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Efficient Holiday Cooking

COOKING ACCOUNTS FOR 4% of total home energy use, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates, and this figure doesn't include the energy costs associated with refrigeration, water heating and dishwashing.

As households gear up for the holiday season, keep these tips in mind to control energy costs.

Smart Oven Use

Before the baking begins, clean the inside of your range, wiping accumulated grease and grime out of the oven and making sure the window is clean and clear so you can see what's cooking.

Don't open the oven door to check on the progress of cooking food. Every time the door is opened, the temperature inside is reduced by as much as 25 degrees, forcing it to use more energy to return to the proper cooking temperature. Use the oven light and the window to keep an eye on those cookies.

For recipes that need to bake longer than an hour, preheating isn't necessary.

If you use a ceramic or glass dish for baking, you can typically set your oven to 25 degrees lower than the recipe directs. Because ceramic and glass hold heat better than metal pans, your dish will cook just as well at a lower temperature.

Stovetop Sense

For your stovetop to function effectively, it's important that the metal reflectors under your electric stove burners stay free of dirt and grime. Electric stovetops transmit heat to pans only by direct contact with burners. The less contact your pan has with the burner, the more energy the stovetop has to expend to heat the pan.

If your pans have warped over time and don't sit flat on the burner, it may be time to upgrade to a new set of cookware. To keep pans from warping, don't clean them while they are still hot. The temperature difference between the pan and wash water can deform the metal.

Think Small Appliances

A slow cooker, microwave, toaster oven or warming plate can do the same job of cooking some dishes with less electricity. For example, the average toaster oven can use about half the energy of the average electric stove over the same cooking time. ■

Change Air Filters All Winter Long

YOU DUTIFULLY CHANGED your air conditioning system's filter every month or two over the summer—right? And now that the weather is cooling off, you might think that job is finished until next summer.

It's not.

Your central heating system also relies on a filter to catch dust, dirt, pet hair and other airborne particles that can clog the system, slow it down and even make it blow that stuff back into your rooms.

A clogged filter restricts airflow, and that can force the system's blower to work harder. This can shorten the life of the equipment, causing it to overheat, break down or unnecessarily increase your heating bill.

That's why it's important to change the filter regularly during cooling and heating seasons. In fact, most heating, ventilating and air conditioning system manufacturers recommend monthly changes all year long.

Especially if you have pets, if you live in a dusty climate, or if someone in your home smokes or suffers from allergies, regular filter changes are critical to keeping your HVAC system in good shape and your family comfortable. ■

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NCEC Awards Grants Through Operation Round Up

ORGANIZATION	GRANT
Common Ground Ministries	$750
Frost Community Center	$1,000
Hope Center	$3,000
Telico Volunteer Fire Department	$3,000
SEPTEMBER TOTAL	**$7,750**

VETERANS DAY

Wednesday, November 11
We salute all those who have served.

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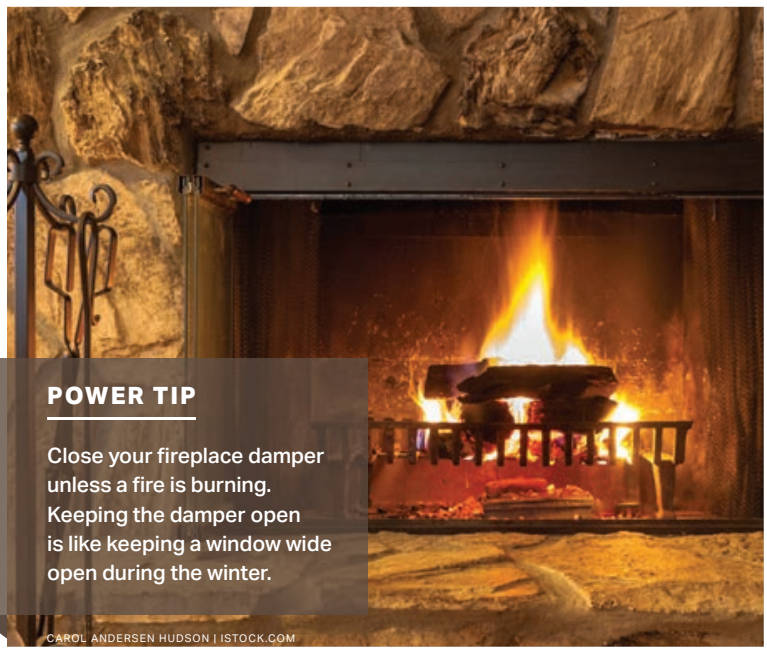

POWER TIP

Close your fireplace damper unless a fire is burning. Keeping the damper open is like keeping a window wide open during the winter.

