

Tap into the Power of the Sun

K–12 Schools are Eligible for NC GreenPower Solar+ Schools Grant



Did you know NC GreenPower Solar+ Schools is providing grants for the installation of a 5kW solar PV system to K–12 schools in North Carolina? Grant winners will also receive related benefits, including a weather station, data monitoring, a STEM curriculum, and teacher training.

How does the Solar+ Schools grant program work?

The Solar+ Schools grant program enables NC GreenPower to foster education and awareness efforts around renewable energy in communities and provide

educational solar technology and curriculum to both educators and students in North Carolina.

NC GreenPower estimates that there will be funding for 10 to 20 school grants for this year's program. The more donations that NC GreenPower receives, the more schools they are able to award each year! The grant covers a portion of the system's costs, and the selected school must fundraise to pay for the balance of the costs. Any K-12 school in North Carolina may apply for a grant, and NC GreenPower will provide online tools to assist with raising the remaining funds.

Interested in applying for a grant? NC GreenPower is now accepting applications for the NC GreenPower Solar+ Schools Education grant program now through Feb. 28. To apply, visit ncgreenpower.org/solar-schools.

Support Solar+ Schools

By supporting the NC GreenPower Solar+ Schools Education program, you can help provide a way for local NC schools to enhance STEM education for thousands of students and support cleaner energy. For as little as \$4 a month, Union Power members can voluntarily contribute on their utility bill to help support these efforts. Each \$4 donation provides grants for a solar package at schools in our state AND generates 125 kWh of green energy. Contributions are tax-free and qualify as a tax-deductible contribution for income tax purposes.

Sign up today and begin contributing with your next electric bill. It's easy to participate! Just visit union-power.com/renewable-energy/nc-greenpower to learn more and to sign up. Remember, you have the power to make a difference!

Are Portable Space Heaters Efficient for My Home?

Small space heaters are meant to do exactly as their name says: heat a small space. But unfortunately, many people use portable space heaters to heat their entire home, which can take a toll on your energy bills. The truth is, whether you should use space heaters or not really depends on your home's efficiency and energy needs.

If you're using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home, like inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors, or an inefficient heating system, space heaters are not a practical solution. 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 the entire home. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home. If you're on a tight budget, caulking and weather-stripping around windows and exterior doors is a low-cost, easy way to save energy. Depending on the size of your home, adding insulation can be a great next step. Union Power's Energy Specialists are happy to explain how insulation may help reduce your power bill. Taking these proactive energy-saving measures rather than relying on space heaters for warmth can reduce your heating and cooling bills for years to come.

Perhaps your home is energy-efficient, but you're cold-natured and want a specific room to be cozier than the rest. In this case, a space heater may work for your needs. A good comparison is ceiling fans; we use ceiling fans in the summer to cool people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a similar way during the winter months. Only use a space heater in small spaces that you're occupying and, if possible, try to shut off other rooms to contain the warmth provided by the space heater. If you decide to use a space heater to heat a small area in your home, make sure the heater is properly sized for the space; most heaters include a general sizing table.



A word about safety: The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates more than 25,000 residential fires are associated with the use of space heaters every year, resulting in more than 300 deaths. If you must use a space heater, purchase a newer model that includes the most current safety features and make sure it carries the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) label. Choose a thermostatically controlled heater to avoid energy waste and overheating, and place the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children and pets away from space heaters.

Also, consider alternative ways to stay warm, like extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you have hardwood or tile floors, lay down area rugs to provide additional insulation (and visual appeal!) and maintain warmth. We know it's cold out there, but remember, in addition to safety concerns, space heaters can significantly increase your energy bills if used improperly.

If you're looking for alternative ways to save energy and increase comfort in your home, contact our Energy Specialists at 704-289-3145. We're here to help you manage your energy use.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month:

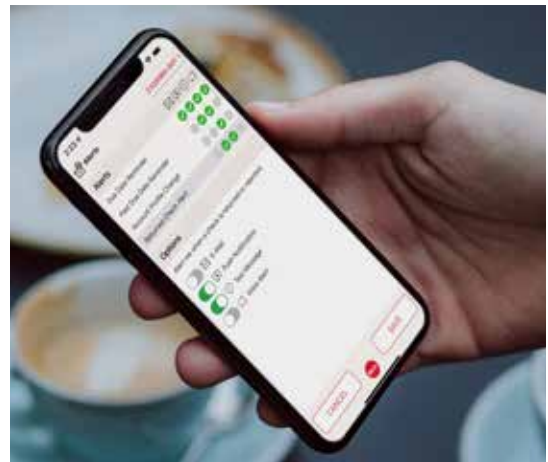
About 30% of a home's heating energy is lost through inefficient windows. Caulk and weatherstrip windows to seal air leaks. When running your home heating system, lock all operable windows to ensure the tightest seal possible.

