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Manager's Message: Investing in a Brighter Future

J. Michael Davis
General Manager



The past few months have underscored how important it is for people and communities to have a strong network of support and access to resources that will help build a brighter future for all. As a local business, we are here to support you—our members—and the community we all share.

While we've strived to give back in additional ways throughout this period of unprecedented need, our ongoing investments in the local community are the foundation of the brighter future we envision. From education grants and workforce development initiatives, to innovative energy solutions and new technologies, everything we do is aimed at strengthening our community.

Chief among Tri-County EMC's contributions are economic development activities that lead to new opportunities for our members, pave the way for the success of local businesses, and give our communities the resources they need to grow and thrive.

As a local business, we are here to support you —our members—and the community we all share.

By offering zero-interest loans through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program, Tri-County EMC is helping create and retain jobs, promote economic development and enhance community facilities and public services like police protection and fire and rescue.

Because we're owned by and based in this community we know firsthand what our community has to offer, and we're actively involved in helping other people and businesses recognize the tremendous potential of this area.

We're committed to making meaningful investments that will support economic vitality and the long-term success of our members.

To learn more about our economic development activities and the ways we're investing in a brighter future, visit tccmc.com.



Educators: Apply Early for a Bright Ideas Grant and You Could Win \$100

It pays to apply early for a Bright Ideas education grant! Teachers who submit their grant application by the Aug. 15 early bird deadline will be entered into a statewide drawing to win one of five \$100 gift cards. The final deadline to apply for a Bright Ideas grant of \$1,000 from Tri-County EMC is Sept. 15. To learn more about the program and apply, visit nrbrightideas.com.



We're Here to Help You Save

Tri-County EMC is here for you, and given the challenging times we've all experienced the last few months, we'd like to share some information and ideas to help you save energy and money.

Summer is a great time to conduct a home energy audit to identify ways to boost energy efficiency. Understanding how your home uses energy can help you determine the best ways to modify energy use and keep more money in your wallet. An energy audit is one of the best ways to determine how energy efficient your home is—an audit can also identify areas for potential energy savings.

We have several qualified energy auditors in our local area. Be sure to hire a professional who will conduct a thorough audit of your home. If you'd prefer to do an energy audit yourself, try ENERGY STAR's online audit. Visit energystar.gov, then enter "home energy yardstick" in the search box to get started.

But keep in mind, an online audit won't be as thorough as an in-home audit.

Home Energy Advisor

Members of Tri-County EMC can find out exactly where their energy dollars are going—and how much money they stand to save by making their homes more efficient with our Home Energy Advisor Tool found at tcemc.com under "My Energy Account." Here's what you'll find in the Home Energy Advisor:

→ Home Energy Advisor

1) Get quick estimates of your home's current energy-use costs. See how much you can save just by making a few changes.

2) This reliable information resource answers questions regarding your home's energy use. These easy to use online tools provide energy and bill analysis, interactive energy education for kids and an extensive energy library.

→ Lighting Calculator

See exactly how much money you can save by switching from standard bulbs to compact fluorescent lights.

→ Appliance Calculator

1) See how it all adds up. Get down-to-the-penny energy operating costs for more than 50 different home appliances and electronic devices.

2) See impact of small appliances on your energy use. Get down-to-the-penny energy operating costs for more than 50 different home appliances and electronic devices.

→ Heat Pump Upgrade

Estimate the savings of upgrading your heat pump from your current SEER to a higher SEER rating.

→ Electric Vehicle Calculator

Thinking of buying an Electric Vehicle? Our EV Calculator will help you compare the monthly fuel cost and pounds of carbon dioxide generated by a gas vehicle versus your make and model of electric vehicle. Instantly calculate the monthly savings—both in money and CO2 emissions—of making the switch to an electric vehicle.

→ Water Heater Calculator

Use our water heater comparison calculator to compare the annual costs of water heating in your household through natural gas, electric, propane, and fuel oil, based on your home's location and occupancy.

→ Billing Analysis

Here the Home Energy Advisor goes one step further and incorporates your actual energy bills in its calculations. To access your account, visit our website tcemc.com. Click "My Energy Account" tab, click on "Pay Your Bill Online", click my "My Usage" tab and then click on "Analyze My Bill" to access your personal bill analysis.

→ Energy Forecast

See the current weather's direct impact on your home's energy use and costs. Based on your area's 7-day weather, you can adjust a "virtual thermostat" for heating and cooling and see the daily dollar impact. Complete the home profile to pinpoint more savings opportunities.

→ Kid's Korner

It's all about energy! Colorful, interactive energy info and games that capture the imagination of young and old alike.

Putting power in your hands

Also under "My Energy Account" is our PrePay program intended to aid in budgeting your monthly energy costs. Tri-County EMC members can pay for electricity before it is used, then use the electricity until the credit expires. During the time period you've paid for, you will receive regular feedback via text message on your balance. Industry studies show that consumers who participate in prepaid metering plans use up to 10% less electricity.

As your trusted energy advisor, we're here to help. If you have questions about your bill or additional ways to save energy, please let us know. We're only one click or phone call away.

Smart Thermostat Options

A Comparison of the Market's Smartest and Most Popular

Heating and cooling costs account for around half of a user's energy bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. So when it comes to reducing energy use and cutting home energy costs, the most impact can be made by programming the thermostat. The right thermostat settings could yield energy savings of 8–15%, and new technology is making it easier than ever to achieve those settings.

Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and may be controlled remotely through a tablet, smartphone or voice control. Some models use multiple sensors to monitor temperatures in various parts of the home for more balanced heating or cooling, track user temperature preferences and use the data to optimize your heating and cooling schedule, and some are designed for complex multi-stage systems that will control heating, cooling, dehumidifier and ventilation systems.

Nest vs. Ecobee

If you're interested in controlling your thermostat with your voice or an app, or in being hands-off and letting it learn your habits, you should consider a smart thermostat. To narrow your choices, factor in smart features, price and attributes that matter most to you, such as color, size or style, and make sure the chosen product supports your HVAC system.

The Nest 3rd Generation Learning Thermostat and Ecobee4 are the most popular and sophisticated devices in this category. Both devices are usually priced around \$250, but consumers can easily recoup their money in energy

cost savings.

Both can be adjusted via computer, tablet, smartphone, Google Assistant or Amazon Alexa device (the Ecobee4 even has a built-in Alexa-enabled speaker). And both thermostats can interact with other smart devices and utilize geofencing—using your phone's GPS to determine if you're home, then automatically adjusting the temperature. Nest's geofencing works with multiple phones, while

for its schedule. As you adjust the temperature up or down, Nest records it, and after a week, learns your schedule and the temperature settings you prefer. From then, it continues to learn and respond to your adjustments. Nest also records 10 days of energy use data that shows you a visual of the times your system turned on and off during those 10 days. Nest also sends a monthly email report that includes a summary of your energy use compared to previous months and other Nest users.

Ecobee must be hardwire installed, utilizes a touchscreen and can analyze HVAC data for 18 months. All temperature and motion data from the thermostat and sensors is recorded, and can be accessed online by the owner to help you monitor



Ecobee supports just one phone. Ecobee makes up for this with its more sophisticated sensors.

The Nest and Ecobee offer for purchase, remote sensors that allow the thermostat to take readings from any room throughout your home and adjust the temperature accordingly. This can be an advantage if your thermostat is located near a draft or in direct sunlight. The Ecobee's sensors go one step further with occupancy sensing, which notices if there is movement in the house, in order to override geofencing if the primary phone user leaves the house and someone is still there.

While many of the features are similar, there are a few that are notably different and can help you determine which is right for you.

Nest, powered by a rechargeable battery, is a learning thermostat and automatically learns your schedule. When you begin using Nest, it makes a few assumptions and creates a baseline

total energy use, how the weather influences your use, and how your home efficiency compares to other users in your area.

The two thermostats also can connect with various energy devices in your home. Ecobee recognizes dehumidifiers and ventilators, and Nest recognizes heat pumps and auxiliary heat.

Other Choices

For those looking for a smart thermostat with fewer bells and whistles, the Honeywell Lyric T5+ is one of the market's most popular, priced around \$135. While it can't sense your presence or learn your schedule, it does have the geofencing feature and can interact with other smart-home devices, such as turning on lights when you arrive or leave home.

Whichever fits your lifestyle and preferences, a smart thermostat is a good investment that can help you save energy and money in a more convenient way.



Stay Safe during Summer Months

North Carolina's summers temperatures can be dangerous; in fact, according to the National Weather Service, heat is one of the leading weather-related dangers in the United States, causing hundreds of fatalities each year. Follow these simple tips to avoid heat-related dangers:

- ➔ Drink plenty of water, non-alcoholic and decaffeinated fluids, even if you don't feel thirsty.
- ➔ Wear lightweight clothes and minimize direct exposure to the sun.
- ➔ Visit public, air-conditioned places like malls or libraries during peak hours of the day to stay cool and take a load off of your HVAC system at home.
- ➔ Use portable electric fans to exhaust hot air from rooms or draw in cooler air.
- ➔ As tempting as it may be, don't sit in front of portable electric fans when a room's temperature is hotter than 90°F. The dry blowing air will dehydrate you faster and exacerbate the problem.

- ➔ Save strenuous activities until the coolest part of the day, usually during early morning or late evening hours.
- ➔ Take a cool bath or shower.
- ➔ If you must go outside during times of extreme heat, minimize your exposure to the heat by staying in shady, grassy areas.
- ➔ Check on family members, friends and neighbors, especially if they are elderly.

Be aware of the symptoms from heat exhaustion: heavy sweating, weakness, clammy or pale skin, nausea, confusion and a fast, weak pulse. If you experience any of these symptoms move to a cooler location, loosen your clothing, lie down and take sips of water. Don't let heat exhaustion become something more serious, like heat stroke. If you think you see someone who could be experiencing a heat stroke, call 911 immediately.

Be safe, be cool and be encouraged that autumn breezes are around the corner!



Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Tri-County EMC Membership Corporation in Dudley, N.C., was chartered May 8, 1940.

Mission Statement:

Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation is a member-driven cooperative committed to providing reliable electric power at a reasonable cost, to offering superior service, and to taking an active role in supporting the communities it serves.

We are here to serve you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year.

For Outages or Emergencies:
919-735-2611 or 1-800-548-4869

tcemc.com

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Employee of the month



Leonard Person

Leonard Person is one of 47 employees ready to serve you. He has worked with Tri-County EMC since January 9, 1995, and is a Right-of-Way Foreman for the cooperative. Leonard and his wife, Cyndi, reside in Dudley.