

# Along these LINES

MARCH/APRIL 2025



## Historic Winter Event

A recap of our co-op's strength and unity Page 17

ALSO INSIDE >>

**Manager's Message** Page 4

**Packing 20,000 Meals in 2 Hours** Page 20

PHOTO COURTESY OF DEMCO



 /DEMCOLouisiana  
DEMCO.org



# CRUISE THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI RIVER

*Your All-Inclusive Lower Mississippi River Cruise Includes:*

- ★ 9-day/8-night exploration
- ★ 7 ports of call with guided excursion options at each
- ★ All onboard meals and our signature evening cocktail hour
- ★ Full enrichment package with guest speakers and nightly entertainment
- ★ Newest fleet of ships with just 90 to 180 guests
- ★ All tips and gratuities

*America's #1  
River Cruise Line*



Call today

**800-459-2596**

to request a  
free Cruise Guide

# Washington Changes Signal Positive Energy Impacts

While energy policy didn't receive much time in the 2024 campaigning spotlight, the second Trump administration is making significant changes to how our nation approaches ever-growing demand for electric power. For electric cooperatives, we expect those changes to be positive.

"America is at an energy crossroads, and the reliability of the electric grid hangs in the balance," National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Jim Matheson explained in a message expressing the association's desire to work closely with President Donald Trump and Congress to protect energy affordability and reliability. "Critical generation resources are being retired faster than they can be reliably replaced. At the same time, electricity demand is skyrocketing as power-hungry data centers and new manufacturing facilities come online. Smart energy policies that keep the lights on are more important than ever."

Shortly after the election, the North American Electric Reliability Corp. warned many regions face an elevated risk of electricity shortfalls in the face of extreme weather.

NERC, the nation's grid watchdog, reiterated older power plants are being retired at the same time Americans are using more electricity. While solar and wind farms have been sprouting up, they can't deliver the always-available electricity that coal- and gas-fired plants provide. Hurricanes Helene and Milton compounded the problem by damaging critical grid infrastructure.

The first Trump administration scaled back

many of President Barack Obama's initiatives to replace fossil fuels with "clean power," so observers expect President Trump's team to overturn many of the Biden administration's energy-related policies. NRECA has been urging officials to eliminate regulatory burdens such as the EPA's power plant rule—which many believe exceeds the EPA's legal authority—and to encourage the Department of Energy and other agencies to take steps to eliminate bureaucratic roadblocks and bolster the long-term reliability of the nation's grid.

Electric cooperatives' vision for America's energy future calls for a durable plan to ensure our consumer-members and the largely rural communities they call home have reliable and affordable access to electricity in the face of skyrocketing demand.

Louisiana's electric cooperatives are comfortable taking a leadership role in this effort because we work hard with elected officials and their staffs to advocate for our members. Policymakers from both parties have consistently commended electric cooperatives as reputable energy providers and engines of economic development that play a vital role in transforming the communities they proudly serve.

Solidifying a positive and resilient energy



Addie Armato

future for co-op communities involves a long list of issues and elements. For example, we're pressing Congress and the Trump administration to overhaul outdated permitting laws that delay or frustrate efforts to build the new infrastructure tomorrow's energy needs demand.

We need to address public lands and conservation regulations that make it challenging to operate power lines, maintain rights of way and reduce potential wildfire threats. Electric cooperatives also support their consumer-members by maintaining federal programs and tax credits that bolster electric reliability and affordability.

While President Trump has earned a reputation for demanding swift action on his priorities, change doesn't happen quickly in Washington. For example, undoing the EPA power plant rule requires a robust regulatory process, and it will take some time to ensure this repeal can withstand expected legal challenges. While the exact path we'll take is still coming into focus, our priority is the interest of the communities we serve and the everyday Americans who call them home.

We continue to strengthen our voice by making sure our representatives at the federal and state levels are aware of our concerns and the importance of ensuring reliable, affordable electricity for all Americans.

The strength of the electric cooperative movement and the clout we have when we work together are unsurpassed, positioning us for continued success as we work with the new administration.

## Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives Inc.

### Staff

**CEO** Addie Armato  
**SAFETY COORDINATOR** Ricky Melancon  
**COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR** Conley Bourgeois  
**MEMBER ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR** Rhianna Garon  
**ACCOUNTING MANAGER** Beth Fraser  
**CREDIT UNION** Jody Overhultz, representative

### Board of Directors

**President** Michael Heinen  
**Vice President** Roger Dale DeHart  
**Secretary/Treasurer** Richard Sitman



### ALEC Members

**BEAUREGARD ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.**  
Mike Viator

**CLAIBORNE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.**  
Mike Marcotte Lane Davidson

**DEMCO**  
Daniel Berthelot Richard "Dickie" Sitman

**JEFF DAVIS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.**  
Michael Heinen Byron Hardee

**SOUTH LOUISIANA ELECTRIC CO-OP ASSOCIATION**  
Trevor Benoit Roger Dale DeHart

**WASHINGTON-ST. TAMMANY ELECTRIC CO-OP INC.**  
Joe Jarrell Dennis Glass

### Associate Member

PANOLA-HARRISON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.



## Powering Homes, Strengthening Communities

Page 12

Local Pages ..... 4-5, 8, 17, 20-21  
 In the Kitchen ..... 10



A Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative 

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**ASCENSION**

Elinda Taillon

**EAST BATON ROUGE**

Steve Irving  
Randy Lorio, Vice President  
Jill McGraw

**EAST FELICIANA**

Mike Anderson  
Glenn DeLee

**LIVINGSTON**

Danny Berthelot, President  
Leslie Falks  
Dennis Lott, Secretary-Treasurer

**ST. HELENA**

Tresa Byrd  
Richard Sitman

**TANGIPAHOA**

Melissa Dufreche

**WEST FELICIANA**

Kevin Beauchamp

**CEO & GENERAL MANAGER**

Randy Pierce

**CHIEF CORPORATE SERVICES OFFICER**

Russchelle Overhultz, CEBS

**CHIEF ENGINEERING & OPERATIONS OFFICER**

Mark Phillips

**CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

Peggy Maranan

**CHIEF MEMBER SERVICES OFFICER**

Galen Dunbar

**CHIEF STRATEGY & REGULATORY OFFICER**

Jeff Andry

**Volume 40, Issue 2**

**Mission**

To enhance the quality of life for our members, employees, and communities by safely providing reliable and competitively priced energy services.

**Along These Lines (USPS 4089)** is published bimonthly by the Association of Louisiana Electric Co-ops Inc., 10725 Airline Hwy., Baton Rouge, LA 70816, in partnership with Pioneer Utility Resources.