Source: Energy.gov

Avoid Surprising Bills with Usage Monitoring & High Usage Alerts

Your electric bill changes each month based on how much energy you use, which may sometimes be more than you expect. Union Power is committed to delivering energy services of exceptional value, and we are here to serve your evolving needs by giving you more control over your energy consumption and costs.

Avoid a surprising bill by enrolling to receive Energy Usage Alerts via push notifications, email, or text. With Energy Usage Alerts, Union Power provides our members with a proactive way to stay on budget and control their daily energy usage. An Energy Usage Alert is an early indication that your energy usage has exceeded the dollar amount or “threshold” that you have set up. When this happens, you can take immediate steps to conserve energy before receiving your monthly energy bill.



To learn and sign up for Energy Usage Alerts, visit union-power.com/member-resources-services/usage-alerts.

We are your local heating, cooling, and electrical services company serving the greater Union County since 2003.



High-Efficiency Trane® Heat Pumps. **MORE AFFORDABLE THAN YOU KNOW.**

Now is the perfect time to purchase a new high-efficiency Trane® heat pump! They deliver clean energy, keeping you comfortable all year long and helping you save on your energy bill. Be sure to check the HSPF and SEER ratings for their efficiency.

With their clean energy, heat pumps cost less to operate. Your annual energy bills will decrease, and you will reap the financial benefits in no time.

Contact Union Services to discuss our affordable monthly payment plans. We have one that will fit your needs.



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The Wells Fargo Home Projects credit card is issued by Wells Fargo Bank, N.A., an Equal Housing Lender. Special terms apply to qualifying purchases charged with approved credit. The special terms APR will continue to apply until all qualifying purchases are paid in full. The monthly payment for this purchase will be the amount that will pay for the purchase in full in equal payments during the promotional (special terms) period. The APR for purchases will apply to certain fees such as a late payment fee or if you use the card for other transactions. For new accounts, the APR for purchases is 28.99%. If you are charged interest in any billing cycle, the minimum interest charge will be \$1.00. This information is accurate as of 10/02/2021 and is subject to change. For current information, call us at 1-800-431-5921. Offer expires 2/28/2022.

At the Heart of Our Co-op Are Our Members

We Love Serving You

February may be the shortest month, but it's packed with special observances like Presidents' Day, Black History Month, and Valentine's Day, in addition to a host of unofficial "national" days you've probably never heard of. But they all have something in common. They were created to highlight a particular issue, theme, or honor what makes each of those days worthy of celebration.

Our members are at the heart of everything we do at the Co-op, and this February, we would like to highlight the top five reasons we love serving you, the members of Union Power.

- **We love serving our members because the co-op wouldn't exist without you.** Our purpose is to provide you with reliable, responsible, and safe electricity. Simply put, Union Power exists to serve you. That's why we were formed on February 22, 1939—to bring power to our local area when for-profit utilities would not.
- **You enable us to complete our mission by supporting our efforts to give back.** A major part of our mission is to serve our community and look after the greater good. With your assistance, we're able to help the most vulnerable members of our community through food and toy drives and programs like Power Bucks that help local families pay their energy bills when times are tough.
- **Members of our Co-op also serve on the board of directors.** They provide guidance for setting Co-op priorities and helping make big decisions. Because our board members live in the area, they're able to serve as the pulse of the larger community and identify immediate and long-term needs. The broader Co-op membership provides helpful input through their vote on director elections and weighing in on Co-op and community issues.
- **You help us get it right.** Union Power members are great about keeping us in the know. We do our best to avoid power outages, but Mother Nature can occasionally throw us a curveball; our members are quick to report any power disruptions and are patient as our crews work to restore power safely. We know outages are frustrating, and your support as we work through



storms means so much to our employees. We also appreciate your feedback on Co-op programs and services. Your opinions are critical for the Co-op's success, and we thank you for that.

- **You and other Union Power members make up the community we serve—and for us, it's all about community.** Our employees live and work here, too, and care about our community the same way you do. We're invested and work to help it thrive. That's why Union Power donates to local charities, schools, and scholarship funds. It's also why we invest in economic development and why you'll see our employees volunteering at local schools and other charitable and community endeavors.

As a co-op, our mission is to enhance the quality of life in our community and look after its long-term interests. We love serving our members and our local community, and just like you, we want to see it continue to thrive.



Shine a Light on Your Future with a Union Power College Scholarship

College scholarships can be of tremendous help to parents and students looking for funds to cover the increasing cost of their education after high school. As part of Union Power's commitment to the community, your cooperative is proud to offer 10 \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors attending a four-year institution or community college in North Carolina.

To qualify, students must reside in the home of a Union Power Cooperative member and be a senior of the current graduating class. The judges weigh the following in

determining the scholarship winners:

- Need - 50%
- Academic achievement - 25%
- Extracurricular activities - 25%

The deadline for applications is March 1. Additional requirements and the application can be found at union-power.com/collegescholarships.



