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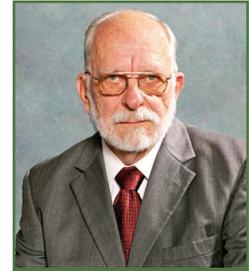
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## Guest Column

# Energy Efficiency for the Future

**W**hen I retired several years ago, one of my foremost thoughts was whether the fixed income I was about to experience would be sufficient enough for my wife Lorraine and me to sustain a comfortable life-style during our retirement years. Many retirees, as well as those still in the workforce, struggle to meet life's daily needs and utilizing energy efficiency methods should be part of that equation. From the vehicles we drive to the homes we live in, reducing energy usage can have a major impact on our quality of life.



CAEC Trustee  
David A. Kelley, Sr.  
District 5

For the past few years, environmental agencies have attempted to control our sources of energy through regulations affecting what we can use and how it can be produced. Innovation has and will play a major role in how successful we become, but we have to utilize what is available. Research continues to make great strides in the development of more efficient buildings, appliances and lighting and it is a major player in the production and use of electrical energy.

As consumers, electrical energy efficiency can help reduce our utility bills while impacting future energy costs. When we reduce the overall demand for electricity through this process, then we help delay the need for construction of new generation plants. Similar to our economy, the building of new generation is subject to inflation, but the added costs imposed by ever increasing environmental constraints will bring with it higher costs for the energy produced.

As a retired civil engineer and a Board member for CAEC, I have tried to be an example for energy efficiency, starting a few years ago with the construction of a new home. Some of the features included were geothermal heating and air-conditioning; energy-efficient doors and windows that include double-pane low-E glass to reduce heat transfer; and spray-foam insulation in the walls and attic. When it came to selecting our appliances, we made sure they were energy efficient as well. Something as simple as using an LED bulb will make a difference. And you may want to consider energy waste, such as setting thermostats too high or too low, lights left on when not in use, unutilized hot water flowing down the drain and air leaks in the home, especially around the doors and windows.

Your co-op wants to help its members to be energy-wise and efficient. To help you understand how to calculate your energy usage, see the next page; and then consider taking advantage of one of the energy audits we offer to help you identify ways to make your home more energy-efficient. Visit our website at [www.caec.coop](http://www.caec.coop) for more energy saving tips or to schedule an appointment for a home energy audit. ■

# Electricity Usage in Your Home



**H**aving the ability to know the cost of your personal choices can help you make informed and wise decisions. For example, as you're squeezing the gas nozzle, you can immediately monitor how many gallons are going into your tank. And as you're driving, your car gauges tell you how much gas you have used.

Have you considered what it might look like to monitor your electricity usage? Without purchasing special equipment or walking outside to view your meter each time you turn something on or off, you can use a simple formula to calculate the usage of various items in your home. But first, let's discuss the

unit of measurement for electricity in your home.

When you buy electricity, you are charged by the kilowatt-hour. So what is a kilowatt-hour? When you use electricity for one hour, you consume 1,000 watt-hours of electricity. Most home appliances provide the wattage right on the device – shown as a number with the letter “W” after it. One thousand watt-hours equal one kilowatt-hour, or one kWh.

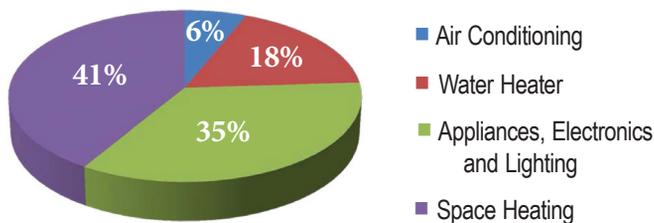
A typical CAEC household consumes about 1,200 kWhs a month (average of a 12-month period). The formula below can help you calculate how many watt-hours your basic appliances use.

For example, the formula below shows the watt-hours of using a 1200W iron for an hour a week:

$$\frac{1200\text{W (wattage of iron)} \times 1 \text{ (hours used per week)} \times 4 \text{ (weeks in the month)}}{1000 \text{ (used to convert watts to kWh)}} = 4.8 \text{ kWhs}$$

Your iron would have contributed 4.8 kWhs to your monthly usage of 1,200 kWh.

## HOME ENERGY USAGE



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

This graph shows how energy is used in an average home with four family members. Your use may vary depending on your lifestyle, the size of your family and the size, age and efficiency of your appliances. Usage also varies with the weather and the amount of insulation in your home's walls and ceilings.

Electricity usage has continued to increase in recent years due to enhancements like high definition TVs and many devices that need charging as well as the introduction of technologies that didn't exist 10-20 years ago.

As you consider purchasing new items, or want to start estimating what the changes in your behavior mean to your monthly usage, this formula can be helpful, or you can visit [www.caec.coop](http://www.caec.coop) for our home energy calculator.

