

# Currents

Your Link to Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative



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## High Voltage . . .



### Avoid Electrical Hazards at Halloween

Don't you remember when Halloween meant dressing up and pan-handling your neighbors for candy? The traditional jack-o-lantern was the star of the show unless that creepy neighbor lady put out a cauldron with dry ice and dressed up like a witch (or was she really dressed up at all?) Today, technology has touched even this venerated holiday. The decorative lights, fog machines, black lights, and animatronics of Halloween make for adventurous, entertaining times for children and adults. With these decorations, though, the risk of fire or electrocution could be lurking around the corner. It is important to check for electrical hazards before accidents happen. Use the following tips to keep electrical hazards from haunting you this Halloween:



⚡ Inspect electrical decorations. Look for cracked or frayed sockets, loose or bare wires, and loose connections.

⚡ Read manufacturer's instructions regarding installation and maintenance. Check the instructions to see how many light strings can be connected together.

⚡ Always unplug light strings before replacing any bulbs.

⚡ Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, walls or other firm supports. Do not use nails or tacks that could puncture light strings or electrical/extension cords.

*continued on page 3*

## Commentary by the President & CEO



by Jim Siglin  
President & CEO

Yes, it's true. Even the cooperatives have something to include on the calendar! Unlike other observances marked by grand sales events or elaborate festivities, Co-op Month simply offers each cooperative the chance to reconnect a bit with its members and let them know what being part of a cooperative is all about.

Here at Sussex Rural Electric, our mission remains the same as when we began; bring the highest quality electric service to our members at the lowest possible price. As we do that, we run the business according to the seven cooperative principles:

1. *Voluntary and open membership*
2. *Democratic member control*
3. *Members' economic participation*
4. *Autonomy and independence*
5. *Education, training and information*
6. *Cooperation among cooperatives*
7. *Concern for community*

If you want to get the definition for each of these principles, you can go to our website at <http://www.sussexrec.com/yourcoop/coopprinc.html> for them or give us a call. Cooperatives really do conduct business differently and these principles help detail why we do so.

Unlike investor-owned utilities where the person or organization with the largest number of shares calls the tune, each member of the cooperative has an equal voice. That is why our Annual Meeting is so important - it is a forum where you can be heard and actively participate in the cooperative. Throughout the year, we also take your input and look to use it wherever possible to enhance how we deliver and manage our service to you.

Times are changing in the energy markets and we will have hurdles to surmount. Being part of Sussex Rural Electric positions you well to weather these storms. From time to time, we may call on you to act in support of initiatives, local and national, that will directly impact the quality of your service and the price you pay. For example, as part of the national Our Energy Our Future campaign, we are asking you to engage your elected representatives in Washington, DC in dialog about how they plan to balance affordable energy needs and environmental concerns. This campaign asks a series of frank questions about our energy future. Some of you are already participating. We ask everyone to become involved. Check out [www.ourenergy.coop](http://www.ourenergy.coop) for details or call us here. It is important during these times to remember why cooperatives were formed, how they operate and how your participation makes a difference. You can count on us to give you as much information as soon as we can to enable you to make a well-informed decision.

Thank you, as always, for your support and participation in your cooperative. Together we can make a difference.

### Buses and crosswalks and kids...Oh my!

Yes, Dorothy, school is open again so please watch for kids heading back to school on foot and by bus.





# Taking Energy Efficiency on the Road

by Tom Tate

Talk about memories of the last oil embargo. The only difference this go-round is the lack of waiting lines at fuel purveyors. Gas prices have everyone watching their travel. What is most intriguing to me is the resurgence of the tips to save on consumption. These things were ingrained in our collective consciousness decades ago. That said, I suppose there are a couple of generations who haven't been exposed to such

nuggets. And, for the most part, they do contribute to better fuel economy. Let me enumerate a few of the best.

My personal favorite, *avoid jack rabbit starts*. Reminds me of learning to drive a stick. The key here is to accelerate at a modest, even pace. Leave NASCAR starts to the professionals (can you imagine a NASCAR event starting off in a fuel saving way?)

