



FILE PHOTOS BY RICHARD C. BIEVER

Indiana's two co-op power suppliers have been developing energy efficiency programs as a way to save consumers money and cut energy use— which ultimately reduces carbon dioxide emissions — since the 1970s. Above: A home builder plants a sign marking another "Touchstone Energy Home," which was part of home show of all super energy-efficient TE Homes served by Harrison REMC near Georgetown. The home program sets high standards for construction methods, materials, HVAC efficiencies and more. Left: For existing homes, most co-ops provide energy advisors who will conduct home energy audits to show consumers where to make improvements to save energy. Parke County REMC energy advisor Jeremy Montgomery runs a blower door test for a consumer, an advanced step. Many co-ops either conduct tests or will suggest local experts who do.

## Co-ops offer win-win ways to help consumers save and cut CO<sub>2</sub>

**T**he power of ingenuity and efficiency doesn't show up in any of the "pie" charts of power supply, but it is an effective and proficient player in the energy mix Indiana's electric co-ops use to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> and other emissions.

And, it's something they've been doing long before "global warming" and "renewable mandates" ever appeared on the horizon and became part of mainstream dialogue. "We share EPA's concerns for a clean energy future. By being in a state without renewable energy mandates, we are far ahead of the curve in terms of diversifying our fuel sources, thus significantly reducing our reliance on coal," said Dear Schramm, manager of environmental affairs at Wabash Valley Power Association, power supplier to the distribution co-ops in the northern half of Indiana.

While all co-ops, in Indiana and nationally, use a higher percentage of coal in their energy "pie" than the national average for all utilities, about 13 percent of the co-ops' pie is from renewables (counting hydroelectric dams), which is also much larger than the national average.

Here's a partial list of things Indiana's co-ops do to not only reduce CO<sub>2</sub>, but also help consumers save money on their electric bill — what you could call a "WIN<sub>2</sub>":

- ▶ **Appliance incentives and rebates** — encourage consumers to replace old, inefficient appliances, water heaters and heating/cooling equipment with energy-efficient electric items such as air source heat pumps, geothermal heat pumps, heat pump or hybrid water heaters.
- ▶ **Appliance recycling** — encourages consumers to unplug old, inefficient secondary refrigerators and freezers in return for \$30 or so, and big savings on the electric bill.
- ▶ **Commercial and industrial programs** — incentives for efficiency measures and standards that reduce energy use, including lighting, HVAC, motors, etc.
- ▶ **Demand-side management programs** — engineered to cut electric use at critical high-demand times through the cooperation of residential and commercial consumers. Programs include remote-controlled water heater and air conditioning switches for residential consumers and a voluntary payback incentive for C&I consumers to voluntarily shut down certain pieces of equipment.
- ▶ **Educational seminars** — sponsored and/or hosted by co-ops around the state, these energy efficiency seminars for homeowners and builders cover a whole range of energy-saving ideas and strategies.
- ▶ **Electric Consumer** — a monthly resource of articles and tips on ways consumers can save energy.
- ▶ **Energy audits** — performed by co-op energy advisors, or experts in the community, to find air leaks, subpar insulation and construction and other factors robbing a consumer's home of comfort and energy. Some include enhanced analysis like blower-door tests.
- ▶ **Environmental Education Resources** — for more than 20 years Hoosier Energy has provided numerous energy and environmental education resources to co-op members, schools and youth groups through an Environmental Education Center in Sullivan County and a free online lending library.
- ▶ **Home weatherization programs** — improvements offered to consumers that add comfort and value to their homes and help lower energy costs.
- ▶ **Indiana Touchstone Energy Home program** — offers standards to builders and homeowners to construct homes significantly more energy efficient than typical homes. TE Homes receive a certified energy rating and provide increased comfort and guaranteed lower energy costs. For example, a 3,300-square-foot home in the program will average \$50 or less for its total monthly heating/cooling costs.
- ▶ **Landfill gas projects** — turn waste gas into clean electricity. Indiana's two co-op power suppliers have developed 16 landfill gas-to-electricity stations, 14 in north and central Indiana; two in southern Indiana and Illinois. Hoosier Energy REC also produces power directly from a coalbed methane plant.
- ▶ **Lighting programs** — offer CFLs and LEDs to consumers at annual meetings and other events to replace inefficient incandescent bulbs with the same amount of light using a fraction of the energy.
- ▶ **Renewable energy** — from wind turbines in Iowa and Illinois and hydropower from Illinois is part of the green portfolio used by Indiana's two co-op power suppliers. Both power suppliers are charter members of a National Renewables Cooperative, based in Carmel, which looks for renewable energy projects for co-ops.
- ▶ **Residential renewable pilot projects** — small-scale wind and solar projects installed in southern Indiana to collect data on energy production and cost to help interested consumers make informed decisions.
- ▶ **sgSolutions** — transforms coal or petroleum coke into synthetic gas burned to create electricity with 20 percent less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than typical coal plants. Wabash Valley Power Association owns the plant in West Terre Haute.