



Keyser's Corner



Michael Keyser
CEO/General Manager

Personalizing Your BARC Relationship

This year The Homestead is observing its 250th anniversary. Can you imagine what it must have been like to live in this part of Virginia in 1766, much less

launch a lodging business here? Thomas Bullitt must have had some real grit and determination to tackle this project and serve an unmet need. The folks who established your cooperative in 1939 shared those same traits.

Some of you might not know that The Homestead is our largest member in terms of power purchased and consumed. That The Homestead has needs different from our residential members and small businesses is likely no surprise. One of the beauties of the cooperative way of doing business in general, and of BARC in particular, is our commitment to meet all member needs, no matter how unique. We work diligently to provide personalized and individual service, without breaking the bank, violating our Terms & Conditions of Service, or abandoning our core cooperative principles.

As an example of providing a personalized experience, let me stay with The Homestead. Recently, a problem arose with some of its electrical equipment, which is housed in our substation. Normally a contractor would take on a project such as this, but The Homestead turned to us. In response to its call, we sent out a team to correct the problems and minimize inconveniencing the guests by performing the work in the middle of the night.

It is telling that the resort turned to us — that it trusted us to deliver for them in a critical situation. We are more than just a utility to The Homestead, and it is more than just a customer. This is the cooperative difference. We participate in its events and serve as an advisor when it comes to electrical, energy and efficiency needs. We feel that our support of The Homestead benefits our community because of its importance as a local employer, and as a large consumer of energy.

At the other end of the spectrum is the residential member. Take a look at the letter on the next page from a member describing her experience with our in-home energy audit service. Reproduced with permission, it demonstrates how we can customize our relationship and provide personalized service to even the smallest members.

Our online energy audit tools, described last month, and in-home energy audits

described on the next page, are two options for efficiency seekers wanting to learn more about how to use energy wisely, on their terms.

Soon enough, members will have the option of receiving high-speed Internet service, while others are enjoying clean renewable energy from our community solar offering. No member is pressured to participate in any of our programs. We want to allow our members to select from those programs and services that

best suit their needs, creating their own personalized experience.

As technology provides new opportunities to improve and expand our service, we will never compromise our steadfast devotion to personalized service.

Technology will never replace individualized attention.

Even those who opt for complete self-service can feel comfortable in the knowledge that a real person is a call or post away. As long as I am CEO, a live person will always answer the phone during business hours.

We strive for 100 percent satisfaction, but on those occasions where we miss that mark, we'll make things right and learn from the experience. This is why management reads your customer survey responses and responds when requested. Our mission is to provide the best value in energy and information, and be your trusted energy partner.

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CEO/General Manager
Michael Keyser

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BARC's Home Energy Audits

by Tom Tate

Last month I wrote about the online energy audit that we offer here at BARC. It truly is an amazing piece of software that can help you pinpoint places to save energy. However, we recognize online options are not for everyone. So, your cooperative offers an in-home audit. Let me walk you through how it works.

We are proceeding on the basis that you have an interest in increasing the efficiency of your home to improve comfort, reduce energy bills or both. Energy audits are a perfect way to accomplish those goals. Your first step is to give us a call. We'll schedule an auditor to come to your home at a convenient time. Be prepared to set aside a couple of hours so the auditor can be thorough in their assessment.

When the auditor arrives, they will spend the first few minutes getting to know how you run your home. Things like preferred temperature settings, work schedules and any unique requirements you have. They will then perform a walkthrough of your home to inspect windows and doors. Their goal is to identify leaks and potential areas where air can enter or leave in an uncontrolled manner.

They'll want to look in the attic and basement or crawl space. The goal here is to assess how much insulation you have and again, look for air leaks. Depending upon the time available, they may also use an infrared camera as part of the audit. You may have seen similar devices used on the ghost hunter programs currently popular on television. Instead of looking for phantoms, the auditor will be looking for those pesky air leaks. They'll show up as different colors helping identify the worst offenders.

They'll take note of the number and age of appliances. They'll do a count on lights and the type of bulbs being used. They will also look over your heating and cooling systems to get an understanding of their age, condition and efficiency.

With all this data in hand, the auditor can calculate the energy efficiency of your home. Using the results they will make recommendations on how you can improve your efficiency, increase your comfort and reduce your energy bill.