**Annual Subscriptions:** Members \$2.46. Nonmembers \$5.

**Postmaster:** Send form 3579 to 10725 Airline Hwy., Baton Rouge, LA 70816.

Periodicals postage paid at Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821 and additional mailing offices.

DEMCO is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



This year, we're focusing on highlighting the cooperative difference, celebrating the unique ways DEMCO and other cooperatives worldwide operate with our members' best interests at heart. We know our success is measured not only by providing reliable electricity but also by the positive impact we make in the communities we serve.

The strength of the cooperative model lies in its ability to bring people together for a common cause. That's what makes us different. We don't just deliver power. We serve our communities in countless ways, working side by side with our members to tackle the challenges we all face.

On Jan. 11, DEMCO employees, family members and friends volunteered to pack more than 20,000 meals for Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, addressing a critical need for food in our communities. This project was part of a larger statewide initiative to provide 1 million meals to those struggling with food insecurity. What made this event so special wasn't just the meals we packed, but the sense of unity, purpose and collective effort that made it all possible. See Pages 20-21.

Volunteering to support local food banks reflects our cooperative principle of Concern for Community—a principle that calls us to respond to the needs of our neighbors, not just as members, but as people.

As we reflect on the event, it's a perfect reminder of what cooperatives stand for. We are not driven by profits or external shareholders. We are owned and operated by those we serve. Every decision we make is with our members in mind, and that's a powerful difference.

We thrive because of the strength of our members and the cooperative values that bind us together.

Together, we're not just lighting up homes. We're lighting up lives.



# POWER OF COMMUNITY



## Smiles And a Meal

DEMCO employees and student interns of the East Baton Rouge intern program share smiles and a meal with guests at the Livingston Council on Aging.

**LEFT: DEMCO Member Service Representative Tia Billoups serves lunch to guests.**  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF DEMCO

**BELOW LEFT: Tiffany Moore, right, visits with student participants while judging. BELOW RIGHT: From left, DEMCO employees Avesia Holland, Tiffany Moore and Nakita Ricard serve as judges at the St. Helena Parish Science Fair hosted at the St. Helena Arts & Technology Academy.**



DEMCO welcomes the class of 2025 Youth Cooperative Ambassadors, from left, Robert Dunbar, Southern University Laboratory School; Daniel Watson, Madison Preparatory Academy; Hayleigh McKean, University View Academy; James Hicks, St. Michael the Archangel High School; Mary Claire Cox, St. Michael the Archangel High School; Shayla Sanders, Liberty Magnet High School; Madeline Cox, St. Michael the Archangel High School; and Johanna Clifton, Glen Oaks Magnet High School.



*Powering life & community* - THE COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE

#DEMCOserves

# What Causes High Bills?

By Victoria Hampton

If you're like most people, at some point you've probably looked at a monthly bill and wondered whether you really spent that much. Whenever we see a higher bill than expected, it's natural to try to pin down what—or who—is responsible for the extra expense.

When it comes to your electric bill, energy experts often use these moments to highlight ways to use less energy and lower future costs. In many cases, high bills don't necessarily mean something is broken. Instead, they often reflect on how and when energy is used at home.

Each household's energy use is different. Understanding how electricity is consumed in your home is the first step toward reducing consumption and saving on power bills.

## Energy Use Misconceptions

Heating and cooling typically account for the most significant energy use in a residence. One misconception that utility

representatives commonly hear is this: Keeping your thermostat at the same temperature shouldn't result in higher bills. The reality is that when temperatures drop outside, your heating system has to work harder to maintain that same indoor temperature. That extra effort increases energy use. Reducing the demand on your heating or cooling system is one of the most straightforward ways to lower your electric bill.

Another source of confusion is comparing the current month's bill with the previous month's. Many utilities offer online tools showing daily or hourly energy use. Reviewing these tools can help you pinpoint exactly when your consumption spikes.

Recognizing when you use the most energy at home is key to discovering new ways to reduce consumption all year long. Remember that outside temperatures directly affect conditions inside the home, which, in turn, impact heating and cooling needs.

filters monthly and replace them at least every three months.

**Check registers.** Make sure all registers in your home are open and not covered by furniture. Restricted air flow makes your heating system work harder and leads to adjusting the thermostat more than necessary.

**Use less hot water.** Your water heater is the second-largest energy user in the home. Wash clothes in cold water, and opt for shorter showers instead of baths to reduce hot water consumption.

**Seal ductwork.** If you have a forced-air system, ensure ducts are well-connected and free from leaks. Properly sealed ducts help conditioned air reach every part of your home.

**Install a smart thermostat.** Smart thermostats automatically adjust settings based on your routine and can be controlled remotely. This ensures you only use energy when you really need it.

**Replace the water heater.** Heat pump water heaters are two to three times more efficient than conventional electric models. They often include features like high-efficiency modes and vacation settings to minimize energy use when you're away.

For more on effectively managing home energy use, check out the tips on Page 23.

## Need Help? Contact Your Utility

If you receive a bill that is more than you can pay, ask your utility about available assistance programs, payment plans and billing options.

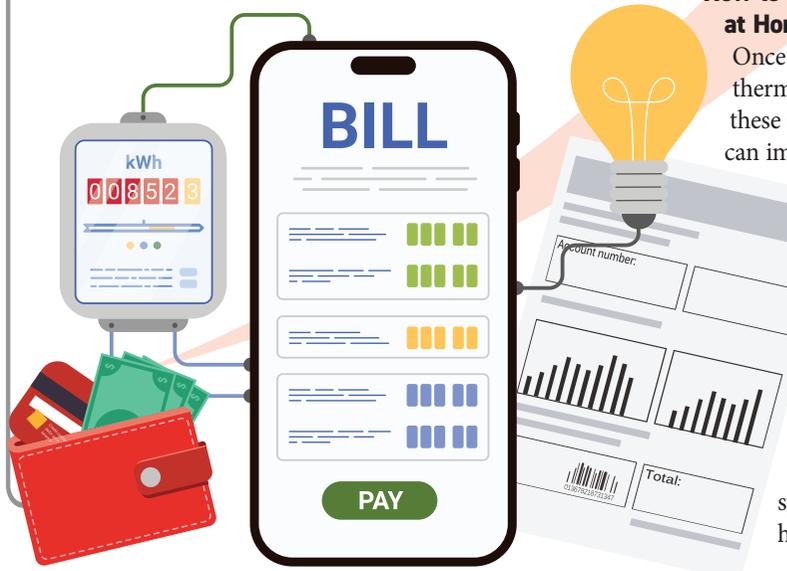
For home upgrade projects, utilities can connect you with rebates, tax credits and incentives. Options may be available for HVAC equipment, windows, doors, washers and dryers, and smart thermostats. Some utilities also offer low- and no-interest loans for home-efficiency upgrades. ■

## How to Use Less Energy at Home

Once you've made thermostat adjustments, these additional steps can improve your

home's energy efficiency and reinforce your conservation habits:

**Change the filter.** Dirty furnace filters restrict airflow and force your system to work harder. Check



ADOBE STOCK IMAGE BY ICONIC PROTOTYPE

# WIRED FOR SERVICE.

We thank electrical lineworkers for their commitment to powering our local communities.

