

McDonough Power Cooperative Connects Members to Stimulus Savings



Steve Epperson
President/CEO

It's all over the news; with the passage of the federal stimulus bill there's money available to help many Americans weatherize homes and make energy efficiency improvements. But how can residents in McDonough Power's seven-county service territory connect with these resources? McDonough Power is ready to help as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 goes into effect.

"The state of our economy has left many McDonough Power members searching for ways to make ends meet," says Steve Epperson, President/CEO of McDonough Power. "Making the most of each energy dollar is high on everyone's list of concerns. We're ready to help explain which parts of the stimulus bill may affect you, especially if you're considering energy efficiency improvements."

Investing in a few basic measures to secure a home from outside elements could provide major benefits. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) says weatherization — the process of sealing air leaks and properly insulating a home — can reduce heating bills by up to 32 percent, resulting in an average energy savings of \$358 per year.

"You can be more comfortable, and save on your energy bill while improving the environment," adds Epperson. "Making our nation more energy efficient takes all of us doing our part, and the stimulus bill provides new ways for you to save money while you're doing it." 9114C9-450A

As a result of the stimulus package, DOE's Weatherization Assistance Program is expanding with a goal of weatherizing one million homes per year. In the past, only households that earned up to 150 percent of the national poverty level were eligible to participate.

The stimulus bill extends eligibility to those with incomes below 200 percent of the national poverty level. For a family of four, that's an income limit of \$66,150.

Program participants receive a professional energy consultation with an analysis of energy bills, a blower-door test to locate air leaks and advice on how to be more efficient.

Workers then arrive to make energy upgrades like insulating walls and roofs, sealing air leaks, and installing more efficient heating and cooling systems. The process to weatherize a home through the program usually takes two days with an average cost of \$2,500. Since some homes have different needs, the stimulus bill allows up to \$6,500 to be spent on each home.

For members not eligible for federally funded programs, the stimulus plan provides a homeowner efficiency tax credit of up to \$1,500, or 30 percent, of the cost for new energy upgrades, including weatherization activities as well as installation of efficient heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. Efficiency tax credits were already available for 2009, but carried a \$500 limit (with additional caps for certain types of upgrades) and only covered up to 10 percent of a member's investment.

"You may have looked at the tax credit in the past and thought it wasn't worth it," notes Epperson. "This change effectively triples the amount of financial investment you get credit for, and, coupled with how much you can save on energy costs each year, it makes these efficiency measures much more affordable."

Tax credits directly lower a member's federal income taxes, and are gener-

■ **Continued on page 16b**

MAP LOCATION GAME

Every month we will have four map location numbers hidden throughout The Wire. If you find your map location number, call our office and identify your number and the page that it is on. If correct, you will win a \$10 credit on your next electric bill.



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■ Stimulus Savings continued from page 16a

ally more valuable than tax deductions because they reduce taxes owed dollar-for-dollar. In contrast, a tax deduction, like a home mortgage or charitable gift, lowers taxable income and may only offer small savings. For example, a \$1,500 tax deduction for someone in the 25 percent tax bracket would lower taxes owed by \$350; a \$1,500 tax credit for energy efficiency efforts will lower taxes owed by \$1,500!

Eligible members should contact their local community action agency to apply for the weatherization services. Below is a list of agencies and corresponding counties. To find out more about energy efficiency measures supported through the stimulus bill, visit www.weatherizationillinois.com or recovery.illinois.gov.

FULTON

Fulton County Health Department
700 East Oak Street
Canton, Illinois 61520-3157
Telephone: 309-647-1134 ext. 245
Hours of Operation: 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

HANCOCK

Western Illinois Regional Council
223 South Randolph Street
Macomb, Illinois 61455-2209
Telephone: 309-837-2997
Hours of Operation: 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

HENDERSON, MCDONOUGH & WARREN COUNTIES

Western Illinois Regional Council
223 South Randolph Street
Macomb, Illinois 61455-2209
Telephone: 309-837-2997
Hours of Operation: 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

KNOX

Carver Community Action Agency
235 East Main Street
P.O. Box 28
Galesburg, Illinois 61402-0028
Telephone: 309-342-0158
Hours of Operation: 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

SCHUYLER

Two Rivers Regional Council of Public Officials
1125 Hampshire, Suite 100
Quincy, Illinois 62301-3000
Telephone: 217-322-6916
Hours of Operation: 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Use a programmable thermostat to vary your home's temperature based on your schedule. Lower your thermostat when you're not home or at night to save as much as 10 percent on heating and cooling costs!

