

## Don't Give Up on Energy-Efficient Appliances



**MESSAGE FROM MANAGER ALAN LESLEY**

A few months ago, as you might have seen in the pages of this magazine, the federal government provided about \$23 million in rebate incentives for Texans who purchased Energy Star-rated appliances to replace older, inefficient ones.

The response to the rebate program was overwhelming, and the available money was quickly snapped up. The heavy response meant that a good number of you who tried to reserve a rebate on the phone or online had no luck.

I know this process may have been frustrating, but the state bureau that administered the program is working to make any future programs run more smoothly. So please, don't let it stop you the next time such an offer comes around.

If you received a rebate this year, you not only received money up front, but you also made a smart investment that will lead to savings in the long run. Energy-efficient appliances simply use less energy, and that translates to lower electricity bills.

For those who didn't receive a rebate, I urge you to not give up on energy-efficiency improvements. The payoff might not be as quick as it would have been with a rebate, but in the long run, you will still be ahead of the game.

Depending on the age and efficiency of your current appliances, you could see a return on your investment in a matter of months. For instance, a modern, efficient dishwasher, through

improvements in motor efficiency and insulation, uses about 10 percent less electricity for the same number of loads than an older, less efficient model, according to Energy Star studies. And these models also use less water, another source of savings. So every time you run a load of dishes, you are saving money with a new, efficient dishwasher.

Once you're past the break-even point (about six years for a dishwasher), where the amount of savings offsets the price you paid for the dishwasher, you are "making" money on that investment, because you are buying less electricity. And that's just one example of the savings available.

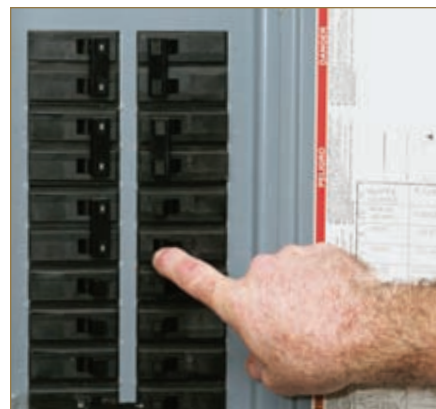
Some other appliances worth upgrading to Energy Star models include clothes washers, water heaters, refrigerators and freezers.

One of the biggest energy users in a typical home is the heating and cooling system. Replacing it, of course, can be a major expense. But, if you have the money to invest, the payoff after the new system pays for itself can be substantial. In addition, the federal government offers tax credits for such improvements that will bring an even quicker payoff. You can further expedite the payoff by doing your homework and choosing the type of system—as well as energy-efficiency ratings—that are best suited to your home.

I hope you look at energy efficiency as a sound investment. Crunch the numbers, and you might see that the rate of return, as a percentage of your initial outlay, will beat that of some other options.

Increased efficiency makes sense for Comanche Electric Cooperative members like you, because it gives you the same service for less money.

Don't let the lack of a rebate stop you from an investment in your home that makes a lot of cents.



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## Give Your Breaker Box a Workout

Do you exercise your breakers? Unless your electricity suddenly shuts off, it's likely you rarely give a second thought to the health of the breaker box where your home's electrical switches "live." But to keep it in good shape, you should open it periodically for a tuneup.

Breakers should be "exercised," or turned on and off, about once a year to make sure they have not gotten stuck and to keep them in good working order.

First, protect your freezer, refrigerator, air conditioner and computers by unplugging or turning them off. Then flip each breaker off and on three times.

If you have ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) in your breaker box, you should test them about once a month. GFCIs can break a faulty circuit and protect you from shock only if operating properly. Because a GFCI does not have an alert if it has become defective, it's important to test them regularly.

To test a GFCI, push the "test" button. The breaker handle will go to the middle or "off" position if it's working properly. To reset it, move the breaker to the "off" position, and then to the "on" position. If the test fails, call a licensed electrician to have it replaced.

AT COMANCHE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

# Conservation Matters



## 10 HOT TIPS for Green Summer Cooking

BY JOHN BRUCE

**K**ee your cool this summer when preparing meals. You can save money and reduce your carbon footprint with these 10 easy tips for going green when cooking summer meals (and year-round, for that matter).