My least favorite, *observe the speed limit*. And all these years I thought they were simply suggestions (just kidding). Data suggests that speeds over 60 mph consume progressively more fuel. Every 5 mph over 60 is the equivalent of spending another \$.30/gallon.

*Remove excess weight*. Okay, I admit that some Blue Collar Comedy Tour skits come to mind here, "Honey, I'd love for your Mother to go cross country with us but the gas cost is simply too high!" I know some folks who carry half their basement in their trunk. Sure they are prepared to ski, fish, golf or build a picnic table on a moment's notice but seriously, get a storage bin for that stuff. Every 100 pounds of unnecessary weight reduces fuel economy by 2% and is worse in smaller vehicles.

*Avoid excessive idling*. Turn the engine off if you are going to be sitting for any significant length of time. No statistics on how long is too long but after 5 minutes, why not shut it down?

*Use cruise control and overdrive gears*. I love the cruise control - I think more than AC. If you don't have it, a few lengths of broom handle cut to varying lengths might work; you know, one for 55 mph, another for 65 and so on... Seriously, cruise control is a great fuel and leg saver. Using overdrive gears puzzles me a bit as most vehicles with automatic transmissions do that by themselves. If you drive a stick and aren't using the top gear at Interstate speeds, do it and save fuel.

*Drive sensibly*, no road rage or erratic driving, if you please. Rapid changes in speed and lane changes can rob you of 33% of your fuel economy on the highway and 5% around town. Is it really worth it to get ahead of those other cars?

*Combine trips*. I love the mental challenge of putting together a series of errands in a sequence that minimizes distance and backtracking. Use cell phones (only if you are on the side of the road to stay in compliance with NJ State law) to make sure the home base doesn't need a loaf of bread or pound of bacon if you are in a store.

You know that most of these are common sense and I feel a tad funny bringing them up but repetition is the key to learning so consider this in the spirit offered and save some gas!

## Members Ask

by Tom Tate

With the recent flurry of articles about electric thermal storage (ETS), a member asked if we'd be so kind as to publish the hours during which we shut off power to the connected devices. Always a pleasure to oblige so here goes:

### ELECTRIC THERMAL STORAGE HOURS

**September 15 - May 15**  
(Winter Cycle)

Monday - Friday

7:00 AM - 11:00 AM & 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM

**May 16 - September 14**  
(Summer Cycle)

Monday - Friday • Noon - 7:00 PM

Just what is the purpose of the ETS concept? Basically, it allows us to sell energy at a lower rate because demand is moved off our peak times.

How is ETS different from our load control program? The basic difference is frequency of control. With ETS, the power is shut off every day whereas load control is only used when our power supplier asks us to implement or when we are testing the system. In addition, load control typically is only used in the Summer. As with the ETS rate, control only occurs Monday - Friday once between noon and 7 p.m.

Both programs help us keep our rates low. ETS has the additional benefit of helping reduce your heating bill. Want to know more about ETS? Check it out online <http://www.sussexrec.com/brochures/ETS.html> or give us a call.

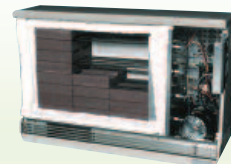


## Cut your heating bill not firewood!

Did your oil or propane bill put a pinch on your budget this winter? Save Up To 60% (as much as \$3,000 in some cases) with our Electric Alternative.

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to find out more. Information also available at

<http://www.sussexrec.com/brochures/ETS.html>

# Celebration Occasions Abound in the Last Quarter of 2008



Let's look at what opportunities we'll have to celebrate the unusual in the last three months of 2008. What pops off the list for me this time? December 5 - Bathtub Party Day followed by National Pawnbrokers Day on the 6th. Other than these, it is quite apparent we enjoy our food in America.

