

Currents

Your Link to Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative



High Voltage. . .



Members Ask Bits and Pieces

I was recently asked if light dimmers use less energy. To be honest, it was a question I had never considered. Taking the cue from the question, I asked our electrical engineers for their opinion. It turns out that dimmers do indeed use less electricity. Older models were not as energy efficient, using resistance to limit current flow thereby wasting a fair amount of energy in the form of heat. Today's dimmers are electronic and do not generate a lot of heat. With dimmable CFLs coming onto the market, the combination is doubly energy efficient.

At a Boy Scout Jamboree in early October, a number of Scouts asked me about using CFLs and any potential hazard from doing so. They were referring to the mercury contained in all fluorescent lamps. To assuage everyone's fears on the mercury front let me offer the following.

The amount of mercury in a CFL is about the size of the ball in a ball-point pen. Hardly dangerous in that quantity. However, massed quantities of these lamps in landfills can lead to large amounts of mercury accumulating in one spot. Therefore, please take dead CFLs and florescent lamps to your local recycling center for proper treatment.

We had a booth promoting energy efficiency at the State Fair this year on Green Day. I was asked by an attendee if you could put CFLs in enclosed fixtures. I glibly said yes and he pounced! He had actually read the fine print on a CFL package and it said not to use in enclosed fixtures. So, we read the same print on my CFL and it confirmed that warning. I must confess, dear readers, that I have never heard of this restriction

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Commentary by the President & CEO



Looking Forward... and Saving

by Jim Siglin
President & CEO

November is here and 2009 is nearly in the books. As in 2008, the economic downturn and weather stand out as major influences on our overall performance. On the economic front, the effect is a drastic drop in new housing starts. As of this writing, we have had only 29 new housing starts. It is a slight improvement over 2008 yet still well below what we have seen in past years.

With respect to the effects of weather, milder than normal temperatures have reduced consumption and therefore, sales. Sales for 2009 are 4% below 2008 sales which were 2% lower than 2007. Lower electric bills are always welcome. And, not being wracked by devastating storms keeps repair costs low. Unfortunately, weather is a key driver of your cooperative's financial stability. The lower sales put heavy pressure on operating budgets, which in previous years, might have caused operating losses. This year the sales slowdown had less effect due to the increase in our facility charge in February. This financial strategy did exactly what it was supposed to do, providing the funds for ongoing operations while letting our members benefit from their lower consumption. While the economy of 2010 doesn't appear set to change much, we can hope for a more normal weather pattern - seasonal temperatures and no damaging storms.

As we wrap up 2009, we will be replacing the more than 1300 load control receivers installed

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on water heaters that have been in service for over 20 years. These innocuous grey devices have served faithfully and now are giving way to a more capable model. For those of you in the program, we will be scheduling appointments to replace the old device with the current generation of technology. If you are not currently in the program, we will be asking you to join.

Originally developed to control costs by reducing peak demand, load control is enjoying renewed importance as a tool to reduce manmade carbon emissions. The technique provides a ready means to delay electric consumption to non-peak usage times, when energy is less expensive and more available. To system operators, the curtailed load is as beneficial as a power generating facility. Over time, this approach can postpone the need for new power plants and transmission lines.

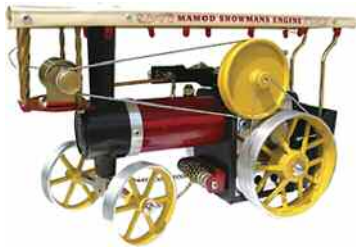
Our existing program controls water heaters. We will be expanding it to include central air conditioning systems and eventually pool pumps. Members already in the program will receive a small incentive to replace the current devices, as will members who join the program. I encourage you to consider joining the program. Your participation helps keep rates low and limits emissions of carbon. If you have an electric water heater or a central air conditioner, please contact us to get all the details and get started in the program.

Another program that helps us control costs is our electronic bill payment option. Enrolling is easy. Navigate to our web site and click on the "Your Bill" heading. Under "View Your Bill", you will be able to enroll. It takes just a couple of minutes and provides you with a secure and environmentally friendly means of paying your electric bill. No more checks to write or potentially go astray in the mail coupled with the control of paying your bill when you want. If you presently use a third party vendor to pay your bill, give our system a try. Its free, and by using our service you help us control our costs. The use of third party vendors can actually increase our costs, since their systems are not integrated into our billing system. Sign up today or call for complete information.

GIFT IDEAS

by Tom Tate

Since it's now the season for gift giving, let me jump in here with some really cool and fun gift ideas. Help the economy while building your gadget/gift cred at home and in the neighborhood.



