Pitt and Greene Electric Membership Corporation

Where customers have a choice

5 Ways to Safeguard Your Home This Winter 12

Space Heating 14

A MESSAGE FOR YOU

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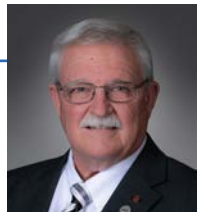
EVP and General Manager



Meeting the challenges weather brings

Electric bills vary with the seasons, driven by weather and consumer use patterns. Weather matters. When it's cool outdoors, family members generally want the house warm. When it's warm outside, air conditioners make living areas pleasant.

How much weather affects your electric bill depends on many factors, including your home's original construction materials, insulation, and air leaks. Personal comfort plays a role too, as does the difference between the thermostat setting inside and temperatures outdoors.

When a house stays at 68 degrees Fahrenheit, but the outdoor temperature varies from being in the 30s in winter to more than 100 degrees on a muggy summer's day, demand for heating and cooling can be significant. Cooled air leaving a home essentially wastes the money spent to cool it. The same is true for air a homeowner has paid to warm.

R-value offers a way of measuring insulation's effectiveness (a higher R-value indicates more effective insulation). For example, on a 28-degree day, heat loss from a residence set at 68 degrees could hit 2,464 BTU per hour even through an 8 ft. x 10 ft. exterior wall packed with R-13 insulation. Reverse the situation on a scorching day—100 degrees outside-and heat gain indoors will still reach 2,464 BTU per hour.

To save money, set your thermostat five degrees closer (higher in summer, lower in winter) to the outdoor temperature, this simple change could result in a savings of 90 watts per hour of electricity, about 197 kilowatt-hours (kWh) in three months.

Keep blinds and drapes on the sunny side of your home closed in summer and open in winter. Find mysteriously "hot" or "cold" spots in the house and solve them by installing gasket seals around outlets and weather stripping along doors and windows, replacing old windows, and upgrading insulation. When practical, adjust landscaping to provide shade for your property in summer and sunlight in winter.

Weather doesn't have to play havoc with electricity bills. There are a variety of tools, appliances, and resources available to solve all sorts of energy challenges. Improvements such as new windows or a roof, require significant financing. But there are a lot of options that are inexpensive and simple enough to do yourself. Find more ways to save at **TogetherWeSave.com**.

Energy Efficiency

TIP OF THE MONTH

To maximize you fireplace's efficiency, always keep the damper closed when the fireplace is not in use. An open damper is like an open window, allowing warm indoor air to escape and cold air to enter. Consider installing a fireplace insert, which improves heat output by circulating warm air into the room rather than letting it escape up the chimney. Also, burn only seasoned hardwood to ensure a hotter, cleaner burn. Regularly clean and inspect your chimney to maintain safe and efficient operation.

Source: energy.gov

5 Ways to Safeguard Your Home This Winter

As the temperatures drop and the days grow shorter, there's a natural inclination to create a warm and cozy haven at home. Unfortunately, as we see increased use of heating equipment, candles and electrical items, the number of home fires tends to increase during winter months.

Here are five ways you can safeguard your home for the winter season.

1 Ensure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly. If your detectors are battery-operated, replace the batteries annually. Test the detectors once a month and give them a good dusting to ensure the sensors are clear of dirt and debris.

2 Inspect electrical cords. We depend on more cords during winter, whether for holiday lighting, extension cords or portable heaters. Before using any corded items, double check to make sure cords aren't frayed or cracked. If you use portable space heaters, remember to keep them at least 3 feet away from flammable items. Use models that include an auto shut-off feature and overheat protection. Space heaters can take a toll on your energy bills. Use them efficiently (to heat smaller spaces) and safely. Never plug a space heater into a power strip.

3 Avoid overloading electrical outlets and power strips. When overloaded with electrical items, outlets and power strips can overheat and catch fire. If you use power strips for multiple devices, make sure the strip can handle the electrical load. For a safer bet, look for power strips that include surge protection.

