



**Tim Stewart,  
CEO/Manager**

## Planning Process Gets Underway

**D**uring the fourth quarter of each year, the cooperative's management and staff begin to prepare a series of planning documents that will provide the tools for financial planning for the cooperative in the upcoming year.

The board of directors meets with cooperative staff to review various department activities and the upcoming business plan.

Besides providing short-term goals and objectives, the business plan must also be consistent with the cooperative's long-range planning studies, goals, and objectives. It is vital that short-term goals and objectives are established to reach long-term objectives such as equity management plans, Rural Utilities Service requirements, and member needs and service requirements. The board of directors and management are aware of the need to maximize the value of expenditures and contain costs where appropriate and feasible. I will be providing more precise budgetary and work plan information in the upcoming months.

### VALUE OF ELECTRICITY! Electricity Remains a Great Value

I was visiting with a member the other day when he brought up that electricity prices seem to keep going up. He noticed that an investor-owned utility has asked for another six-plus percent increase, which seems to occur every year, from the Public Service Commission. That got me thinking about what the value of electricity really is, which is the crux of the following article.

As a member and owner of Clark Electric Cooperative, you have heard and read periodic comments about rising costs of electricity. As I am sure you are all aware, we here at Clark experienced a change to our base in March of 2013. Even though this was the first change to base rates in over five years, price adjustments are always difficult and unpopular with everyone, ourselves included. Over the years we have always shared the reasons behind the increases such as changing legislation, government policy changes, and environmental regulations that, in recent years, have required retrofitting several of Dairyland Power Cooperative's power generation facilities.

In light of these changes and obligations that have affected our costs, I would like to illustrate the continued incredible value you and your family enjoy with electric-

ity. Electricity is unique in it's extremely reliable and available to you at any time and in virtually any place you need it. It is also unique in that you are able to be billed and pay for it after you use it instead of having to fund it in advance or make lengthy contractual commitments as you must with cell phones, cable or satellite television, and Internet services.

Let's begin with a few value comparisons to some typical consumer goods we all purchase on a regular basis. I'll compare today's average national prices to the prices from 75 years ago, which is about the length of time many electric cooperatives in our area have been providing members with electricity. These price comparisons are from 1936 (Clark Electric Cooperative was incorporated April 1, 1937).

When people bought a pound of regular grocery store coffee in 1936, it would have cost them 14.5 cents. Today when you pick up the same amount of regular grocery store coffee you will pay 51 (yes, 51) times as

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### Value of Electricity? Priceless!

Compare the changes in prices for these consumer goods and services in the 75 years that have passed since 1936, when many electric cooperatives in our area went online.

	<b>1936</b> 8¢	<b>2013</b> \$1.41	The cost of a loaf of bread increased 17.9 times.
	<b>1936</b> \$3,925	<b>2013</b> \$313,700	The cost of a home increased 79.9 times.
	<b>1936</b> 5¢	<b>2013</b> 12¢	The price for a kWh of electricity has remained relatively consistent in comparison, and is still a great value!

Prices based on U.S. national average prices.  
 Data source: Touchstone Energy 2013

# Energy Assistance Available for Qualifying Households

The winter heating season has now begun. It's important for you to make every attempt to keep current on your electric bill. We understand that things do happen that put financial burdens on people. Certain government organizations can offer heating assistance or point you in the direction of a group that can help.

The Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) administers the federally funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Public Benefits Energy Assistance Program. LIHEAP and its related services help more than 230,000 Wisconsin households annually.

## ELIGIBILITY

- You may be eligible for weatherization services if:
  - You received benefits from Wisconsin's Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) or your gross income for the last three months is equal to or less than 60 percent of Wisconsin's state median income (SMI) for your family size. Your dwelling/apartment has not been weatherized before.
  - Your household meets certain priorities that may include a high energy burden or use, an elderly or disabled member or a child under six.

