August 2014 "Owned By Those We Serve"

FEC POWER Source

Vol. 18 No. 08

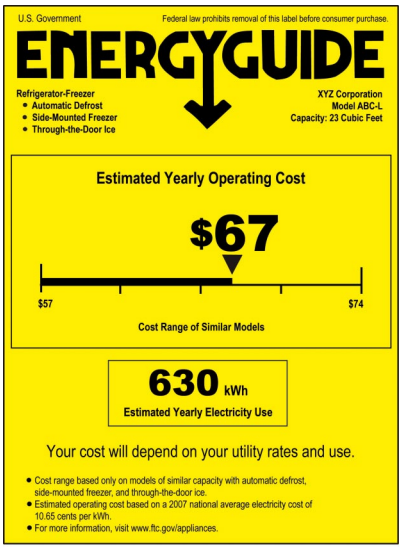
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Look For The Energy Label

Over $1200 of the average annual American household budget goes toward operating appliances, and heating and cooling equipment. Those energy bills, though, can be reduced by using high-efficiency appliances and space conditioning equipment.

When you shop for a major appliance, look for the yellow EnergyGuide labels. There are three types of labels: Energy Cost, Energy Efficiency Rating, and Generic.

Energy Cost: These labels provide you with the estimated annual cost of the energy needed to operate the appliance. The bar beneath the annual cost shows the range of operating costs of competing brands and models of similar size and features. At the bottom of the label is a chart that allows you to estimate what your cost to operate that appliance will be, based on your local utility rate.



Energy Efficiency Rating: These labels indicate the energy efficiency of climate control appliances such as room air conditioners. The large number in the center of the label indicates the efficiency. The larger the number, the more efficient the appliance. This label also provides a range of ratings for similar conditioners and a cost/use chart that allows you to calculate the energy cost of the appliance based on local utility rates.

Generic: This label appears on furnaces and contains general information on how to save energy. It also directs you to an energy fact sheet developed by the manufacturers. This sheet contains information on the seasonal efficiency of a particular model and the efficiencies of the highest and lowest efficiency model with similar capabilities.

So remember, the price of the appliance is not the only consideration to be taken, in the long run, the operating cost may prove more important.

How Geothermal Works

One of the biggest users of electricity during the summer is air conditioning. Heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) accounts for about half of a home's annual energy use.

The modern air conditioner was invented by Willis Carrier in 1902 for use in a printing company and while they have become more efficient, reliable, and common in homes, they a work the same as the original. They all have an indoor coil that cools and removes moisture from the home's air. An outdoor coil dumps heat from the house outside. It takes energy to force heat to flow from inside the house where it's cool to the hot outdoors. The greater the temperature difference between inside and outside, the more energy it takes.

In addition to raising your thermostat setting, there are things you can do to help your air conditioner be more efficient. Changing the air filter frequently, keeping air vents open and unblocked helps air circulate. Sealing the ductwork reduces air

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GEO *from* **PAGE 1**

leaks. Getting a periodic checkup by a NATE-certified technician is also a good idea.

If you are considering a new HVAC system for your home, you have a lot of choices. One significant opportunity for reducing the cost of operating your HVAC system is to install a Geothermal or Ground-Source Heat Pump. Geothermal systems use an outdoor coil to get rid of heat to the hot outdoors by using coils buried in the ground – either in horizontal loops, vertical wells, or ponds. Because the temperature of the ground is cooler in the summer than the air, the system doesn't have to work as hard to cool your home and saves you energy and money. The same system can also reduce your heating costs. Even when the air temperature is below freezing, the ground is much warmer. Most geothermal systems can also heat water!

Geothermal systems are more expensive to install and they should only be installed by a skilled and trained technician. Currently, there is a 30% tax credit and a 30% federal tax credit available to those who choose to install geo systems. This combined 60% tax credit makes this type of system very attractive – not to mention that it consume up to 70% less energy to cool and heat your home! Additionally, Farmers' Electric Cooperative (FEC) has a very appealing rebate in place, offering our members $4,000 cash-back to go geo!

For more information about this and other efficient HVAC systems, call FEC today and ask to speak to someone in Member Services.

Test GFCIs Monthly

A ground-fault circuit interrupter is a fast-acting breaker designed to shut off power immediately when it senses a break in the current – such as when water comes into contact with the circuit. They are most often found in kitchens, bathrooms, laundry rooms or outdoors in garages, or near pools or spas. GFCIs can save a life by preventing electrical shock.

But GFCIs can be damaged by voltage surges from lightning, utility switching or simply from normal usage, and there may be no outward evidence of the damage. If they are not working properly, they are not protecting you from shock or electrocution.

GFCIs should be tested once a month to make sure they are working properly.

Malfunctioning GFCIs do not provide shock protection. Have a licensed, qualified electrician check the GFCI and correct the problem if your GFCI is not working.

To test a GFCI:

1. Push the RESET button.
2. Plug in a night-light or similar device
3. The night-light should be on.
4. Press the TEST button.
5. The night-light should turn OFF.
6. Push the RESET button again.
7. The night-light should turn back ON.
8. If the night-light did not turn OFF, the GFCI is not working properly.

The GFCI label isn't enough – test the outlets regularly to be certain they are working properly.

