

SLVREC's Electric Charging Station

San Luis Valley REC has a new feature in the parking lot! We have added an electric vehicle (EV) charger as part of the services we offer. REC decided to install the charging station after much research, a survey of the membership, and the ambition to raise interest and awareness of electric vehicles in the San Luis Valley.

The unit is a dual-port Level 2 PowerCharge. The cooperative will be offering a six-month trial period for folks to stop by and try it out. We also plan to purchase an electric vehicle some time this year.

Many of you participated in the "Interest in Electric Vehicle" survey that we circulate in June of 2018. The overall response was positive. Sixty-one percent of respondents showed interest in electric vehicles, and many supported the idea of REC installing a charging station.

In the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives' National Survey of Cooperative Difference, 2016-2017 edition, it was asserted that "Plug-in electric vehicles have the potential to change the future of transportation while adding much needed electric load to our grid. Identifying market potential, targeting members based on demographics, and understanding recharging behaviors of households using EVs play a critical role as EVs enter the mainstream." At REC, we want to be part of the conversation and solution to help members understand and best utilize EVs.

According to PlugShare.com, we are now one of the seven charging locations in the San Luis Valley. Cooperatives all over the United States are joining the drive toward education for members on EVs and charging stations.



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LOREN HOWARD

Automation Provides More Control to Members

Home automation systems are placing the powers of control in the hands of co-op members, but many questions remain about the best ways to use them to save money and energy.

“Most smart home technology is about comfort and convenience. Consumers interested in saving money on monthly energy purchases should look at internet-connected thermostats first,” said Brian Sloboda, program and product line manager for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

“Around half of all thermostats sold today are smart thermostats. These devices can learn your preferences and adjust the thermostat when you are not home,” Sloboda said. “These devices have the potential to reduce air conditioning energy consumption by 10 percent. During winter months, the thermostats could save 7 percent on energy used to heat the home.”

Sloboda has watched home automation systems evolve over the years. He is particularly interested in identifying ways to enhance efficiency and potential savings for co-op members.

“Laundry, dishwashing and water heating can be set to occur outside of your co-op’s peak demand periods, which typically are during weekday business hours,” said Sloboda.

NRECA is currently working with one of the Department of Energy’s national laboratories on a demonstration project examining energy-saving options that could time shift some activities, but actual cost savings for the consumer will likely be limited.

“Pool pumps, dishwashers, thermostats and car chargers can learn their owners’ behavior and then communicate with the

utility, so the data can be used for demand response,” Sloboda said. “The goal of the work by the lab is to determine if a system like this can be implemented without inconveniencing the consumer, providing energy demand savings to the utility.”

Finding Value in Energy Savings
Security system notifications and thermostat controls that adapt to home automation are among the most popular options available. But some consumers are tackling other tasks in ways that actually could help them save or manage energy use effectively.

“There are different kinds of smart when it comes to smart appliances and devices,” said Peter May-Ostendorp, principal researcher at Xergy Consulting, which specializes in emerging technologies for energy savings in buildings, including homes.

“For some, smart simply means ‘we connected this thing to the network,’ which adds minimal value to the consumer,” said May-Ostendorp, who also is an energy technology consultant to NRECA. “In other products, smart means that there is some intelligence either built into the product or connected via the cloud that enables a taste of artificial intelligence.”

But not every product using artificial intelligence is designed to save energy. In many instances, energy use is secondary to convenience or connectivity features.

Making Connections
“Most smart devices have nothing to do with energy use, grid management or other resource conservation, like saving water,” said May-Ostendorp. “Generally, the benefits—dollar savings to the consumer—have not been proven, with the exception of smart thermostats, grid-connected water heaters and similar devices.”

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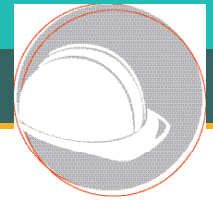
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Automation Provides More Control to Members



According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), interest in connected or smart appliances is trending upward among consumers, and manufacturers are responding with a growing list of products.

“If you are thinking of purchasing a smart appliance or thermostat, look for one that is ENERGY STAR®-certified with connected functionality,” wrote EPA officials asked about the technology. “Those that meet our criteria are designed to encourage interoperability and offer the following features: low energy use, energy use reporting, and consumer ownership of all data.”

Besides smart thermostats, the products available now include, room air conditioners, refrigerators and freezers, laundry equipment, light bulbs and fixtures, and power strips.

“While owning a smart product doesn’t automatically save you energy, if YOU are smart about using them, they can make a significant difference in your home,” wrote the EPA.

That means making the investment pay off could take a few lifestyle changes. But dashboards, accessible from computers or tablets, and apps available for smartphones can help.

“I don’t think many people want infinite control over dozens of appliances and systems in their homes,” said Spencer Sator, president and CEO of Crimson Consulting, another NRECA energy efficiency advisor.

“What we really want is ‘set it and forget it’ features that we don’t have to actively manage,” said Sator. “The best devices get installed, adjusted — the consumer can walk away and still potentially save some energy.”

According to Sator, consumers are looking for simplicity. That’s feeding the popularity of virtual assistant technologies, like Amazon’s Alexa and Echo, Google Assistant, and Apple HomeKit. Other companies, including Samsung, Logitech, and Wink are also offering home-management hubs and platforms designed to help manage connected technology.

Convenience and programming simplicity are among the most important factors fueling consumer acceptance of what Sator describes as “home ecosystem” products. Home security controls, including locks, alarm systems and lighting are also popular features.