**LINEWORKER  
APPRECIATION DAY**  
APRIL 14, 2025

## WIN A PORTABLE BLACKSTONE GRILL

Make a \$1 donation to the Cooperative Youth Leadership Fund to enter a drawing for a new grill. Tickets are available at your cooperative, and proceeds benefit the Louisiana Youth Leadership Council Representative Scholarship.



**BLACKSTONE**



The prize drawing will be held in July at the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives Annual Meeting in Baton Rouge. The winner will be contacted by phone.

**DEMCO BOARD ELECTION  
DIXIE ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION  
CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**2025 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**  
Saturday, May 10, 2025 at 10 a.m.

**LOCATION OF MEETING**  
**DEMCO Headquarters Facility**  
16262 Wax Road, Greenwell Springs, LA 70739  
(Elections in Districts 3, 6, 9, 12 and 13)

**February 10, 2025 –  
March 7, 2025**

Publish the Calendar of Events in the official journal of each parish, including the date, time, and place of the meeting of the Nominating Committee.

**March 11, 2025 –  
March 13, 2025**

Pre-qualification period. Members interested in seeking a position on the board of directors are required pursuant to DEMCO bylaws to appear in person between these dates to determine eligibility as prescribed in the corporation's bylaws. Candidates not pre-qualified will not be eligible to seek a position on the board of directors.

**March 20, 2025**

DEMCO Governance Committee will meet at 3:30 p.m. on this date, if needed, to determine eligibility of director candidates who have pre-qualified. Only candidates who have pre-qualified will be considered.

**March 20, 2025**

DEMCO Board Meeting at 5 p.m., at DEMCO Headquarters. The Committee on Nominations will be appointed at this meeting.

**March 20, 2025**

The Nominating Committee meeting begins at 5:05 p.m. at DEMCO Headquarters, 16262 Wax Road, Greenwell Springs, LA, 70739 with results of the meeting to be posted March 21, 2025.

**March 21, 2025**

Beginning on this date, pre-qualified director candidates may obtain a petition to run for a seat on the board of directors. DEMCO bylaws require 50 valid signatures for the petition to be validated.

**March 21, 2025**

This is the Record Date for the 2025 Annual Membership Meeting. A final list of those

members eligible to vote in DEMCO's 2025 Annual Membership Meeting will be prepared.

**April 7, 2025**

Petitions must be returned to DEMCO headquarters office by 4:30 p.m. and received by the CEO and General Manager's office.

**April 17, 2025**

The Governance Committee will meet at 3:30 p.m. on this date, if needed, to validate each petition and post the results as required by the corporation's bylaws on this date.

**April 21, 2025 –  
April 25, 2025**

The Official Notice of the 2025 Annual Meeting will be mailed to all members of the cooperative during this time.

**April 21, 2025**

Ballots for the 2025 Annual Meeting will be mailed to members of the cooperative on this date. Members should receive their ballots by Saturday, April 26, 2025 — VOTE and mail your ballot immediately.

**May 2, 2025**

The deadline for receiving ballots for the 2025 Annual Membership Meeting is 4:30 p.m. on this date — DO NOT DELAY — VOTE

**May 5, 2025 – May 6, 2025**

Ballots will be counted during this period by the certified public accountants selected by DEMCO to conduct the annual meeting. Candidates will be advised as to the time and place that the ballots will be counted.

**May 10, 2025**

Annual meeting and election results announced at 10 a.m., at 16262 Wax Road, Greenwell Springs, LA 70739.



**DEMCO brings light to our communities in so many ways.** DEMCO-member students 12th+ grade planning to attend a Louisiana public college may enter to win a \$1,250 tuition award per semester for the fall and spring semesters of the academic year.

By May 5, enter at [DEMCO.org/Scholarships](http://DEMCO.org/Scholarships).

*Powering life and community:*  
**THAT'S THE COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE**

**ELECTRONICS  
EFFICIENCY  
FILL-IN-THE-BLANK**



- Use a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ with an on/off switch when powering multiple electronics to easily manage energy use.  
A. power strip B. extension cord C. remote control
- For devices that require \_\_\_\_\_, use rechargeable ones, which are more cost-effective and environmentally friendly.  
A. power cords B. lights C. batteries
- Unplug electronic devices that consume energy even when they're not in use, like \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. lamps B. ceiling fans C. phone chargers
- Use the sleep or power management mode on your \_\_\_\_\_ to save on energy costs.  
A. computer B. refrigerator C. oven

1 A 2 C 3 C 4 A  
Answer Key

# If you love music, *Mississippi* should be on your playlist.

American music is a truly global phenomenon, but its roots trace back to one place—Mississippi. Over 100 years ago, in the Mississippi Delta, the blues ignited a music revolution that would give rise to rock 'n' roll, gospel, country, and R&B while influencing genres from jazz to hip hop. And the story continues today. In Mississippi, you can explore the lives and legacies of icons like B.B. King, Elvis Presley, and Muddy Waters at music museums and on the Blues and Country Music Trails, or catch today's rising stars at juke joints, music clubs, and theaters across the state. Learn more at [VisitMississippi.org/Music](https://www.visitmississippi.org/music).

#VisitMS



VISIT  
MISSISSIPPI

The Crossroads | Clarksdale, Mississippi

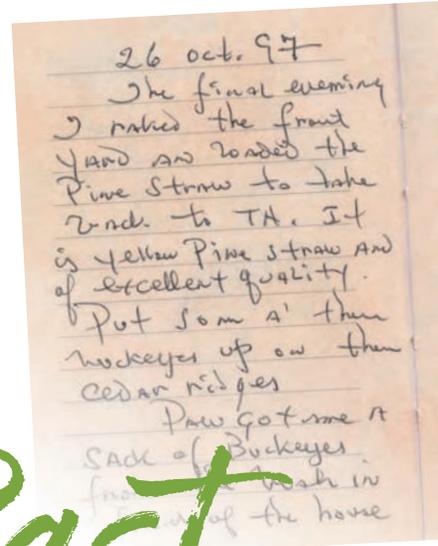


Listen to the *"Birthplace of America's Music"* playlist on Spotify.



