



Economic Stimulus Response

Leadership Column/Editorial

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Help us Weatherize Rural America

In these times, every budget can use extra money. Weatherization—making your home more energy-efficient with upgrades like proper insulation or sealing air leaks—can save your energy budget an average of \$358 a year.

And now's the time to make your home as efficient as possible, as Uncle Sam can help with the cost.

Your electric cooperative is joining electric co-ops across the nation in finding ways to connect you, our members, with energy efficiency help from the federal stimulus bill.

Weatherizing your home has never been more critical. Congress is considering climate change legislation that will undoubtedly raise electricity bills. The effect this will have your wallet depends in part on how much energy you use.

Increasing energy efficiency at home can help lower your energy use and, most importantly, your electric bills. There are three great ways you can do this through the stimulus.

First and foremost, low-income members can apply for help from the federal Weatherization Assistance Program. The stimulus bill allows an average of \$6,500 to be spent on each home for weatherization purposes. Households with incomes at or below 200 percent of the national poverty level are eligible. For a family of four, that's \$44,100

If you don't qualify, you can receive a tax credit for 30 percent of the cost for qualified energy efficiency projects, up to \$1,500 for work done on existing homes in 2009 and 2010. From replacing windows, doors, and insulation to installing an energy-efficient heating and cooling system, there are many ways you can use the tax credit to offset some of the costs for efficiency upgrades.

Finally, a renewable energy tax credit exists for members investing in solar water heaters, geothermal heat pumps, and other "green" technologies. The credit covers 30 percent of the cost for approved projects completed on any type of home between 2009 and 2016.

ENERGY STAR's website, www.energystar.gov (keyword: "Tax credits") provides a great overview of what qualifies for tax credits and includes guidance on how to apply for them.

Our goal as an electric co-op is to keep costs down—and we're counting on public officials at state energy agencies to invest the money in a way that will benefit the highest number of our members. We expect them to do the right thing so that our state can use its power supply resources as efficiently and affordably as possible.

As you know, the benefit of being part of a co-op is our unique member-centered focus. We're driven, not by profits, but by our members' bottom line. We work to keep your electric bills as low as possible while providing the high degree of reliable, excellent service you've come to expect. The federal stimulus bill gives all of us a new set of tools to help fulfill this mission.

Take advantage of the savings the stimulus has to offer, and encourage our local officials to do the same. Together, we can keep electric bills affordable.

Need to find out where you apply for the program?

To use the **Weatherization Technical Assistance Program**

(www.waptac.org/sp.asp?mc=what_contacts), click on your state to get your statewide energy office contact. In the right column the number of **Local Community Action Committees** (the agencies overseeing the program) are listed, followed by a link to their contact information ('Contact Information for Local Agencies'). The agencies are responsible for different counties; find the agency your members can contact and call the group to make sure this is the best way for members to apply for the Weatherization Assistance Program. Then give your members their contact information!