

# COOPERATIVE

## REVIEW

For members of Union Power Cooperative



**W**ith the holiday season upon us and the New Year just around the corner, so many of us are looking forward to the season's promise of joy, laughter, and great cheer. The holidays are typically one of the busiest times of the year, with lots of decorating, shopping, wrapping, baking, and socializing to get done – it's also easy to see how this season can become a little overwhelming. That, coupled with the uncertainty and hopelessness the pandemic has brought on for so many people, can make the mere thought of celebrating and gift-giving even more stressful.

Because we are a co-op, giving back is a part of who we are, and our concern for community is a year-round endeavor.

That being said, it's important to remember what the holidays are about, something this year has confirmed for us all: family, friends, and spreading goodwill and cheer to others. There's no better way to celebrate the true meaning of the season than by giving back to those in need. And because there are still so many people who are struggling financially, as well as physically, mentally, and emotionally, as a result of the pandemic, our ability to help in any way we can make an impact is a really big deal.

As there has been so much more time to take stock in our lives and make more deliberate decisions about how we're showing up in the world, we want to highlight the gifts of time, love, and compassion— the gifts that keep on giving! While it's difficult to quantify the actual impact these

gifts have, we strongly believe they can make a tremendous difference in our communities, make our corner of the world a better place, and can make someone's holiday season a lot brighter.

We encourage you to give a person, organization, or cause that you care about these gifts. In addition to them benefitting from your efforts, you will enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you are helping a good cause, and you will most likely make new friends, expand your social network, strengthen existing skills, or learn a new one.

So, this holiday season, consider starting a new tradition. And no matter how you choose to give, at the end of the day, any donation of time, love, and compassion will likely be treasured.

This year and always, we appreciate your membership and ongoing partnership as we join together to strengthen our community and demonstrate the cooperative difference.

As Union Power members, you have the unique ability to give the gift of power through our Power Bucks program. Power Bucks allow you to purchase kilowatt-hours of electricity for any Union Power member in need. If you are looking to brighten someone's day with this gift, call 704-289-3145 to speak with a customer service representative (CSR) who will apply the Power Bucks credit to the member's account of your choice. The member's next bill will show a credit for the amount of Power Bucks purchased.

*Thank you again for your support, and we wish you all a safe and joyous holiday season. Happy gift-giving!*



# Union Power Hosts Virtual 81st Annual Meeting

The year 2020 has been unlike any other. People everywhere have had to adjust to the unusual circumstances the COVID-19 pandemic has ushered into our lives. This can also be said about this year's 81st Annual Meeting, held virtually on Saturday, Oct. 10. It was quite unusual not to host the meeting in-person as we've done for many years. We missed all of the smiling faces of the members we've come to know and look forward to seeing each year, as we are sure many of you missed attending and taking part in the fun and fellowship we all enjoy.

Nonetheless, we're very grateful for the commitment you have shown to our co-op's future by voting for our board of directors and attending our virtual annual meeting.

It was business as usual, as we began our business meeting promptly at 9 a.m. with a welcome and a call to order by Board President Lee Roy Kirk, Jr. Following, Board Secretary-Treasurer Sherise Jones gave the financial report highlighting the co-op's continued commitment to financial strength. Executive Vice President and General Manager

Greg Andress also shared remarks about how the co-op has adapted throughout the pandemic to ensure we are able to maintain our operations and continue providing the reliable electricity and energy services our members have come to expect. Other information and co-op updates were also provided during the meeting.

Check out a recap of the 81st Annual Meeting on the Union Power Cooperative YouTube Channel.



## Stay Safe from Scammers

Be on the lookout for scammers taking advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic through misinformation and scare tactics. They might use real company names to get in touch with you by phone, email, postal mail, text, or social media. Protect your money and your identity by not sharing personal information like your financial information, Social Security number, or date of birth. If you have questions or are uncertain about information you receive regarding Union Power, call our office at 704-289-3145.

# Safety, Storm, and Outage Response in a COVID-19 Environment

*No Matter the Challenges, We Are Ready!*

**A**s we approach peak winter storm season, conversations about seasonal reliability have been amplified by the pandemic. And while this year hasn't been normal by any means, Union Power has a strong track record of preparing for emergencies and maintaining an exceptional level of reliability. We continuously look for ways to improve so we can work efficiently and effectively to better serve our members.