**CAEC offices will be closed Feb. 17 for Presidents' Day**



# Perry County

**D**iversity in its people, land, weather and location is what comes to mind when you think of Perry County. Home to a range of historical educational institutions, such as Judson College and the Marion Military Institute, the county also offers an array of opportunities for recreation and education at the Perry Lakes Park, part of the Talladega National Forest, the Barton's Beach Cahaba River Preserve and the Marion State Fish Hatchery to name a few.



Judson College - Jewett Hall

*Photo: Courtesy of Judson College*

Located in the west-central part of the state, the county was established Dec. 13, 1819, the same year Alabama became a state, and is named in honor of United States Navy Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry of Rhode Island. The first towns in the area that would become Perry County were Muckle's Ridge (now known as Marion), Perry Ridge, Uniontown (originally known as Woodville) and Heiberger, birthplace of civil rights leader Coretta Scott King. The county comprises approximately 719 square miles of rugged mountains, forests, waterfalls and streams.

The largest city in Perry County and featuring the county's main attractions is historic Marion. Today the town is referred to as "College City" because of the dominating presence of the educational associations founded in the area. The Marion Female Seminary was established in 1836. It was here that Nicola Marschall, an art teacher and native of St. Windel, Prussia, is credited with designing the first Confederate flag and the Confederate uniform, "The Stars and Bars."

Judson College, a Baptist women's college, was founded in 1838 and is the fifth oldest women's college in the U.S. The Alabama Women's Hall of Fame is located on the campus of Judson College and the museum serves as a permanent place of honor for Alabama's most outstanding women, including Helen Adams Keller, Julia Strudwick Tutwiler, Amelia Gayle Gorgas, Tallulah Bankhead and others.

In 1842, the Baptists also founded Howard College. Howard survived two fires, the Civil War (the school was used as a Confederate military hospital 1863 – 1865), a century of financial turmoil and two relocations to become one of the region's top universities. In 1887, Howard College moved to Birmingham and later became Samford University.

The remaining faculty and students from Howard College reorganized and became Marion Military Institute (MMI) which holds the honor of being the oldest military junior college and preparatory school in the United States. The U.S. Army ROTC program was first offered at MMI in 1916, when the institute was designated as an "Honor Military School with Distinction" by the U.S. Department of Defense. With students who attend from all over the world, MMI is one of only six military junior colleges in the U.S. which offers unique military training programs. In 1971, MMI became coeducational and, since 1988, MMI hosts the Alabama Military Hall of Honor Museum, displaying portrait plaques of inductees and military artifacts.



Marion Military Institute

*Photo: Courtesy of MMI*

Originated in 1867 by freed slaves, Lincoln Normal School was an educational institution for African-American children. In 1870, the school expanded to include teacher training and for a time became known as the Lincoln Normal University for Teachers. In 1887, fire destroyed many of the campus buildings and as a result, the teacher training function was relocated to Montgomery where it became Alabama State University.



A pair of nesting Bald Eagles have been spotted at the Marion Fish Hatchery

The school building closed in 1970, when it was consolidated with Marion High School. Notable alumni of the Lincoln Normal School include Coretta Scott King, civil rights activist and wife of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Jean Childs, wife of civil rights activist Andrew Young.

Several recreational opportunities are featured in Marion, such as the Marion Fish Hatchery, which attracts birdwatchers from around the state and country, and for more than 50 years, they have assembled an extensive bird list, including in recent years, a pair of nesting Bald Eagles.

Biologists, architects and birdwatchers from around the country congregate to this wilderness area. The Perry Lakes Park was originally constructed in 1935 by the Civilian Conservation Corps. This nearly 1,000-acre nature park is home to the tallest birding tower in the Northern Hemisphere. The park contains several unique features that were designed and constructed by architecture students from Auburn University's Rural Studio, including the park's pavilion, covered

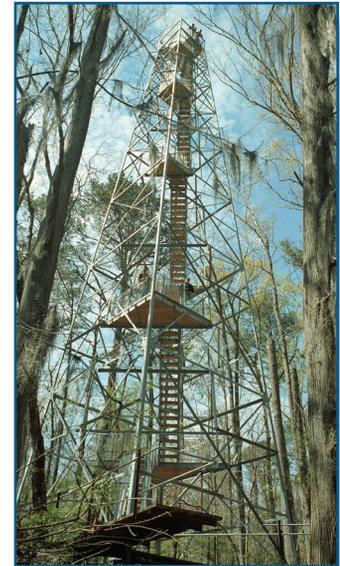
bridge, boardwalk and a 100-foot bird observation tower (equivalent to a 10-story building), allowing birdwatchers to peer into forest layers usually obscured by foliage from the ground.

Often used for educational and scientific research, the Barton's Beach Cahaba River Preserve, spread over 125 acres of gravel/sand bars, beaver ponds, swamps and mixed hardwood floodplain forest, offers a spectacular panorama from which to observe the Cahaba River, the most biodiverse river in North America. More than two dozen species of mussels and 130 species of fish inhabit this free-flowing river.

During March and April, the Golden Club Arum Lily Pond blazes with the bright yellow blossoms of the largest colony of gold club arum lilies in North America. Although spring is the best time to visit, the site offers excellent wildlife viewing year-round.