4 Clean the fireplace to improve safety and efficiency. There's nothing better than a warm fire on a chilly night, but it's important to maintain your fireplace for safety. As wood burns, a sticky substance known as creosote builds up in the chimney. When creosote buildup becomes too thick, a chimney fire can ignite. The chimney should be cleaned at least once a year to reduce fire risks. Regular cleaning also improves air flow and limits the amount of carbon monoxide that seeps indoors.

5 Practice safety in the kitchen. As we spend more time in the kitchen during the holiday season, be mindful of potential fire hazards. Never leave food that's cooking on the stovetop unattended. Clean and remove spilled foods from cooking surfaces and be mindful of where you place flammable items like dish towels.

Pitt and Greene EMC wants you and your family to stay safe during the winter season.

Bright Ideas 2025–2026

Congratulations to the following teachers who were receipents of the Bright Ideas Grant Program: Heather Davis, Greene Early College; Megan Taylor, Snow Hill Primary; Danisha Williams, Creekside Elementary; Lisa Godley, Farmville Central; Shamecka Hopkins, Grifton Elementary; Patsy Johnson, The Oakwood School; and Lisa Carr, Farmville Middle School. The Bright Ideas Grant Program is a statewide effort by North Carolina's 27 electric cooperatives to provide additional classroom resources that cannot be met through existing school budgets. Since 1994, North Carolina's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives have awarded more than $15.8 million to North Carolina teachers.

The application process will reopen for interested teachers in April 2026. Any K–12 certified North Carolina teacher can apply for a grant up to $2000.

In order to be considered for a Bright Idea Grant, the idea submitted by the teacher should be a unique and innovative way to reach the students and increase their interest in learning.

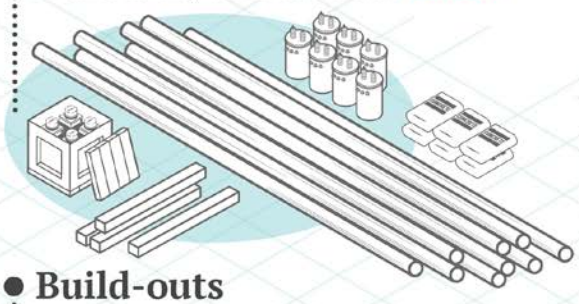
To find out more information about the Bright Idea Grant Program, visit **ncbrightideas.com**.

Infrastructure Costs

The past five years have been a period of exploding costs for the electric utility industry and for broadband providers, pushed by soaring demand, supply chain challenges, raw materials shortages, increased labor costs and tariffs. The impact has been rapid increases in the cost of producing power, longer and more unpredictable project timelines and the need for more financing, all of which have driven electric rates up for residences, businesses and other end-users. Here's a look at what's contributing to the trend. **Percent increase since 2020:**

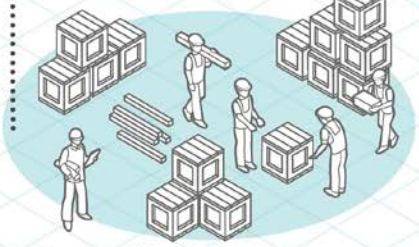
Infrastructure

Utility poles (wood, steel, composite)	+25–40%
Crossarms & braces (steel/wood)	+20–35%
Conductor wire (aluminum/copper)	+30–50%
Transformers	+70–100%
Grain-oriented electrical steel	+80–100%
Oil/dielectric fluids	+25–40%
Copper wiring	+50%
Concrete	+25–35%
Smart meters	+20–35%
Pad-mounted switchgear	+25–40%
Circuit breakers/reclosers	+20–35%



