




# Co-op News from Wyrulec Company

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives   
The power of human connections

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## Guest column

# Electric cooperatives focus on making sure power is available

By Kent Singer  
Executive director of Colorado Rural Electric Association.



**Kent Singer**

“Quality Is Job One.” Do you remember that tag line for the Ford Motor Company advertising campaign of the early 1980s? The company was trying to position itself to compete with foreign automakers, and the slogan was intended to revitalize the brand with the message that Ford was focused on the quality of its product.

It was a particularly effective campaign because it was easy to understand and conveyed a message that any auto buyer could relate to. With apologies to Ford, Colorado’s electric co-ops believe that “Reliability Is Job One.” In other words, while we strive to provide an affordable product in an environmentally responsible manner, our most important job is to have the power ready when you flip the switch. This means that we have to synchronize an incredibly complex system of power plants, transmission lines, distribution lines, substations, transformers, service drops, and meters in order to light and heat your home or business at the exact moment you require the power.

This is becoming increasingly difficult in the hyper regulated world in which we find ourselves. As I have discussed in prior columns, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has proposed a sweeping set of new regulations that will cost the electric power sector billions of dollars as utilities strive to comply with the new rules. Utilities will be required to install incredibly expensive equipment to reduce the emissions of mercury, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and other pollutants from power plants. If the regulations are implemented as proposed, some electric utilities will have to make a choice.

They can invest millions of dollars to keep coal-fired generating stations in service or they can close those power plants and invest millions in new generation plants fired with natural gas. Some utilities have already announced that they will retire coal-fired generating stations if the proposed EPA rules are implemented. (An anticipated 25 gigawatts of capacity will be lost.) The North American Electric Reliability Corporation estimates an additional 37 gigawatts of electricity will be lost when, due to the EPA rules, utilities close generating plants before they are scheduled to be closed. To put this in perspective, the total capacity of coal-fired electric generating stations in the United States today is about 340 gigawatts.

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### How to reach us

Wyrulec Company  
500 Main St. • PO Box 359  
Lingle, Wyoming 82223

307-837-2225

800-628-5266

Fax: 307-837-2115

E-mail: [wyrulec@wyrulec.com](mailto:wyrulec@wyrulec.com)

Website: [www.wyrulec.com](http://www.wyrulec.com)

Office hrs: 7:30–4:30, Mon.-Fri.

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## Electric cooperatives focus on making sure power is available

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These retirements amount to about 18 percent of the U.S. fleet. In a recent report, NERC estimated that these retirements will cause electric reliability problems in Texas and the New England states. And even though NERC concluded that other states, including Colorado, should be able to manage through the retirements, it expressed concerns that if hundreds of generating units must be retrofitted with new pollution control equipment at the same time, there could be unforeseen reliability problems in other areas of the country.

There simply is not enough equipment, contractors, and engineers to achieve the required retrofits in the time allotted by the EPA. Further, as some units are taken offline to be retrofitted, it may be difficult for the replacement power to be obtained since all electric utilities are facing the same compliance deadlines.

This may lead to inflated wholesale electricity market prices that would translate to higher rates for you, the end-use consumer. Does this mean that the co-ops are opposed to efforts to further clean up the air in Colorado and across the country? Absolutely not. We have already spent hundreds of millions of dollars to install SO<sub>2</sub> scrubbers, low-NO<sub>x</sub> burners, baghouses to control particulates, and other pollution control devices in our power plants. These investments have resulted

in dramatically reduced emissions at Colorado power plants over the last decade. All Colorado electric utilities, including the electric co-ops, are committed to clean air and environmental stewardship.

We comply with all environmental regulations that are in place today and will comply with any new regulations that are implemented in the future. However, the electric co-ops are advocating that the regulators keep in mind that we need to balance environmental concerns with the economic and practical realities of operating utility systems.

Everyone believes in clean air, but we also believe that access to affordable and reliable electricity is an equally essential component of public health and safety as well as economic vitality. Achieving a reasonable balance of these objectives will require the involvement of many stakeholders. You can be assured that the electric co-ops will make sure your voice, that of the consumer, is heard in this debate. For Colorado's electric co-ops, affordable and reliable electric service continues to be "Job One."

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## Expensive electricity doesn't happen all at once

Rosalyn Arndt

**it sort of just creeps up, one regulation at a time**

Every home, business, school and hospital in the West relies on the power of electricity. And when the price of energy goes up, every part of your life is affected.

For some families, higher electricity bills could make for tough choices at home—even being forced to cut back on essentials like groceries. When businesses can't afford electricity, they have to cut back on new jobs and equipment. And for

schools and hospitals, rising utility costs means fewer funds available for investing in updated technology and additional teachers, doctors, and nurses.

Higher energy prices create a domino effect in the local economy, affecting farming, manufacturing, and small businesses, even driving up the cost of food and other everyday items. That's why protecting the cost-effective, reliable source of elec-

tricity we have today is vital for a prosperous future. After all, it's the current that energizes the homes, businesses, communities, and economy of the West.

Affordable electricity matters. And so does your voice. Sign up today at [KeepElectricityAffordable.org](http://KeepElectricityAffordable.org) to stay informed on how we can work together to keep electricity affordable in your community.

# Caulk like a pro with these handy application tips

This article originally ran in the July 2011 issue of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine.

By ROBERT A. DICKLEMAN

The greatest sources of heating and cooling losses in your home are often invisible—air leaks. As a result, controlling air leaks provides the best way to extend the

life of your home, conserve energy, save money, and increase comfort.






Bottom line? If you don't tighten up your home first, money spent on insulation may be wasted.

