



**By Bruce Ardel,
General Manager**

2011 in Review

ity. We observed this milestone by putting together a 75th anniversary booklet and showcasing our co-op's history at our Member Appreciation event in October.

It goes without saying, we were hit with more than our fair share of major storms in 2011. The month of May will be remembered for the tornado that went through our service area and more recently the snowstorm that blasted us in November. We appreciated the many cards and e-mails we received offering words of thanks and encouragement to our crews who worked hard restoring service during those outages.

Our commitment to you, as a member, has been to make Oakdale Electric more efficient and convenient to conduct business with. Several work plan projects costing more than \$1.5 million were completed in 2011 and involved relocating and upgrading more than 25 miles of line in several projects located in the Tomah, Lyndon Station, Elroy, and Tunnel City areas. One of the big-

Throughout all the events of the past year, one thing that hasn't changed is Oakdale Electric's dedication to its members. We are still non-profit, just as we have been since we were formed 75 years ago, which means energy costs are passed through to our members without a profit margin added. We are a local, community-based organization and remain focused on serving our members. 2011 was an important and historical year for Oakdale Electric Cooperative. While we continue to focus on the future, we celebrated the positive changes that have come about with the ever-expanding use of electric-



Oakdale Electric Cooperative marked its 75th anniversary in 2011, observing the big milestone at both the annual meeting in April and Member Appreciation event in October. Line crews were kept especially busy in 2011 thanks to a couple of major storms. At right, Oakdale Electric crews work at restoring power after a tornado swept through the service area in May.



ger projects took place in the Valley Junction area and involved rebuilding more than seven miles of line. Tree trimming and vegetation removal (right-of-way maintenance) continue to play an important part in Oakdale Electric's ongoing efforts to provide safe and reliable energy to our 16,000 members. Over the course of last year, we invested almost \$800,000 to clear more than 200 miles of right-of-way on our system.

In 2011 we saw the systemwide completion of our automated meter reading (AMR) project. This five-year project involved replacement of more than 16,000 old meters with new electronic digital Cannon meters. AMR allows us to monitor the quality of service each account is receiving as well as help pinpoint outages.

The year also brought about a change in how Oakdale structures our rates. We felt that restructuring our rate schedules was one of the most equitable and fair ways to allocate costs to our members. Over the years, electricity still remains a good value. We will continue to provide programs and services that help you make the best use of your energy dollar. As a member-owner, you share in the successes of the cooperative. In 2011 we refunded capital credits totaling \$800,000 to our members.

Oakdale Electric is always focused on the benefit and value the co-op brings to its members. In July, we joined several other cooperatives and participated in the Youth Leadership Congress (YLC) program at UW-River Falls. Twenty area students who attended YLC will receive \$1,000 scholarships towards their continuing education. We are honored to have, for the first time, one of our students elected to represent Wisconsin on the National Youth Leadership Council in Washington, D.C.

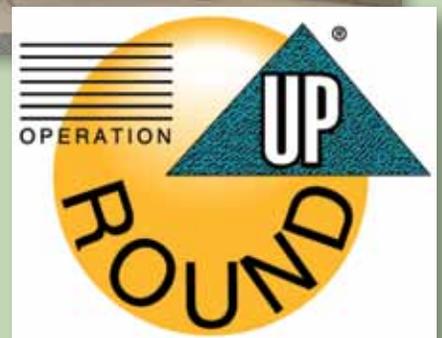
Operation Round Up® was established 10 years ago to help meet some of the charitable needs of people who live in our service area. Since then, more than \$29,000 has been awarded to provide much needed assistance to individuals experiencing hardships and to support worthwhile projects. Operation Round Up is a voluntary program that allows us to round up members' electric bills to the next whole dollar, with the difference placed in a trust that is administered by the Trust's Board.

Through all the changes that each year brings, Oakdale Electric Cooperative remains dedicated to you, our members. Nothing will ever be more important to us than bringing you safe, reliable power at the lowest cost possible. We look forward to serving you in 2012. ■

Crews were also busy in 2011 relocating and upgrading line, as well as performing routine system maintenance such as tree trimming.



In 2011, the cooperative marked a first at the annual Youth Leadership Congress, where an Oakdale Electric Cooperative delegate was elected to the Youth Board for the first time. 2011 saw another significant milestone as the cooperative's Operation Round Up® program marked its 10th year.



Electric Bills Reflect Weather Patterns

Minimizing Movement of Conditioned Air Can Cut Energy Costs

By Kris Wendtland

Electric bills vary with the seasons, driven by weather and consumer use patterns.

“Weather matters,” stresses Chad Reisenauer, key accounts/energy conservation coordinator at Basin Electric Power Cooperative, a generation and transmission cooperative headquartered in Bismarck, N.D. “When it’s cool outdoors, family members generally want the house warm. When it’s warm outside, air conditioners make living areas pleasant.”

How much weather affects your electric bills depends on many factors, including your home’s original construction materials, insulation, and air leaks. Personal comfort plays a role too, as does the difference between the thermostat setting inside and temperatures outdoors.

“When a house stays at 68 degrees Fahrenheit, but the outdoor temperature varies from minus 20 degrees in winter to more than 100 degrees on a muggy summer’s day, demand for heating and cooling can be significant,” Reisenauer notes. “Cooled air leaving a home essentially wastes the money spent to cool it. The same is true for air a homeowner has paid to warm.”