Without regard to the pandemic, restoring power after a storm can be challenging for utility repair crews, in general, as travel and work conditions can be affected by high winds, fallen trees, and flooding. Now, in addition to addressing those standard concerns, our storm response plan has incorporated COVID-19-safe work practices and physical-distancing measures to balance the safety of our crews, members, and communities while still providing the level of service our members deserve.

Primarily, COVID-19 has forced major changes in our day-to-day operations, but we have taken proactive steps to ensure its stability and continuity since the beginning.

Limiting interactions between crews have been a big focus. All touchpoints have been reevaluated from staggering daily lineman shifts to implementing guidelines for the number of guys per truck, and scheduling fueling and yard pickups. Our linemen are taking every precaution to maintain social distancing best practices to ensure they remain safe, healthy, and capable of doing the essential work they've been called to do.

"We've been moving crews as a unit, so it's well-documented where everyone is at all times. Because of this, crews maintain their assignments and they already have their equipment on their trucks ready to go," shared Line Superintendent David Medlock. "This is the plan we put in place when COVID first started. It has helped us streamline our processes and also limit exposure risks."

Additional considerations have been given to concerns raised about electric cooperatives dispatching visiting crews during major storms. When major storms occur, co-ops have always depended upon other co-ops in the network to help handle widespread outages. The COVID-19 pandemic hasn't changed that— we just aren't able to lean on each other in the same way we have in the past. Operations personnel began working on mutual aid relief approaches that addressed health and safety concerns



when the pandemic started earlier this year. There have been numerous discussions about transportation, lodging, crew assignments, meal preparation and distribution, and increasing reliance upon crews from neighboring co-ops.

Having contractors on board also helps us work on necessary system reliability improvements and get an early jump on power restoration after any major storm.

Although we can't completely prevent outages, advances in technology make our system more resilient and enable us to respond to storm impacts and restore power safely and more efficiently. The system, combined with our around-the-clock dispatch team and outage management system (OMS), improves service, accelerates outage notifications, and enhances preventative measures.

"We're as prepared as we can be given the circumstances. No matter the challenges, our commitment to get the job done remains the same, and our ability to 'answer the call' is as strong as ever," said Lonnie Kirkley, manager of operations. "We are dedicated to delivering safe, reliable, and affordable energy to our members day-to-day and during the more difficult times."

A dedicated and competent workforce, comprehensive storm plan, resilient and smart technology integrated system, and cooperative partnerships go a long way toward helping us deliver on our promises now and always.



# Energy-Saving Tips to Brighten Your Holidays

On the first day of Christmas, Union Power gave to me... tips and tricks to save energy! That's right, we're getting in the energy-saving holiday spirit here at Union Power, and we are sharing tips to help you save energy and money at home during the holidays.