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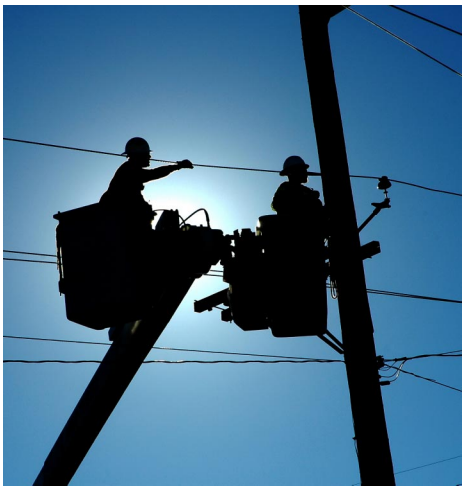

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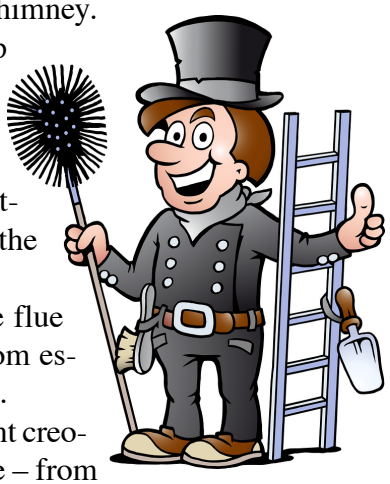
It's Time For A Fireplace Checkup

Crisp, fall days aren't too far ahead of us, so now is a good time to check your fireplace for safety and efficiency.

Even if you're still using an energy-inefficient wood fireplace, you can minimize the heat loss it causes by taking a few precautions:

- Close the fireplace damper until you're ready to burn a fire. Open it only while the fire is burning, and close it again once you have put the fire out. An open damper in an unused fireplace sucks heated air right out of your house and sends it out through the chimney.
- Prevent air from your room from going up the chimney by installing tempered glass doors on the front of the fireplace. You also can direct the heat that the fire produces into your room by installing a heat-air exchange to blow the warm air into the house.



- Reinforce the seals around your fireplace flue damper. Tight seals prevent heated air from escaping through the fireplace and chimney.
- Insulate your chimney with liners to prevent creosote – a byproduct of exhaust from the fire – from building up in it. That buildup can make your fireplace less efficient an create a hazard for an unintended fire in the chimney.
- Call a chimney sweep certified by the Chimney Safety Institute of America to clean your fireplace and chimney every year before the heating season begins. The chimney sweep can advise you about safety issues and malfunctioning parts.
- If you don't use your fireplace, have a chimney expert plug and seal it so it won't rob your home of its comfortable, heated air.

POWER TIP

Save ENERGY

Save MONEY

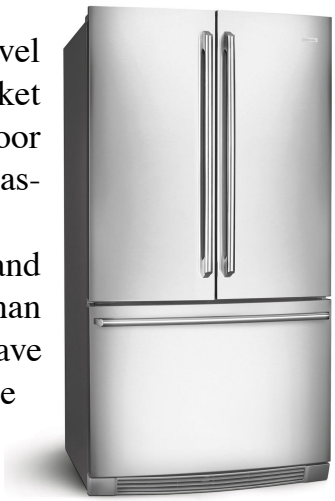
During summer months, our homes can be extremely hot, making living conditions uncomfortable. But while you're putting your air conditioner to work, try adding a ceiling fan into the mix – fans can help you raise your thermostat setting by about 4 degrees and still feel just as comfortable.

But remember to turn fans off in unoccupied rooms. Fans cool people, not rooms, and you're wasting energy by leaving them on if there isn't anyone in the room.

Keep Your Frig Humming

The refrigerator can be one of the home's biggest energy hogs. But you can help it run more efficiently by:

- Keeping it level. A fridge on an uneven floor can lean forward just enough to prevent the door gasket from sealing tightly when the door is closed.
- Checking gaskets. Even on a level floor, a refrigerator's door gasket can wear out over time. If your door isn't closing tightly, replace the gasket.
- Filling it up. A full refrigerator and freezer work more efficiently than a half-empty one. If you don't have enough food and beverages in the refrigerator, fill it with jugs of water until about two-thirds of the empty space is taken. Same goes for the freezer: Pack bags full of ice and scatter them around in the freezer so it's at least three-quarters full.
- Cooling food before refrigerating it. Putting hot food into a refrigerator or freezer forces the unit to adjust its temperature to compensate for the heat. Set food out for a short time, letting it cool, before refrigerating it.



- Covering food before storing it in the fridge. Uncovered food and liquids release moisture and can force the compressor to work harder.
- Moving the unit out of the sunshine and away from the oven. It has to work harder to keep everything cool when the outside of it is exposed to a heat source.
- Leaving it some breathing room. So it can properly ventilate, a refrigerator needs some clearance between its top and the cabinets above it and between its sides and the walls. Likewise, don't use the top of a refrigerator for storage. Bread bags and other items can restrict airflow.
- Most importantly, cleaning it. Regularly wipe dust, dirt, and cobwebs from the top of the fridge and from the coils behind it. You may have to remove a cardboard cover to expose the coils and compressor fan. When doing this, unplug the unit first. Don't forget to plug it back in after cleaning.

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