1. Cook outdoors when possible to reduce the load on your air conditioner. Try a solar cooker or oven. Solar cookers and ovens are by far the most energy-efficient cooking appliances. They require no fuel, reduce unwanted summer heat in your home by taking cooking outside and can accommodate any food a slow cooker can. Some solar ovens can reach 500 degrees. To learn more, visit [www.solarcooking.org](http://www.solarcooking.org).

2. Toaster ovens, convection ovens and slow cookers get the job done with less energy than conventional stovetops or ovens, especially when preparing smaller meals.

3. Use as small a pan, as little water and as little pre-heating time as possible.

4. Bake in glass or ceramic ovenware instead of metal. You can turn the temperature down by 25 degrees, and foods will cook in the same amount of time.

5. Don't open the door and peek in the oven. Use the oven window instead!

6. Regularly clean burner pans (the pans under the burners that catch grease). Clean pans more effectively reflect heat to the cookware. Dirty burner pans absorb



**Funny-looking, but functional, solar cookers and ovens are by far the most energy-efficient cooking appliances.**

SOLAR COOKERS INTERNATIONAL

heat and reduce efficiency.

7. Use flat-bottomed cookware that rests evenly on the surface of electric coil burners or solid-disk or radiant elements under smooth-top ceramic glass.

8. Avoid thawing food in the microwave. Thawing food in the fridge is far more energy efficient, contributes to the fridge's cooling and is safer than thawing food on the countertop or in the sink.

9. Use residual heat. Turn the stove or oven off before cooking is done to allow cooking to continue while reducing energy use. An electric burner element can be turned off two minutes before

removing the cookware since it remains hot. Ovens can be turned off 20 minutes before cooking's done.

10. Consider substituting one or more stovetop burners with an induction cooker. The typical efficiency of an induction cooker is 84 percent whereas gas stovetops are 40 percent efficient, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. What's more, induction cookers (which require magnetic cookware such as cast iron or enameled steel) produce as much heat as gas and are less costly to operate than a conventional electric burner. To learn more, visit [www.theinductionsite.com](http://www.theinductionsite.com).

*John Bruce is a freelance writer who writes on energy efficiency and other topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

# You Might be from Rural America if ...

BY SHIRLEY DUKES

I'm thinking about writing a book. It all came about one morning when I sat at a red light, looked both ways, and drove right on through it. Fortunately for me, it was 6 a.m. and no one was about, so I didn't cause any major pileups—and no police officer came chasing after me to give me a ticket. But I must say that as soon as I realized what I had done, my heart dropped into the pit of my stomach, and I almost had to pull over to get control of myself. My first thought was, "Well, you know you are from rural America when you use a red light as a four-way stop!" Then I thought, "Hey, that would make a good book: You Know You Are From Rural America If ..."

So I quizzed my co-workers about their interpretations of rural America. These were some of their responses:

You know you are from Rural America If ...

- Your nearest neighbor is more than two miles away.

- You know the guys who work on your power lines by name.
- Your favorite entertainment is listening to the police scanner so you can keep up with all the local gossip.
- You drive more miles of dirt road than pavement to get to town.
- The animal control officer knows to call you when your brother-in-law's animals are out.
- You get five calls asking if you know that your teenage daughter is in the next town.
- You go walking for exercise, and everyone keeps stopping and asking if you need a ride.
- Your neighbors are your friends.
- You call a business and speak to a live person instead of a machine.

The thing is, Comanche Electric Cooperative's service territory is pretty much rural. Yes, we've got a few towns here

If these scenes look familiar, you might be from Rural America.





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and there, but there no big cities and no high-traffic areas. Our seven counties pretty much sum up what rural America is all about. It's all about Pow-Wows, Peach and Melon Festivals, Reunion Celebrations, Ripfest, Frontier Days and Fandangles. It's all about rodeos and parades, country music and street dances. We have Doodle Bug Trains and car and tractor shows, bicycle rides and 10-kilometer runs. It's all about stock shows and youth fairs.

Summer in rural America is all about baseball and softball, lakes and swimming holes, enjoying a cool watermelon on a hot day, snow cones at noon and fireflies at dusk. Life in rural America is slower-paced than life in the cities. We know how to have good, clean fun right at home, and when we want a change of pace we can run up to the city and have a fun-filled day—but we are always ready to come home.