- 1. Install A Programmable Thermostat.** Don't pay for warm air that you aren't using. By installing and setting a programmable thermostat, you can potentially save money on your energy bills. If you are traveling this holiday, be sure to program your thermostat for energy savings. If you own a heat pump, be sure not to increase your thermostat setting by more than two degrees at one time. This practice will eliminate the electric heat strips from activating and allow your system to operate efficiently.
- 2. Maintain Your Fireplace.** It isn't the holidays without a crackling fire, but don't let your energy bills go up with the smoke. Proper chimney maintenance – like sealing your fireplace flue damper (if you do not use your fireplace), caulking around your hearth, and installing tempered glass doors and a heat-air exchange system to blow warmed air back into the room – will help keep warm air in your house and cold air out. If you plan to have a cozy fire to enhance the season, be sure that your damper is indeed open.
- 3. Prepare Your Windows for Winter.** Before you curl up on the couch in front of the window this holiday season, be sure to take steps to reduce heat loss. Weatherizing your windows can reduce drafts, and installing storm windows can cut heat loss through your windows by 25-50%.
- 4. Take Advantage of Sunlight.** Use sunlight to your advantage this winter. Open curtains during the day to allow sunlight to warm your home naturally, and close them at night to reduce the chill from cold windows.
- 5. Purchase Rechargeable Batteries & An Energy Star Battery Charger.** If you are buying gifts that require batteries, consider purchasing rechargeable batteries — which are more cost-effective than disposable batteries — and an ENERGY STAR charger for them.
- 6. Save Energy in The Kitchen.** Between holiday baking and meal preparation, your oven is probably working overtime. Cooking alone accounts for 4.5% of your home's energy use, and when factoring in other kitchen appliances, your kitchen's energy use can be very high. By taking simple actions in the kitchen – like using the right-sized pots on stove burners and using the oven light to check on a dish's progress to prevent heat loss instead of opening the door, you can entertain in style without raising your energy bill.
- 7. Use LED Lights.** This holiday, light up your home with LED lights. In addition to being sturdier and more resistant to breakage, LED holiday lights also last longer and consume less energy than traditional incandescent light strands.
- 8. Install A Light Timer.** When decking your house in holiday lights, use timer controls to lower energy consumption and save money. Timer controls allow you to turn lights on and off at specific times while staying in the holiday spirit.
- 9. Plug Holiday Decorations into Power Strips.** From holiday lights to listening to Christmas carols on repeat, the holidays can take a toll on your home's energy consumption. Even when you aren't using lights and electronics, they still draw small amounts of energy. Plug your electronics into a power strip and turn it off to reduce your energy bills.
- 10. Drive Your Way to Fuel Savings.** Whether you drive across town to do errands or across the country to visit family, fuel costs can add up over the holidays. One way to reduce fuel consumption is to empty your car after all your driving trips; an extra 100 pounds in your vehicle could increase gas costs by up to \$0.08 a gallon. Drive an electric vehicle? Learn how you can save by visiting [union-power.com](http://union-power.com).  
  
Ultimately, numerous steps can be taken to manage and potentially reduce your energy consumption this holiday season. Taking the initiative to be energy efficient will not only positively impact your finances, but it will also increase your home's comfort. We at Union Power hope that you have a happy and healthy holiday season and that you take extra steps to manage your energy consumption during this time of year.

# NC Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

JUNE 20-26, 2021

*A week to remember!*



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**NC**

High School juniors, apply for a free trip to Washington, D.C., and experience a week you'll never forget! **Deadline to apply: December 31, 2020.**

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- ★ Monuments
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- ★ Legislators
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- ★ Fun

For more information and to apply, visit [union-power.com](http://union-power.com) and search for **Youth Tour**.

*Deck the halls without  
breaking the bank!*

Don't get your tinsel in a tangle this holiday season.  
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[savewithunion.com](http://savewithunion.com)

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# Make Space for Safety When Considering Portable Heaters



Using a portable space heater is a great way to warm up specific rooms in your home without having to crank up the thermostat, but using them doesn't come without risk! Use the tips below to ensure a safe and warm winter.

- 1. Look for Safety Features.** Today's portable heater models include a variety of safety features that help take a lot of the worry out of using them:
  - **Overheat Protection**  
Space heaters with overheat protection detect when internal components become too hot. When an unsafe temperature is detected, the switch automatically shuts off the unit to prevent overheating.
  - **Tip-Over Protection**  
Space heaters equipped with a tip-over protection switch will automatically shut off if it's tipped over for any reason.
  - **Cool-Touch Housing**  
Cool-touch housing prevents accidental burns when touching the exterior of a heater. This safety feature is particularly useful in areas with active children or pets.
- 2. Plug Directly into an Outlet.** As a rule of thumb, you should always plug portable electric heaters directly into an outlet with sufficient power capacity. Attaching an extension cord to the unit increases the chance of overheating, fires, and electrical shock injuries.
- 3. Regular Inspection and Maintenance.** Occasionally inspect your space heater, especially when you first purchase it. Frequently clean and maintain it to ensure it's working safely. Wiping yours down will also help reduce the amount of dust and allergens that may be dispersed around your space.
- 4. Shut Off and Unplug if Not in Use.** Upon leaving an area, please turn off the portable space heater and unplug it. Many models feature programmable timers that can automatically program on and off times when you sleep or head to work.
- 5. Keep Heaters Away from Water.** Unless it is specifically designed for use in damp spaces (these models feature GFCI plugs), refrain from running a heater in a bathroom, kitchen, or other wet/humid areas. Also, be careful not to touch the heater if you have damp or wet hands, which increases the risk of electrical shock.
- 6. Be Mindful of Its Placement.** It's generally suggested that space heaters be placed at least three feet away from furniture, window treatments, bedding, clothing, rugs, and other combustibles. These items can cause a fire risk if they come in contact with a unit's electric heating element or too-hot surface. Never sit or drape anything on top of a portable heater. Also, be sure that the heater is placed on a hard, level surface.



## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month:

Energy bills can increase during winter for a variety of reasons, like houseguests, more time spent at home, and shorter days and longer nights. Small actions, like turning down your thermostat, replacing old bulbs with LEDs, and washing clothes in cold water, can help you save.

Source: [energy.gov](https://www.energy.gov)



## Turn Down the Heat On Your Monthly Electric Bill

### *Our Space Heater Calculator Helps You Keep Costs in Check*

With colder weather settling in, you are likely ready to fire up the heat on your thermostat and plug in your portable space heaters, but you may also be dreading the increased costs this could have on your monthly electric bill.

Worry no more! You can turn down the heat on your monthly electric bill by taking advantage of the interactive energy-saving calculators and other resources provided on our website at [union-power.com](https://www.union-power.com). We've added a Space Heater Calculator to help you discover one of the common causes of higher bills during the winter.

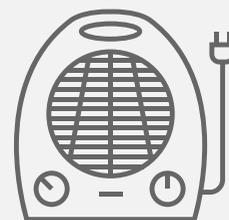
Our Space Heater Calculator helps you quickly understand the added operating cost and additional safety precautions required.

Take the element of surprise out of your energy bill by simply visiting the Energy Saving Calculators page on [union-power.com](https://www.union-power.com) and clicking on the Space Heater Calculator icon for an estimated cost of your space heater use.

#### **Once you're there:**

- 1.** Enter the number of space heaters you plan to use.
- 2.** Enter the hours per day you plan to use the space heaters.
- 3.** Enter the cost you are paying on an average per kilowatt-hour (our calculators use the default value of 0.10 or 10 cents).
- 4.** Instant estimated costs are shown!

You can reduce the number of heaters and operating hours to see how much you can reduce the estimated cost.



**Please note:** Space heaters are designed to be supplemental heaters, used for short periods of time in specific rooms. They are not designed to be used as primary heating resources for entire floors or an entire home. Your most efficient heating resource is your home's HVAC system, and consistency is key. If for some reason you do not feel that your system is heating properly or working efficiently, it would be a great idea to have your unit inspected by an HVAC professional.

# Right-of-Way Clearing

During the next month, you may see our tree-trimming crews in your neighborhood: ABC Professional Tree Services, Asplundh Tree Expert LLC, and Lewis Tree Service

**Union County:** Antioch Ch Rd, Baron Rd, Bernard Simpson Rd, Beulah Church Rd, Birchaven Dr, Brackenhouse Ln, Brandy Courts, Cedar Bend, Chickadee Ct, Coachman Dr, Cox Rd, Creekstone Rd, Curling Creek Dr, Cuthbertson Rd, Deal Rd, Dovewood Pl, Duncan Rd, Eagle Rd, Elder Ct, Forest Lawn Dr, Forest Ridge Rd, Fox Run Rd, Foxbridge Dr, Foxfield Rd, Foxton Rd, Friendly Baptist Church Rd, Garden View Ln, Gatewood Ln, Glenrose Pl, Gramercy Dr, Greenhurst Ln, Horn Tassel Ct, Hornyak Dr, Hudson Church Rd, Hunting Creek Dr, Huntington Dr, Joe Kerr Rd, Ken Ryan Dr, Kirby Ln, Long Needles Ln, Maple Grove Church Rd, Marvin School Rd, New Town Rd, Old Waxhaw Monroe Rd, Pennigar Rd, Peppergrass Ln, Perry Pond Dr, Potter Rd, Price Rd, Quail Ridge Ln, Red Fox Trail, Ridge Rd, Ridgeview Ln, Robinwood Ln, Skytop Rd, Snapfinger Ct, Squash Harvest Ct, Timber Ln, Twelve Mile Creek Rd, Underwood Rd, W Unionville Indian Trail Rd, Walden Ln, Water Oak Ln, Weddington Hills Dr, Weddington Matthews Rd, Weddington Rd, Winding Ln



## Union Power Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

The Cooperative Review newsletter is published monthly for the members and friends of Union Power Cooperative.

Greg Andress  
*Exec. Vice President &  
General Manager*

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