

Saving money with space heaters depends on usage

High-end space heaters are marketed heavily during the fall and winter through television infomercials, full-page ads in newspapers and magazines, and marketing presentations designed to look like news articles.

If you're thinking about buying one of these heaters to warm your home this winter, understand these units can cause your electricity usage to climb significantly. How much they'll boost your power bill depends a lot on how you use them.

"Space heaters can be cost-effective when used in conjunction with your central heating system, but *only* if you lower your thermostat by several degrees and use the space heater to keep a localized area more comfortable," said Sherman Phillips, manager of Clay Electric Co-op's Energy Services Division.

"We usually recommend that members set their heating system thermostats at 68 degrees. However, to realize savings with a space heater, the central heating thermostat should be lowered to 65 degrees, and the space heater should be used to warm the part of the home most frequently occupied."

Phillips cautioned space heater users to turn the heaters off in rooms that will be unoccupied for any length of time. Regarding the heaters' cost to operate, Phillips said on a high setting, the units can cost 20 cents per hour on average. If a space heater is used eight hours per day for 20 days, that's an additional \$32 on your electricity bill.

According to Brian Sloboda, a senior program manager with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)'s Cooperative Research Network, space heaters are not the ideal solution to heating homes when compared to air source and ground source heat pumps.

For every unit of electricity consumed by electric space heaters, they produce one unit of heat, according to Sloboda. "The cost of operating multiple electric space heaters is almost always significantly more than operating a central heating system."

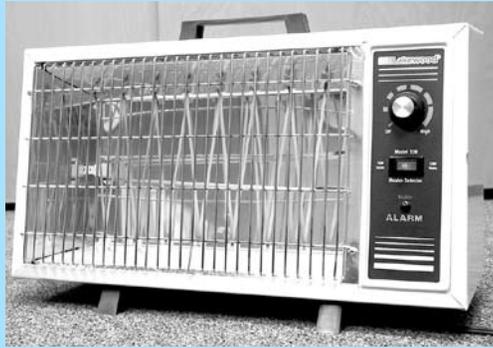
Phillips agreed, saying the most energy-efficient heating investment for North Florida is an electric heat pump.

According to the Department of Energy, a heat pump can provide 1.5 to 3 units of heat for every unit of electricity consumed, making it the most efficient option for wintertime home heating. A heat pump moves heat rather than creating it from a fuel, like in a combustion heating system.

Before winter weather sets in, consider performing some easy and inexpensive energy-saving improvements to your home that could save you some money in the long run. Here are some suggestions:

- Add caulk and weatherstripping around doors and windows.
- Add insulation to attics and exposed walls.
- Move furniture or obstacles away from heat registers.
- Insulate duct work.
- Close blinds or curtains at night.

If you use space heaters this winter, Clay Electric encourages members to keep safety in mind. Every winter, there are news accounts of families left homeless from a fire due to a space heater being placed too close to flammable materials. Make sure the heater has an auto shutoff if the unit tips over, and locate the unit far enough away from flammable materials to avoid a fire.



The Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc. _____

Power Line

December 2011

We're upgrading our computer system to better serve you

Clay Electric is in the process of implementing a new customer information system (CIS). This system, which is critical to the co-op's daily operations, handles all aspects of customer account services including billing, customer information, service orders, customer contacts, capital credits and more. The new system, from Harris-Cayenta, is more flexible and will enhance Clay Electric's ability to meet the changing service needs of members, as well as to adapt to future changes. For now, members will not notice any differences.

The current computer system being used by the co-op will no longer be used after Jan. 17. Customers will not be able to access their accounts on the Clay Electric website or make payments by telephone from the evening of Jan. 17th - 23. Payments will be accepted at Fidelity Express locations and at district offices. The co-op encourages customers to wait until Jan. 25 to make online payments or other changes to their accounts. There will be no late payment penalties for customers whose payments are unable to be processed during this time.

Please have patience with us as we complete this change that will enable us to better serve you in the future.

—  Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc. —

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

Report from the manager

Ricky Davis

General Manager/CEO



In 2011 we accomplished much on your behalf

We're nearing the end of another year, and it's a good time to share with you some of our accomplishments for 2011.

