September 2021 "Your Electric Connection Since 1938"

FEC POWER Source

Vol. 25 No. 09

Farmers' Electric Coopertative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider and employer

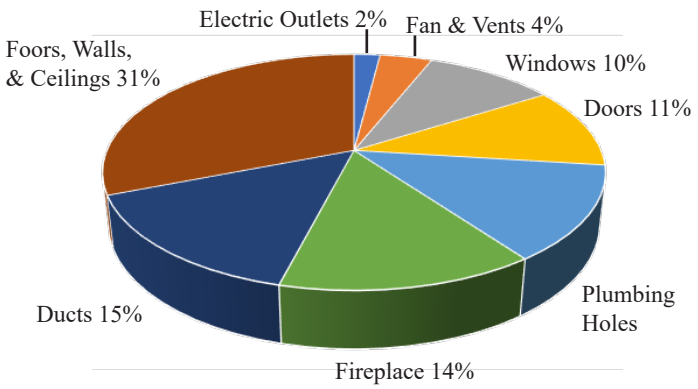
energy efficiency facts

LOCATING & SEALING AIR LEAKS

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, 25 to 40 percent of the energy used for heating and cooling a typical home is lost due to air leakage. Warm air leaking into your home during the summer and out of your home during the winter can waste a lot of energy dollars. That's why tightening up your home is the first step you should take in cutting your energy costs. A modest investment in time and effort can pay real dividends when it comes to reducing energy costs. Experts say a $25 investment in caulking and weather-stripping could result in hundreds of dollars of energy savings every year.

How does air escape? Air leaks in and out of your home through every hole, nook, and cranny. Common leakage sites include: plumbing holes through walls, floors and ceilings, around chimneys, fireplace dampers, attic access hatches, recessed lights and fans, wiring holes, missing plaster, electrical outlets and switches, moldings around windows, doors and baseboards, and dropped ceilings above bathtubs and kitchen cabinets (see figure 1).

Typical Air Leakage Locations



Source: U.S. Department of Energy, *Energy Savers Guide*

Getting Started

Repair all obvious sources of air leakage first, such as broken windows and holes where air can enter through the ceiling, walls, or floor. Check anywhere building materials join and look for daylight that is visible through the cracks. After these have been properly sealed, you will be ready to tighten up other less obvious air leakage areas.

Caulking vs. Weather-stripping

Caulking is used between non-moving parts where the gap is less than ½ inch wide (e.g. between window frame and wall). Apply caulk on a clean dry surface after removing any old caulk and paint – the best time to caulk is during dry weather when the temperature is above 45 degrees. Weather-stripping comes in cleverly designed strips of felt, rubber, metal, or plastic that fills the spaces around doors, windows, and attic hatches – It compresses and seals when they are shut. There are a variety of weather-stripping materials available from your local hardware store.

No Cost

- Identify and prioritize where leakage might be taking place – air leakage locations are not always obvious and easy to find (see figure 1). Prioritize your air sealing strategy by identifying the biggest leads first. On a windy day, locate leaks by running your hands near those leakage sites mentioned in figure 1.
- Lock your windows to make sure they are shut. Locking a window helps create an air-tight seal.
- Keep the fireplace damper closed when the fireplace is not in use. Even when the damper is closed it is still leaking air and taking your money up the chimney.

See **LEAKS** *on* **PAGE 4**

Manager's Message...

Changes on the Horizon for the PRC

It has been some time since I reported on activities before the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (NMPRC). Folks may recall that the New Mexico legislature provided for the formation of the NMPRC, establishing authority to regulate utilities, telecommunications, and motor carrier industries to ensure fair and reasonable rates, and to assure reasonable and adequate services to the public. In addition, the legislature provided for a separate rate-making process for rural electric cooperatives, including Farmers' Electric (FEC), recognizing cooperatives are self-regulated by a Board of Trustees/Directors who are elected by the members/customers they represent.

When I became General Manager of FEC, the NMPRC was comprised of three commissioners, appointed by the Governor. Largely due to concerns about an appointed commission concentrating too much regulatory control in any political party, an effort arose to change the NMPRC from three appointed commissioners to a five-member body, elected by voters, each representing one of five districts. In 1996 voters responded, deciding through referendum (constitutional amendment) that voters were best positioned to decide who best to serve as utility regulators.

Over the past several legislative cycles there were efforts to reform the NMPRC; culminating in 2019 to place a referendum once again before the voters, to reverse course and return to a three-member body appointed by the Governor. In November 2020, as we watched and waited on the outcome of both national and state elections, a few of us were also watching on how voters would decide the future of the NMPRC. As the dust settled, with 55 percent of votes cast in favor of change, the NMPRC will become a commission appointed by the Governor beginning January 1, 2023. Further, the process provides for creation of a nominating committee to develop a list of candidates from which the Governor will appoint three members. Of the three commissioners, who must be confirmed by the state Senate, no more than two can be members of the same political party. Commissioners will serve a maximum of two, six-year terms.

