

(Energy) Star-Crossed Consumers

Nearly two decades after the first Energy Star labels turned up on computers and monitors, items in 60 different product categories now carry the brand promoting their energy efficiency.

Since the Energy Star program was launched in 1992 by the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the lists of products sporting the label has grown to include appliances, home entertainment equipment and construction materials and buildings.

The rating means a product delivers the same or better performance as comparable models while using less energy and saving money.

"We're recognizing the top performers when it comes to energy efficiency," explains Katharine Kaplan, Energy Star program manager. "Generally, that means you're in the top 25 percent."

For example, qualified refrigerators must be at least 15 percent more efficient than the minimum federal efficiency standard. Energy Star-rated TVs consume 3 watts or less when switched off, compared to a standard TV, which consumes almost 6 watts on average.

Consumers are taking advantage of the program. A survey by the Consortium for Energy Efficiency—a group including members like the quasi-governmental Tennessee Valley Authority and Bonneville Power Administration, a federal power marketing administration in the Northwest—discovered 76 percent of American households recognize the Energy Star brand. Of these consumers, 73 percent purchased an Energy Star-labeled product within the last year.

The program has had its ups and downs. Last October *The New York Times* revealed some manufacturers of household appliances were testing products for Energy Star certification internally instead of using independent laboratories. In response, Energy Star ramped up oversight of product ratings and by the end of the year had revoked the Energy Star label for some refrigerators while raising the bar for the efficiency expected from TVs.



WHO KNEW A FRESH LAYER OF INSULATION WOULD HELP ME WEATHER THE ECONOMY?

Touchstone Energy is a national alliance of local, consumer-owned electric cooperatives providing high standards of service to customers large and small. More than 640 Touchstone Energy cooperatives in 46 states are delivering energy and energy solutions to more than 30 million customers every day. Touchstone Energy cooperatives serve their members with integrity, accountability, innovation and a long-standing commitment to communities.

ELECTRIC GRILLING SAFETY TIPS

Summer means outdoor and backyard barbecues. Whether your menu calls for steaks, chicken or skewered veggies, follow these safety precautions when operating an electric grill.

- Never immerse cords, plugs or heating elements in water or other liquid.
- Visually inspect cord, plug and all connections for damage and wear before operation. Replace or repair prior to operation.
- Unplug an electric grill from the outlet when not in use and before cleaning.
- Electrical cords should always be secured during operation to protect against product damage or personal injury.
- To ensure protection against risk of shock, the electric grill should be connected to a ground fault circuit interrupter outlet in accordance with local codes.
- Do not use an electric grill in the rain.
- Always read the grill's instruction manual before use.

Information for Upcoming Primary Election

When are the 2010 Primary and General Elections held in New Mexico?

- The Primary Election will be held Tuesday, June 1, 2010. (Section 1-8-11, NMSA 1978)
- The General Election will be held Tuesday, November 2, 2010. (NM Const. Art. XX, Sec. 6)

For more information on the Primary Elections in State of New Mexico, please go to the following websites:

Secretary of State

<http://www.sos.state.nm.us/sos-elections.html>

Otero County

http://www.co.otero.nm.us/Clerk/voter_info.htm

Lincoln County

<http://www.lincolncountynm.net/clerk.htm>

INFORMATION YOU CAN FIND AT OUR WEBSITE WWW.OCEC-INC.COM

- Make a payment with your credit card, debit card, or pay by e-check.
- Check your balance, payment history, consumption history and a detailed copy of your billing information.
- Online Energy Audit
- Kids Corner for educational purposes.
- Regulatory Information
- Existing Rates
- Products and Services offered by OCEC.
- Job Opportunities
- Net Metering Information
- Contacts at OCEC

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS OF OTERO COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP

Otero County Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Power-Gram

April 2010



For Outages Please call: 1-800-548-4660

Visit us at www.ocec-inc.com

Cloudfcroft, N.M. 575-682-2521

Alto, N.M. 575-336-4550

Carrizozo, N.M. 575-648-2352

Your Landscaping Can Affect Energy Bills

In just about all climates but the most humid ones, placing low-growing ground cover plants near your house helps keep it cool during the summer. The leaves block the sun's heat from being absorbed into the ground, and they give off moisture. This evaporation of water from the leaves, called transpiration, cools air near the home - similar to when we perspire.

Dwarf shrubs are ideal for energy-efficient landscaping because they remain small (2 to 3 feet high) at maturity. Plant some near the house foundation and some farther away for wind-break ramps.

Dwarf shrubs can also cut your utility bills year-round. The sill plate, the bottom frame along a home's foundation, remains one of the greatest air infiltration pathways into many houses. Planting dwarf shrubs near the house, especially evergreen varieties, can block the force of cold winter winds and reduce the amount of air leaking in.

As a windbreak ramp, dwarf shrubs can be planted to the northwest side of taller shrubs and trees. These smaller plants begin directing the cold winds upward toward the tops of taller trees. The wind continues upward over the top of your house, instead of blowing against it.

Trees have perhaps the greatest affect on your utility bills. Evergreen trees are effective when planted from the northwest side across to the northeast side of a house so they block the winter winds. Deciduous trees planted on the other sides provide summer shade, but allow the winter sun through. You may want to leave a small gap to the southwest to allow summer breezes to reach your home.

For more information on energy-efficiency or tips on conserving energy, please visit the Coops website at www.ocec-inc.com and click on HOME Energy Saver or Touchstone Energy Savers links on the left side of the page. You may also contact Clint Gardner at clintg@ote-coop.com.

INFORMATION REQUESTED BY COOPERATIVE

When you as a member of Otero County Electric Cooperative, Inc. perform some type of improvements around your home or property and you add electrical load, please notify OCEC to notify us so we can be assured that the equipment we have at your location is sized properly. Failure to do so may result in damage to your equipment and also the cooperative's equipment. So to avoid unnecessary outages or damages to equipment, please contact OCEC when you add a load a your location.



OTERO COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

P.O. BOX 227

CLOUDCROFT, NEW MEXICO 88317

- Office hours are 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. If service is interrupted, check your fuses and circuit breakers. If all your service is off, check with your neighbors.
- Report promptly if you think the trouble is on Otero County Electric Cooperative, Incorporated lines.
- When problem is on consumers side of the meter, the consumer will be charged for a false call for service.
- Please examine this bill carefully as it will be considered correct if we are not notified within 30 days.
- The statement enclosed does not include payments made after billing date.
- If you desire information on the use of electricity for any job, large or small, do not hesitate to call your Cooperative, come by the office, or write for information at any time.
- FOR EMERGENCIES OR POWER OUTAGES CALL (800) 548-4660.