# Preserving the Past

Book and documentary capture master gardener's life's work



years visiting the state, attending the Washington Parish Free Fair in Franklinton, where he interviewed farmers and gardeners about their heirloom seeds. The October fair contains the Mile Branch Settlement, a collection of historic buildings. Activities there include demonstrations of household and farming traditions dating back decades.

“He said he had recorded histories from farmers in notebooks and asked if we would like to see them,” Christina recalls.

John returned to the couple with three black leather notebooks full of oral histories, agricultural practices, family recipes and seed information.

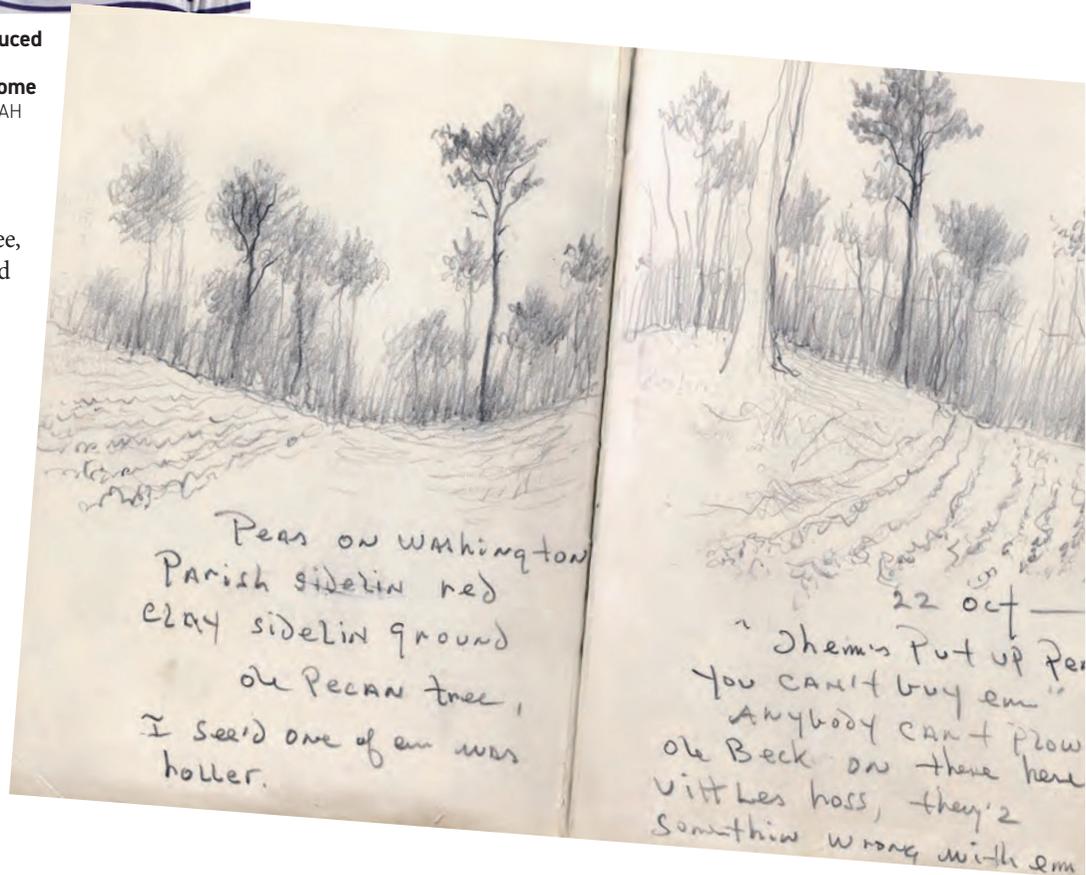
“They were beautifully handwritten and beautifully illustrated,” Christina says.

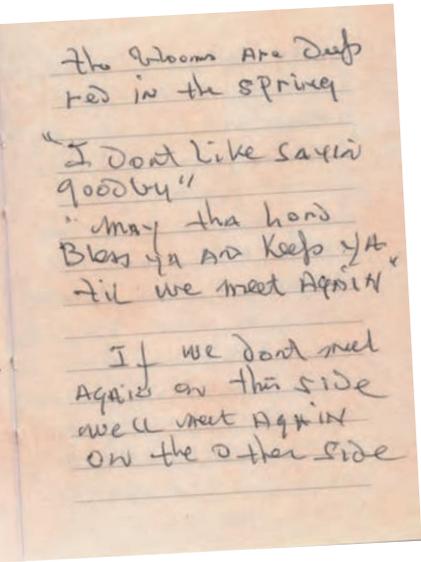
**John Coykendall and Christina Melton produced “Preserving Our Roots: My Journey to Save Seeds and Stories.” John’s journals show some of the inspiration.** PHOTOS COURTESY OF SARAH HACKENBERG/LSU PRESS

**By Cheré Coen**

On a visit to Blackberry Farm in Tennessee, Christina Melton and her husband strolled the 4,200-acre grounds of the luxurious farm-to-table resort in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. The resort, named No. 1 in the South in the 2024 Travel + Leisure World’s Best Awards, includes a garden that supports its acclaimed restaurant. Among the farm’s many services is seed saving, where heirloom and heritage crops are acquired and preserved for future plantings.

The Meltons meandered to the garden shed, where the farm’s master gardener, John Coykendall, was shelling peas by the fire. They mentioned they were from Louisiana, which started a conversation. John spent 40-plus





**Sharing the Stories**

At the time, Christina worked in public broadcasting. As an Emmy Award-winning documentary filmmaker, she knew a story when she saw one. She gathered photos of John's notebooks and began pitching a book idea to Mary Katherine Callaway, the head of LSU Press at the time.

"She said, 'That's fine, but we don't have people just sitting around wanting to write books,'" Christina says with a laugh.

Instead, Christina and John produced the book themselves with LSU Press. "Preserving Our Roots: My Journey to Save Seeds and Stories" was published in 2019 and contains John's by Washington Parish farmers and his journal entries organized by seasons. In addition, the book features recipes and old farming traditions. Baton Rouge photographer Sarah Hackenberg shot the photos, and Christina later created a documentary titled "Deeply Rooted: John Coykendall's Journey to Save Our Seeds and Stories" that aired on PBS.

"Over the course of doing both the book and documentary, we did countless hours of interviewing John at Blackberry Farm," she says.

John is a longtime member of Seed Savers Exchange, a nonprofit that started collecting and sharing heirloom seeds, plants and stories in 1975. According to the organization, around 75% of the world's edible plant varieties have been lost.

One of the most interesting stories John relates in the book is that of the "unknown pea." Washington Parish farmers kept referring to this variety of pea that was common throughout the region but lacking a name—and a presence. John searched for years for the pea until one day a farmer brought in a jar containing the long-sought legume.