How about a little steam punk to get it moving? Check out the classic Mamod steam engines from England. I have drooled over these babies for years. Steam rollers, cars, miniatures of The African Queen, factory operations? All is within your grasp. For the Mother Lode of steam powered gadgets, go to www.ministeam.com. Prebuilt and kit options abound.

Now I know why the airplanes still have the slot in the head for disposal of used double-sided razor blades. They knew these shaving implements of yore were due for a comeback.



Whether you're an old pro at wetshaving (that's using foam or soap to you and me) or new to the game, the Merkur Heavy Classic Safety Razor (\$49) <http://www.groominglounge.com/dv-hd.html> will have you shaving more closely than ever before in no time. Handcrafted and double-edged, the Merkur's chunky body provides extra weight, letting you apply less pressure, resulting in a more comfortable, smoother

shave. I have already passed my heirloom straight razors on to my son; maybe I can use this and not end up in the ER. www.groominglounge.com

Not so much a gadget as a stress reliever, buy and hand out these babies to satisfy your need to engage in road rage. Say someone cuts you off for that last spot in the lot or parks so close you need a can opener to get into your car. How about an obviously non-handicapped person taking up the handicap spot? Don't chuck a rock through their window or key their door. Express just how you feel by handing out a parking ticket (\$7). The book of 20 unique pull-out cards is perfect for letting the parking-challenged know just where you stand, with heartwarming messages such as "Did you park like this or was there an earthquake?" "This parking job violates the law...of physics." Do I hear "Citizen's arrest?" <http://www.shineboxprint.com/products/ready/ptx>



Now here's an interesting gadget. We humans spend a third of our lives asleep (once we graduate from high school and college, that is). So why wouldn't we want to optimize that part of our lives? The Zeo Personal Sleep Coach (\$400) can help do just that. The system consists of a headband with a SoftWave sensor to accurately track your unique sleep



patterns and a bedside display. The display shows the time, a graph of your pattern of sleep phases from the night before, a "ZQ" single-digit representation of the quantity, quality, and depth of your sleep, a count of how long you actually slept and how long it took you to fall asleep, and more. Want more information? Pop the SD card out of the display and into your computer to upload your data to Zeo's website. Here you can get a more detailed look at your sleeping patterns and personalized tips for getting your best night's rest. Sweet, be a geek asleep and awake! www.myzeo.com. Now, if I could just program it to Tivo my dreams...

For those stubborn to grind items, more power is the key. If you are currently saddled with an underpowered, anemic blender, fear not - relief is at hand. The



chromed-out Gas Powered Blender (\$285) <http://www.uncrate.com/go/gas-powered-blender/sports> a 2 stroke, 43cc gas powered variable speed engine, motorbike-style handle bars,

an 85 oz stainless steel pitcher, and polyurethane coating for added durability. Be sure to use in a well-ventilated area. It's the sensible alternative to cutting ice with a chainsaw and can churn out industrial sized margaritas. www.hegworks.com - search for item number 900108.

Want to void your warranty and hack everyday items? Consider a subscription to Make magazine. This bible for DIYers in all fields will inspire you to push your purchases beyond their design intent into new and unusual configurations. And it has some really cool projects to boot. www.makezine.com

Let me close with a sure-to-please stocking stuffer, a Swiss Army knife! Who would have dreamed that the trusty old Swiss Army knife would adapt so well to modern technology? I mean, a pocket knife is so 19th century. Well, they have adapted and prospered. Check out their 41 tool Cyber Tool. Everything you need to void your warranty in one easy to carry package.

<http://www.victorinox.ch/index.cfm?site=victorinox.ch&page=350&lang=E>



Christmas in Country 2009

by Tom Tate

Get your Christmas decorating mojo in gear and join our annual Christmas in the Country contest. If you are new to the contest here is a brief overview. Each year, Sussex REC teams with WSUS to identify the very best outside Christmas display. Entrants post pictures of their handiwork to the WSUS website where people are then free to vote for their favorite. The grand prizewinner takes home a Cummins-Onan portable generator for use in powering even more elaborate displays in the future. Okay, its really for emergency power in an outage but it can drive one of those "visible from orbit" masterpieces of the electric decorative art.

Are there categories and what are the

guidelines? There are categories that change a bit from year to year. Typically, there is a traditional category, one that is most creative, and so forth. Guidelines are simple - you must live in the WSUS listening area, preferably Sussex County. You need to be able to access the Internet to upload your entry. You can encourage people to vote for your creation but everyone is limited to one vote.