Use Our Space Heater Calculator to Estimate your Space Heater Costs

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

Take the element of surprise out of your energy bill by simply visiting union-power.com/energysavingscalculators and clicking on the Space Heater Calculator icon for an estimated cost of your space heater use.

A Slam Dunk Summer Opportunity for Middle School Students

Do you know a middle school student who loves basketball and wants to gain experience training alongside real college basketball players and coaches? We have great news for you! We are accepting applications for full scholarships to basketball camps at two of North Carolina's top universities this summer.

Middle school boys can apply for a scholarship to attend the Carolina Basketball School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Middle school girls can apply for a spot at the Wolfpack Women's Basketball Camp held at North Carolina State University in Raleigh.

These camps will take place in June 2022. To apply, students must be a rising sixth- or seventh-



grader. Applicants will be judged on their academics, extracurricular activities, and an essay. Applications must be submitted by March 31. Scholarship winners are expected to be announced in May.



To learn more about the camps and to apply, visit union-power.com/sportscampscholarships.

STREET LIGHT Need Repair?



Take these steps:

1

Get the pole number from the yellow tag on the light pole.



2

Complete the "Street Light Repair" Form found at union-power.com/lightrepair. Or, call 1-800-922-6840.

3

We will confirm your request and repairs will be scheduled.

**Union Power
Cooperative**
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Five Easy Ways to Save Energy When Working from Home

Today, more Americans are working from home than ever before. More time spent at home means more energy used throughout the day. If you're punching the clock from home, there are small steps you can take to reduce your energy use and save on electric bills. Here are five easy ways to save energy when working from home.

1 Use a smart power strip.
Plugging in your most-used devices, like computers, monitors, and routers, to a smart power strip ensures these devices aren't drawing power when they're not in use. Smart power strips also give you the option to select which devices should stay in "always on" mode.

2 Unplug your least-used equipment.
If your home office includes equipment like printers and scanners, you're probably not using these electronics every day. In this case, go ahead and unplug your least-used electronics and devices since many of these can draw energy even when they're not being used.

3 Choose ENERGY STAR®-certified office equipment.
If you're looking to purchase new equipment for your workspace, look for the ENERGY STAR® label to ensure you're getting the most energy-efficient features. Computers, monitors, imaging equipment, and other office electronics that receive the ENERGY STAR® rating include power management features to make saving energy easy. Most of these are designed to run cooler and last longer.

4 Flip the switch and use natural light instead.
It's still chilly out there, so take advantage of natural light and additional warmth from the sun. When you're working during the day, open blinds, curtains, and other window coverings to let natural light in—and don't forget to turn off the lights to reduce energy use!

5 Lower the thermostat.
Home heating makes up a significant portion of your energy bills. Turn the thermostat down a couple of degrees during the day to reduce energy use and save money. The Department of Energy recommends setting the thermostat to 68 degrees or cooler during winter months. You're more likely to stay focused and alert when it's cooler in your home, so all the more reason to mind the thermostat.

Working from home doesn't have to take a toll on your energy bills, and whether you're working remotely or not, these practical tips can help everyone reduce their energy use. Contact Union Power if you have questions about your bills or want additional information about saving energy at home.

How Right-of-Way Clearing Helps Ensure Reliable, Safe Electricity for our Members

Fallen trees and broken limbs are the largest cause of power outages. With over 6,000 miles of power lines to protect, Union Power works year-round on our vegetation management—or right-of-way (ROW)—program to ensure members enjoy the most reliable electricity possible. These efforts also contribute to a safe working environment for line technicians.

A right-of-way is an area around our lines that Union Power has access to in order to maintain or repair the electric system. When trees or limbs fall on our power lines, particularly during severe weather, there's a greater chance of power outages within our communities. And while we can't control the weather, we can take steps to deliver the most reliable power possible.

By performing routine right-of-way maintenance, we can reduce the risk of outages due to fallen trees. When outages do occur, right-of-way preventative maintenance helps shorten the duration of the outages because power lines are easy to access and not overgrown with trees. A clear path to power lines creates a safer working environment for line technicians, whether they're performing routine maintenance or power restoration.

Members can help by avoiding planting trees near power lines. For existing trees that are directly in the Cooperative's rights of way, Union Power helps with removal and replacement.

For safety, it's important for the public to remember that power lines can energize anything or anyone that gets too close to the line, including tree limbs, ladders, equipment that can have a high overhead reach, such as forklifts, or even a kite string. Well-maintained rights-of-way help ensure that trees and limbs don't get close enough to power lines to energize them. While this helps keep electricity reliable, it also helps keep people and animals from being electrocuted or severely injured.



Our vegetation management program combines several methods to control growth—all with the goal of balancing the beauty of our area while ensuring safe, reliable electricity.



For more information about Union Power's vegetation management program or tree trimming practices, please call 704-289-3145 and speak with Wil Ortiz (ext. 3323) or Carrie Lorenz-Efird (ext. 3291). Visit union-power.com for monthly right-of-way clearing updates.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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

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