I'm proud of the fact that our electric rates remain among the lowest in the state, and the lowest among the 15 electric cooperatives in Florida. We lowered our cost for 1,000 kilowatt hours of electricity to \$112.80 earlier this year, from \$113.50. We are lower than many neighboring utilities, including GRU, JEA and Progress Energy. Lower fuel expenses for our wholesale power provider (Seminole Electric Co-op) was one of big reasons for our lower power cost.

Our focus at this past summer's strategic planning workshop was ensuring that your cooperative remains prepared and financially sound during this ongoing period of slow economic activity. The sluggish and stagnant economy is affecting us and our members, and we're hopeful things will begin to turn around next year. For us, this slowdown has meant we've had to continuously reallocate our workforce to accomplish a variety of essential tasks and add value to the service we provide our members. We remain uncertain what kind of long-term effects the difficult economic conditions will have on us and our members.

We added six "values" to our Strategic Plan for 2012 to help emphasize our commitment to Safety, Ethics, Service, Communications, Dedication and Community. These are important and worthwhile values for a business to have, and they will be an integral part of our ongoing commitment to our members and the communities we serve.

Speaking of community, our employees assisted the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life earlier this year with fundraisers that brought in just over \$10,000. We were honored by the ACS with a plaque commemorating our 10 years of service to the Relay events. Our employees also held a fundraiser to help Middleburg teacher and volleyball coach Carrie Prewitt with her electric bills when she moved into her new home that was provided by the Extreme Makeover: Home Edition TV series. The TV show that featured Carrie aired on Mother's Day. It was a very touching show about Carrie adopting three teenage girls.

A very important project this year is the implementation of a new Customer Information System (CIS), which will go live next month. This system is a complex computer system that is critical to the co-op's daily operations and customer service. A considerable amount of testing and training has taken place to ensure things go smoothly as we transition to a new CIS.

Our members continue to take advantage of a variety of payment options. Payments remitted electronically increased 14 percent, including payments taken over the phone by our service representatives, and the self-service options via the web and our Interactive Voice Response system. Also both our Automatic Monthly Payment Plan and payments via credit cards (through Speed Pay/Western Union) increased during the year. Speed Pay payments increased 48 percent over 2010's activity.

Our presence on Facebook expanded this year. We've reached more than 510 fans, and our communications via Facebook have included power outage reports and a variety of co-op events and programs.

Our employees continued to recognize the importance of working safely. Many of our departments and districts were recognized for meeting safety performance criteria established for the year.

We continue to help our members with energy efficiency and energy conservation information. Just over 1,300 members received rebates totaling \$332,693. Energy efficiency loans totaled 98,

resulting in \$453,152 loaned for various energy efficiency upgrades.

We completed a large number of projects this year that enhanced the reliability of our distribution and transmission systems, and also installed new state-of-the-art equipment in our substations to help us monitor changing load conditions and detect the locations of faults. We also upgraded our Energy Control Center with a new video display wall, which will allow information to be shared among all our dispatchers.

And lastly, we continue to monitor a variety of federal and state regulations and rules that could impact our ability to deliver competitively priced power to our members.

As always, the board of trustees, management and employees appreciate your support. We will strive to do our best for you each and every day.

Two Gainesville District employees retired last month

Gainesville District employees Steve Law and Nina Tripp retired last month.

Steve Law, who was Gainesville's District Engineer, had 37 years of service with the cooperative.

Nina Tripp was a customer service representative. She retired after 20 years.

Gainesville District Manager Derick Thomas said Law and Tripp will be missed by their fellow coworkers and the district's customers. He noted that they were extremely dedicated to the co-op's members.

"They were an asset to our district and we are all fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with them," Thomas said.



Law



Tripp

Power Line is an informational publication of Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc. It is distributed monthly with members' billing statements. If you have questions or comments about the Power Line publication, contact Editor Kathy Richardson at P. O. Box 308, Keystone Heights, FL 32656; e-mail: KRichardson@clayelectric.com.

Clay Electric's website (<http://www.clayelectric.com>) offers online services such as payments, and information about the co-op's programs and services.

Clay Electric's Board of Trustees will meet on Dec. 15 and Jan. 26 beginning at 12:30 p.m. in Keystone Heights.