



## *Digital devices impact energy use*

Ah, the Digital Age. We have gadgets galore, the ability to manage our homes in new and innovative ways, brilliant images and captivating sounds of modern entertainment options and of course, the internet. Clearly, digital devices reign supreme. Yet these cool new capabilities come with a couple of pitfalls; vampire loads and the issue of “technology reincarnation.”

Over the course of the Digital Age, electricity use has continued to increase. Families have multiple televisions. Computer prices have plummeted, meaning many homes now have multiple computers. Everyone in the family needs a cell phone. Gaming consoles and set top cable/satellite boxes satisfy our desire for entertainment.

Major appliances aside, most digital devices do not use 120-volt power, which is the standard voltage of a home outlet. They actually use a lot less. So, trying to plug your brand new smartphone directly into an outlet is going to lead to a fried device and lots of tears from someone. This is why low-voltage devices come with a power adapter. These “wall warts” as some term them, take the 120-volt electricity supplied by Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative and convert it to say, five volts. Unfortunately, most folks leave their adapters plugged in to make recharging easier. The problem with this approach is that the seemingly innocuous wall wart uses power even when it isn’t charging a device.

This invisible energy consumption is often called “vampire load.” Studies show that 5 to 10 percent of the average home’s energy use is from vampire loads. The only way to stop this is to unplug the power adapter when it is not in use or employ

smart power strips. These look like the typical power strip but with a twist--only one socket gets power all the time. When the device or appliance connected to it turns on and starts using power, the remaining sockets receive power too. This is perfect for entertainment systems, computer set ups and a variety of other situations.

Technological advances have steadily increased energy efficiency and reduced purchase prices. On its face, this seems like a good thing. Unfortunately, when replacing a product at the end of its life, the tendency is to go bigger, or continue to use the old tech. This is the second issue I noted--technology reincarnation.

*Our many  
Digital Devices  
impact energy use.*

The infographic features a central illustration of a white house with a red roof, surrounded by various household electronic devices. A speech bubble above the house contains three dots, suggesting connectivity. The devices include a smartphone, a laptop, a washing machine, a refrigerator, a television, a speaker, a small robot-like figure, and a power strip. Each device has a small screen displaying icons related to its function, such as laundry symbols or kitchen tools. The background is a light teal color, and the entire graphic is enclosed in a thin red border.

## ***continued. . . Digital devices impact energy use***

For example, flat screen television prices have plummeted as technology has evolved--and so has the amount of electricity they use. Consumers wander into the big box store and are dazzled by walls of giant, brilliant televisions. What they used to pay for the paltry 32" model now might net them a 50" giant. And who doesn't want to see their favorite show or sports event in near life size? But if you spring for the bigger TV, you won't benefit from the increased energy efficiency of the newer technology. The bigger model uses as much juice as the older, smaller TV, which likely ends up in another room (reincarnated in another setting) still using power.

Or refrigerators. These are the showpieces of the evolution of smart appliances. Many new models include touchscreens and cameras; they communicate over the internet and probably even keep food cold and make ice. Yet what often happens is the old refrigerator ends up in the basement or garage, reincarnated as a dedicated beverage unit or overflow.

I'll offer a couple words of advice to help you avoid--or at least reduce--the effects of vampire loads and technology reincarnation. Invest in smart power strips or make a point to use outlets where you can conveniently unplug power adapters when not in use. Don't oversize your replacement appliances and entertainment gear unless family needs dictate the larger capacities. And recycle the replaced appliances and equipment to stem technology reincarnation.

You will enjoy the Digital Age for a lot less.

*Tom Tate writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.. ■*

### **Did You Know?**

**Electric cooperatives have retired \$13.8 billion to members since 1988 — \$1 billion in 2015 alone. Because electric co-ops operate at cost, any excess revenues, called margins, are allocated and retired to members in the form of capital credits.**

**\$1 billion  
in 2015**

**\$13.8 billion  
since 1988**

*Source: National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation*

## *Avoiding the energy rush*

**D**id you know that when you use electricity often matters as much as how much electricity you consume?

It's no surprise that electricity use fluctuates throughout the day based on consumer demand, and electric co-ops must be able to provide enough electricity to meet the energy demands of their members during times of highest energy use, also known as "on-peak hours." Early-morning hours, when people often start their day, and evening hours, when people return to their homes after work, are common times for on-peak hours. To reduce peak energy demand and save money, many electric co-ops have created a time-of-use rate program to encourage electricity use during off-peak hours--when energy is less expensive to provide. Similar to saving money by attending a matinee, you can keep more money in your wallet simply by using electricity during an off-peak time period.

