

Doug Rye Says...

TIPS TO CUT YOUR UTILITY BILLS



PLANNING IS IMPORTANT

A lot has happened since my last article. Record numbers of tornadoes have occurred in several states, resulting in massive destruction and loss of lives.

Probably few, if any, lives were lost to those who planned ahead and installed a safe room. For many years I have recommended that folks include a safe room as part of their new house construction. Planning is important.

Record flooding has also occurred, resulting in similar destruction and additional loss of lives. Although the flood plain maps will no doubt be revised, those who planned ahead and built above the existing flood plain received less damage than those who did not. When I built my wife's new house, I used the 500-year flood map. I had seen way too many houses flooded that were located in the 100-year flood plain zone. Twice in the last eight years, I have been glad that I used the 500-year map. Again, planning is important.

And now, adding to our problems, there are record prices at the gasoline pump. Because of this and other things, we are seeing cost increases in practically every item that we buy. What are

we going to do? Well, I hate problems, but I enjoy trying to solve them. I have learned that most can be solved if common sense prevails. Common sense tells me that if there is a shortage of funds, I must spend less or make more money. Some of you are already thinking – here comes his energy efficiency stuff again. And you are right.

I have a friend who has lived in his 1,800-square-foot Doug Rye house for 25 years. He spent an extra \$2,000 to build his house to my specifications, which included a geothermal heat pump. As best we can determine, he has saved his family about \$10,600 in utility bills by doing so. And consider this – he is still saving money every month for as long as he lives in the house. When someone else lives in the house, he or she will receive the benefits. Remember the famous Doug Rye saying, “Energy efficiency costs nothing, it makes you money”? Think of this. If he had not used my techniques in his new house, he would have sent that \$10,600 to the utility company by now.

Actually, he included the \$2,000 into his 30-year loan, which increased his house payment by \$12 per month. That saved him \$25 per month on his utility bill, which means he spent none of his own money and had a positive cash flow from day one. That was super smart planning.

We are at the beginning of the summer season. If your utility bills are high, why not make a plan now that will help you lower those bills? It's a little difficult for me to tell you exactly what you need to do at your house, but if you have read, and continue to read, these monthly columns, you should be able to develop a good plan. With the 30 percent federal tax credit, geothermal is more feasible now than ever, so you might want to make it a part of your plan. If you are a member of an Arkansas electric cooperative, you can request that the cooperative assist you. Just give them a call because they definitely want to help you.

I just returned from conducting seminars in Florida and Alabama where the electric rate is almost a third higher than in Arkansas. Every indication is that electric rates will increase in the near future. You can either make and implement your plan or find a way to increase your income. Planning is important, but it is up to you. Feel free to call me and I will also help you.

On a lighter note, it is now time for you to enter the 2011 \$50,000 Energy Efficiency Makeover Contest. To enter, ask your local electric cooperative representative for an entry form or go to SmartEnergyTips.org. I was involved with the last three makeover contests and can tell you that if you win, you won't have to worry about your plan any longer. Good luck to all of you. See you next month. •

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.smartenergytips.org.