So, what are you waiting for! Get out there and get creative! Inflatable figures, lots of lights and glittering geegaws, whirly gigs - it's all good. Then round up a posse of supporters to boost you to the winner's circle. Good luck and Merry Christmas.

WHERE DO ALL THESE PHRASES COME FROM?

There are many sources for the phrases and sayings that colour our language. One important source is the Bible. From there we get 'by the skin of your teeth', 'from strength to strength' and more. (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/bible-phrases-sayings.html>) Whether we view these as English phrases is debatable as the first English translation of the Bible was a thousand years or more after the original texts were written. Wycliffe's translation, circa 1392, is the first version that brought the Bible to the English-speaking world - apart from that small number of scholars who had read the previous Latin versions and discussed them in English. Whatever we think about the Englishness of translated biblical phrases even they pale next to the single most prolific coiner of English - Shakespeare. To use his own words from *All's Well That Ends Well*:

*A man in all the world's
new fashion planted,
That hath a mint of phrases
in his brain;*

The choice here is very long - 'foul play' and 'fair play', 'in a pickle' and 'in stitches', 'high time' and 'lie low' and many more. (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/phrases-sayings-shakespeare.html>).

If Shakespeare and the Bible are the Pre-

miership; who is top of the First Division? Chaucer? Dickens? Well, it's neither of them, but the Scottish poet and novelist Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832). While there are collective works which have brought us more idioms and phrases - *The Book of Common Prayer* for example, Scott is the individual author who can claim to come second after Shakespeare.



Scott might seem an unlikely candidate as a major source of innovation in the language as he is rather out of favour in the 21st century and hardly now a household name. That wasn't the case in his lifetime though, when he was the best-known and most widely read novelist.

Sir Walter isn't regarded as the most highly inventive of writers and much of his prolific output calls on the 'retelling' of old songs and tales that he learned at his grandmother's knee. He was no plagiarist though and is now thought of as the architect of the historical novel. He coined several phrases that are now in everyday use. Or at least he adapted existing texts and brought the phrases to the public attention. At this distance in time it's quite hard to tell just how much was the transformation of inherited

materials and how much was pure invention. Take the phrase 'caught red-handed' (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/caught-red-handed.html>) for example. 'Redhand' was an existing Scottish legal term meaning 'in the act of crime'. It's a small step for a Scottish author from 'redhand' to 'caught red-handed'. Nevertheless, without Scott we wouldn't have the phrase.

Other phrases of which Scott is either the father or the midwife:

Cold Shoulder (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/cold-shoulder.html>)

Blood is thicker than water (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/67600.html>)

Flotsam and jetsam (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/flotsam-and-jetsam.html>)

Go berserk (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/go-berserk.html>)

Infra dig (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/infra-dig.html>)

Lock stock and barrel (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/lock-stock-and-barrel.html>)

Nail your colours to the mast (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/253600.html>)

Savoir faire (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/311050.html>)

Strain at the leash (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/336500.html>)

The apple of my eye (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/34850.html>)

The back of beyond (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/52650.html>)

Tongue in cheek (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/tongue-in-cheek.html>)

Wide berth (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/wide-berth.html>)

WARNING: 2010 Census Cautions from the Better Business Bureau

BE CAUTIOUS ABOUT GIVING INFO TO CENSUS WORKERS

With the U.S. Census process beginning, the Better Business Bureau (BBB) advises people to be cooperative, but cautious, so as not to become a victim of fraud or identity theft. The first phase of the 2010 U.S. Census is under way as workers have begun verifying the addresses of households across the country. Eventually, more than 140,000 U.S. Census workers will count every person in the United States and will gather information about every person living at each address including *name, age, gender, race, and other relevant data.*

The big question is - how do you tell the difference between a U.S. Census worker and a con artist?

The Better Business Bureau offers the following advice:

If a U.S. Census worker knocks on your door, they will have a badge, a handheld device, a Census Bureau canvas bag, and a confidentiality notice.

Ask to see their identification and their badge before answering their questions.

You should never invite anyone you don't know into your home.

*Census workers are currently only knocking on doors to verify address information.

Do not give your Social Security number, credit card or banking information to anyone, even if they claim they need it for the U.S. Census.

While the Census Bureau might ask for basic financial information, such as a salary range, the Census Bureau will not ask for Social Security, bank account, or credit card numbers nor will employees solicit donations.

Eventually, Census workers may contact you by telephone, mail, or in person at home. However, **the Census Bureau will not contact you by Email**, so be on the lookout for Email scams impersonating the Census.

Never click on a link or open any attachments in an Email that are supposedly from the U.S. Census Bureau.

