lights go out. And although it may only be a matter of minutes or hours before Piedmont Electric gets things up and running again, thawing food in the refrigerator and freezer can make that relatively short time seem like an eternity.

It's important to keep cold food safe during a power outage. A little advanced preparation and know-how can keep your family safe from food-borne bacteria.

First, keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.

If unopened, a refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about four hours; a full freezer will do so for

about 48 hours (24 hours if it's half-full).

One way to know if food is safe is to monitor its temperature. Meat, poultry, fish and eggs should be refrigerated at or below 40°F and frozen food at or below 0°F.

If the power stays out for a prolonged period, there are a few ways to aid your refrigerator and freezer in the fight to keep things cold.

The simplest tip is to keep your freezer full. If it's not full, group items close together to preserve the cold.

It will take 25 pounds or so to keep a full, 10-cubic foot freezer safe for three to four days.

Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic foot full freezer for two days. Separate dry ice from food with cardboard to prevent freezer burn.

If unopened, a refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about four hours; a full freezer will do so for about 48 hours.



Piedmont Electric CONNECTION

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To report an outage 24 hours a day: **800.449.2667***

To access account information 24 hours a day: **800.548.2105***

*Voice instructions will direct you through the system.

Call BEFORE You Dig: **800.632.4949** or **811**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Cathy J. Johnson, CCC, Editor