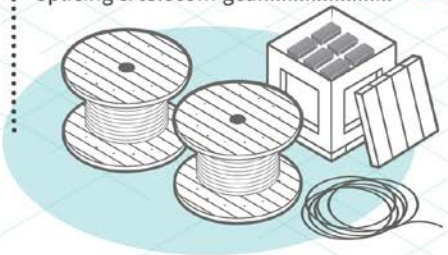
Build-outs

Utility construction labor	+20–40%
Freight/logistics	+30–60%



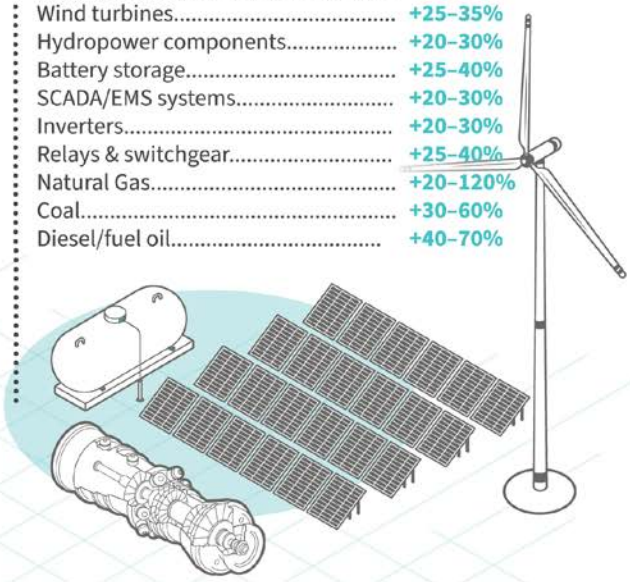
Broadband

Fiber-optic cable	+25–40%
Splicing & telecom gear	+20–30%



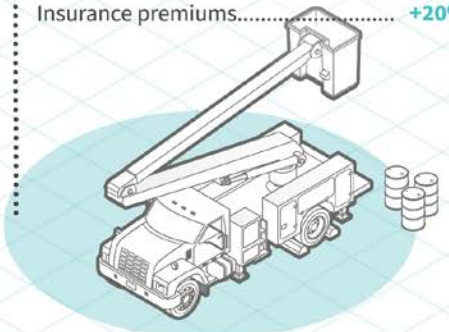
Generation

Diesel gensets	+20–40%
Gas turbines	+20–30%
Solar PV systems	+25–35%
Wind turbines	+25–35%
Hydropower components	+20–30%
Battery storage	+25–40%
SCADA/EMS systems	+20–30%
Inverters	+20–30%
Relays & switchgear	+25–40%
Natural Gas	+20–120%
Coal	+30–60%
Diesel/fuel oil	+40–70%



Fleets

Light trucks	+25–40%
Bucket trucks, digger derricks	+20–50%
Fuel costs (especially diesel)	+20–30%
Maintenance	+15–25%
Insurance premiums	+20%



Sources: BLS; energynews.com; Reuters; Wood Mackenzie; NREL; IEA

Space Heating

As temperatures drop this winter, many will look for supplemental heating sources for their homes. Space heaters can be a good alternative for those who want to warm one area of their home without turning up the thermostat on the central heating system. However, space heaters are also responsible for 32% of house fires, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

If you are planning to use a space heater in your home this winter, review these tips to keep you, your family and your property safe.

Materials

What are the components of your space heater made of? Parts like metal grating can be hot to the touch and may burn anyone who gets too close. Make sure you purchase a heater that is cool to the touch and has guards over the coils just in case little fingers get too close.

Placement

While it can be tempting to place a small heater on a shelf so it is not in the way of pets and children, it is safest to leave the heater on a level floor on a nonflammable surface. Keeping the space heater on the floor can keep it from falling over, preventing fire hazards. Also, remember that space heaters and bathrooms are not a good combination, unless the heater is designed for bathroom use. Moisture can damage the heater.

The most important rule about space heater placement is the three-foot rule. Whether you are using the heater in the bedroom, living room or kitchen, space heaters should always be kept three feet away from flammable materials and out of the way of children and pets.

Special Features

Does your space heater have an auto shutoff function if tipped over? Auto shutoff can be a lifesaver. If you currently own a space heater without auto shutoff, consider purchasing a heater with this important safety feature.

Cords

You should never use an extension cord when plugging in a space heater as it can cause overheating. The space heater should be plugged directly into a wall outlet, and should be the only thing plugged into the wall outlet. Also, make sure cords aren't in a high-traffic area so they are not a tripping hazard.

Use

Never leave a heater unattended while in use. If you are leaving your home or going to bed, make sure to unplug the heater.

Following these tips and making sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions can keep you safe this winter.

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