

Energy Commandment No. 3: “Thou shalt invest in an energy-efficient water heater.”



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As we continue with the 10 Commandments of Energy Efficiency, we will keep our focus on making wise investments. This month, I am encouraging you to invest in a specific item that will make a world of difference in your utility bill. And in the coming months, I plan to continue to remind you that using your money for energy efficiency is probably the best

investment you can make.

Have you ever thought much about your water heater? Are you aware that about 20 percent of your utility bill goes toward the heating of water? Have you ever had to replace your water heater? Nearly every one of you said “Yes.” Now, why did you replace it? Was it the wrong color? Well, of course not. You replaced it because it quit working or had started leaking.

At some point, we all need to replace a water heater. Now wouldn't it be great if we could install a replacement guaranteed to never leak or rust? And wouldn't it be great if the new water heater was super energy efficient? Well, such a product is available and I will tell you how I learned about it.

About 10 years ago I was attending a really big home show in the Astrodome in Houston, Texas. It takes several days to see everything in that show, which is sponsored by the National Association of Homebuilders. I actually did an energy presentation there and had about four extra hours to look around. I was practically running through the aisles looking at every display as fast as possible. At one point, I looked to my left and saw some strange looking objects that were shaped like a 44-caliber pistol bullet only they were about five feet tall. I hollered over to the fellow and asked, “What are these?” And he said, “Water heaters.” I said, “Commercial?” and he said, “No, mostly residential.” I turned and walked his way and asked, “What is so special about these water heaters?” And he said they are guaranteed to never leak or rust and

are 93 percent to 96 percent energy efficient. I didn't necessarily believe him but I knew that if it were true, a lot of my listeners would want to have one.

Later, when I got proof that it was true, I started telling about the Marathon® water heater in my seminars and on my radio show. Folks just like you started asking where they could get a Marathon. For months, I had to say, “I don't know.” But that didn't last for long because the electric cooperatives of Arkansas saw what a great product it was and began offering them to their members. *(Editor's Note: Many South Dakota electric cooperatives have carried Marathon water heaters for more than 15 years.)*

And I know for a fact that hundreds of you have already purchased one. If you understand the facts, the rest of you will do the same. The facts are simple. It is the last water heater that you will ever need at a particular location. It won't rust or leak because the tank has no metal. And the Marathon is so well insulated with “envirofoam,” that it has practically zero standby loss regardless of the location. It does not warm your cold garage in the winter and it does not heat your house in the summer.

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Now, consider this: The average gas water heater is less than 58 percent efficient, which means that about 40 percent of the natural gas you buy goes up the flue into the sky. On the other hand, the all-electric Marathons average 95 percent efficiency. That's a no-brainer in my book. So, my advice to you is this: When you need a water heater for your new or existing house, contact your local electric co-op and ask about the Marathon water heater.

Remember – your co-op values you, the member, and it cares. That's why your co-op is doing all it can to help you save money on your electric bill by sponsoring this column, my show, my seminars, by conducting energy audits and much more.

Reprinted courtesy of Rural Arkansas magazine and Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas. Doug Rye, a licensed architect living in Saline County, Ark., is the popular host of the “Home Remedies” radio show and a promoter of energy efficiency building. To reach Doug, call him at 501-653-7931.

Teacher Energy Seminar Offered

Basin Electric, the Lignite Energy Council and the American Coal Foundation are sponsoring a teacher seminar titled "Lignite – Our Regional Resource: Energy, Economics and Environment" at University of Mary in Bismarck, N.D., June 15-18, 2009.

"The cost of the seminar and travel expenses will be paid by Basin Electric Power Cooperative for South Dakota, Minnesota and Montana teachers," said Anika Schaff of Basin Electric.

Now in its 24th year, Schaff said the seminar provides teachers with a broader understanding of the lignite coal industry and the important role it plays in providing electricity to consumers, farmers and businesses. The seminar will provide teachers with the information and educational materials they need to teach their students about how lignite is mined and converted into energy. Lignite's economic impact on the region, as well as important environmental issues affecting the mining and power plant industry will also be discussed.