From a regulatory standpoint the NMPRC is very busy, despite being forced from their physical office building in Santa Fe, as well as restrictions on meeting in person due to COVID. Commissioners and staff have embraced these

See **PRC** *on* **PAGE 3**

POWER SOURCE
is published monthly by Farmers' Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Questions or article ideas should be directed to :
Thom J. Moore,
POWER SOURCE
P. O. Box 550
Clovis, New Mexico
88102-0550
Phone:
(575) 762-4466 or
1-800-445-8541
thom@fecnm.org

We are on-call 24 hours each day, 365 days each year, to serve your electric power needs

To Report an Outage Call:

Clovis
(575) 762-4466
Fort Sumner
(575) 355-2291
Santa Rosa
(575) 472-3971
Toll Free
(800) 445-8541

PRC *from* **PAGE 2**

challenges by continuing to conduct most meetings virtually, with many employees continuing to work from home. For FEC, we are following twelve active cases, by far the most active cases in my tenure, and all have potential to impact how we conduct business and as well as impact the cost of providing service. It is interesting, the oldest case we are tracking began in 2012, and has gone through prolonged periods of no activity.

One recent case, a Notice of Inquiry (NOI) on consideration of what changes should be made to existing rules governing the interconnection of customer owned distributed generation (DG) resources is just wrapping up the initial "working group" process. Over the past several months, every other week, we have participated in conference calls lasting between five and six hours discussing a variety of interconnection issues. A final report and recommendations for change are expected to be presented to the NMPRC this month. We are also participating in a new case, initiated by the legislature through passage of The Community Solar Act, crafting a framework of how a community solar project could interconnect with a utility system without imposing additional costs on those who choose to not participate in a project.

It would be challenging, if not impossible, for a small utility like FEC to actively follow and participate in each of these cases. Through our network of sixteen rural electric cooperatives in New Mexico and through our statewide association, the New Mexico Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NMRECA) we are able communicate to legislators and regulators how proposed changes will impact rural consumers.

Additional information on the NMPRC can be found at www.nm-prc.org.

Until next month,

SAVE THESE DATES!

Each Saturday January 15 - February 19, 2022

ANNIE'S PROJECT
EMPOWERING WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

This six-week course is a set of interactive classes bringing women together to learn from experts in production, financial management, human resources, marketing, and the legal field. There's plenty of time for questions, sharing, reacting, and connecting with your presenters and fellow participants.

It's a relaxed, fun, and dynamic way to learn, grow, and meet other farm and ranch women.

Classes will be each Saturday
January 15- February 19, 2022
9 am - 1 pm in Tucumcari

For more information, call Susann Mikkelson at Quay County Cooperative Extension Service at (575) 461-0562 or email: susannm@nmsu.edu

Online registration option coming soon!

Early Bird Rate: $100 for all six sessions!
($125 after December 1, 2021)

NM STATE UNIVERSITY
BE BOLD. Shape the Future.
College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences
Cooperative Extension Service
Quay County Extension Office

LEAKS *from* **PAGE 1**

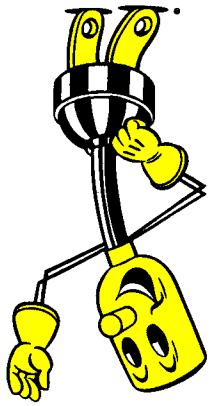
In a well insulated home, an open damper can raise heating and cooling energy consumption by 30 percent. An inadequately sealed fireplace is one of the worst sources of air leakage in the home. According to the Department of Energy, sealing and weather-stripping the fireplace in a typical home can reduce air leakage by 14 percent or more. If you're not using your fireplace, seal it up.

Low Cost

- **Window putty** (glazing compound) is used to seal a loose windowpane.
- **Select the best product** to do the job. Ask your local hardware store attendant for the best sealing product for your project. Discuss the location, surface type, size of leak, etc.
- **Seal the leaks**. The best and most affective place to seal a home is on the inside. This not only prevents air movement, it also prevents moisture from accumulating in the wall and ceiling cavities.
- **Caulk the leaks in your ceiling.** Typical insulation does not stop air leakage. When you're up in the attic, look for dirty spots in the insulation. This often indicates a hole where air leaks into and out of your house. Caulk areas where air might escape from such places as ceiling light fixtures, wiring and plumbing holes in the kitchen and bath, electrical junction boxes, and recessed light fixtures.
- **A foam backer rod** is used to fill large or deep cracks; then this is covered and sealed with caulk.
- **Rope caulk** can be used to air seal many leaky areas around the home – especially windows. this inexpensive material is very easy to apply and later, if you want to open the window, it's easy to remove. Note: always designate one window in each room as the fire escape and make sure that it is operable.
- **An attic hatch or pull-down stairway** in the heated and cooled part of your home needs to be weather-stripped and insulated.
- **Electrical outlet cover gaskets** reduce air leakage through electrical outlets. Although the savings are small (about two percent of heating and cooling costs) the cost is also low and it is an easy do-it-yourself project.
- **Window pulley seals** are inexpensive and easy to install. Many older double-hung windows have a rope and weight system to make it easier to raise and lower the window. The peal-and-stick pulley seals stops air leakage at this location while allowing the window to continue to function.
-

Investment

- **The duct system** in a typical home loses about 20 percent of the air that moves through it due to leaks and poorly sealed connections. This results in higher utility bills and an uncomfortable home. Observe the condition of your ducts; particularly how they are sealed; if uninsulated, check for gaps or air escaping at the joints. If the ducts are insulated, make sure the insulation is vapor sealed and securely taped. Consult a duct-sealing contractor and make sure that mastic or UL-approved duct sealing tape is being used (common "duct tape" does not hold up on ducts and should not be used). Also, ensure that the ducts are insulated with R-5 duct insulation and carefully vapor sealed.



FARMERS' ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
OF NEW MEXICO
3701 Thornton St., P.O. Box 550
Clovis, New Mexico 88102-0550

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
CLOVIS, NM
PERMIT NO. 64