



# CENTRAL ELECTRIC POWER ASSOCIATION

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## WHAT IS MUTUAL AID AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?



by Jennah Denney

Electric cooperatives employ a variety of methods to reduce the likelihood of power outages — from regular tree trimming, to equipment maintenance and repairs, to local grid updates. But outages do occur, and when they do, co-ops are ready to respond.

Another way co-ops prepare for major outages and disasters is through mutual aid, which is a collaborative approach to emergency planning. The mutual aid model allows electric co-ops to help each other out during times of need. This approach permits co-ops to “borrow” restoration workers from other co-ops, thereby increasing the workforce response to areas impacted by a major outage event. It’s essentially about neighbors helping neighbors, even when those neighbors are fellow co-ops located hundreds of miles away.

Electric co-ops operate according to seven principles, and principles six and seven, Cooperation among Cooperatives and Concern for Community, are directly connected to the mutual aid model.

Electric co-ops were formed to provide reliable electric service to their members at the lowest reasonable cost, and mutual aid has been a fundamental part of our DNA since co-ops were formed. The concept of mutual aid originated with the rural electrification efforts in the 1930s. From the very beginning, electric co-ops relied on each other to assist in times of need, and mutual aid provides an essential safety net in times of crisis.

Mutual aid ultimately benefits co-ops’ consumer-members. During major outage events, co-ops can increase their workforce and respond more quickly, leading to shorter outage times for members.

Disaster response and mutual aid is managed by electric co-ops, as well as co-ops’ statewide organizations. The statewide organizations

assist with coordination between states, helping to ensure the necessary personnel and equipment, which are the key ingredients of the mutual aid recipe. These efforts require effective logistics management and experts who fully understand resource allocation and have the know-how to respond under pressure.

During major outage events, a variety of equipment is necessary to complete repairs, including bucket trucks and other specialized vehicles, utility poles, transformers, and wires. Skilled lineworkers, tree trimmers, damage assessors, and other key personnel are also often shared among co-ops. These experts provide critical skills and manpower to speed up the restoration process.

Because the national network of transmission and distribution infrastructure owned by electric co-ops has been built to federal standards, line crews from any electric co-op in the U.S. can arrive on the scene ready to provide emergency support and secure in their knowledge of the system’s engineering.

Today, mutual aid continues to be a vital part of how electric co-ops operate and serve members of their local communities. The goal of mutual aid is to restore power as quickly and safely as possible after a major outage event. By sharing resources, co-ops can significantly enhance their response capabilities. In essence, mutual aid embodies the sixth cooperative principle of “Cooperation Among Cooperatives” and ensures that members receive reliable electricity even in the face of major challenges.

*Jennah Denney writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



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# Set your home *to* VACAY MODE

Before you leave for vacation, reduce unnecessary energy waste and unneeded wear and tear on your home's equipment by following these energy-saving tips.

by Miranda Boutelle

**Q** How can I lower my electric bill when I'm gone on vacation?

**A** Just like you, the equipment in your home is hard at work getting through the daily grind. While you are off enjoying a new adventure or time away, give your home's equipment a vacation, too. Doing so can reduce unnecessary energy waste and unneeded wear and tear on your heating and cooling system, appliances, and more.

## Here's how to set your home to vacay mode

Your heating and cooling system keeps you comfortable. If you aren't there, it doesn't need to be quite so comfortable in your home. Setting the thermostat closer to the outdoor temperature can save you energy and money. I don't recommend completely turning off the heating or cooling system. In extreme weather, your heating and cooling system also helps protect your home from freezing pipes or damage from excessive heat.

As a rule, you can typically set your thermostat 5 to 10 degrees closer to the outdoor temperature when you aren't home. Each home is different, and the weather varies depending on where you live. Consider the right temperature balance for your home.

Installing a smart thermostat gives you the ability to control your settings remotely from your smart phone. This allows you to adjust the temperature after you leave home and right before you return.

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Most water heaters include a vacation mode setting. This setting drops the temperature to reduce wasted energy when you're away. A storage water heater is like an insulated tea kettle, standing by and ready for you to have hot water whenever you need it. Give that water heater a vacation, too. Changing the setting to vacation mode keeps it on at a lower setting, saving energy. Leave yourself a note with a reminder to turn it back on when you get home, so you don't wind up with a disappointing shower before the first day back at work.

Closing the curtains can provide two benefits. It can keep heat from the sun at bay. This reduces the load on your heating and cooling system, which saves energy. It also has the benefit of blocking visibility into your home when you're away.

