

Spring *is in the* Air

Home Improvement Plans That Won't Waste Your Energy

Spring is upon us and the fever is in the air. Anticipation of warm weather and sunshine lead many of us to begin thinking about indoor and outdoor home improvement projects.

Plans for home building, renovations, upgrades and yard work are rapidly coming together.

There are a few things to remember before starting a project:

Before you dig to plant that tree or replace that fence post, call Copper Valley Electric Association (CVEA) for a cable locate at 822-3211 or 835-4301.

You don't always know what you are going to dig into and you don't have to. CVEA is here to help. We will locate the lines to ensure what you hit will not be a hazard to your safety or the safety of others.

If your building plans include a new electrical service or existing service upgrade, contact Chris Botulinski at

822-5505 or 835-4301.

CVEA can evaluate your needs and schedule a site inspection. If you have questions regarding construction specifications, visit the Electrical Service, New Service section at www.cvea.org.

Home improvement projects can improve the energy efficiency of your home and lead to tax savings.

A recent tax law change provides a tax credit to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes. The law provides a 10-percent credit for buying qualified energy-efficiency improvements.

To qualify, a component must meet or exceed the criteria established by the 2000 International Energy Conservation Code.

These credits have been extended through 2007, so you only have one year to take advantage of

this opportunity.

Up to \$500 is available per household for upgrading doors, windows, roofing, insulation and heating/cooling equipment, such as air circulating fans and natural gas, propane or oil furnaces, or hot water heaters.

The simplest energy-saving measures, such as installing compact fluorescent lights (CFL) or replacing appliances, make great weekend projects.

Lighting accounts for almost one-fifth of all the electricity consumed in the United States.

Common incandescent bulbs are inefficient and waste 90 percent of their energy producing heat instead of light.

CFLs provide a solution. They use one-quarter to one-third the electricity and can save 60 percent to 75 per-



cent on lighting costs.

CFLs are more expensive, so start slow. Install new compact fluorescent lights in the rooms you use the most. Make sure to check your fixtures first, as CFLs are slightly larger and may not fit all fixtures.

If you are building a new home or upgrading existing fixtures, look for new fixtures designed especially for CFLs. It will be worth the extra effort when you consider compact fluorescent lights will last six to 10 times longer and save you money!

Is it time for new appliances?

The appliances in your home account for approximately 20 percent of your total energy consumption. Refrigerators and other kitchen appliances use most of that energy.

The technology of manufacturing kitchen appliances has progressed rapidly the past 10 years, so a newer appliance can mean less energy wasted and more money saved on your electric bill.

For example, the best new refrigerators use less than 500 kilowatt-hours (kWh) a year compared to the 1,000 to 1,500 kWh used by older models.

When you shop for a new appliance, look for the Energy Star® label, the symbol for energy efficiency, that indicates the Department of Energy's approval. Also look for the label when purchasing heating and cooling equipment, lighting, home office equipment, windows and small electronics.

Don't let the often-higher purchase price make you nervous. It will pay for itself in the long run. Energy Star windows can increase comfort and reduce heating and cooling costs by as much as 30 percent!

Remember that as a rule of thumb, refrigerators last an average of 20 years and dishwashers about 10.

Think of the money you will save on your electric bill each month in the course of 10 to 20 years.



Most of the energy used by dishwashers is the energy required to heat the water they use. Look for dishwashers that have their own heating element, which allows you to lower water temperature and save energy. Also look for dishwashers offering energy-saving drying options.

Refrigerators with upper and lower doors are more efficient than models with side-by-side doors. Side-by-side units have more linear feet of door seals. A unit with manual defrost uses less energy than one with automatic defrost.

If replacing the thermostat in your home, look for a programmable unit. This will coordinate indoor climates with your daily and weekend patterns, reducing the potential of your home remaining hotter or cooler than necessary.

Once you have purchased your appliances, you can do a few things to make sure they are running at maximum efficiency.

- Put your refrigerator in a location that is not in direct sunlight or near a heat source.

- Clean the condenser coils on the back of the refrigerator at least once a year and make sure the door seals properly. It should hold a dollar bill firmly.

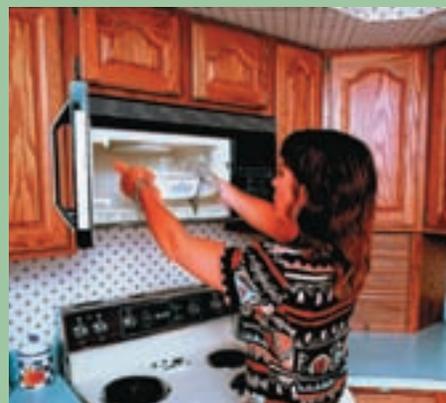
- Keep heating vents clean and replace filters annually.

- Use your microwave oven. Most energy produced in a microwave goes directly to heating the food. This takes less energy than heating an entire oven for a small food item.

- Run your dishwasher only when it is full.

- Switch to cold water to wash the laundry. ■

For additional information on energy efficiency, visit www.eere.energy.gov/consumer; or www.abfc.state.ak.us/energy/energy.cfm.



Even though Energy Star appliances—such as microwaves, refrigerators and dishwashers—may cost more to buy, the money you save on electricity will offset that initial higher cost.