CAROL ANDERSEN HUDSON | ISTOCK.COM

Navarro County Electric Cooperative

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24/7 Outage Hotline Numbers

For information and to report outages, please call us.

LOCAL
(903) 874-7411

TOLL-FREE
1-800-771-9095

ABOUT NAVARRO COUNTY EC
NCEC owns and maintains more than 3,000 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 12,000 members in Ellis, Freestone, Hill, Limestone and Navarro counties.

OFFICE HOURS
Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

BILL PAYMENT OPTIONS
- Online at navarroec.com
- Through the SmartHub app
- By phone at 1-855-385-9975 (Phone payments are not accepted on the NCEC office line.)

TEXAS CO-OP POWER
NCEC provides *Texas Co-op Power* and TexasCoopPower.com to give you information about events, safety, special programs and other activities of your cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact the co-op office.

VISIT US ONLINE
navarroec.com

Happy Thanksgiving

May the good things of life be yours in abundance not only at Thanksgiving but throughout the coming year.

Our offices will be closed **Thursday–Friday, November 26–27,** in observance of the holiday.

A. IVANOVA | ISTOCK.COM

HELIN LOIK-TOMSON | ISTOCK.COM

Whole-House Electrical Safety Checklist

A WHOLE-HOUSE ELECTRICAL safety check can help prevent injuries, deaths and fires caused by faulty products and wiring. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends that homeowners conduct an inspection every six months and provides a checklist to help with the task.

First check lights.

▸ Are the lightbulbs the appropriate wattage for each fixture? If not, replace bulbs with the correct wattage. While you're at it, consider energy-efficient alternatives such as LEDs.

Check portable electrical heating equipment.

▸ Does the heater have a mark—such as UL, ETL or CSA—of a nationally recognized testing laboratory? If not, replace the heater because it may not have adequate safety features.

▸ Is the heater placed at least 3 feet away from flammable materials? If not, move it that far or farther from combustibles and ensure that nothing could fall onto the heater. Some heaters produce enough heat to ignite even nearby combustible materials.

▸ Is the heater stable? If not, place the heater on a flat, level surface. Fires can start if a heater falls over. Some heaters turn off automatically if tipped, but it is best to make sure it doesn't tip over in the first place.

▸ Is the heater in good condition, without strange smells, sparks or smoke when in use? If not, repair or replace the heater. Odd smells, sparks or smoke could indicate an electrical problem that could result in fire or electric shock.

Check electrical outlets and switches.

▸ Are all outlets and switches working properly? If not, have an electrician check them and correct any unsafe wiring conditions.

▸ Are all outlets and switches cool to the touch? If not, stop using them and make sure the outlet is not overloaded with appliances. Unusually warm outlets and switches could indicate an unsafe wiring condition.

▸ Do all electrical plugs fit into all outlets? If not, have the outlet replaced, as loosefitting plugs can cause overheating and fires.

▸ Do all electrical outlets have faceplates covering wiring? If not, install faceplates. Exposed wiring is a shock hazard.

▸ In homes with children, do all unused outlets have safety covers? If not, insert safety covers over outlets to prevent children from experiencing serious shock if any object is inserted.

Inspect outlets with ground-fault circuit interrupters.

▸ Do you test all GFCI outlets regularly? If not, test them once a month. GFCIs can prevent electrocution and should be used in kitchens, bathrooms and other areas of the home where risk of shock is higher.

Follow this procedure to test GFCIs:

▸ Plug a light into the outlet and turn it on.

▸ Press the test button. Did the light go out? If not, replace the GFCI.

▸ Press the reset button. Did the light come back on? If not, replace the GFCI.

Check countertop appliances.

▸ Are all countertop appliances unplugged when not in use? If not, unplug them, as unattended appliances that remain plugged in may create a fire risk.

▸ Are all appliance cords positioned so that they will not contact a hot surface such as an oven or toaster in the kitchen? If not, relocate cords away from heat sources. Melted or burned cords with exposed wires could lead to electric shock or fire.

▸ Are all appliances located away from sinks? If not, move appliances away from sinks. If it is not possible to move appliances away from sinks, ensure they are plugged into an outlet protected by GFCI. Electricity and water mixing can cause electric shock and fire. ■