

### Energy Efficiency Assistance Program Broadens

#### More Homeowners May be Eligible to Receive Free Home Energy Evaluations; Program Pays for 90 Percent of Improvements

More Oakdale Electric Cooperative customers may now be eligible for Focus on Energy's assistance program, which offers limited-income homeowners low-cost efficiency improvements to improve the comfort, safety, and affordability of their homes. The assistance program, called Targeted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®, is now seeking applications from homeowners with incomes between 150 to 250 percent of the poverty level, which is a significant increase from the past maximum of 200 percent. To put the new maximum into perspective, a family of four's maximum eligible annual income increased to \$53,000 from the previous \$42,400.

“By participating in the program, homeowners have a tremendous opportunity to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, at minimal cost,” said Jerry Bloom, member service advisor. “Not only will they enjoy lower energy bills and improved comfort all throughout the year, they will have peace of mind knowing they are taking care of their investment and the environment.”

#### Who is Eligible?

Targeted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR is available to homeowners with limited incomes (\$31,800 to \$53,000 for a family of four) who are customers of both participating electricity and natural gas providers. To be eligible, homeowners must provide proof of all household income for the last three full months, as well as proof of ownership of the residence.

#### What is Targeted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR?

Targeted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR is part of Focus on Energy, Wisconsin's energy efficiency and renewable energy program. Targeted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR offers qualifying homeowners a no-cost energy evaluation performed by a qualified



program provider. Depending on the results of the evaluation, the home may receive energy-efficiency improvements, such as adding insulation, finding and eliminating drafts, replacing an inefficient heating system, installing compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), and more. Targeted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR will pay 90 percent of the costs of the energy-efficiency improvements — the homeowner pays just 10 percent.

Energy-efficient homes save energy and money all year long. In summer, a home that's properly sealed and insulated stays cooler and more comfortable, reducing the need for fans and air conditioners during hot daylight hours. In winter, energy-efficient homes keep warm air inside, improving comfort and reducing heating costs during Wisconsin's coldest months.



**focus on energy**™

*The power is within you.*

Homeowners wishing to apply for Targeted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR are encouraged to call Focus on Energy at (800) 762-7077 or visit [focusonenergy.com](http://focusonenergy.com) to download an application.

### About the Focus on Energy Targeted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program

Focus on Energy's Targeted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program assists qualifying Wisconsin residents in making energy-efficiency improvements to their homes. The improvements are completed by program providers at minimal cost to the homeowner and aim to make homes more comfortable, safe, and energy efficient. Focus on Energy offers applications, along with full program details, at (800) 762-7077 and [focusonenergy.com](http://focusonenergy.com).

### About Focus on Energy

Focus on Energy works with eligible Wisconsin residents and businesses to install cost-effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Focus information, resources and financial incentives help to implement projects that otherwise would not be completed, or to complete projects sooner than scheduled. Its efforts help Wisconsin residents and businesses manage rising energy costs, promote in-state economic development, protect our environment, and control the state's growing demand for electricity and natural gas. For more information, call (800) 762-7077 or visit [focusonenergy.com](http://focusonenergy.com). ■



*Through the Targeted Home Performance with Energy Star® program, homeowners may receive help with a variety of energy-efficiency projects, such as adding insulation to the attic or switching incandescent light bulbs to compact fluorescent lights.*



# COMING



# IN 2009

## Co-op Connections Program

The Oakdale Electric Cooperative board of directors has decided to offer the Co-op Connections program to our members. Touchstone Energy has created Co-op Connections, a member benefits card that offers cooperative members product and service discounts at participating retail businesses. In turn, participating businesses benefit from increased customer traffic, as well as from promotions in co-op communications and advertising materials.

Touchstone Energy secures discounts from a variety of national businesses and chains, such as rental car companies and hotels. The Co-op Connections program benefits cooperative members by offering 10 to 60 percent savings on most prescriptions at over 48,000 independent pharmacies and national chains, including CVS, Walgreens, Wal-Mart, Target, and more.

The Co-op Connections card not only offers valuable discounts, it provides members a sense of belonging to the cooperative and strengthens the partnership between local businesses and the cooperative.

Watch your mail for this card. ■

# **Protect Your Family From Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

**By Chris Grammes**

Often called the “silent killer” because of its odorless, tasteless, and colorless nature, carbon monoxide remains the leading cause of accidental poisonings in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Each year, carbon monoxide poisoning claims nearly 500 lives and causes more than 15,000 visits to hospital emergency departments across the country.

Carbon monoxide can be found in combustion fumes, such as those produced by cars and trucks, small gasoline engines, stoves, lanterns, coal- and wood-burning stoves, and gas ranges and heating systems. Carbon monoxide from these sources can build up in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces, poisoning people and animals who breathe it.

Portable electric generators are a source of carbon monoxide poisoning if used improperly. Many people rely on these units during extended power outages, but special care must be used. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, for example, the misuse of generators caused five deaths and dozens of cases of carbon monoxide poisoning.

The most common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headaches, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. High levels of carbon monoxide inhalation can lead to loss of consciousness and death. Unless suspected, poisoning can be difficult to diagnose because the symptoms mimic other illnesses like the flu.

To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning in your home, following these tips:

- Have your fuel-burning appliances — including oil and gas furnaces, gas water heaters, gas ranges and ovens, gas dryers, gas or kerosene space heaters, fireplaces, and wood stoves — inspected by a trained



professional at the beginning of every heating season. Make certain that flues and chimneys are connected, in good condition, and not blocked.

- Choose appliances that vent fumes outside whenever possible, have them properly installed, and maintain them according to manufacturers' instructions.
- Read and follow all instructions that accompany any fuel-burning device. If you cannot avoid using an unvented gas or kerosene space heater, carefully follow the cautions that come with the device. Use the proper fuel and keep doors to the rest of the house open. Crack a window to ensure enough air for ventilation and proper fuel-burning.
- Do not idle your car in a closed garage. Fumes can build up very quickly.
- Never use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.
- Never use a charcoal grill indoors or charcoal briquettes in a fireplace.
- Do not sleep in any room with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater.
- Do not use any gasoline-powered engines (mowers, weed trimmers, snow blowers, chainsaws, small engines, or generators) in enclosed spaces.

## Oakdale Electric Recognized for ACRE Participation



Director Larry Powell (right) receives a certificate for cooperatives that achieve outstanding participation in the Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE) program. Presenting the certificate is NRECA Wisconsin Director Bob Kretzschmar (left). ACRE provides monetary support to the election campaigns of federal and state legislative candidates who support the goals and ideals of the electric cooperative program. Helping candidates who support rural electrification is the primary purpose of ACRE, the non-partisan political action committee that represents the interests of the nation's electric co-ops and their consumer-members.

- Install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector in your home and check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. Look for Underwriters' Laboratory (UL) certification on any detector you purchase.

If a carbon monoxide detector in your house goes off, check to see if anyone in the house is experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning. If anyone is, get that person out of the house immediately and tell your doctor you suspect poisoning from carbon monoxide. Regardless of whether anyone in the home has symptoms, ventilate the house, turn off all potential sources of carbon monoxide, and have a qualified technician check your gas appliances. ■

*Sources: Centers for Disease Control; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Chris Grammes writes about safety 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.)*



### Oakdale Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



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Diggers Hotline: For underground cable locates and power line clearance information, call (800) 242-8511.