With quality higher educational programs offered to students from across the country and the rich diversity of physiographic features typical of Alabama, Perry County has it all, neatly packaged for residents and tourists to enjoy throughout the course of the year. ■

Sources: *The Heritage of Perry County/Alabama*, *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, *The Perry County Chamber of Commerce*



Bird observation tower designed and constructed by architecture students from Auburn University's Rural Studio

Photo By: Timothy Hursley



## Dangers of Electricity Theft-the Invisible Crime

Could you be paying your electric utility bill along with someone else's without even knowing it? Often an "invisible" crime, electricity theft occurs when someone illegally taps into a power supply, hooks up a line that has been disconnected or tampers with a meter to avoid recording electricity usage.

Power theft carries deadly risks and many thieves pay for the power they steal with their lives. Tampering with live electricity inside a meter is dangerous and could result in a fire or electrocution from exposure to an electrical current. Illegal connections to power lines are never safe, as they haven't been installed by professionals and are a danger to anyone who may come into contact with them, especially young children.

According to the Cooperative Research Network, a division of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, power surging through a compromised meter can cause an electrical catastrophe. A short circuit could produce an arc flash bright enough to cause blindness and powerful enough to launch fragments of shrapnel-like, red-hot debris. Serious injury or death from electrocution, explosion or fire often results from meter tampering. Only trained utility personnel wearing protective equipment and clothing should work on meters.

Here are some steps you can take to help prevent and reduce electricity theft:

- Examine your electric bills. If your usage is unusually high, check for any suspicious wiring connected to your meter base or breaker panel. If any exposed wiring is discovered, report it to Central Alabama Electric Cooperative (CAEC) as soon as possible.
- Notify your cooperative immediately if you know of an illegally connected consumer.



- Be aware of your surroundings and report any suspicious activities to your electric co-op.

CAEC has processes and procedures in place to detect electricity theft such as routine inspections by our field service representatives, daily blink reports produced from our Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) software and usage audits on disconnected meters performed by our collections department.

Reporting electricity theft can protect you, your family, neighbors, property and CAEC employees. If you suspect electricity theft, contact us at (800)545-5735. ■

## Statement of Non-Discrimination

Central Alabama Electric Cooperative is the recipient of Federal financial assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which provide that no person in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or disability shall be excluded from participation in, admission or access to, denied the benefits of or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organization's programs or activities.

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is the President/Chief Executive Officer Thomas M. Stackhouse. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected him or her to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint with this organization; or USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. ■

# COOPERATIVE ACTION NETWORK

STAND WITH US  
AS WE FIGHT  
TO KEEP  
ELECTRIC BILLS  
AFFORDABLE.

**ACTION.COOP**



**STAND WITH US AS WE FIGHT TO KEEP ELECTRIC BILLS AFFORDABLE.**

PLEASE PRINT

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E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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SIGN UP FOR TEXT ALERTS

I AM A MEMBER OF \_\_\_\_\_ CO-OP

**I authorize America's Electric Cooperatives to communicate on my behalf regarding America's electricity challenges.**

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

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



# Recipe for *Efficiency* from CAEC

## Insulating Electrical Outlets and Switches

**A**ir infiltrates into and out of your home through every hole and crack. Sealing the air loss within your home is critical and one of the often forgotten areas is under the covers of electrical wall outlets and switch plates.

While most people don't consider this to be a major source of energy loss, keep in mind that behind every faceplate that covers a light switch or electrical outlet is a gaping hole through which cold air leaks into your house. Don't

believe it? On a cold, windy day, simply hold your hand near your outlet or light switch and you're likely to feel that cold air seeping in from the wall.

A simple, inexpensive, energy-saving method of stopping air leaks and drafts around wall outlets and switches is to insulate them. Adding insulation allows you to create a tight seal between the wall and the faceplate, eliminating where heat can escape or cold can creep in.

### Utensils (tools):

Screwdriver (flat head)

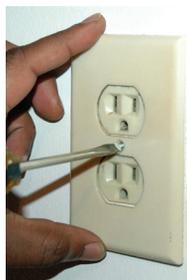
### Ingredients (supplies):

Foam Electrical Outlet Sealers/Gaskets

Foam Light Switch Plate Sealers/Gaskets

### Directions:

1. Turn power off at the circuit breaker box located in a metal box inside or outside your home.



2. Remove the cover plates on the electrical outlets and light switches with a screwdriver.

3. Punch out the perforated holes or cut outs from the foam sealers/gaskets. A pack of six or eight can be purchased at any hardware or home improvement store for under \$5.



4. Place the foam inserts securely over the outlet plugs and light switches.



5. Screw the cover plates back on so it fits snugly against the foam insulation.

6. Switch the power back on and inspect each outlet to ensure it is working properly.

It's just that easy!

Although insulating electrical outlets and light switches may not seem like a worthwhile energy-saving effort, these little steps can make a noticeable difference in your monthly utility usage. For more energy tips, visit us at [www.caec.coop](http://www.caec.coop).