“We’re seeing adoption of the technology not necessarily for energy-saving reasons, but for life-enhancing applications, including some that help elderly consumers maintain inde-

pendence in their homes,” Sator said.

Energy advisors agree that controlling devices from various manufacturers that perform different functions with a single system enhances the value of home automation systems.

Command and Control

The challenges for consumers are deciding which features meet their expectations and justify the added investment in automation, and how well various products work together under management of a particular hub device or app.

“This is still the Wild West, from a technology value perspective,” said Sator. “When you consider available options and actual performance of the devices available, some gadgets perform well and can save consumers money and energy, while others don’t measure up to the hype.”

With more than 900 manufacturers marketing about 4,100 connected devices, voice command technology is seen as one way to avoid collections of various remotes that typically wind up cast aside in favor of multifunction control devices.

“The Jetsons-like experience—where your Fitbit recognizes you’re awake, tells the coffee to brew, queues up your morning news on a smart speaker, ramps up the heating set point—isn’t really happening,” said Xergy Consulting’s May-Ostendorp. “People have thought that Alexa or Google Home might be the answer, but do we all really want to talk to our home, Star Trek style, to accomplish basic tasks?”

In fact, smart speaker technology is primarily used to answer questions, check the weather, get news updates or play music. According to a survey conducted in five major industrialized nations, including the United States, 65 percent of those asked cited those functions, while only six percent reported using the technology to control lighting, televisions, or other connected devices.

“No one wants a hodge-podge of technologies that can’t communicate with each other,” said Crimson Consulting’s Sator, adding that the necessary hubs and powered interfaces to connect the devices could actually boost overall energy use. “The technology isn’t very smart if devices can’t work together.”

Meet Your Co-op!

Meet Alec Higel!

Alec joined REC as an apprentice lineman in August of 2018. Prior to his employment here he worked diligently in line school and on the family farm. The Higel family farm, located between Alamosa and Monte Vista, raises alfalfa, grass, and over 300 head of cattle. Alec and his wife are expecting their first child in April and could not be more excited.

San Luis Valley REC has been a great fit for Alec and what he refers to as his “dream job”. He finds his work very rewarding, appreciates the many benefits offered by the cooperative, and loves the camaraderie of the line crew.

Alec hopes to bring a great work ethic, open communication skills, and an empathetic ear to REC.



Energy Efficiency

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Is your hot water tank warm to the touch? Consider insulating it to save 7 to 16 percent annually on water heating costs. Follow the manufacturer’s recommendations.

Source: energy.gov





RECIPES OF THE MONTH

INGREDIENTS

1 large egg
 1 12 -ounce can evaporated whole milk
 Pinch of cayenne pepper
 Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
 Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
 1 1/3 cups grated muenster cheese
 (4 ounces), plus 4 deli-thin slices
 (1 ounce)
 1/2 cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
 (2 ounces)
 1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese (1 ounce)
 1/2 head cauliflower, cut into small florets
 (4 cups)
 4 cups medium pasta shells (9 ounces)

Three-Cheese Macaroni

Whisk the egg, evaporated milk, cayenne, nutmeg, and salt and black pepper to taste in a bowl. Toss the grated cheeses in a separate bowl.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the cauliflower and cook until almost falling apart, about 7 minutes. Transfer with a slotted spoon to a bowl. Add the pasta to the same water and cook until al dente, about 10 minutes. Drain, reserving 1/4 cup cooking water. Preheat the broiler.

Combine the egg mixture and the grated cheeses in the empty pot and cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until the cheeses melt and the sauce begins to thicken. Remove from the heat and add the cauliflower. Puree with an immersion blender until smooth and light (you can also use a regular blender). Stir in some of the reserved pasta water until creamy.

Toss the pasta in the sauce; season with salt and black pepper. Transfer to a shallow casserole dish and top with muenster slices. Broil until golden brown, about 5 minutes.

INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup breadcrumbs
 1/3 cup milk
 1/3 cup chopped fresh parsley
 1 large egg
 3 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
 1 small onion, finely minced
 1 teaspoon chili powder
 2 cloves garlic, grated or finely minced
 1 1/2 pounds meatloaf mix
 (ground beef, pork and/or veal)
 Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
 1/2 cup ketchup
 1 to 2 tablespoons packed light brown sugar
 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar

Mini Skillet Meatloaves

Mix the breadcrumbs, milk, parsley, egg, Worcestershire sauce, onion, chili powder and garlic in a large bowl. Add the meat, season with salt and pepper and mix with your hands until combined. Shape into six 3-to-4-inch oval loaves.

Heat the vegetable oil in a large nonstick skillet over high heat. Add the loaves and brown about 3 minutes per side.

Whisk the ketchup, sugar and vinegar in a bowl and brush a few tablespoonfuls over the meat. Add 1/2 cup water to the skillet, cover and simmer over low heat until cooked through, about 15 minutes.

Transfer the loaves to a plate. Add the remaining ketchup mixture to the skillet and cook over high heat, stirring, until thick, 3 to 5 minutes. Serve meatloaves with the hot glaze.



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POWERING OUR COMMUNITY

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Monday through Thursday.
The office is closed Friday through Sunday.

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www.energyoutreach.org

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SCHEDULED MEETINGS

Board Meeting: January 29, 2019 @ 9:30 a.m.
The REC Board of Directors meets the last Tuesday of each
month unless otherwise stated. Members are welcome.

This institution is an equal opportunity employer.

