Winter 2008

On-The-Line

A publication of Northwestern Wisconsin Electric Company

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Home Audits

Find out how energy-efficient your home is and save a bundle!

The cold winter months in Wisconsin are usually the time of year when customers start wondering just how energy efficient their house is. There are a few options to choose from to analyze your home;

Energy Star Home Program

Of course, if you're building a new home, the best time to make changes or add improvements is while it's still on paper in the planning stages. The Energy Star new home program can help customers build homes which are at least 25% more efficient than a standard home built to code. Each new home in the program is inspected three times during construction and ultimately certified with the Energy Star label.

Home Performance Program

If you live in an existing home that you feel could use some improvements, the Home Performance with Energy Star program is a good option. To participate, schedule an evaluation with a certified consultant who will go through your home and provide a report outlining problems and recommended solutions. Once the recommended solutions have been implemented, a post-performance evaluation is completed to see how things went.

Self-Administered Home Audit

Customers can audit their own home using the Energy Star Home Improvement Tools. Visit www.energystar.gov and go the Home Improvement section to complete a self-administered home audit to see how you're doing.

Targeted Home Performance

If you meet income requirements, you could qualify for the Targeted Home Performance program to receive a home energy audit. The results of the audit will direct the Focus on Energy consultant to complete measures such as adding insulation, sealing air leaks, updating the heating system, or installing energy saving devices. These measures will not only improve the comfort of the home, but will also make it safer.

All NWE customers qualify for any of these programs. The certified contractors needed to do the evaluation charge a fee. These charges will vary, depending on the program. NWE customers will also qualify for Focus on Energy incentives offered on energy efficient equipment recommended as a result of the home evaluation programs above. To get started, call Focus on Energy at (800) 762-7077 to sign up for the programs and find a consultant near you.

ASK WALLY T. WATTMEISER

Q: I'm worried about what may happen to my home if the heating system fails or the power goes off while I'm gone. What can I do to settle my nerves about this?

ASK WALLY

A: You're right to be nervous about this. Power companies respond to outages based on customers calling to report them; we don't automatically know of an outage.

There are a few things you can do to deal with this issue. You can install a back-up generation system to automatically run when the power goes off. This system and its controls should be installed by a qualified electrical contractor to be both safe and reliable.

Another option would be to install a warning device to call you when either the power is off or the temperature in the home drops to unsafe levels. This system could be part of a full security system. Or, because security systems can be expensive, you can install a device that specifically deals with low temperature. You get a phone call from a device about the size of an answering machine when there is a problem.

Two of the most popular freeze protection devices are the FreezeAlarm found at www.freezealarm.com and the Sensaphone found at www.sensaphone.com.

The easiest and probably least expensive way to monitor your home is to have someone simply check on it when you're away. Either way you choose, the responsibility of taking care of your home is yours, so choose wisely.

SNOWMOBILE SAFETY

Stay clear of overhead electric poles and guy wires;
Maintain a safe distance from electric substations;
Watch for underground pad-mounted transformers and junctions;
Steer clear of NWE crews working along trails.

New Atlas Substation

Since 1970, the Atlas substation has sat virtually unnoticed on the banks of the Trade River just north of Atlas. For 38 years it has served its purpose of providing power to the small communities of Atlas, Cushing and Trade Lake, as well as the towns of Sterling and Laketown. This substation was primarily built to serve the growing needs of the farming community, which included two feedmill operations.

Since then, the area has seen a reduction in farming, but, because of the lakes in the area, a large residential load has blossomed to replace it. Because of this growth, and the need to upgrade the eight mile transmission line from Frederic, NWE plans to replace the substation with a new one during the winter of 2008. The new transmission line is being upgraded from a 34,500 volt line to a 69,000 volt line and will terminate at the new sub's location at the southeast corner of County Rd Z and 300th Ave. Currently, the customers who are fed from the Atlas substation are being served from NWE substations to the north and south of Atlas. Customers will notice crews in the area over the next several months and may even be contacted by NWE regarding momentary outages to accommodate the crews for safety reasons. This substation will initially power over 1,300 customers in the area and provide the means for growth over the next 30 to 40 years. If you have questions or concerns regarding this construction, please contact NWE at (800) 261-1200 or (715) 463-5371.

NWE

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