Using less on-peak power means lower costs for the co-op--and ultimately, lower rates for members.

Electric rates based on time of use offer consumers the ability to lower their electricity costs

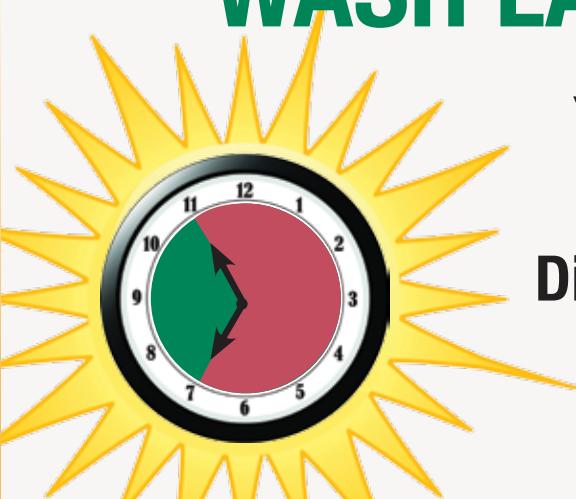
without reducing the amount of electricity used. By performing some of your daily chores, like running the dishwasher or doing laundry during off-peak hours, you can save on your utility bill. In a similar vein, plug electronic equipment, such as computers, printers, TVs and power tools into a power strip, then turn it off during peak hours.

You can also put technology to work for you. If you have a programmable thermostat, adjust the settings so your heating/cooling system syncs up with the off-peak rate periods. Use automatic timers to run hot tubs, pool pumps, water heaters and other appliances in the same way.

Saving energy can be simple. Remember, by shifting your energy use to off-peak times, you have the power to save on your monthly energy bill. To learn more about why time of use matters, watch a short video by visiting the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/TOUmatters>.

*Anne Prince writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.* ■

# WASH EARLY OR WASH LATE



**You Can  
Make A  
Difference!**



## Recipes

The following recipes were submitted by Cathy Skaife (Platteville). In regards to the Amish Sugar Cookie recipe, she shares that "This recipe was given to me by Donna Digman and they are delicious!!"

### Amish Sugar Cookies

- 2 sticks of butter or margarine
- 1 cup cooking oil
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 4 1/2 - 5 cups flour

(You may need to add a couple tablespoons)



Cream shortening and sugar. Add eggs and oil. Mix well. Add flour, cream of tartar, baking soda and vanilla. Roll in a ball and press down flat with a flat bottom glass dipped in sugar. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 - 12 minutes or until done. I sometimes frost and decorate them.

### Caramel Pecan Pie

- 3 eggs
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 cup ( 12-oz. jar) caramel topping
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine, melted
- 1 1/2 cups pecan halves
- 1 (9 -inch) unbaked pie crust



In a mixing bowl, beat eggs slightly with a fork. Add sugar, stirring until dissolved. Stir in topping and butter. Mix well. Stir in pecan halves. Pour filling into pie shell. Bake 45 minutes at 350 degrees or until knife inserted near center comes out clean. Cool thoroughly. Cover and store in refrigerator.

### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Heating your living space uses more energy than any other system in your home – typically making up about 42 percent of your utility bill. By combining proper equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings, you can save about 30 percent on your energy bill.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)

## Vegetation Management

Zielies Tree Service Inc will be working on the Eastman Substation north and south circuits in Crawford County.

**It is important for SREC to maintain its rights-of-way for the following reasons:**

- Accessibility for field crews, vehicles and equipment
- Fire prevention
- Reliable electric service
- Quality service with the reduction of outages and blinks
- Safety for workers and the public
- Meeting state and federal code requirements

On a daily basis, SREC employees and contractors are working throughout the area, at times on your property, to operate and maintain the electric system and our rights-of-ways. We appreciate your cooperation. If you have questions, please contact Jay at [jgardner@srec.net](mailto:jgardner@srec.net) or call 800-236-2141, ext. 566.

## WATT'S HAPPENING

*Watt's Happening* is published monthly as an information service to the member-owners of Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative.

Any questions or comments can be directed to *Watt's Happening*, c/o Heidi Pierce, Editor, Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative, 231 North Sheridan, Lancaster, WI 53813 or telephone (608) 723-2121 or toll free 800-236-2141.

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