R-value offers a way of measuring insulation’s effectiveness (a higher R-value indicates more effective insulation). For example, on a 28-degree day, heat loss from a residence set at 68 degrees could hit 2,464 Btu per hour even through an 80 ft. x 10 ft. exterior wall packed with R-13 insulation. Reverse that situation on a scorching day—100 degrees outside—and heat gain indoors will still reach 2,464 BTU per hour.

To save money, set your thermostat five degrees closer (higher in summer, lower in winter) to the outdoor temperature—this simple change could result in a savings of 90 watts per hour of electricity—about 197 kilowatt-hours (kWh) in three months. At a national average of 10 cents per kWh, this adjustment keeps an extra \$19.70 in your pocket.

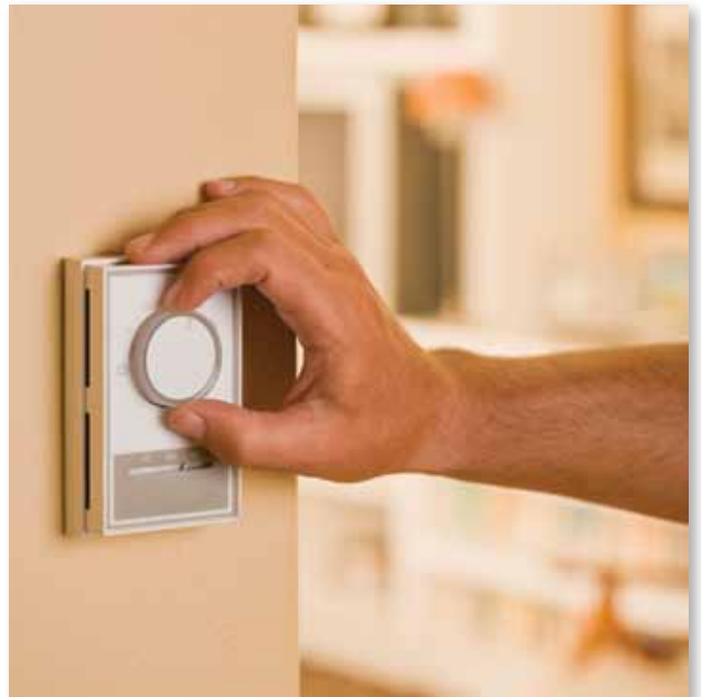
Adjust the thermostat. Keep blinds and drapes on

the sunny side of your home closed in summer and open in winter. Find mysteriously “hot” or “cold” spots in the house and solve them by installing gasket seals around outlets and weather stripping along doors and windows, replacing old windows, and upgrading insulation. When practical, adjust landscaping to provide shade for your property in summer and sunlight in winter.

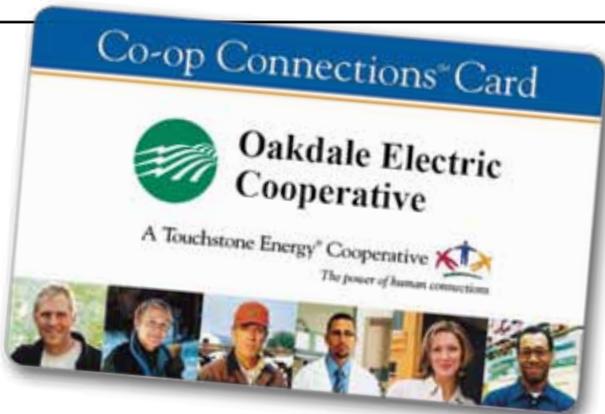
Weather doesn’t have to play havoc with electricity bills. “There are a variety of tools, appliances, and resources available to solve all sorts of energy challenges,” Reisenauer stresses. “Some, such as new windows or a roof, require significant financing. But there are a lot of options that are inexpensive and simple to benefit from.”

Find more ways to save at www.TogetherWeSave.com.—*Sources: Jim Herritage, CEM, Energy Auditors, Inc.; Residential Energy: Cost Savings and Comfort for Existing Buildings by John Krigger and Chris Dorsi* ■

Kris Wendtland writes on energy efficiency issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.



Simply setting your thermostat five degrees closer to the outdoor temperature could save as much as 90 watts per hour of electricity, resulting in an average savings of \$19.70.



Member Raves About Co-op Connections Card

Stephen Huff of Mauston had only good things to say about Oakdale Electric's Co-op Connections Card. Stephen is retired and uses his connections card on all of his prescriptions. He is saving 50 percent or more on each prescription he gets filled. Stephen is currently in Arizona for the winter and he was excited to know that the card still worked there. He is currently checking into renting a car and using the other great accommodations the card has to offer. Stephen says,

“If you are not using the card, you are making a mistake.”

Oakdale's Co-op Connection card is no cost to the member. The average savings are 10 to 60 percent at more than 56,000 pharmacies nationwide, including CVS, Walgreens, Walmart, Target, and many more. You can find participating pharmacy locations at www.locateproviders.com. Oakdale Electric Cooperative members have saved more than \$10,000 in 2011.



Watch Your January Statement for Previous Year's Energy Charges

Each year around tax filing time, we receive calls from many of you asking for the amount you paid for energy charges for the previous year. Hopefully, we've been able to save you the call. That amount will now be printed on your statements that you receive about the first of January each year.



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Use motion sensors on your lights to save on your electric bill. These sensors turn on lights automatically when someone enters a room and turn them off after a person leaves.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy



Oakdale Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



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