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9191 U.S. Hwy. 231

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637 Coosa River Pkwy.



# Holiday Values

This time of the year brings people together to celebrate family traditions and reminisce about Christmases gone by. As my wife Amy and I look at our grown children, Becca, Tori and Isaac with his lovely wife Kim, we hope we've instilled an appreciation of attaining value for a dollar. With that in mind, we know this season involves a lot more cooking and shopping for our family meals, which we want to be special since they don't occur as often as they once did, but we also want to capitalize on savings.



This same emphasis of savings extends to you, the members. As a member and owner of CAEC, you receive several exclusive, money-saving benefits that come in handy, especially this time of year. As a matter of fact, did you know that you can save at local and national businesses with your Co-op Connections® Card simply for being a member of CAEC? As you make your purchasing plans, don't forget to check out these deals. An updated listing is in the middle of this magazine. These same vendors are also listed on our website ([www.caec.coop](http://www.caec.coop)) and your app store (search "co-op connections").

CAEC also offers savings to you through our energy efficiency programs, products and services. One service in particular that I think is highly beneficial is usage monitoring, which allows you to track your daily power consumption. Almost all of us have those family members who continuously turn up the heat in the winter months, increasing usage. Visit our website to sign-up. Members who use this service are generally able to lower their power bills, simply because they are more aware of their usage on an ongoing basis.

And it's never too early to think about a New Year's Resolution. Once the Christmas tree comes down and the decorations are stored away, this may be a good time to contemplate starting the New Year with an energy audit. The feedback from the assessment can help you make plans for the coming year to make your home more energy efficient.

Last month many of you received one of the best values – the return of margins through a general retirement of capital credits to those who actually used the service during the years of 1988-89. As a not-for-profit organization, we operate at cost, receiving only enough revenue to run and expand the business – with no need to raise rates for the purpose of generating profits. So, the margins made each year by your cooperative are eventually returned to our members in the form of capital credits, or members' equity (ownership), in the co-op.

So while you're looking for those holiday specials, remember that your co-op wants to add value to your energy dollars all year long.

Have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Tom Stackhouse  
President/CEO

# Payment Options for Everyone

In today's fast-paced world, we all need a convenient way to pay our bills. That's why CAEC offers payment options for your power bill, whether it is with the click of a mouse or in person.

## Payment Options:

### **Mobile App**

Keep track of your account, pay or view your bill and more with the CAEC App for Android and Apple devices. It's free and can be found by searching "CAEC" in your app store.

### **By Phone**



You can make a payment anytime with our automated phone system by calling (800) 545-5735. Easy-to-follow instructions will guide you through the process.

### **Draft**

Draft payment is the most convenient option we offer and you never have to worry about being late with a payment. Your bill is automatically deducted from a checking or credit card account ensuring prompt payment on your account.

### **Online**

Pay your bill any time of the day by taking advantage of our online payment system at [www.caec.coop](http://www.caec.coop).

### **24-Hour Self-Service Kiosk**

Available at our Prattville Headquarters, Clanton and Wetumpka service centers, our kiosks allow you to pay your bill with cash, check or credit card.

## Billing Options:

### **Levelized Billing**

Prevents drastic changes in your bill – amount is based on your average usage for 12 months.

### **E-Bill**

We will send your bill by e-mail at the same time of the month as you presently receive your paper bill, which can be conveniently paid online.

### **Prepay**

Prepay is just what it sounds like, paying for electricity prior to its consumption, putting you in control of your energy use.

*To learn more about or to sign up for any of these choices, call us at (800) 545-5735 and find the option that works best for you!*

## Service Centers

Payments can be made in person at any of our service centers located in Clanton, Prattville, Rockford and Wetumpka, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. The Clanton, Rockford and Wetumpka service centers open at 7:30 a.m., close from noon to 1 p.m. and close for business at 4:30 p.m. The Prattville office offers lobby and drive through service during the regular business hours of 7:30 a.m. through 4:30 p.m. We also have an authorized payment center located at Maplesville Supermarket.

**Scam Alerts:** CAEC does not use other companies to disconnect services or solicit payments. If you receive a call from a person claiming to be a cooperative employee and asking for credit card, financial, account, or Social Security information, and you suspect fraud, do not give that information to the caller. Instead, ask for the caller's name and then call us at (800) 545-5735 to verify whether the call was from one of our employees before supplying any information.

# Cooperative Principles in Summary

**C**ooperatives have one significant characteristic in common: our operations are based on seven core principles. These principles and values were adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA). Co-ops trace the root of these principles to the first modern cooperative founded in Rochdale, England, in 1844.