The seminar includes tours of a lignite mine, a power plant fueled by lignite and the Great Plains Synfuels Plant. The Synfuels Plant converts coal into synthetic natural gas and other valuable byproducts. A tour of the visitor's center at Fort Mandan, the location where the Lewis & Clark Expedition spent its first winter, is also included. The visitor's center was constructed with the use of coal combustion byproducts.

The seminar is being held in cooperation with University of Mary and the Center for Economic Education at the University of North Dakota.

Teachers can earn one semester graduate credit in economics from the University of North Dakota by successfully completing the seminar requirements.

Teachers from all grade levels are encouraged to apply to the program, but earth science, social studies and energy education teachers will be placed first. There are 120 spots available.

Registration information for teachers from South Dakota, Minnesota and Montana is available in the "Online registrations" section of Basin Electric's Web site at http://www.basinelectric.com/News_Center/Event_Registration/index.html. North Dakota teachers can find more details on the seminar at www.lignite.com/teachers.

For further information or to register, contact Anika Schaff at 1717 E. Interstate Ave., Bismarck, ND 58503. You may also call her at 1-800-242-2372 or e-mail her at aschaff@bepc.com.

USDA Approves CO2 Capture Loan

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is making a positive effort for the development of clean coal technologies by announcing up to a \$300 million loan to Basin Electric Power Cooperative for a carbon-dioxide (CO₂) capture project.

The announcement was made by USDA Secretary Ed Schafer. "Clean, efficient coal-fired generating plants are an important component in America's efforts to achieve energy independence," he said in an USDA press release. The money will be used to finance development of a demonstration project for capturing CO₂ at the cooperative's Antelope Valley Station (AVS) near Beulah, N.D.

Basin Electric is working with a technology provider to capture emissions of CO₂ from a conventional coal-based power plant. The technology is now being tested on a pilot basis and based on results of those tests, would be expanded to a demonstration project at AVS.

"We've been pushing the technology envelope for years to ensure that coal remains a part of our energy future, but we must also keep an eye on consumer electric costs. Developing new technologies takes time and a huge financial commitment," said Ron Harper, Basin Electric CEO. "This loan is vitally important for three reasons. One, it helps to keep consumer costs affordable by providing low-cost funding. Second, it helps for the continuing development of clean-coal technologies. Third, it sets an example for other federal agencies to emulate."

A commercially viable technology for CO₂ capture from conventional coal-based plants isn't yet available.

AVS is located adjacent to the Great Plains Synfuels Plant, home to the largest carbon capture project in the world.

More than 3 million tons of CO₂ is captured annually and piped to Canada for use in enhanced oil recovery.

Wind Energy Group Formed

The South Dakota Wind Energy Association held its initial membership and organizational meeting in Pierre, S.D., in January. The group's formation culminates several months of efforts to further encourage South Dakota wind development.

SDWEA seeks to support the development of wind energy as a sustainable economic and environmentally friendly resource for South Dakota and its citizens.

SDWEA will also act as a forum for education, research and reliable information about wind development and become a source of reliable information for state leaders and citizens on issues related to wind energy.

New officers were elected to lead the board of directors during the meeting: president, Jeffrey L. Nelson, East River Electric Power Cooperative general manager; vice president, Dr. Kevin Kephart, South Dakota State University vice president for research and dean of the graduate school; and secretary/treasurer, Toby Crow, Associated Contractors of

South Dakota, executive vice president.

The board selected Steve Wegman as its executive director. Previously, Wegman worked as an analyst for the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission.

"I am excited about what this association can do to provide a new perspective for advocating the expansion of this great resource for not only the benefit of project developers, but also for South Dakota," Wegman said.

SDWEA primary sponsors are the Associated General Contractors of South Dakota, Inc; East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc.; Missouri River Energy Services; Rural Learning Center; Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative, Inc.; South Dakota Corn Council; South Dakota Electric Utility Companies; South Dakota Farm Bureau; South Dakota Farmers Union; and the South Dakota Rural Electric Association.

For those interested in joining SDWEA, contact Steve Wegman at 605-295-1221.