## Income Guidelines For The 2013-2014 WHEAP Heating Season

### 60 PERCENT OF STATE MEDIAN INCOME GUIDELINES

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	ONE MONTH	THREE MONTH	ANNUAL INCOME
1	2,058.00	6,173.00	24,692.00
2	2,691.00	8,073.00	32,290.00
3	3,324.00	9,972.00	39,887.00
4	3,957.00	11,871.00	47,485.00
5	4,590.00	13,771.00	55,083.00
6	5,223.00	15,670.00	62,680.00
7	5,342.00	16,026.00	64,105.00
8	5,461.00	16,382.00	65,529.00

For more information and application details, please contact your local office:

**Clark County** ..... 715-743-5233  
Department of Social Services

**Chippewa County** ..... 715-726-7862  
Department of Human Services/Economic Support

**Marathon County** ..... 715-842-3111  
Energy Services, Inc.

**Taylor County** ..... 715-748-6123  
Human Services Department

**Wood County**  
Department of Social Services  
Wisconsin Rapids Office..... 715-421-8600  
Marshfield Office ..... 715-387-6374

**Jackson County** ..... 715-284-4301  
Department of Health & Human Services

For more information or to locate your local agency, call toll free 1-866-HEATWIS (432-8947) or visit [homeenergyplus.wi.gov](http://homeenergyplus.wi.gov). Other Resources for Energy and Weatherization Programs—**CEC Website:** [www.cecoop.com](http://www.cecoop.com), click the Bill Payment Tab and then the energy assistant link for more information; **Focus on Energy Targeted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®:** 1-800-762-7077 or visit [www.focusonenergy.com](http://www.focusonenergy.com); **Keep Wisconsin Warm Fund – Bill Pay Assistance:** 1-800-981-WARM (9276) or visit [www.kwwf.org](http://www.kwwf.org). (Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration Brochure) ■

## Clark Electric Cooperative Gift Certificates Available

*Need ideas about what to get that someone special for the holidays?*

We all have someone on our shopping list who seems to have everything. How about giving them the gift of energy with a gift certificate from Clark Electric Cooperative? If they receive electric service from Clark Electric Cooperative, contact our Billing Department at 715-267-6188 or 1-800-272-6188 to learn how to obtain a gift certificate.



# Don't Take the Merry out of Your Christmas

By Sara Peterson, NRECA

**B**efore your family puts up a tree or hangs the stockings this holiday season, start a new tradition. Put safety at the top of your list. Too often the twinkling lights people see are on top of a fire truck or ambulance—the result of holiday accidents that could have been prevented.

Trees and lights are danger-prone holiday decorations. According to the United States Fire Administration, Christmas trees start an average of 260 house fires each season, resulting in more than \$16 million in property damage. Another 150 house fires are sparked by holiday lights and decorative lighting, costing \$8.9 million in damage. Typically, all of these fires are more severe and damaging, resulting in twice the injuries and five times the fatalities per blaze compared to average winter home fires.

Unsafe practices while putting up decorations are to blame for even more injuries. Nearly 6,000 people visit emergency rooms each year for falls. Four thousand more are treated for injuries associated with extension cords.

But safety steps don't end with bright decorations. Gifts trigger injuries, too. Toys that are not used as intended or used without proper supervision lead to avoidable accidents. Electrical shocks, burns, or injuries from sharp, pointed, or moving parts cause many of these injuries, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

When it is time to deck your halls, take these precautions to ensure the safety of you, your family, and holiday guests:

### TREES

- Make sure an artificial tree is labeled “fire resistant.” Be aware that “fire resistant” does not mean “fire proof.” Exercise caution when it comes to your tree.
- Make sure a live tree is fresh and green. Dry, brittle limbs and shedding needles are a breeding ground for sparks. Water a live tree regularly.



- Place any type of tree away from heat sources such as fireplaces, vents, and radiators.

