

Good News

Good news – no more ice! Great news – it is Easter and the flowers are beautiful. More good news – the government will help many of you pay for some of the things that I have been teaching you.

As I write this column, I have just completed appearing at a home show in Kentucky. I am preparing to conduct an energy efficiency seminar at a community college in Tennessee tonight. I will then drive to south Arkansas for a seminar and then to Illinois for a seminar and radio show. I have had great difficulty in deciding how to write this article because there is so very much that I wish to teach you. However, I am allowed only one page.

I went down this morning for breakfast in the motel lobby and asked if I could have a late check-out since my seminar was not until 5 p.m. at the college. The lady at the desk asked, “Are you the calk man?” To which I answered, “Yes, I am the King of Caulk and Talk – How did you know?” I received a brochure in the mail about the meeting from our power company and I plan to be there because my electric bills have really gone up this year. I told her that she has two choices: Do something about it or just keep complaining. I proceeded to give her a personal one hour seminar and answer her questions. Before we had finished, several others in the area had joined the group.

Folks, every indication is that utility rates will continue to increase. With a slowing economy, utility bills will become a larger percentage of a family’s budget. You have two choices: Use less or use less. Some of you are thinking, “This man is a genius.” Others are thinking, “This man is a moron.” Probably, both of you are correct. I have spent my entire adult life teaching others how to use less by conservation and energy efficiency. Example: Turning off the light is conservation, but installing a compact fluorescent bulb is energy efficiency.

Now for the other great news: I am happy to announce that it is now more feasible to make energy improvements than ever before. The Stimulus Bill signed by the president on Feb. 17, 2009, allows for impressive tax credits to help pay for energy improvements. Please understand I am not your tax advisor, but I suggest that you go to www.energystar.gov for details. Please note that these are tax credits, which may be worth far more than tax deductions. Please note that there are tax credits for windows, insulation, solar systems, wind systems, and the best news of all, geothermal heat pumps. You can now install the best heating and cooling system available and may qualify for a tax credit of 30 percent of the total cost on your 2009 tax return. My friends, this is huge. Many of you have installed geothermal with no tax advantages, but because you knew it was the smart thing to do. Well now, it is cost effective for many more of you to do the same. I consider that as really, really good news.

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