## October

- 1-31 Co-op Month - How about this one?  
*Celebrating for the 78th time!!*
- 1-31 Eat Better, Eat Together Month
- 1-31 Frozen Foods Festival Month

- 1-31 Go Hog Wild - Eat Country Ham Month
- 1-31 National Bake and Decorate Month
- 1-31 National Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- 1-31 National Chili Month
- 1-31 National Dental Hygiene Month
- 1-31 National Popcorn Poppin' Month
- 1-31 National Roller Skating Month
- 1-31 National Seafood Month
- 1-31 Spinach Lovers Month
- 1-31 Talk About Prescriptions Month
- 1-31 Vegetarian Month
- 5-11 Fire Prevention Week
- 6-11 Improve Your Home Office Week
- 11 National Cake Decorating Day
- 12-18 National Chestnut Week
- 13 Columbus Day
- 16 National Boss Day
- 18 Sweetest Day
- 22 National Nut Day
- 25 National Denim Day
- 26 Mother-in-Law Day
- 31 Halloween

## November

- 1-7 National Fig Week
- 1-30 National Georgia Pecan Month
- 1-30 National Pomegranate Month
- 1-30 National Roasting Month
- 1-30 Peanut Butter Lovers' Month

- 6 National Men Make Dinner Day
- 3 Sandwich Day
- 4 Election Day
- 8 Cook Something Bold and Pungent Day
- 11 Veteran's Day
- 15 National Bundt Day
- 17 Homemade Bread Day
- 23 Cashew Day
- 23-29 National Game and Puzzle Week
- 27 Thanksgiving Day
- 28 National Flossing Day

## December

- 1 National Pie Day
- 1-7 Cookie Cutter Week
- 1-31 National Tie Month
- 1-31 Safe Toys & Gifts Month
- 4 National Cookie Day
- 5 Bathtub Party Day
- 6 National Pawnbrokers Day
- 8 National Brownie Day
- 12 Poinsettia Day
- 13 National Cocoa Day
- 21 Winter Begins
- 22-29 Hanukkah
- 25 Christmas
- 28 National Chocolate Day
- 31 New Year's Eve

## Electrical Hazards...

*continued from page 1*

- ⚡ Provide well-lit walkways and porch lighting for trick-or-treaters. Make sure the walkways are clear for trick-or-treaters.
- ⚡ Don't overload extension cords or place them near, or in, snow or water.
- ⚡ Make sure electrical decorations are approved by a nationally recognized certification organization like "UL" (Underwriters Laboratory) and marked for outdoor use if you are using them outside. Check [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) or [www.ul.com](http://www.ul.com) for recalls. Many Halloween toys have been recalled in the past by the CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission).
- ⚡ Do not overload your circuit breakers or fuses.
- ⚡ Plug lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Portable outdoor GFCIs can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold.
- ⚡ Make sure decorative lighting is well-ventilated, protected from weather and a safe distance from anything flammable like dry leaves and shrubs. Do not coil power cords or extension cords while in use or tuck under rugs or drapes.
- ⚡ Turn out all lights and decorations before leaving or going to bed. Always have at least one fire extinguisher available and know how to use it.

All these admonitions of caution might take the fun out of the celebration but we do want you around for the next holiday! Enjoy but be safe.

Sources: Home Safety Council [www.homesafetycouncil.org](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org); Electrical Safety Foundation International [www.electrical-safety.org](http://www.electrical-safety.org)  
*Jack-o-Lantern graphic by Donnaree Hardy*

## Make the wise choice

*When it's time to buy a new water heater, there are a number of choices you can make. You can purchase a heater warranted for six or eight years, one that will be cheap to buy, but expensive to operate. Or you can invest in a Marathon and save money in operating costs...for a lifetime. Marathon - super efficient and warranted not to leak for as long as you own your home.*



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by Tom Tate

Ah yes, the glories of digital television have arrived and soon your trusty analog signal will be the stuff of memories. Those rabbit ears and roof-top antennas that have served so faithfully must now retire in the face of the relentless march of progress. At the stroke of midnight, February 17, 2009, all full-power television stations in the United States are converting their broadcasting from analog to 100% digital. This will result in better clarity of viewing and more programming options for the public. Okay, so the clarity will be better. The more options point is subject to debate according to whom you ask...