### LIGHTS

- Do not overload electrical outlets. Most lights are designed to connect no more than three strands. Inspect the wires periodically to make sure they are intact and not warm to the touch.
- Never leave lights on overnight or when no one's home.
- Only use lights that have been approved by an independent testing laboratory.
- Replace any strands that show signs of damage, such as bare or frayed wires, broken bulbs, or loose connections. Faulty lights can send an electrical charge through a tree and electrocute anyone who comes in contact with a branch.

### GIFTS

- Select gifts that are age appropriate for the recipient. Toys recommended for older children pose too many risks for younger children to use safely.
- Educate children on electrical safety when using any new toy that requires an electrical connection.
- Review all instructions and safety guidelines for new products before you allow the child to use it.

Make sure safety ranks at the top of your “to do” list this holiday season. Like the old Christmas song says, there's no place like home for the holidays—especially when your family is safe.—Sources: *United States Fire Administration, Consumer Product Safety Commission* ■

## Happy Holidays

The board of directors and employees of Clark Electric Cooperative wish you a safe and happy holiday season. Our office will be closed Wednesday, December 25, and Wednesday, January 1 for the holidays.

## Value of Electricity *(Continued from page 4)*

much, or \$7.43. A loaf of bread 75 years ago could have been purchased for 8 cents, while a similar loaf today will sell for an average of at least \$1.41. Today's same size loaf of bread costs us 18 times as much as it would have in 1936. Do we even want to talk about the cost of a gallon of gasoline?

One final comparison for you—in 1936 you could have purchased a house for the average national price of \$3,925. That's almost hard to believe, considering that the average national price of a similar sized house in 2013 is \$313,700. It's true. In 75 years the price of a home has increased by 80 times.

Because the cooperative is locally owned by our members, we work for you on a not-for-profit basis (instead of being owned by stockholders seeking profits). This local member ownership, cooperative business model helps us to ensure that your electricity remains as affordable as possible. Keep in mind that prior to 1937, most of our sparsely populated rural areas didn't have electricity. The investor-owned utilities of the time said

there wasn't enough profit in it so it couldn't be done.

Did you know that in 1936 the average national cost per kilowatt hour was 5 cents? That was a real bargain. Even today, the average national cost per kilowatt hour is just slightly over two times that amount, or 12 cents per kilowatt hour. When we compare the doubling of cost per kilowatt hour to over a 50 times increase in price for coffee or even an 80 times increase in price for a house, you can see how we continue to get a great value for every dollar from our electricity purchases.

When you stop and think about it, I can't think of one other item that enhances our quality of life as much as electricity does. Electricity cools and heats our homes, cooks our meals, pumps and heats our water, powers our computers, provides lighting, cleans our clothes, milks cows, and offers a host of other labor-saving applications. Talk about entertainment: Electricity powers items such as TVs, VCRs, DVDs, stereos, gaming consoles, shopping centers, restaurants, and casinos, all for just pennies per kilowatt hour. When you look at all electricity does, I believe electricity provides a great value to cost.

Even though we are in an era of cost escalations and increasing demand for energy consumption, Clark Electric Cooperative is committed to providing safe, reliable, and affordable electricity. If you would like to trim your energy budget, these websites may be helpful: [www.togetherwesave.com](http://www.togetherwesave.com), [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov), [www.energysavers.gov](http://www.energysavers.gov), [www.cecoop.com](http://www.cecoop.com), and [www.focusonenergy.com](http://www.focusonenergy.com).

Electricity... where would we be without it?

In closing, as Christmas will soon be here, it seems appropriate to share a few thoughts about the holiday season. The holiday season brings to mind all sorts of memories of experiences and days gone by, such as decorating and lighting the Christmas tree, anticipating the aroma of home-baked Christmas cookies, or sharing together with our families and friends. Whatever memories you have from the past, it's the time of year when our actions can mean so very much to others. All of us at Clark Electric Cooperative hope you and your family have a very joyful holiday season. ■



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