"Finding this pea was a great discovery, but also very well illustrates just how perilously close so many of our old varieties are to being lost forever," John writes in the book. "Many have already been lost. Thankfully, others have been saved for future generations."

**Historic Recipes**

The book contains many recipes Washington Parish residents gave to John. One of his favorite spring dishes is English peas with new potatoes in a cream sauce.

"There is nothing more delicious than tender new potatoes, so named because they are tender, immature potatoes with skin so thin that it literally peels off as you wash them," he writes.

See this recipe at right, along with Rose Vise's Stuffed Eggs, another great recipe for spring. ■

**Rose Vise's Stuffed Eggs**

Courtesy of Calvin Vise

**Makes 24 stuffed eggs**

**3 slices bacon, cooked, drained and crumbled**

**12 hard-boiled eggs, cooled and shelled**

**2 tablespoons mayonnaise, preferably made fresh**

**2 tablespoons grated onion**

**1 tablespoon prepared mustard**

**2 teaspoons hot sauce**

**1½ teaspoons Worcestershire sauce**

**Salt and pepper, to taste**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Slice eggs in half lengthwise, and put the yolks into a mixing bowl. Arrange the empty egg whites on a serving plate. To the yolks, add the bacon and remaining ingredients. Beat with a mixer until smooth. Use a spoon or pastry bag to fill the egg-white halves with the yolk mixture. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate.

**English Peas and New Potatoes**

**Makes 6 servings**

**1 pound small new potatoes**

**1 pound fresh or frozen small green peas**

**2 tablespoons butter**

**2 tablespoons all-purpose flour**

**1½ cups "rich" milk (fresh whole milk)**

**Salt and pepper, to taste**

**Thinly sliced green onions for garnish**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Cut unpeeled potatoes into quarters, and put them in a medium saucepan. Cover with water, bring to a boil and cook for 12 minutes. Add peas. Cook until potatoes are tender, 5 to 7 more minutes. Do not overcook. Drain and set aside.

In a large saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. Add flour. Stir constantly until you have a roux, about 5 minutes. Whisk in milk, and allow to thicken.

Add cooked potatoes and peas. Simmer for another 5 to 6 minutes. Add salt and pepper. Toss with green onions before serving.



ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY FLASH NET, DINA STUDIO





Louisiana lineworkers from Washington-St. Tammany Electric Cooperative practice their skills at the ALEC training yard.

# Powering Homes, Strengthening Communities

How lineworkers make a difference one connection at a time

By Cheré Coen

During an ice storm in Northern Arkansas, a family lost power before Christmas. It was especially hard on their young son, who couldn't enjoy his new gaming console that Santa delivered. When the South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association crew had finished all the repairs and energized the line, the child bolted back inside to play his video game.

"At that moment, I realized this is why we do it," says Matt Peters with a laugh. "We are putting smiles and hope back to the community. That's an honor to be able to do that."

While Matt began as a climbing helper, he now serves as the SLECA general manager. He believes a career in utility work brings with it a deep satisfaction not found in other occupations.

"It's a great career," he says. "You make lifelong relationships,

“There's a thousand ways the lights will go out but only one way to get them back on. And we're part of that rebuilding.”

— Matt Peters, SLECA general manager

provide for your family and give back to the community you serve.”

And then there is the weather that can disrupt power, ranging from simple thunderstorms to full-force hurricanes, ice storms and tornadoes.

“There's a sense of bringing normalcy to a community, and only you can do it,” Matt says. “You have to have power to rebuild. You have to have electricity. There's a thousand ways the lights will go out but only one way to get them back on. And we're part of that rebuilding.”



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Louisiana lineworkers from South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association, Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative and WSTE work together during Louisiana Lineman Training School. Mark Phillips, DEMCO's chief engineering and operations officer, left, in his lineworker days. ABOVE: A DEMCO lineworker practices underground cable prep work during training.

## Becoming a Lineworker

Ricky Melancon started his career on a digger truck as the “low man on the totem pole.” He learned on the job and worked his way from linework to substations and metering before becoming the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives’ safety coordinator. Today, those wanting to become lineworkers have more options to gain experience, he says.

“Times have changed a little bit. We hire new guys and invest heavily in their education and training,” he says. “It’s still like that. It’s one of the few trades you can go into, and the co-ops pay for your schooling. But now there are linemen training schools, and many times the co-ops hire guys straight from there.”

Training schools and community colleges prepare lineworkers with commercial driver’s licenses and CPR training, among other skills related to the field. South Louisiana Community College in Crowley offers a 20-week course, and Northshore Technical Community College provides an electric line technician program at its Florida Parishes campus and the Sullivan campus in Bogalusa.

“They don’t have years of experience yet,” Ricky says of those graduating from the training schools, “but they have a general idea of what to expect.”

Once hired by the state’s rural electric cooperatives, employees spend four years in Louisiana Lineman Training, spending two weeks a year in Baton Rouge in addition to their on-the-job training.

“It’s always on-the-job training,” Ricky says. “In my opinion, it takes 10 years to have a seasoned lineman. It’s definitely not something you can do overnight.”

It’s not just linework, he adds. The job requires a commercial driver’s license, knowing the vast rules of safety, understanding technology and electricity, operating tools such as a chain saw, working around wildlife and so much more.

“There’s a lot to learn when you’re getting into linework,” he says.

The career may require years of education and job experience, but the rewards are many for those who are competitive, athletic and love the outdoors, says DEMCO Chief of Engineering and Operations Officer Mark Phillips.



Louisiana bucket trucks line up at dusk following Hurricane Ian in Florida in 2022.



**ABOVE:** Louisiana Lineman Training includes fieldwork as well as classroom sessions. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Grayden McDaniel, of WSTE, climbs a pole during training.

“It’s a very rewarding career,” Mark says. “You’re respected. You’re never in the same place twice. You’re not confined to a fence or the four walls of an office. And it’s fun, too.”

Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative Superintendent Kain Miller has been in the industry for 15 years and finds there’s still so much to learn.

“You have to be curious, and you have to want to learn,” Kain says. “Curiosity is the biggest thing a lineman can have. Always ask not only how but why. Veteran linemen are there for a reason. They have a ton of knowledge. Soak up as much as you can.”

Matt agrees that learning requires asking lots of questions.

“We always preach, if you don’t know, ask,” he says. “Know your boundaries. If you’re not comfortable with something, pick up the phone and call somebody.”

Other helpful attributes can boil down to an individual’s personality.

“You have to be a problem-solver and work on the fly,” Mark says.

“The one thing you can’t teach is desire, heart,” Matt adds. “You have it, or you don’t.”