Individual households will be required to have a conversion box if their television sets are not served through cable, satellite or

fiber optics. In other words, your picture will vanish into a mass of grey fuzz if you stick with the old analog antennas. However, fear not, as Uncle Sam has a proposition. From now until March 2009, consumers will be able to apply for up to two \$40 coupons per household provided by the U.S. Government. The converter box is a one time purchase and prices are expected to range between \$50 and \$70 without the coupon. Coupons expire within 90 days of the date they are mailed out to consumers.

Local retailers will likely carry the boxes for purchase plus you can be sure there will be endless offers to sell these devices on television, radio and in print. A strategy of "Buyer Beware" will serve you well in the coming months. Be sure to do your homework and research any offers and the companies behind them. Your best bet is to get your converter from a source you already know and trust. Just as with any change of this magnitude, scammers will try to cash in. Don't fall for specially priced converters offered over the phone, through the mail or through e-mail.

Many broadcasters transmit digital programming now. Called "free to air", you may be able to pick up this content today with the proper antenna and geographical location. In fact, you might want to consider an HD antenna with your converter for best results (a new antenna is not necessarily required). Check here for a nice antenna

from our friends at Radio Shack <http://www.radioshack.com/family/index.jsp?categoryid=2032204&cp=2032057.2032187.2032189>. For help selecting an antenna, go here: <http://www.antennaweb.org/aw/welcome.aspx>.

While a new television may not be necessary, it might be just the excuse you have been seeking to upgrade that old vacuum-tube set to something with say an LCD flair. Digital content on an analog set, that's just not right. When purchasing your new set, be sure to calculate the energy consumption. You have been reading Currents regularly and know which technologies are the most energy efficient, right? Yes, this is the test you've been expecting.

For more on converters and the coupon program, check out these websites:

For coupon applications please visit: [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov)

For information on where to purchase converter boxes, please visit: [www.niadtvo.gov](http://www.niadtvo.gov)

For information on how to install a converter box, please visit: [www.DigitalTips.org](http://www.DigitalTips.org)

To learn more about options please visit: [www.DTVTransition.org](http://www.DTVTransition.org)

One last note - remember to recycle or reuse those old antennas and television sets. For the heavy duty electronics of a television, consider taking it to the proper recycling center. They can make sure it is properly handled. For antennas, have some fun! For those outside behemoths, how about using it as a solar clothes dryer? Or dress it up and press it into service as a scare crow. Get in touch with your artistic side and create some avant-garde sculpture. Rabbit ears are an excellent choice here. Or, pull the ears off and use them to roast marshmallows. The expandable feature allows you to adjust length as dictated by the size of the fire.

## "For All the Gold in Fort Knox"



by Barbara Taylor

You've probably heard this expression, maybe even used it before a hopeful roll of the dice. But have you ever wondered, "Just how much gold is there in Fort Knox?"

According to the US Department of the Treasury, "a large amount" of the US gold reserves is stored in the Fort Knox Bullion Depository in Kentucky. Hmm, thought so. A little more investigation uncovers a Fun Facts sheet published by the US Mint that lists the present holdings as 147.3 million ounces of gold. With current gold prices hovering around \$800 an ounce, that's \$117.8 billion!!! So you think you are smarter than a grade schooler (no legal infringements intended). Which weighs more? A pound of feathers or a pound of gold. For the answer go to [www.sussexrec.com](http://www.sussexrec.com) and check in the News section.

Gold is no longer transferred in and out of the depository. It is held there as an asset of the United States. And, surprisingly, Fort

Knox does not hold the largest store of gold in the US; that honor goes to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York's underground vault in Manhattan. Ever see "Die Hard with a Vengeance"?

A common misconception about the gold in Fort Knox is that it is stored there to back our US currency. This practice was discontinued many years ago. Our currency now is backed by the credibility of the US government.

While it is actually independent of the depository, Fort Knox is also home to the US Army Armor Center and School, responsible for training all US Armor Soldiers and Marines. Also located at Fort Knox is the Patton Museum of Armor and Cavalry, which you can visit for free. But don't think of stopping by to check out the gold; the depository never has been and probably never will be open to the public. Just ask Mr. Goldfinger... his unexpected visit went terribly awry, at least from his perspective.

## Currents

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