For more advice on avoiding identity theft and fraud, visit target www.bbb.org (*weekly tips*).

Bottom line...if in doubt, don't give it out (information or access to your home, that is.)



WINTER BUTTON UP



by Tom Tate

By the time you read this, Fall will be nearly spent and we may even have some snow under our belts. Still, it isn't too late to batten down the hatches for a snugger Winter experience. One of the best treatments is to caulk around your windows and exterior doors. Common construction techniques tend to create a myriad of entry points for Old Man Winter. So a tube of caulk and a caulk gun are the first line of defense in a tighter, more comfortable home.

The key to a successful caulking job is a clean surface. Check around the windows and doors and brush away loose dirt, flaking paint and spider webs. If you have some mold or mildew, clean it with a solution of bleach and water.

If necessary, use a hose to clean your work area. Once the work surface is clean and dry, load up your caulk gun and have at it.

I like a relatively small bead of caulk, about 1/4 inch wide. And, I like to start at the top of the opening and work my way down. I hold my caulk gun at a compound 45° angle. By that I mean, 45° from the horizontal and 45° away from the window molding. This allows me to put proper pressure on the nozzle and force the caulk into the opening. If the bead is nice enough, I may forego the tradition of smoothing it with my finger. If it looks a little ragged or the caulk is not sticking the way I want, then I resort to the digit treatment. An alternative to using your finger is a caulking



ing tool designed to smooth out the bead. Leave some area uncaulked and as you smooth, push the excess into the uncaulked area to avoid waste.

Working around doors you may find it easier to stop a foot or so from the bottom of the door and caulk the balance from the ground up. This will keep you from having to squat or lay down to get the last few centimeters caulked. Also, when you stop caulking, be sure to release the pressure on the caulk gun and back the plunger out. Otherwise, the caulk will continue to come out and you'll have a bit of a mess.

What type of caulk is best? Now that is a tough question. I prefer silicone based products but latex acrylic is a nice alternative. A quick scan of Lowes.com returned 217 results for "caulk" and the caulk section in the stores can be overwhelming. Make sure it is an exterior product and is mildew and mold resistant. I generally go with clear but a small range of colors are now available.

To me, the caulk gun is just as important as the caulk. If you haven't caulked a lot, the pressure from using standard caulk guns can leave your hand and forearm sore. So, why not go for a motorized, cordless model? Because they cost \$330? Okay, reason enough. Go for a good quality gun and switch hands frequently.

Properly caulked windows and doors should keep out the drafts and breezes for several years. Your energy budget and comfort level will thank you for the effort.

PLEASE HELP THOSE IN NEED THIS WINTER

By Barbara Taylor

"If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one." - Mother Teresa

According to a recent report by the World Food Program, more than one billion people worldwide suffer from hunger. Some of those people live right here in the Sussex County area.

The Division of Social Services, located at 83 Spring Street in Newton (formerly Shelby's Department Store), houses a food pantry for those in need. Open Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., anyone can stop in at the Food Locker for assistance. No appointment or application is needed. The staff will assess people's needs and provide them with food and personal items on an emergency basis.

Economic conditions this year have increased the need for donations. The shelves at food pantries throughout our area are often bare. With the start of the winter season, the Division is launching a "Stuff the Bus" campaign. The goal is to collect enough food and other items to fill two

Sussex County Transit buses. Sussex REC is proud to do our part by being a drop-off point for donations.

The buses will be located at the QuickChek stores in Lafayette and Franklin on November 23rd and 24th to collect donations. Needed items include non-perishable foods such as: shelf stable milk, cereal, peanut butter, jelly, crackers, meals in a can, soup, tuna or other protein in a can, baby food, juice boxes, etc. If possible, pop-top cans are appreciated as some recipients cannot manage a can opener. Food is provided to anyone in need, from infants to the elderly.

Personal items are also needed including soap, toiletries, personal hygiene products, diapers, wipes, etc.

Baskets will be in our lobby, ready to accept your contributions. Some Sussex REC employees have decided, in lieu of exchanging gifts in the office, to make additional donations to the campaign. Together we can all help those in need locally.



Members Ask...

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and have in fact used CFLs in enclosed fixtures with no ill effect. Be advised that, from this point forward, you should not use CFLs in enclosed fixtures.

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Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
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64 Route 639 • P.O. Box 346 • Sussex, NJ 07461

973.875.5101 / Fax: 973.875.4114

Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday

Website: www.sussexrec.com

E-mail: info@sussexrec.com

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SREC
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973-875-1365

After Hours: 877.504.6463