### The Sky’s the Limit

Once a lineman is hired, the opportunities to move up in the co-op are endless. Matt went from climbing helper to general manager with many stops in between.

“The sky’s the limit,” Matt says. “Hard work, determination—there’s no limit.”

“To run the co-op, it takes a lot of different people,” Mark agrees, adding that jobs include project management, servicemen, crew leaders, district managers, mapping and more. “Once you’re in and you’re a lineman, there’s so many opportunities.”

Jeff Davis is smaller in comparison to other co-ops in the state, but “even small co-ops have multiple avenues to go down,” Kain says. “Being a lineman is the best base your career can have.”

### A Brotherhood

When situations arise and the electricity goes off, linemen are the first line of defense to restore power. This could happen at any hour, so not only must linemen prepare to be awakened in the night, but their families must, too.

“Being a lineman, you take pride in being one,” Matt says. “It takes a certain person to do it. When the phone rings, you leave.”

Matt’s wife and three children accept the demands of his job. “They understand that when I have to go to work, I go to work.”

During Hurricane Helene, SLECA linemen traveled to Florida to help restore electricity. Cooperatives in 26 U.S. states have a long history of supporting one another—traveling to disaster zones when needed. When Hurricane Ida hit South Louisiana in 2021, crews arrived from Georgia and Missouri to help, Matt says.

“The first thing they asked was how our families and homes were,” Matt says.

It’s one example of how cooperative employees become a brotherhood.

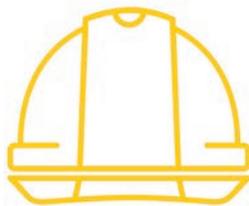
“It’s a tight-knit community. You build lasting relationships,” Matt says. “Everybody works together.” ■

## Career Demand

According to Lineman Central, there are about 120,000 linemen across the country, with the number of lineman jobs growing about 3% each year. A Louisiana lineman’s average salary is \$70,820 in 2023, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The demand for linemen keeps increasing due to the growth of the power infrastructure, Jeff Davis Electric Cooperative Superintendent Kain Miller says.

“The demand for electricity is always going to go up, so we always need more linemen,” he says.



# KEEP CALM AND

# LET LINEWORKERS CARRY ON

**By Pam Stevens**

Picture this: It's a dark and stormy night in Louisiana, and the power's out. Your phone flashlight is your new best friend, and you're wondering how to keep your family warm. Suddenly, in the distance, you see them—the superheroes of the grid—our electric lineworkers.

But here's the deal: This isn't the time to turn into an over-curious bystander. For everyone's safety, it is best to let them do their work.

### **Safety First—For You and Them**

Electricity is no joke. Lineworkers are trained to handle dangerous situations, but they can't do their job efficiently if they're distracted by folks wandering too close. It's not just risky for them—it's risky for you, too. High-voltage equipment isn't forgiving, and the safest place for you during an outage is far, far away from the action. As special as each of our members are, you are no exception to this rule.

### **Information for You and Your Co-op**

We know it's tempting to walk up and ask what's going on. But trust us, lineworkers already have enough on their plates. Every

minute spent explaining what's happening is a minute they're not fixing the problem. Instead, always report your outage, then stay informed through outage maps and social media channels. For large or extended outages, updates are provided as new information is available.

### **Let Efficiency Shine**

The fewer distractions, the faster the power comes back on. By keeping your distance, you're not just staying safe—you're helping your whole community get their power restored quickly. Think of it as your way of contributing to the effort without needing a hard hat.

### **Show Your Support from Afar**

Lineworkers are top-notch pros dedicated to your service, and we know you want to thank them for their hard work. Do so with a wave from a distance or consider sending a note to the co-op on its social media channels. They'll appreciate the gesture without worrying about rescuing you near a live wire and having concern for their own safety.

So next time the lights go out, remember: Stay safe, stay informed and let the pros handle it. Your cooperative—and your community—will thank you. ■

# The Historic Winter Event of 2025

A Recap of Our Co-op's Strength and Unity

By Anne Hawes

The winter freeze and snowfall of January 2025 will be remembered as one of South Louisiana's most significant weather events.

On Wednesday, Jan. 22, morning

temperatures set daily records across the region, marking the second coldest morning for South Louisiana since the February 1899 mega-freeze, said Jay Grymes, state climatologist with the Louisiana State University AgCenter. Adding to the historical significance, snowfall on Tuesday, Jan. 21, ranked as the second-largest total recorded in the southern half of the state since the "super snow" of February 1895.

"When combining these two extraordinary weather events, it is clear that this was South Louisiana's greatest winter event of all time," Jay said.

As temperatures dropped and energy demand soared, our DEMCO community came together to meet the challenge.

We asked you, our members, to help "beat the peak" of a projected all-time high demand of 738 megawatts (MW). Thanks to your quick response and dedication, the peak demand reached 695 MW—still a record, but well below what could have been.

Your efforts made a real difference. By working together, we helped prevent outages and avoided costly power supply purchases. This event highlighted the strength of our cooperative community, where every action—big or small—plays a vital role in ensuring reliable service for all.

We are grateful for your commitment and support. Time and time again, you show that being part of a cooperative means more than just receiving power; it's about coming together to support one another, no matter what challenges arise.

Thank you for being an essential part of the DEMCO family. ■



**ABOVE: Snow covered grounds at DEMCO headquarters.**

PHOTO BY CECIL GARAUDY

**LEFT: DEMCO linemen restore power during historic winter event with snow.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF DEMCO



# Surging Demand, Shrinking Supply

Increasing need for power affects electric co-ops and their consumers

By Scott Flood

When rural electric utilities first strung power lines from farm to farm, across waterways and through remote forests less than a century ago, most consumers had but a handful of light bulbs to power. With time, they added appliances like refrigerators, but they surely couldn't imagine the number and variety of electrical devices in today's homes and garages.

Across the United States, consumers use a growing amount of electricity at work, at home and, with the growth of electric vehicles, on the road.

The demand for electricity increased by 2.5% in 2024 and is expected to grow by 3.2% this year. This comes after many utilities saw a 4.8% increase in 2022. Through 2029, the nation's peak demand is projected to grow by 38 gigawatts. That would be like adding another California-sized state to our nation's power grid.

Driving this surge are advancements in technology, including artificial intelligence, cryptocurrency and cloud computing, which rely on energy-intensive data centers. These facilities, often located in rural areas due to affordable land and fewer neighbors, require massive amounts of electricity.

According to the U.S. Department of

Energy, data centers consume up to 50 times more energy per square foot than traditional commercial buildings. By 2030, these centers are expected to account for 9% of the nation's electricity use, up from nearly 2% today. A single large data center may demand more than 100 megawatts of power, enough to supply 80,000 homes.