Fortunately, you can seal a lot of leaks around your home's exterior with less than \$100 worth of caulk. It's generally possible to seal openings up to one-quarter

inch between window frames and siding or around door frames. For larger gaps, add a backing material before caulking, or use \*Harriette O Yates\* a spray foam sealant instead.

Most types of outdoor caulk are sold in tubes that fit a caulking gun. In addition, some caulks come in aerosol cans; they're a

## Common Caulking Compounds

Caulk Type	Recommended Uses	Cleanup	Shrinkage	Adhesion	Comments
Silicone 	Seals most dissimilar building materials such as wood, stone, vinyl, metal flashing and brick	Immediately with dry cloth and mineral spirits or naphtha	Little or none	Good to excellent	Permits joints to stretch or compress. Will stick to painted surfaces, but paint will not adhere to most cured silicones.
Polyurethane, expandable spray foam 	Expands when curing. Good for larger cracks. Use in non-friction areas, because foam becomes dry and powdery over time.	Immediately with solvent such as lacquer thinner	None; expands quite a bit	Good to excellent	Quickly expands to fit larger, irregularly shaped gaps. Flexible. Can be applied at variable temperatures. Must be painted for exterior use to protect from ultraviolet radiation.
Water-based spray foam 	Around window and door frames in new construction or remodeling projects; smaller cracks	Water	None; expands only 25%	Good to excellent	Takes 24 hours to cure to a soft consistency. Will not overexpand to bend window frames. Must be exposed to air to dry. Not useful for larger gaps, as curing becomes difficult.
Butyl rubber 	Seals most dissimilar materials such as glass, metal, plastic, wood and concrete. Seals around windows and flashing; bonds loose shingles	Mineral spirits or naphtha	5%-30%	Good	Lasts 10 or more years. Resilient, but not brittle. Can be painted after one week. Variable shrinkage may require two applications. Does not adhere well to painted surfaces.
Oil or resin-based 	Seals exterior seams and joints on almost all building materials	Mineral spirits or naphtha	10%-20%	Good	Low cost. Rope and tube forms available. Oils dry out and cause material to harden and fall out. Low durability; lasts 1-4 years. Poor adhesion to porous surfaces such as masonry. Should be painted. Limited temperature range.

## Caulk like a pro with these handy application tips

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good choice for filling gaps up to one-half inch around pipes and wires.

When shopping for caulk, there are myriad choices. Choose a product that will adhere best to the materials you're sealing.

If your budget allows, spend a little more for a higher-quality caulk. Inexpensive caulks may last only a few years, while premium-priced caulks are rated for 20 years or more.

### Caulk like a pro

\*As a rule of thumb, you'll probably use half a cartridge per window or door and up to six cartridges for foundation work.

\*Most caulks pose no known health hazards after they're fully cured. Some high-performance caulking compounds contain irritating or potentially toxic ingredients, so read the instructions.

\*The best time to apply caulk is during dry weather when outdoor temperatures are above 45°F. Low humidity is important during application to prevent cracks from swelling with moisture.

\*If the gap you're sealing is

too wide, use a special filler made for the purpose. You'll find fillers in the caulking department of your local hardware store. Fillers are not designed for exposure to the elements; so caulk or seal over it.

\*Before applying new caulk, remove the old caulk or paint residue with a putty knife, stiff brush, or special solvent.

\*Make sure your work area is dry, so you won't seal in moisture.

\*Hold the caulking gun at a consistent angle; 45° is best.

\*Caulk in a straight, continuous stream, avoiding stops and starts. Make sure the caulk sticks to both sides of the crack or seam.

\*Send caulk to the bottom of an opening to avoid bubbles.

\*Release the trigger on the caulking gun before pulling it away from the crack to prevent applying too much caulk. A caulking gun with an automatic release makes this much easier.

\*Don't skimp. If the caulk shrinks, reapply it to form a smooth bead that completely seals the crack. \*Terry L Morris\*

\*If caulk oozes out of a crack, use a putty knife to push it back in.

\*Once you've applied caulk, it takes time for it to dry, or cure. The tack-free time tells you how quickly the fresh caulk's outer surface will skin over. Total cure time

is what's required for the caulk to reach the point where no further drying or shrinking will occur.

\*Don't allow pets and small children to come into contact with fresh caulk.

### Expanding foam

\*Be sure to use the correct type of spray foam for the job. Polyurethane expandable spray foam works well around pipes and gaps around the foundation but expands with so much force that it can damage window and door frames. In those spots, use a water-based spray foam specifically designed for the job.

\*Expanding foam is ideal for filling cracks that caulks can't handle. It comes in aerosol cans and takes a short time to cure. The foam is very sticky and attaches itself quickly, so be prepared to pick up any messes fast.

\*To seal gaps too wide for foam, use foil-faced bubble wrap. For really large holes, cut sections of rigid foam insulation to fit and then glue into place with expanding foam before covering the area with wood or another appropriate building material.

Find more ways to seal your home and save at Energy Savers.gov

Sources: U.S. Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, ENERGY STAR, and product manufacturers

### Swooning this month

Nothing is more romantic than dim lights. We don't have any. Check with the Camels up north. In the meantime, give your loved one a bouquet of compact fluorescent bulbs. After diamonds and synthetic oil, they're the most cherished Valentine's Day gift of all.

We have CFLs in stock that are 100-watt replacements. They operate at 23 watts but provide light equal to a 100-watt bulb. Don't tell your sweetie, just stop in. The bulbs are \$1.00 each.

### Cupid strikes

Each month we hide 5 names in this wide-eyed missive. Find yours and we'll give you \$25 toward your Valentine's bouquet. Call 307-837-2225 for your cash.

Ernest Eugene Hort