Throughout the year, we have highlighted each principle in *Alabama Living* to help you gain a better understanding of what makes a cooperative different from other traditional business models and how we exemplify these values each day. Below is a brief summary of each of the seven principles and the magazine issue in which it was featured:

1

## Voluntary & Open Membership

*Voluntary and Open Membership: Cooperatives are voluntary organizations; open to all people able to use its services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination. (March 2015)*

This principle includes each member being equally responsible and, just as importantly, being treated as an equal. Any person can participate in the cooperative and is to be treated justly and fairly with the same rights and benefits as every other member, as long as the individual accepts the requirements of being a member.

2

## Democratic Member Control

*Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights – one member, one vote – and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner. (April 2015)*

As a member-owner, you elect the governing body who determines cooperative policies and oversees its activities. Each member of the Board of Trustees is also a member of the cooperative and receives electric service from CAEC. Consequently, your elected trustees have a vested interest in the quality of service that is received as well as the cost of electricity to the membership.

3

## Member's Economic Participation

*Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefitting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership. (May 2015)*

By laying out the responsibilities of members and the cooperative in regard to how funds should be handled, cooperatives receive money to operate through two main channels: rates, or the funds supplied from your bill payments, and through loans from the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (NRUCFC) or federal agencies such as the Rural Utilities Service (RUS). As a member, you have a say through your elected board of trustees who sets the strategic direction of the co-op with management and staff. By developing equity and operational plans, it is determined how much of our financial obligations are paid from rates and with loans. As a not-for-profit organization, your cooperative operates at cost, receiving only enough revenue to run and ensure the future viability of the business. Cooperatives are unique in returning margins through capital credits to local members who used the service.



## Value of **Membership**

**4**

### **Autonomy & Independence**

*Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy. (June 2015)*

Despite our obvious similarities, each co-op is different, mainly because the areas we serve are unique. Remaining autonomous and independent allows us to best serve the needs of you, our owners. Local service and attention to your distinctive needs explain why having local control and governance is best for each electric co-op. In spite of our established relationships with different associations, none of these organizations can direct the business of CAEC. Decisions about how to deliver your electricity at the lowest possible cost are left to our board of trustees, who are elected by you.

**5**

### **Education, Training and Information**

*Cooperatives provide education and training for members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperative. Members also inform the general public about the nature and benefits of cooperatives. (September 2015)*

Through tools such as a printed and digital magazine, social media, our website, information included with your bill and more, we communicate a variety of topics directly to our members. We also endeavor to educate everyone, co-op members and the general public, about the cooperative business model. Our educational outreach includes all ages and we sponsor programs to both educate and empower the youth in our service area. We educate our elected officials on the role of cooperatives and the issues that we, and our members, are facing in today's regulatory climate.

**6**

### **Cooperation Among Cooperatives**

*Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structure. (October 2015)*

Cooperatives serve their members best by working together – because there is power in numbers. At the most basic level, electric cooperatives know how to collaborate for the greater good, either by supporting one another in times of crisis or by partnering on projects.

**7**

### **Concern for Community**

*Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members. (November 2015)*

Cooperatives like CAEC came together using the cooperative business model as their guide to address a key concern for their communities – to bring safe, reliable and affordable electric power to our area – that defined our purpose. In addition, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of communities through policies and programs. Through education, economic development initiatives and CAEC employees' involvement in the communities within our service area, we will continue to work alongside our members for the sustainable development of the region we serve.

Over 170 years later, cooperatives still abide by these seven principles that allow us to do business with the members in mind – serving you in the most efficient, reliable and valuable way possible. ■



# Live Christmas Tree Safety Tips

**F**ew traditions are as unique to the holidays as adorning our homes with brightly lit Christmas trees. Many people choose to display live trees in their homes, and while this timeless exhibit adds to the magic of the season, it may also increase the risk of holiday fires and injuries. A primary concern with a live Christmas tree is fire danger, often brought on by the combination of electrical malfunctions and a drying tree.

According to the National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA), there are several things to do when looking for a fresh tree. If you're heading to a retail lot, look for one that is well lit but keeps the trees in a shaded area to prevent them from drying out. Ask the seller questions, such as when they received their trees; are they delivered once at the beginning of the season or in several shipments? If there are several varieties of trees, ask the retailer which performs best in your climate, as some species last longer and remain fresher than others in certain environments.

Once you select a potential tree, know how to do a fresh-check. The NCTA suggests that you run a branch through your enclosed hand – the needles should not come off easily. Bend the outer branches - they should be pliable. If they are brittle and snap easily or the needles come off without effort, the tree is too dry and could be a fire hazard. Other warning signs are excessive needle loss, discolored foliage, musty odor and wrinkled bark. A good rule of thumb is if you are unsure as to whether a tree is fresh, select another, and if all the trees on the lot don't look fresh, find another retailer.

When you get your live tree home, make a fresh cut to remove about a half inch disk of wood from the base of the trunk before putting it in the stand. Do not cut it at an angle or in a V-shape which makes the tree less sturdy and reduces the amount of water available to the tree. Taking a few minutes to do this will im-

prove your tree's water intake, and make it harder for your tree to catch fire. As a general rule, tree stands should provide one quart of water per inch of stem diameter. Check the stand daily to ensure the water level doesn't go below the base of the tree. An additional safeguard is to place the tree away from sources of heat (fireplaces, space heaters, vents).

