

Electric News

Published for Members of the Little Ocmulgee EMC

FEBRUARY/MARCH/APRIL 2023 • VOLUME 46, NUMBER 1



What Makes Your Electric Utility Special?

You get your electricity from a utility that follows a cooperative business model. Like a food or housing co-op, your electric cooperative follows seven principles that utilities in big cities don't.

The three with the most impact on consumers are:

1. Electric cooperatives consider their consumers to be members. Anyone who lives in the area where a cooperative provides them power may become a member. The co-op principle Open and Voluntary Membership means you are a member, not just a customer.

2. All of the people on your electric cooperative's board of directors are consumer-members just like you. The co-op principle Democratic Member Control means that you may run for a seat on the board, vote for



which board candidates serve on the board and may be asked to vote on other important utility matters. Every household and/or business gets a vote.

3. By paying your electric bill every month, you contribute to the financial success of the cooperative. If the cooperative

collects more payments than it needs to operate and serve its members, you may get a refund called capital credits. Under the co-op principle Members' Economic Participation, everyone would get that credit in proportion to what the household or business paid.

The remaining four principles are Autonomy and Independence, which makes sure the utility is democratically controlled; Education, Training and Information, which means your utility helps everyone understand the benefits of a cooperative; Cooperation Among Cooperatives, which encourages your utility to help nearby electric cooperatives during storms and other emergencies; and Concern With Community, which involves your utility assisting in economic development and policies that help members and the community.

Cut the Clutter

Have you ever considered that the clutter in your house could become a safety hazard?

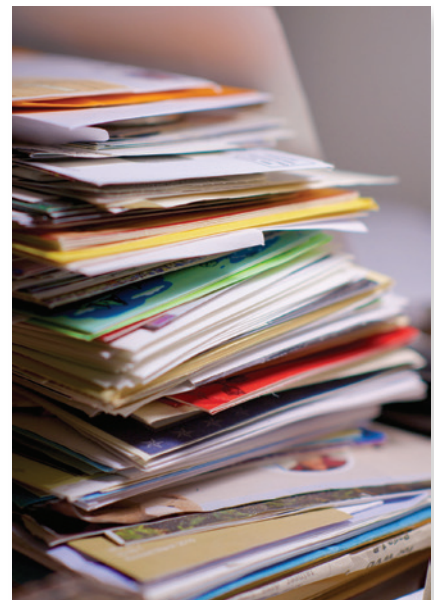
Here's how:

- Stacks of mail, old newspapers and empty cardboard boxes—all flammable items—can catch fire if they're stored too close to a heat source like a baseboard radiator.
- Papers strewn about your rooms can serve as kindling in case a fire does break out.
- Clutter can block windows and doors, making it difficult for your family to rush out of the house

during a fire and hindering the efforts of firefighters to get in.

- The line of sight to someone who is injured or disabled can be obstructed by clutter, which means firefighters and family members might not get to a loved one who is trapped under falling items during a fire.

Get the family together and go through your rooms one by one and collect unneeded paper, boxes, broken appliances and other clutter—and get rid of it once and for all.



Should I Change My Charging Habits?

Four things to know about extending rechargeable battery life

By Paul Wesslund

Many of us are so connected to our phones, tablets and laptops that we panic when the battery nears the dreaded 0% mark. We want our device batteries to perform well for as long as possible. But taking care of them can conflict with why we have our electronics in the first place. The point isn't to fret about battery life, it's to read and send emails, scroll on social media, take photos and partake in countless other pursuits.

If you ever find yourself fretting over your device's power levels, here are a few tips on striking the right balance between battery health and how you work and play:

1. Keep your battery about 40% to 80% charged. There is a lot of reasonable advice shared on the internet to keep your phone charged between 20% to 80% or 40% to 80%. To understand those recommendations—and why you might want to

either follow them or ignore them—it helps to understand how rechargeable batteries work.

Up until about 20 years ago, batteries benefited from occasional “deep discharges”—running the battery down until the device shuts off. But because of different materials used in batteries today, that's not true anymore.

Rechargeable batteries work by containing two different materials that produce electricity when particles flow from one to the other. They flow the other direction when being recharged. That process will degrade any battery over time. Keeping both sides of a battery in balance, with the device charged at about 50%, will put the least amount of stress on the battery and make it last longer.

2. Overnight charging can add stress to some batteries. Charging your device up to 100% or letting it drain to 0% until it shuts down puts extra stress on the battery and can shorten its life. That's why it can make sense to charge your devices occasionally throughout the day, rather than keeping them plugged in while you sleep. Newer electronics will actually stop charging at 100%. But then each time the charge drops to 99%, charging will resume.

3. Keep it cool, but not cold. One absolute in battery care is don't let your device get warmer than 95 degrees. Keep it out of the sun and never leave it in a hot vehicle. If the device does get hot, don't go to the other extreme and put it in the freezer. Just place it in the shade or take the cover off for a while.



