



SNOW AND ICE

aren't always so nice

It's been said that the only predictable thing about Wisconsin weather is that it's unpredictable. That may be true for most of the year, but in January we can pretty safely predict that at some point we're going to be hit with a nasty winter storm, bringing heavy snow, high winds, freezing rain, frigid temperatures, or a combination of any of the above.

Severe winter storms very quickly create conditions that are ripe for power outages and electrical safety concerns, as heavy snow and ice weigh down tree branches and power lines. According to the National Weather Service, a half-inch accumulation of ice on a power line—something we occasionally see in our part of the state—can add up to 500 pounds of extra weight. Add some strong winds to the mix and the likelihood of significant damage increases significantly.

On the following page, we offer tips from Safe Electricity to help keep all our members safe during and immediately following a winter storm.



WEATHERING A WINTER STORM SAFELY

Before the Storm

- Listen for emergency weather information and alerts, and prepare your home to keep the cold out if it looks like a storm might be severe enough to cause power outages. Caulk and weather strip any gaps or openings, and insulate your pipes to help keep them from freezing. Test your carbon monoxide detector to ensure it's working properly.
- Gather up supplies in case there's a prolonged power outage. An emergency kit should include flashlights, a battery-powered radio and extra batteries, blankets, bottled water, and nonperishable food. Be mindful of each person's specific needs, such as medication.
- Keep an emergency supply kit in your car in case you get stranded on the road during a winter storm. Your kit should include jumper cables, sand, a flashlight, warm clothes, blankets, bottled water, and non-perishable snacks.

During a Storm

- It's best to hunker inside for the duration of a severe winter storm, but if you must be outside, be very careful of downed power lines. Heavy snow and ice can pull power lines down to within reach, or cause them to snap and break completely. Stay away, and warn others to stay away. Treat all power lines as live and dangerous, and treat everything near power lines as dangerous too.
- If the power is out and your home is without heat, dress in layers and keep covered up in blankets. Keep your home as warm as possible by closing off unneeded rooms, placing draft blocks at the bottom of doors, and keeping windows covered at night.
- If you have a standby generator to provide backup power during a prolonged outage, use it with caution. Follow operating instructions, use fire safeguards, and be sure to properly ventilate. Only use generators, and grills, outdoors and away from windows to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.

After the Storm

- After an outage, power can return in spikes. Keep your electronics safe by unplugging them. Leave one light on to indicate that power has been restored, then turn on other appliances and equipment one at a time.
- Once you venture outside, keep in mind that electrical hazards may still be lurking even though the weather may have calmed down and the lights are back on. Be alert to any electrical hazards that might be hidden from piles of broken tree limbs and other debris.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR NEW ELECTRONICS

Did you get some new computer equipment or other electronics for Christmas? Here are some tips from the U.S. Department of Energy for using them cost-efficiently.

A misconception from the days of older mainframe computers is that it's more energy efficient to keep a computer running constantly than to turn it off and on each day. While there is a slight

power surge when a computer is turned on, that amount is small compared to the energy used when a device is left on for long periods of time. Enabling your computer's power management features so it automatically goes into sleep mode when you're not using it can save up to \$30 in energy costs a year, according to Energy Sense®. Also, consider turning your computer off if you're not going to

use it for more than two hours.

Remember that any device that's plugged in is drawing energy whether it's being used or not. To avoid this phantom power draw, plug all computer accessories into a power strip/surge protector and turn off the power strip when the equipment is not in use. Or, be sure to unplug any electronic device when you're not using it.



Save More & Spend Less this New Year!

Resolve to Save More and Spend Less by **monitoring your energy usage** through SmartHub.

Usage Explorer

Usage Explorer gives you a detailed look at your past and current usage, all in one place. View your usage and weather trends by month, day, or hour.

Bill Comparison/Usage Comparison

Usage Comparison lets you compare two bills worth of usage history side by side. View the differences between this month, last year, or other combinations to see how your bill varies each month.

Average Usage

Average Usage shows you what your typical or average usage is for your selected time period. For example, see your average usage on each day of the week (such as

Tuesdays), over the course of a year. Or see your typical usage in each hour of the day over the course of two weeks. Discover when you can save the most on your utility bill.

Resolve to save more and spend less this New Year and sign up for SmartHub online. It's Richland Electric's FREE and mobile online payment system. Click on the signup link and follow the prompts to create your user name and password. Questions? Call, click, or visit us at 608-647-3173 or www.rec.coop.





RECALLING HOLIDAYS FROM AN EARLIER DAY

As a kid, Christmas was the most special celebration of the year; no other holiday came close.

On Christmas Eve, the Christmas tree was up with presents underneath it. But we couldn't open them until Christmas morning, and only then after the morning milking had been done.

We milked the cows early on Christmas Eve, so we could wash up, put on our good clothes and attend Christmas Eve services at West Holden Lutheran Church (Norwegian), only about three miles from our farm. Ma would have preferred attending a German Lutheran Church, but we couldn't do that until one was eventually built in Wild Rose in 1941.

When we arrived home, Ma treated us to a special Christmas Eve dinner that featured oyster stew as its center piece. She said that she remembered eating oyster stew when she was a little girl. Pa said he remembered eating oyster stew as well. In addition, Ma brought out the Christmas cookies she'd been busy making, especially the date pinwheel cookies and the little cookies with chocolate drops in their centers—these were my favorites. Here are the recipes.

Oyster Stew

- 1 pint fresh oysters
- 1 quart whole milk
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

In a small pan, cook the oysters over medium heat in the liquid they come in, stirring constantly until their edges curl. Heat milk in larger pan on low heat. Add butter and stir until melted. Add the oysters and liquid to the milk. Add spices and heat thoroughly.

Date Pinwheel Cookies

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| 8 ounces chopped dates | 1 cup shortening |
| ½ cup water | 3 eggs, beaten |
| 1/3 cup white sugar | 4 cups flour |
| 1 teaspoon vanilla | ½ teaspoon cinnamon |
| 2 cups brown sugar | 1 teaspoon baking soda |
| | ¾ teaspoon salt |

Combine the chopped dates, ½ cup water and 1/3 cup white sugar. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly until soft. Add 1 teaspoon vanilla and stir. Let cool and set aside. In a bowl, cream the brown sugar and shortening together. Beat the three eggs and add to the sugar mixture. Mix together the flour, cinnamon, baking soda, and salt. Add to the sugar mixture and mix until the sides of the bowl are clean. (Dough will be mixed together and will pull away from the sides of the bowl.) Divide the dough in half. Roll out on lightly floured pastry cloth to ¼ inch thickness and into a rectangle shape that is about 18 inches by 12 inches. Spread date filling on rolled dough. Roll out the second dough the same size as the first batch. Cover the first rectangle with the second rolled sheet. Using your hands, roll the dough, beginning on the long side, like a jelly roll. Refrigerate or place in a cold place over night. Cut the roll into slices. Put on lightly greased cookie sheet. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 12 minutes.

[Excerpted from *Old Farm Country Cookbook*, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2017. Go to www.jerryapps.com to learn more about Jerry's work.]



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