Source: U.S. Department of Energy



A SPECIAL HOLIDAY FOR A SPECIAL PLANET

It's our home, and its land, air and water sustain our daily lives. So, every year on April 22, people throughout the world celebrate Earth Day.

Back in the late 1960s, Americans were beginning to become aware of the damage pollution was causing to the planet's air and water. After U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin witnessed the damage caused by an oil spill off the California coast, he called for a day that would focus the nation's attention on the importance of the environment. **4219B4-530A**

The first Earth Day took place on April 22, 1970. April 22 was chosen because it was the birthday of Julius Sterling Morton, who founded Arbor Day. In addition, the organizers believed that naturalist John Muir had been born on that day, although they

later learned Muir had actually been born on the 21st. (Reflecting the political chaos of the times, a conservative group insisted that Earth Day was actually a pro-Communist event, because Soviet Union founder Vladimir Lenin also happened to be born April 22.)

Nearly 20 million Americans participated in activities to commemorate that first Earth Day, and the focus on environmental issues contributed to the subsequent passage of the Clean Air Act and the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Over the years, Earth Day has grown, with particularly large observances in 1990 and 2000. Today, many cities and towns observe the day by holding events that spotlight ways people can make Earth-friendly choices, from replacing incandescent light bulbs with high-efficiency compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs), to increasing awareness of local recycling programs.

Electric cooperatives like ours have also been working to help consumers

reduce their use of electricity. For example, we promote proper home sealing as a way to lower energy bills while enhancing comfort.

Why would an electric cooperative care so much about the environment? We live here, too, and we appreciate having clean air to breathe and clean water to drink. Just as important, we're a non-profit membership organization that exists to serve the needs of members like you. Wise energy use and a concern for the Earth improve the quality of our members' lives, now and for future generations.

