



POWER-GRAM

December
2017

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A Monthly Newsletter for Members of

**OTERO COUNTY ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

Holiday Lighting Tips

This year is rapidly drawing to a close and that means the holiday lighting season is back. If your home space is in need of a decorative refresh, here are some tips to take your artistic stylings to the next level. There are two areas to cover, so let's get started.

Safety is up first. If your lights are ground mounted or can be installed standing on the floor or ground, you can skip ahead. However, since most decorations involve some installation at height, you need to do the following:

1. Have a ground crew (one or two people) to steady your ladder and pass up the decorations...an invaluable part of safety and for keeping you supplied with untangled light strings, fasteners and encouragement.
2. Remember to keep a safe distance from your overhead electric service.
3. Don't overreach. If you cannot get to a point with your body completely centered between the sides of the ladder, get down and relocate it.
4. Don't overextend the ladder. If your ladder is too short, rent or borrow a longer one. A ladder extended beyond its working limits is dangerous as is standing on rungs too close to the top.
5. Do not overload circuits by stringing more light sets together than the manufacturer recommends. Check the packaging for details.
6. Check your wires for breaks and cracks in the insulation that can lead to shorts.

Most of these tips apply equally to inside and outside decorating activities.

Light selection is next. If at all possible, invest in LED lights this season. Unlike the first versions to hit the market that were characterized by rather

harsh and unattractive colors, the newest generation's colors are reminiscent of the incandescent lights of yore.

Why go the LED route? Longevity and cost of operation are the two key reasons. Unlike incandescent lights, whether the large or mini bulb, LEDs will last for many, many years. LEDs have no filaments to burn out. Aside from physically destroying the bulb, the LED is amazingly robust. Given the modest number of hours of operation, you can expect LEDs to last seven or more years.

Then there is the cost of operation benefit from LEDs. These gems of technological advancement truly sip electricity. A reasonable estimate of power consumption is 7 watts per 100 lights. How does that compare to the old incandescent? Each of those bulbs used 12 watts so a string of 100 devoured 1200 watts.

Truly want to manage the cost of operating holiday lights? Invest in timers to turn the lights on and off automatically. Really into gadgets? Invest in a smart plug for your lights you can program and control from your smart phone.

Once you have your design finalized and installed, it is my recommendation to leave as much of the outside portion of lights in place. No, don't be that person who leaves the holiday lights on all year. Simply disconnect them after the holidays, protecting the plugs and sockets from dirt and debris. Think of the reduced stress and risk if you set and forget your design. With the longevity of the LEDs, you can enjoy this freedom and practically eliminate the risks associated with high-wire seasonal gymnastics.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP

Purchasing electronic gifts this holiday season? Remember to purchase ENERGY STAR®-certified electronics and give the gift of energy efficiency. For a list of energy efficient products, visit www.energystar.gov/productfinder

Source: energystar.gov



Simple Tips for Better Eating

Eating can be a fun experience that brings people together and helps create community, but food choices and meal prep can cause stress for people who struggle with nutrition, feel overwhelmed by or just don't like cooking. Here are a few simple tips to make your meals richer in flavor and nutrients, less laden with empty calories and less stressful, too.

Plan ahead.

Meal planning, writing grocery lists and doing food prep when you have time helps making nutritious meals that meet your health needs easier, even when time and energy are in short supply. Search your favorite sites for recipes with common ingredients. For example, roast a chicken Sunday night with roasted potatoes and veggies. Leftover chicken goes into tacos or a casserole on Monday night, while the leftover potatoes get scrambled with eggs, peppers and mushrooms for a quick dinner Tuesday and the veggies go on a store-bought raw crust for fresh pizza Wednesday night. Planning ahead means knowing who will be at home to eat and help prepare dinner.

Eat with purpose.

Food is fuel and mealtimes can reinforce connections. Grabbing fast food and eating in front of the TV are things that will happen. Try paying attention to the food you're eating while you're preparing and eating it; you'll eat less and enjoy meals more.

It's not easy being green.

Do you find veggies unappetizing? Well, imagine what might happen if you put a little thought and seasoning into your veggies. You might be surprised about the difference in taste between roasting vegetables instead of over cooking them. Remember, your vegetables like flavor and not being boiled, too. Add chopped garlic and herbs, squeeze on some fresh lemon juice or splash on balsamic. Marinate. Roast. Sauté. Have fun with your veggies.

Choose healthier proteins.

Has your doctor advised you to avoid unhealthy fats? Deep fried chicken legs are delicious, but baked breaded-and-herbed chicken breasts are delicious, too. Pan-fried tofu is a great, crispy topping for salads, soups and more exotic dishes like curries. Make your burgers with leaner beef and ground turkey and add, for example, pico de gallo to the patties for extra flavor. Be creative.

Don't shop hungry.

It's the advice everyone gives for a reason: it's true. Grab an apple or some jerky before shopping, if you're feeling hungry.

Know your limits.

Time, energy and patience are not resources that come in endless supply. Look for recipes with minimal but nutritious ingredients and simple cooking methods, like one-pot, one-sheet pan and crockpot recipes. Buy precut or frozen veggies to accelerate prep. Keep things like frozen shrimp, broccoli and ravioli on hand for quick dinners.

Remember: Do what works for you, your family and the time, energy and patience you have left at meal time.



It's time to Deck the halls for the holidays! OCEC crews are shown raising the Cloudcroft village Christmas Tree.