At the same time, baseload power—the always-available energy typically generated by coal and nuclear plants—is being retired at a rapid pace. More than 110 gigawatts of this reliable power are slated to disappear by 2033. As renewable energy sources like solar and wind grow, they cannot fully replace baseload generation due to their intermittent nature. Without sufficient baseload power, the risk of rolling brownouts and blackouts increases, a scenario experts warn could affect 19 states by 2028.

This growth in demand is unprecedented. A decade ago, a huge commercial project might boost a utility's total load by 20 or 30 megawatts.

"Now, they're getting requests for projects in the hundreds of megawatts," says Stephanie Crawford, regulatory affairs director for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

This growth places immense pressure to expand capacity and upgrade infrastructure.

To address these challenges, the efforts fall into two categories: increasing knowledge and building relationships. A generation ago, power supply discussions were fairly straightforward for utility directors, given the widespread availability of baseload generation. Today's directors increasingly find themselves learning about

sophisticated and challenging issues as they weigh decisions affecting operations and financial viability for years to come.

They must grapple with complex energy issues, from ensuring sufficient transmission capacity to understanding regulatory hurdles. Supply chain constraints also pose significant barriers, with delays for critical components like transformers stretching up to two years.

Relationship-building is equally crucial. Utilities must engage early and often with companies planning large energy projects to ensure alignment on costs, timelines and infrastructure needs. For instance, phased development of a data center can give them more time to prepare for peak loads. Partnerships to develop on-site generation assets may also alleviate transmission challenges.

While these tech companies are often willing to invest in infrastructure upgrades, their focus is on reliability rather than cost. Utilities must balance these demands with their obligation to maintain affordability and reliability for all consumers.

In addition to preparing for new projects, Stephanie notes the importance of leaders keeping their fingers on the pulse of their existing commercial accounts.

"Being proactive and reaching out to understand how a commercial account's energy needs may be changing in the coming years will inform conversations and decisions about timing, rate design and other factors, even if they're not making specific requests yet," she says.

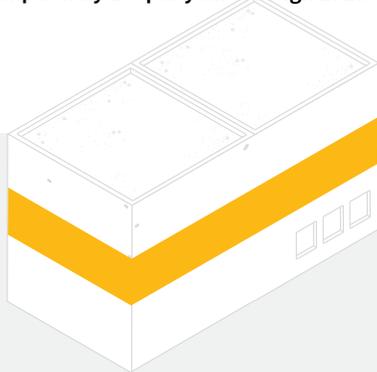
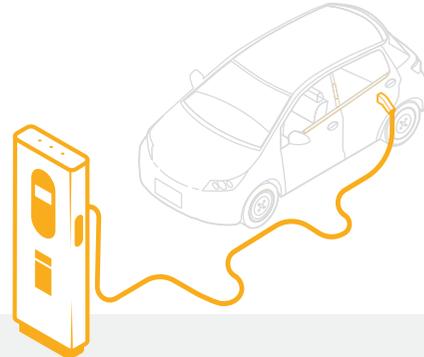
Stephanie says this improved communication helps utilities serve emerging needs while protecting reliability for all consumers. ■

# 4 Major Reasons for Increasing Demand

After decades of flat or declining electricity demand, the United States is in the midst of a boom in power use. Recent government data shows power consumption nationwide is set to increase by at least 38 gigawatts between now and 2029. This trend would ordinarily be great news for the power industry. But government policies aimed at shutting down fossil fuel-based generation and yearslong delays in permitting and siting for new transmission lines are turning this power boom into a capacity crisis. Here are the primary demand drivers:

## Electrification

Electric vehicle adoption, electrification of home heating and industrial electrification are expected to increase overall U.S. energy consumption by 1% per year through 2026.



↑  
**65%**

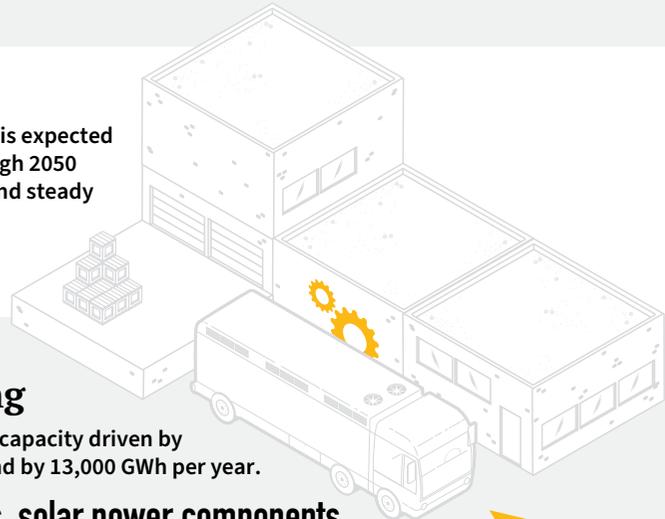
## Data Centers

Driven by explosions in artificial intelligence, cryptocurrency and cloud computing, total U.S. data center load is projected to increase by 65% by 2050.



## Economic Growth

Residential power consumption is expected to increase by 14% to 22% through 2050 due to increases in population and steady economic growth.



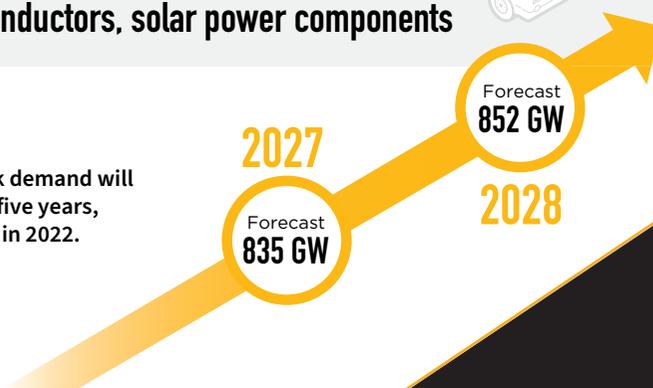
## Manufacturing Growth/Onshoring

New, expanding and “onshored/reshored” manufacturing capacity driven by federal incentives is expected to increase industrial demand by 13,000 GWh per year.

**Key products:** EVs, batteries, semiconductors, solar power components

## Total Demand

Analysts predicted in 2023 that U.S. peak demand will increase by at least 38 GW over the next five years, nearly double the growth rate predicted in 2022.



From left, Toni Johnson, David Latona and Chanon Martin unload meals at the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. PHOTOS COURTESY OF DEMCO



From left, Tiffany Moore, Kellie Smith, Bianca Tyson and Dominique Comeaux pack meals.