DANIEL KOPPAL, UNSPLASH

Experts recommend keeping devices charged between 40% to 80% to help prolong battery health.

4. Use less power. One of the easiest ways to put less stress on a battery is to use less power. You can close energy-draining apps and functions when you're not using them, and you can activate energy-saving settings like putting the device to sleep sooner.

Another easy way to reduce battery use is to activate Airplane Mode every now and then. You may be inconvenienced by a temporary pause on receiving emails, texts or phone calls, but it might help you focus better on that movie you're watching, trail you're hiking or dinner conversation you're having with friends.

If you're the kind of person who likes to turn in their electronics every couple years for the latest versions, these recommendations likely won't apply. But if you're someone who wants your devices to last longer, these suggestions can help prolong battery life.

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.



SOLEI FEYSSA, UNSPLASH

Charging your device up to 100% or letting it drain to 0% until it shuts down puts extra stress on the battery and can shorten its life.

5 Hacks to Get Better Performance From Kitchen Appliances

Did you know the shape of your container affects how evenly food cooks in a microwave? Or the order you add ingredients to a blender can make the appliance stall?

Here are five facts that could make meal prep easier on you and your countertop appliances:

1. Use round dishes in the microwave. Rectangular containers draw more energy to the corners, so the edges of your food can overcook. A microwave will heat food in a round container more evenly. Another microwave hack: Don't salt your food before cooking. Salt attracts the microwave's energy, which can leave the salted top layer of your leftovers dry.

2. Add liquid ingredients to the blender first. Then, layer the smallest ingredients first and work your way



up to larger and tougher pieces, like ice. If you put the ice in first, your blender is likely to stall every few seconds.

3. Stop storing pots and pans in the oven's warming drawer. That drawer, as its name suggests, is for

keeping food warm while you're cooking the rest of your meal. Nonfood items stored in the warming drawer heat up every time you use the oven, which can ruin the finish and even harm your oven.

4. Use your microwave or Wi-Fi, but not at the same time. Microwave ovens can slow down your internet signals. Save the Zoom calls and movie streaming for a time when you're not heating up food in the microwave.

5. Remove labels from dishes before washing them. It might seem that washing new glasses and plates in the dishwasher is a quick and easy way to remove price tags and labels, but the glue on those tags can clog the machine's filter and pump. Better to pull the stickers off by hand than to run up a dishwasher repair bill.

Should I Close Off Unused Rooms During the Winter?

It seems that if you close the door to an unused room, you can avoid paying to heat it, right? The opposite is true.

When you close off an interior room, or if you close the air vents in that room,

your heating system has to work harder and can even break down as a result.

The reason: Your home's HVAC system is designed to keep the whole

house comfortable by distributing heat evenly throughout. If you close off a room or duct, you reduce airflow to

that room and force your system to work harder to heat it up. This can cause a pressure imbalance, which can damage your ducts or heating system.

Here are a few better ideas:

- Save money and energy by using caulk to seal air leaks around windows and holes in walls where cables enter the house.
- Add insulation to the attic.
- Install curtains that are thermally insulated.
- Replace your outdated thermostat with a programmable one that will lower the temperature at bedtime and when everyone leaves the house in the morning.



Hop Off the Treadmill in 2023 for a Better Work-Life Balance

A New Year's resolution ritual may be to rush to the fitness equipment store after the holidays for a brand-new treadmill to help you burn off your holiday weight gain.

But if you're running on another kind of treadmill—the kind that has you going nonstop as you juggle work, family, friends, volunteer work and so much else while working from home—consider resolving to hop off. That might make 2023 a better year than 2022.

Here are five ways to bring some balance into work-from-home life, even if your workdays are partly devoted to family and your weekends are partially about work:

1. Use your actual treadmill—or the one at the gym—for a daily jog or walk. Or stroll outside for at least 20 minutes a day, by yourself and without talking on the phone, to take a meaningful, enjoyable and healthy break from the grind.

2. Set up a space in your home for work, and with a door if possible. Let your children know that when you're in there, you're off limits



except for emergencies. Work only in that space and never in the rest of the house.

3. Plan what you will do when you're finished working for the day. Schedule a drink or coffee with a friend, or take a class at the gym at the same time every evening. That will help you draw a hard boundary around the workday and your time off.

4. Enjoy your downtime. Just because work is behind the door of

your workspace doesn't mean you should work when you're not busy. Time isn't wasted if you're using it to recharge, relax or spend time with family or hobbies.

5. Turn off your phone. Better yet, get a separate phone for work and leave it in your workspace when you leave for the evening. That way, you won't be tempted to take after-hours calls while you're off the clock.

Energy Efficiency *Tip of the Month*



Do you have a home office? Set equipment like printers and scanners to automatically switch to sleep or energy-saver mode when not in use. In addition to saving energy, the equipment will stay cooler, which will help extend its life. Another way to save in the home office is to use energy-efficient lamps for task lighting. Small lamps use less energy than whole room lighting.

