

Conducting a DIY energy audit can yield energy savings

By Anne Prince, NRECA

Fall has arrived. But, before it gets too cool, consider performing a home energy audit.

Armed with some basic knowledge and a little time, members can conduct a baseline energy audit of their home to identify where they are losing energy (and money). A checklist is available online at www.scecnet.net (*Forms/Articles*, scroll down to *Community*) and can be used to take notes on problems found. Remember, the audit itself is not a money saver unless energy efficiency measures are implemented.

DIY 101

Where to start? In multi-level homes, work from the top down. Begin in the attic or highest floor, and work down to the first floor or basement.

- **Insulation and air leaks (drafts).** According to the Department of Energy, improving a home's insulation and sealing air leaks are the fastest and most cost-effective ways to reduce energy waste. Is there sufficient insulation in the attic? Are openings containing piping, duct work and chimney sealed?
- **Electronic devices.** Inventory all electronic devices in the home and how often they are used. Computers, printers, DVD players, phones and gaming consoles are notorious "electricity vampires" – they drain energy even when not in use. If items can be turned off without disrupting daily routines, consider plugging them into a power strip that can be turned on and off (or put on a timer).
- **Lighting.** Are there still incandescent lights in the home? If so, purchase LED replacement bulbs to be installed once the incandescent bulbs burn out. Are there areas in the home that have night lights? Consider replacing them with LED night lights. SCEC has a small inventory of LED night lights available to members upon request. (limit: two per member). Are there low use areas in the home where a



motion sensor could be installed? Think about areas, such as a closet, porch or garage.

- **Thermostat/indoor temperature.** Is there a programmable thermostat in the house? If so, when was the last time it was programmed? Are the date and time correct? If not, this could throw off the automatic settings. Program settings so the temperature in the home is lower during the day and/or times when no one is home and at night when people are sleeping. Consider lowering the overall temperature to 68 degrees.
- **Appliances and cleaning.** Appliances are large energy users, especially if they are more than 10 years old. How and when appliances are used also make a difference. Wash full loads of clothes in cold water whenever possible. Running the clothes washer and dryer, as well as the dishwasher early in the morning or in the evening (during off-peak times) will save the electric cooperative money by purchasing electricity when demand is lower. Make sure the dryer's lint trap is cleaned after each load and regularly check the dryer vents to make sure they are clear; this will not only save

energy, it may also prevent a fire. Finally, running the dishwasher at night after supper and opening it up when the dry cycle begins allows dishes to air dry overnight for free, rather than wasting energy on the dishwasher's "dry" setting.

Evaluation

Once the audit is complete, review the findings. Prioritize actions that can be made based on available time and money, weighing where the biggest impact for the investment can be found.

Members with questions regarding energy efficiency may contact Jerry Van Someren at SCEC by calling 715-796-7000 or email jerryvvs@scecnet.net.

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"TogetherWeSave.com" is available in Google play or the iTunes stores (under "iPhone only," "Touchstone Energy").

