

Doug Rye Says
February 2009

Energy Commandment No. 3: “Thou shalt invest in an energy-efficient water heater”

As we continue with the 10 Commandments of Energy Efficiency, we will keep our focus on making wise investments. This month, I am encouraging you to invest in a specific item that will make a world of difference in your utility bill. And in the coming months, I plan to continue to remind you that using your money for energy efficiency is probably the best investment you can make.

Have you ever thought much about your water heater? Are you aware that about 20 percent of your utility bill goes toward the heating of water? Have you ever had to replace your water heater? Nearly every one of you said “Yes.” Now, why did you replace it? Was it the wrong color? Well, of course not. You replaced it because it quit working or had started leaking. At some point, we all need to replace a water heater. Now wouldn't it be great if we could install a replacement guaranteed to never leak or rust? And wouldn't it be great if the new water heater was super energy efficient? Well, such a product is available and I will tell you how I learned about it.

About 10 years ago I was attending a really big home show in the Astrodome in Houston. It takes several days to see everything in that show, which is sponsored by the National Association of Homebuilders. I actually did an energy presentation there and had about four extra hours to look around. I was practically running through the aisles looking at every display as fast as possible. At one point, I looked to my left and saw some strange looking objects that were shaped like a 44-caliber pistol bullet only they were about five feet tall. I hollered over to the fellow and asked, “What are these?” And he said, “Water heaters.” I said, “Commercial?” and he said, “No, mostly residential.” I turned and walked his way and asked, “What is so special about these water heaters?” And he said they are guaranteed to never leak or rust and are 91 to 95 percent energy efficient. I didn't necessarily believe him but I knew that if it were true, a lot of my listeners would want to have one.

Later, when I got proof that it was true, I started telling about the Marathon water heater in my seminars and on my radio show. Folks just like you started asking where they could get a Marathon. For months, I had to say, “I don't know.” But that didn't last for long because the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas saw what a great product it was and began offering them to their members. And I know for a fact that hundreds of you have already purchased one. If you understand the facts, the rest of you will do the same. The facts are simple. It is the last water heater that you will ever need at a particular location. It won't rust or leak because the tank has no metal. And the Marathon is so well insulated with “envirofoam,” that it has practically zero standby loss regardless of the location. It

does not warm your cold garage in the winter and it does not heat your house in the summer.

Now, consider this: The average gas water heater is less than 58 percent efficient, which means that about 40 percent of the natural gas you buy goes up the flue into the sky. On the other hand, the all-electric Marathons average 91-plus percent efficiency. That's a no-brainer in my book. So, my advice to you is this: When you need a water heater for your new or existing house, contact your local electric co-op and ask about the Marathon water heater. Remember – your co-op values you, the member, and it cares. That's why your co-op is doing all it can to help you save money on your electric bill by sponsoring this column, my show, my seminars, by conducting energy audits and much more.

Doug Rye, a licensed architect living in Saline County and the popular host of the “Home Remedies” radio show, works as a consultant for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas to promote energy efficiency to cooperative members statewide. To order Doug’s video or ask energy efficiency-related questions,, call Doug at 1-501-653-7931. More energy-efficiency tips, as well as Doug’s columns, can also be found at www.ecark.org