**Prose**

**It’s not too early to think about air conditioning**

 The comfortable spring weather is more likely to nudge you to open your windows than to turn on the air conditioner—and that makes this the perfect time to make sure your c/c is in shape for the summer heat that’s just a few months away.

 The best time to service your home’s air conditioning system is when you don’t need it. If you put it off until it’s 90 degrees outdoors, you could be dealing with some down time that can leave your home pretty uncomfortable.

 Annal service is important because your technician will lubricate and clean moving parts and check for—and repair—potential problems. That will make it more likely that your system will run smoothly all summer.

 Choose an a/c tech who is licensed by the state. Chances are the same tech can come back in the fall to tune up your heating system.

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**Consult an electrician before adding home gym, theater**

 If you’re lucky enough to have an unused room to convert to a home office, a home gym or a home theater, add one more item to your “to do” list: Call an electrician.

Setting up any of those rooms involves moving in a lot of big electronic equipment like a treadmill, a giant-screen TV, computers and printers, and stereo components. It’s quite possible that the electrical receptacles in the room won’t be able to handle equipment that uses as much electricity as those pieces do.

 You also might not have enough outlets for all of the things you’ll need to plug in. Sure, you can buy a power strip that allows you to plug multiple pieces of equipment into a single outlet. But that power strip won’t add any juice to the circuit that powers that single outlet—which means you can overload it and set yourself up to trip your circuits or even cause overheating or a fire.

 So before you start using your home gym to get in shape, get the room in shape first. Ask a licensed electrician to inspect the room’s outlets and power supply and determine if you need to upgrade.

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**Double-pane windows save energy, money**

 If you live in an older home, it’s a good bet that its windows are made from single panes of glass.

 Newer homes typically come with double-pane windows and for good reason: They’re far more energy efficient. In fact, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates that you can save between 7% and 15% on heating and cooling bills when you replace single-pane windows with double-pane versions, especially if they’re rated by the government’s Energy Star program as extra-energy efficient.

 You can find out how much money you can save each year if you replace your old windows with more efficient models by visiting the Energy Star website. Savings range from $77 in mild climates to more than $500 in areas with extreme winters or summers.

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**What’s different about an electric cooperative?**

 You receive this publication because you buy your electricity from an electric cooperative. That’s a utility that operates like no other.

 Cooperatives are consumer-owned businesses, which means that you and your neighbors actually own your electric utility. In fact, you may have noticed that the utility refers to you as a “member” rather than as a “customer.”

 The cooperative’s board of directors is a group of consumer-members, just like you, and, in fact, you can run for a seat on the board yourself if you’d like to. When the directors’ terms expire, the cooperative will hold an election and you will get to vote. So the cooperative is governed by its consumers, and those who govern it are elected by the consumers.

 Cooperatives have their roots in their local communities, so they never sell stock. That way, consumer-members retain local control.

 Take advantage of the opportunity to participate as an owner-member of your electric cooperative by attending membership meetings and voting in board elections.

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**Electricity demand to climb in 2025**

Consumption of electricity is expected to rise in 2025 all over the world, inching the price of electricity upward.

A colder-than-usual winter led home and business owners to crank up the heat, moving sales of electricity up by 2% over the last year, according to the Energy Information Administration. Rising production costs and declining gas inventories have contributed to price increases.

“Current high coal and gas prices are not the result of a single shock event on the demand or supply side,” according to an EIA report. “Rather, they result from a combination of supply and demand factors that gradually tightened markets over the course of several months and even years.”

To keep your family’s energy consumption from rising, consider purchasing an energy-efficient water heater and furnace; unplugging anything electric when you’re not using it; and experimenting with solar for space heating and cooling, all recommended by the U.S. Department of Energy.

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**Pointers**

*Explain, please:* **Avoid big words, utility jargon in pubs**

Sorry to say, your youngest readers—those in their early 20s—might not have the same broad vocabulary that you did when you were their age.

When you were in college and then starting your career, chances are good that you read books and newspapers regularly. You didn’t have an iPhone to scroll through, social media to keep up with or mobile video games to make animation and videos more prominent in your life than words.

Today’s young adults do. While many still enjoy getting lost in a good book and can quote authors from Dickens to Franzen, many don’t spend time reading and don’t care to.

It’s a shame that non-readers are missing out on the joy of the written word. A bigger shame is that many of them have limited vocabularies, so when they do read something brief but important, like your cooperative’s newsletters, bill stuffers and statewide local pages, they get stuck on words that you might use every day and assume everybody understands.

Don’t be so sure. Technical terms like distribution lines or substation might stump them. They might not understand what a trustee is or does. And expect that electric cooperative-specific jargon like capital credits or even cooperative might be unfamiliar.

When younger readers come across words they don’t know, they don’t do what you did at their age—look them up in the dictionary. Instead, they move on to something that is more familiar, like the colloquial prose of social media or something with few or no written words at all—like a video.

This is in no way a dig at young electric cooperative members. The members of Generation X have multiple skills that older readers might not, like tech savvy, an ease with social media and video production. They bring a knack for multi-platform marketing and a global perspective, thanks to the internet and social media.

They just don’t read the same way you used to.

And you need to accommodate that by digitizing just about everything you publish, by doubling your effort on social media and by producing more video messages for those who prefer that form of communication over print.

You also must take care when creating printed materials that you don’t use utility jargon without explaining it and you don’t assume all readers can define words as familiar to you as facility or subdivision or seminar.

If you’re making a presentation to a young audience, check in when you use a word that’s more likely to be familiar to those who are older—and take a couple of seconds to explain its meaning.

Same goes in print: The more you can explain to your audience, the more attentive that audience will be to the important messages of your electric cooperative.

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