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Touchstone Energy* Cooperatives
of South Dakota
*The power of human connections**

Looking out for you.

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City of Elk Point, S.D.

South Dakota Electric Cooperative Connections is published monthly for \$6 annually for member cooperatives, \$12 annually for non-members by South Dakota Rural Electric Association, 222 W. Pleasant Drive, Pierre, S.D. 57501. Correspondence to: Editor, *South Dakota Electric Cooperative Connections*, PO Box 1138, Pierre, SD 57501; telephone (605) 224-8823; fax (605) 224-4430; e-mail editor@sdrea.coop

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Energy Conservation Is Back in Style

It looks like energy conservation is back in style. There's nothing like rising fuel prices to make us think harder about when and how we use energy.

The hurricane season has taken its toll on some of the nation's systems for reaching, refining and transporting our oil and gas supplies. In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, TV news shows carried images of vehicles lined up at gas stations and plastic bags on pump handles.

Demand for petroleum products continues to rise against a supply that sometimes cannot meet it entirely. So we have seen prices rise at the gas pump, which affects any goods and services whose delivery relies on transportation by cars and trucks, trains and planes, even fishing boats. All of us also are seeing prices rise for the fuels that run appliances and systems in our homes, farms and businesses.

These dynamics naturally cause us to adjust and manage our personal use of energy as best we can.

But energy conservation never went out of style in our business. Not a month goes by when this publication doesn't print something on how to conserve energy: tips for watching and controlling the operation of heat pumps and water heaters, how to plug energy leaks in homes, how to judge the efficiency of appliances, how to build or renovate buildings that require minimal energy consumption.

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As the price of energy fluctuates, and as the technology of appliances and vehicles changes accordingly, electric co-ops will continue to pay attention to smart energy use.

Why? It just makes sense. It makes sense to consumer-members, considering that you own the utility that supplies your electric power. It's in your interest to make sure your own plans – and by extension those of the co-op – include conservative ways of using electricity and all other forms of energy you pay for.

Touchstone Energy co-ops, individually and with state and national partners, have been involved for many years in supporting research and testing technology designed to conserve energy and enhance service reliability.

Whether it's larger customers, who are always looking for ways to improve energy management, or the residential member who wants advice on the smartest, most efficient appliances, we offer services that can help you use energy wisely.

Some of us remember when the nation's highway speed limit was lowered to 55 mph. Others may also remember the "oil embargo" of the 1970s and the 45-mpg VW Rabbit diesel automobile, the rising popularity of wood-burning stoves and furnaces and President Carter's plea to turn the thermostat down a few degrees in winter and up a few degrees in summer.

We're not likely to see a return to those specific events and trends, but we are likely to see a stronger emphasis on conserving energy, not only in our own consumption practices, but also in how industry designs and manufactures vehicles, buildings, community infrastructure and appliances. Such a trend can only benefit everyone.