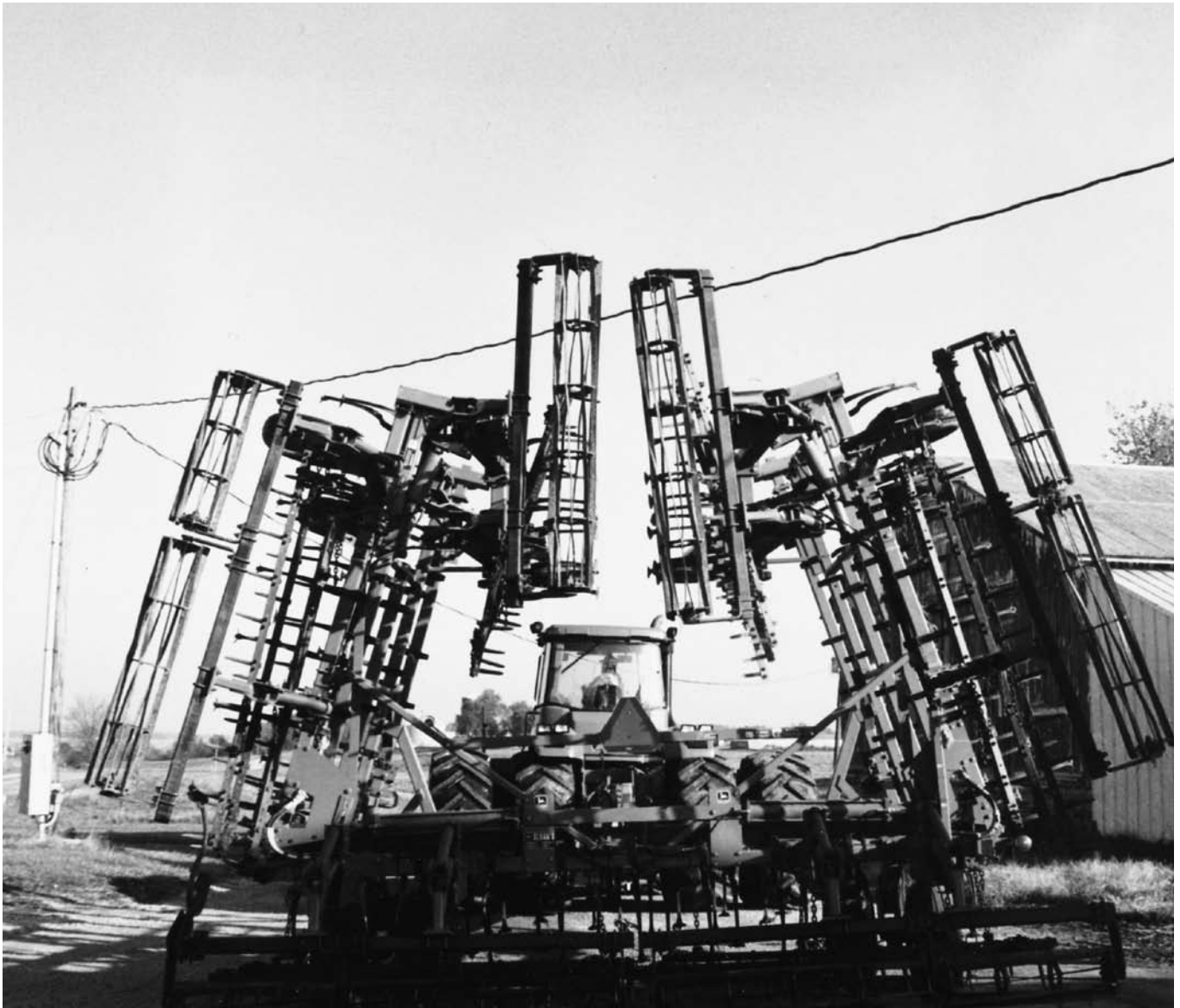
For practical ideas on ways to improve the efficiency of your home while reducing the demand for electricity, contact your local Energy Advisor. On Earth Day and every day, we're here to provide free advice when you want it, and help when you need it.

Co-op receives two awards at state conference

McDonough Power Cooperative in Macomb received two safety honors recently during the Safety/Supervisory Technical Conference held in Springfield. The awards were given to cooperatives with outstanding "no lost time" and "accident/illness" safety records for 2008. President/CEO Steve Epperson says, "We are extremely proud of our employees. It takes personal commitment and daily vigilance to accomplish a consistently safe working environment. Our safety conscious corporate culture exists because of our employee's excellent attitudes and cooperation." **627A3-706B**

The conference is sponsored annually by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC). The theme of the conference was "Make Safety Your Brand."





Watch Out for Electrical Hazards on the Farm

By Chris Grammes

Those who live on a farm know it's hard work and dangerous, too. Each year, farmers are electrocuted when large farm machinery comes into contact with overhead power lines.

Often, the situation occurs because a newer, bigger piece of equipment no longer clears a line the way a smaller one did. In addition, shifting soil may also affect whether or not machinery avoids power lines from year to year.

The following tips will help keep everyone on a farm safe:

- Look over work areas carefully for overhead power lines and utility poles.
- Make sure you have ample clearance when moving large machinery such as combines, grain augers, pickers, bailers, and front-end loaders. Do this every year as equipment sizes or soil conditions may change.
- Store large equipment properly if near or under power lines. When planning new construction, factor in existing power lines. 541C6C-270C
- Be extra careful when working around trees and brush; they often make it difficult to see power lines.
- Train all farm workers to keep an eye out for overhead power lines.

Sources: Safe Electricity www.safeelectricity.org; National Ag Safety Database

Chris Grammes writes on 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.