But while life may be simpler here, it doesn't mean we are simple people. We enjoy our culture, and we have plenty of it. We have art shows and celebrations in the park, talent shows and dinner theaters, golf tournaments and wildflower shows. And we have our share of old depots and movie theaters.

Comanche Electric Cooperative is proud of the heritage and culture that is rural America. We strive to be rural right alongside our member-owners. We are rural enough that we still answer the phone when you call instead of sending you to a "Press 1 for English" switchboard. Our employees still hang banners at Christmas time and change out lights at ballparks. They walk alongside you at Relay for Life and help package food and gifts at Christmas time for needy families.

We are your friends and neighbors. We are rural America.

But like rural America, the business of delivering reliable electric service is not a simple endeavor. Comanche Electric Cooperative employs state-of-the-art equipment and software to better serve you, our member-owners. At CECA, we were way ahead of our larger, investor-owned competitors by implementing smart-metering systems almost a decade ago. Our lines are equipped with SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) capabilities that aid our linemen in locating faults and repairing lines in a quicker and more efficient manner. Most of the service trucks in the CECA fleet are equipped with laptops with digital mapping software that allows crews to track their vehicle in relation to the system, doing away with bulky and costly-to-produce paper maps. This digital mapping software allows the linemen to look up consumer information and locate crucial equipment in the field, which aids in getting power restored more efficiently.

Comanche Electric Cooperative is in the beginning stages of collecting GPS (global positioning system) points at each crucial pole location to help improve the accuracy of our digital maps and enhance the use of the data received from our SCADA-enabled equipment. These are just a few of the small steps CECA is taking into the ever-evolving world of utility technologies, but they are huge leaps for our linemen out working on the lines.

Thank you, rural America, for allowing Comanche Electric Cooperative to be the company we are. It is a privilege to serve you, and we do it with pride.





**It saves you money. It costs you nothing.**  
*Pretty much the opposite of your kids.*

To help out with the increasing cost of raising your growing tots, and a whole lot more, Comanche Electric Cooperative offers members the Co-op Connections program.

The card entitles you to savings on prescriptions, travel, gifts and much more. You'll find discounts at local merchants in town as well as national businesses online.

The card is yours. The savings are yours.  
All because you're a member of Comanche Electric.

Visit [www.ceca.coop](http://www.ceca.coop) for all the details.

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*Looking out for you.*



# Keep Independence Day Celebrations Free of Accidents

Did you know American Independence Day is celebrated in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and England in acknowledgment of their friendship with the U.S.?

Whether celebrating at home or abroad, here are some tips to keep celebrations safe.

Fireworks are a much-anticipated highlight, but also present a significant danger. The best option is to attend a public fireworks display and leave it to the professionals. But if your holiday isn't complete without setting off a few of your own, please take these precautions:

- Follow all local laws and read and follow product directions.
- Do not allow children to handle fireworks.
- Make sure fireworks are used on a hard, stable surface in an open, clear area and never attempt to re-light a "dud."
- Make sure there is water nearby in case of an emergency.

If swimming is part of your plan, make sure children are always supervised in or around the pool. Take responsibility for your children even in the company of other adults.

Many people travel over the holiday, and congestion, accidents, road rage, and drinking-and-driving incidents can quickly turn the holiday into a tragedy. Make sure your car is in excellent condition and that you are rested, alert and sober if you are driving. Plan ahead for a designated driver if appropriate.

If barbecue is on the menu, be careful when lighting the grill, and make sure an adult is always present around a heated grill.

And, don't forget to take special precautions with your pets. Fireworks can be terrifying for them, so keep them indoors.

Drink plenty of water, wear sunscreen and have a great Independence Day!



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FIND US ON THE WEB AT  
[WWW.CECA.COOP](http://WWW.CECA.COOP)

### YOUR "LOCAL PAGES"

This section of Texas Co-op Power is produced by Comanche EC each month to provide you with information about current events, special programs and other activities of the cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact Shirley at the Comanche office or at [sdukes@ceca.coop](mailto:sdukes@ceca.coop).

Comanche EC  
will be closed  
Monday, July 5,  
in observance of  
Independence Day.