From left, David Latona, Olivia Schulte, Lisa Latona, Addison Latona, Linda Courtney and CEO Randy Pierce pack meals.

# DEMCO Serves

## Packing 20,000 Meals in 2 Hours

A group of DEMCO employees gathered Saturday, Jan. 11, to tackle a challenge close to home: hunger. Hosted in the cooperative's Training Center, DEMCO employees, family members and friends volunteered for a morning of purposeful action, packing more than 20,000 meals for the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank.

Part of a statewide initiative led by Feeding Louisiana and

Volunteer Louisiana to provide 1 million meals to residents in need, DEMCO's contribution will directly benefit food banks serving the seven parishes within its service area.

Volunteers arrived early and received safety instructions and a packing demonstration from The Pack Shack, who facilitated the process. Meal-packing teams worked 9-11 a.m. to assemble red beans and rice meals. Each time 4,000 meals were packed, a volunteer was



CLOCKWISE from top: DEMCO Serves Pack Shack Project participants celebrate the meals they packed in January 2025. More than 20,000 meals are loaded and delivered to the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank for the surrounding communities. From left, Kelly Heroman, Jeff Andry, Jill McGraw, Camille Andry and Lorenza Lively pack meals.

selected to ring the gong, sparking cheers and applause.

**Community Impact**

The timing of the event was crucial. Following the holiday season, food banks often face increased demand while their supplies dwindle. By stepping up to pack meals, DEMCO and its volunteers addressed this critical need, demonstrating the cooperative principle of concern for community in action.

**Meeting a Critical Need**

The event was more than just a meal-packing effort; it was a celebration of the cooperative spirit. With music playing, the joy and camaraderie were palpable.

A film crew captured the event, adding another layer of purpose—promoting the cooperative difference through video

segments that will share this impactful story with DEMCO members and the broader community.

As the morning concluded, volunteers collected their boxed lunches to take with them, leaving with full hearts and a deeper connection to DEMCO’s mission.

**The Cooperative Difference**

Events like this highlight DEMCO’s dedication to the cooperative principle of concern for community. By uniting employees, members and local organizations, the co-op demonstrates the power of collective effort in addressing vital issues like hunger.

Packing 20,000 meals was more than a service project. It was a reflection of the generosity and commitment that defines DEMCO’s role as a partner in building a brighter future for its communities. ■



# EFFECTIVE WAYS TO LOWER HOME ENERGY USE

Outside factors, such as fuel and equipment costs and extreme weather, can affect electricity prices. But you have the power to control home energy consumption by taking proactive steps to reduce energy use.

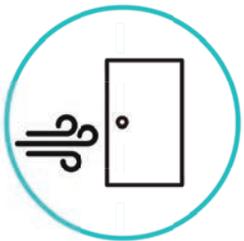
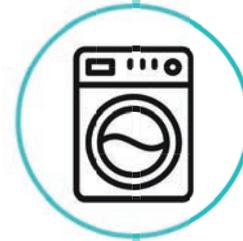


## Thermostat Management

The thermostat is one of the best places to lower your energy use, because heating and cooling account for a significant portion of home energy consumption. During winter months, adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting to reduce energy use. The Department of Energy recommends 68 F or lower.

## Use Off-Peak Energy Times

Plan energy-intensive chores and tasks, such as running the dishwasher or washing clothing, during off-peak energy hours, when the demand for electricity is lower. Off-peak times are early in the morning or late evenings. By scheduling these activities during off-peak periods, you can help keep rates lower, reduce demand and relieve pressure on the grid.



## Seal Your Home

According to Energy Star, about 20% of heated or cooled air that moves through a home is lost due to lack of proper insulation and air leaks. Ensure your home has sufficient insulation levels, and seal air leaks around windows and doors with caulk and weatherstripping. This is a simple, effective way to lower energy use and improve indoor comfort.

## Maintain Equipment

The health of your heating and cooling system is essential for comfort and can greatly impact energy bills. Maintain your system by regularly replacing dirty filters and scheduling annual inspections for maintenance and necessary repairs.





**RENEWAL**  
by **ANDERSEN**  
FULL-SERVICE WINDOW & DOOR REPLACEMENT

Get a **FREE** consultation!  
Call **855-962-5195**

## IT'S OUR 31-DAY SALES EVENT

Save Big on Replacement Windows and Doors!

**\$379**

**OFF EACH WINDOW<sup>1</sup>**

MINIMUM PURCHASE OF 4

AND

**\$779**

**OFF EACH DOOR<sup>1</sup>**

MINIMUM PURCHASE OF 4

**AND NO** Money Down | **NO** Monthly Payments | **NO** Interest for 12 months<sup>1</sup>

MINIMUM PURCHASE OF 4 - INTEREST ACCRUES FROM THE DATE OF PURCHASE BUT IS WAIVED IF PAID IN FULL WITHIN 12 MONTHS



**TESTED, TRUSTED, AND TOTALLY PROVEN.<sup>2</sup>**

**Offer Ends 4/30/2025**

Call for your **FREE** consultation.

**855-962-5195**

**FINDYOURWINDOW.COM**



<sup>1</sup>DETAILS OF OFFER: Offer expires 4/30/2025. Not valid with other offers or prior purchases. Get \$379 off per window, get \$779 off per entry/patio door and 12 months no money down, no monthly payments, no interest when you purchase four (4) or more windows or entry/patio doors between 3/5/2025 and 4/30/2025. Subject to credit approval. 12-month Promo Period: while no payments are due, interest accrues but is waived if the loan is paid in full before the Promo Period expires. Any unpaid balance owed after the Promo Period, plus accrued interest, will be paid in installments based on the terms disclosed in the customer's loan agreement. Financing is provided by various financial institutions without regard to age, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, or familial status. Savings comparison based on purchase of a single unit at list price. Available at participating locations and offer applies throughout the service area. See your local Renewal by Andersen location for details. License numbers available at renewalbyandersen.com/license. Some Renewal by Andersen locations are independently owned and operated. <sup>2</sup>Based on testing of 10 double-hung units per ASTM E2068 20 years after installation. <sup>3</sup>It is the only warranty among top selling window companies that meets all of the following requirements: easy to understand terms, unrestricted transferability, installation coverage, labor coverage, geographically unrestricted, coverage for exterior color, insect screens and hardware, and no maintenance requirement. Visit renewalbyandersen.com/nationsbest for details. <sup>4</sup>Review aggregator survey of 5-star reviews among leading national full-service window replacement companies. January 2024 Reputation.com. <sup>5</sup>Renewal by Andersen <sup>®</sup> and all other marks where denoted are trademarks Andersen Corporation. ©2025 Andersen Corporation. All rights reserved. RBA14201