To reduce your risk of electrical malfunctions and danger when it comes to décor, use low heat lights such as LED's or miniature bulbs and inspect the light sets (new or old) for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections before use. Be careful where you place electrical cords. Don't run electrical cords under rugs; walking traffic can weaken the insulation and the wires can overheat, increasing the chances for fire or electrical shock. Purchase lights, electric decorations and extension cords that are UL-listed only. And always turn off the tree lights when leaving the house or going to bed.

Electrical malfunctions can also ignite artificial trees and you should take the same precautions as you would with a real tree regarding tree placement and decorations.

By following these safety tips, you can keep your holidays merry and bright with the beauty of a real tree in your home. ■



*Offices will be closed Dec. 24 & 25 for Christmas  
and Jan. 1 for New Year's Day*



# Recipe for *Efficiency* from CAEC

## How to Use the EnergyGuide Label on Appliances

Appliances account for about 20 percent of your household's energy consumption, with refrigerators and clothes dryers at the top of the list.

When you're shopping for appliances, you can think of two price tags – the purchase price and the operating cost for the appliance during its lifetime. You'll be paying on that second price tag every month with your utility bill for the next 10 to 20 years, depending on the life of the appliance.

Look for the ENERGY STAR label when you shop for a new appliance. ENERGY STAR appliances have been identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency and Department of Energy as being energy-efficient products. They usually exceed minimum federal standards by a substantial amount because they use at least 10 to 25 percent less energy than most non-qualified models.

To help you determine whether an appliance is energy efficient, the federal government requires most appliances to display the bright yellow and black EnergyGuide label.

Here's a guide to help you interpret and use the EnergyGuide label:

The diagram shows a yellow EnergyGuide label for a refrigerator-freezer. At the top, it says "U.S. Government" and "Federal law prohibits removal of this label before consumer purchase." The main title is "ENERGYGUIDE" with a large downward arrow. Below the title, it lists "Refrigerator-Freezer" with features: "Automatic Defrost", "Side-Mounted Freezer", and "Through-the-Door Ice". To the right, it says "XYZ Corporation Model ABC-L" and "Capacity: 23 Cubic Feet". The central part of the label is titled "Estimated Yearly Operating Cost" and shows "\$67" in a large font, with a range from "\$57" to "\$74" below it. Below that, it shows "630 kWh" for "Estimated Yearly Electricity Use". At the bottom, it says "Your cost will depend on your utility rates and use." and includes a list of footnotes and the ENERGY STAR logo.

**Lists key features of the appliance you're looking at and the similar models that make up the cost range below.**

**The maker, model, and size tell you exactly what product this label describes.**

**What you might pay to run the appliance for a year, based on its electricity use and the national average cost of energy. The cost appears on labels for all models and brands, so you can compare energy use just like you would price or other features.**

**The cost range helps you compare the energy use of different models by showing you the range of operating costs for models with similar features.**

**An estimate of how much electricity the appliance uses in a year based on typical use. Multiply this by your local electricity rate on your utility bill to better judge what your actual operating cost might be.**

**If you see the ENERGY STAR logo, it means the product is better for the environment because it uses less energy than standard models.**

- Cost range based only on models of similar capacity with automatic defrost, side-mounted freezer, and through-the-door ice.
- Estimated operating cost based on a 2007 national average electricity cost of 10.65 cents per kWh.
- For more information, visit [www.ftc.gov/appliances](http://www.ftc.gov/appliances).

Source: Federal Trade Commission

The EnergyGuide labels will tell you the annual energy consumption and operating cost for each appliance so you can compare them yourself. For more energy tips, visit us at [www.caec.coop](http://www.caec.coop).

# What does \$1 mean in today's world?



**A** dollar means not having to choose between purchasing medication or having hot water.

A dollar means not having to choose between buying food or lighting your home.

For as little as \$1 a month CAEC members can support the Project SHARE program and help those in need from having to make these tough choices.

Help elderly and disabled Alabamians power their homes by saying yes to Project SHARE.

To participate in Project SHARE and become a part of the network of neighbors helping neighbors, you can contribute \$1, \$2, \$5 or any other whole-dollar amount. The amount you select will be automatically added to your utility bill each month.

Call us at (800) 545-5735 for more information, or complete the form below and return it to CAEC.

Mail form to: Central Alabama Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 681570, Prattville, AL 36068

Yes, I agree to help those in need through Project SHARE.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ St: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Account #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount I wish to donate to Project SHARE each month: \_\_\_\$1 \_\_\_\$2 \_\_\_\$5 \_\_\_ Other (please specify)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