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For security, some people use timers or leave on exterior lights. Make sure any lights left on are LEDs, instead of incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs. LEDs use less energy and have less impact on your electric use when left on all night. You can also consider adding smart LEDs to your home. Smart LEDs can be controlled remotely through an app on your phone.

Did you know there are devices in your home that continue to draw power from your electrical outlets even when turned off or on standby? Before you leave, walk through your home and unplug devices and small appliances. Make sure gaming consoles and computers are fully powered down. Unplugging any devices that have lights, clocks, or use standby mode can also reduce wasted energy.

Having peace of mind that your home is powered down and secure can help you enjoy your vacation. After all, we all need an occasional break.

*Miranda Boutelle is the chief operating officer at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon.*



Having peace of mind that your house is powered down and secure can help you enjoy your vacation. Follow these energy-saving tips before you leave home



Set your thermostat 5 to 10 degrees closer to the outdoor temperature when you aren't home. You can also consider upgrading to a smart thermostat, which gives you control over the temperature from anywhere



# UNLOCK COMFORT AND SAVINGS

by Abby Berry

If you're working on your summer to-dos, consider adding home weatherization to your list.

We typically think about weatherizing our homes during winter months when we're standing next to a chilly window or a drafty exterior door. But weatherizing your home provides comfort and energy savings year-round, especially during summer months when your air conditioner is working overtime.

According to energystar.gov, a home with insufficient insulation and air leaks wastes more than 20% of the energy used to heat or cool the home — that's essentially throwing money out the door. Fortunately, most weatherization projects are easy to DIY and can be completed in a day.

The simplest and most cost-effective weatherization strategies include air sealing around windows and exterior doors.

If you have older windows, odds are you have air escaping through tiny cracks and gaps around the frame. Do a quick visual inspection. If you can see any daylight around the frame or the windows rattle easily, you likely have air leaks. Also check for any small cracks around the frame that may not be visible with sunlight.

If you suspect you have leaky windows and plan to apply new caulk, be sure to remove the old caulk and clean the area well before application. Caulking materials vary in strength and properties, but you'll likely need a half-cartridge per window.

Silicone caulk is a popular choice and can also be used to seal joints between bathroom and kitchen fixtures. If you have any leftover caulk, use it to seal those areas.

Another effective but simple weatherization project is installing weatherstripping around exterior doors. The most common types of weatherstripping options are V-channel, felt and foam tape. To choose

the best type for your home, consider temperature fluctuations and weather exposure. Most homeowners opt for felt or foam tape; both options are easy to install but will need to be replaced every couple years, depending on wear and tear. Weatherstripping should be installed around the top and sides of the door.

If you see daylight around the bottom of an exterior door, consider installing a door sweep in addition to weatherstripping. Door sweeps are available in aluminum, plastic, vinyl and felt options.

Weatherstripping can also be installed around windows, typically to the sides of a double hung or sliding window, or around the window sash.

If you're unsure how to install weatherstripping or apply caulk, check out trusted websites like Lowes.com or energy.gov for step-by-step instructions and video tutorials.

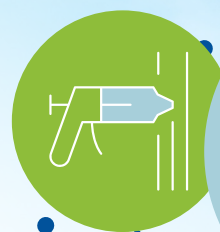
Another way to improve comfort in your home is adding insulation. While this is a more costly project and requires a professional's help, it's an effective way to decrease heat flow, which impacts energy use in winter and summer months. Older homes may need additional insulation to either replace older materials or meet newer efficiency standards. Contact a qualified installation specialist if you suspect your home's insulation levels are inadequate.

In addition to saving energy, air sealing can help you avoid moisture control issues, improve indoor air quality, and extend the life of your heating and cooling system. Weatherize your home to unlock year-round comfort and savings on monthly energy costs.

*Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

## 3 WAYS TO SEAL IN COMFORT

In addition to increased comfort, weatherizing your home is an excellent way to save energy and lower your cooling and heating costs. Here are three ways you can seal in comfort *and* savings.



### 1 Caulk

Apply caulk around cracks and openings between stationary components like door frames and window frames.



### 2 Insulate

Adding insulation is an effective weatherization strategy, especially for older homes. Consider additional insulation in areas like an unfinished attic, exterior walls, and floors above uninsulated spaces.

### 3 Weatherstripping

Install weatherstripping around components that move, like doors and operable windows.