What kind of recommendations can you expect? Weatherstripping, caulking and sealing are regularly included to seal any gaps found in the shell of your house. You may get a recommendation to replace incandescent bulbs with LED alternatives. A programmable thermostat can save up to 10 percent on your heating and cooling bills so that may turn up if you do not have one. Perhaps additional insulation in strategic locations will be included. Appliance and other system recommendations are frequently part of the results, encouraging you to purchase ENERGY STAR products and high-efficiency heating/cooling systems when the time is right to replace them.

Over the years I have tempered the presentation of audit results with this assurance, "you do not have to do everything at once." The list of recommendations can be intimidating if you feel you have to do everything it says. You should consider the recommendations as a long-term improvement plan. Do what you can now and pace yourself on implementing the others.

Remember, BARC is here to help with advice at every step of the process. Our goal is to help you manage the energy cost of running your home while keeping it comfortable. If you think an audit is right for you and your family, give us a call today.



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Dear BARC Electric Customers,

Have you noticed your electric bills going up? Do you need to do some detective work to try to resolve why your costs are so high? Are you interested in finding ways to save money on your bills through fine-tuning your usage and educating yourself about ways to cut costs? If so, I would highly recommend calling BARC Electric. They are readily willing, competent and available to assist you in any and all of these areas.

This past summer I noticed our electric bills got progressively more until they had nearly doubled. I called BARC to see if there had been some mistake in the reading of the meters. When that wasn't the case, I had them send me their itemized list of the measurement of electricity each of those items used. Still unable to solve the mystery, I asked if they could send out someone to walk around my house and farm to help me find out what had changed to be causing such an increase in my bill.

Within two days the nicest men came and spent over two hours with me trying the "crack the mystery." First, we studied my record of bills for the past year. They agreed something was unusual to have spiked such an increase. Then we walked around looking for evidence of high power usage. In every room they gave me useful tips on how to save money with each of my appliances, heaters, etc. Through our "detective work," we accounted for \$80 of the extra cost, but still couldn't pinpoint the other \$100 increase. That's when they checked the electric usage of my water pump and discovered it was running continuously and, evidently, had been for four months! When we calculated the monthly cost of a pump that never cuts off according to the power it uses, it came to precisely the final missing \$100 extra expense I'd been seeing on my bills!

The men left, advising me to call the pump man to check it out, but they were so interested in seeing my problem resolved that they asked me to call them and let them know the final verdict. Sure enough, my pump was dysfunctional and had to be replaced.

I was so impressed with BARC for the enthusiasm, interest, competency and promptness with which they were willing to assist me in solving my problem. I was also so glad I had chosen to investigate the issue because I learned so much about electricity usage in the process and how to lower my bills in many other ways that I'd never known.

When BARC told me they'd like to provide this service to more people and asked me to write a letter about my experience, I was quite happy to do so. By the way, did I mention this was all done for free? That's service with a smile for all! :)

**One happy customer,
Rebecca Taylor**

Caveat Emptor | by Tom Tate

Every winter I get my dander up when I see ads for “amazing” electric heaters that:

- Use less electricity than a coffee maker.
- Will cut your heating bill by 60 percent.
- Operate for pennies a day. Turn it on and leave it on ...
- Provide greater comfort due to special heating technology.
- And so on.

These ads border on deceit by only telling part of the truth. As your marketing and communications guy, this practice rankles me. People deserve the whole truth so they can make informed decisions based on what is best for them and their families.

Let me give you the “rest of the story” as Paul Harvey famously said, starting with the “coffee maker” claim. They are correct in their assertion to the extent that the average coffee maker uses 1,600 watts and their heater uses 1,500. What they fail to mention is your coffee maker is only going to run 10 minutes or so a day while their heater will run for several hours. Unless you are operating a coffee shop from your home.

Next is the amazing reduction in your heating bill. They base this on people turning off or dramatically turning back their primary heating system. And even at that, our Cooperative Research Network estimates the best savings members can expect from using these heaters is 10 percent at most. So, if you have a propane furnace and turn it back to 58° then supplement with this electric heating marvel, you will save some on propane but not 60 percent.

Following their advice you can expect your electric bill to skyrocket. If you use a cost of \$.083/kWh, here is how much just one 1,500-watt electric space heater running 24 hours a day will add to your bill in a month.

$$(((1,500 \times 24) \times 30) / 1,000) \times \$0.083 = \$89.64.$$

Not much savings going on here.

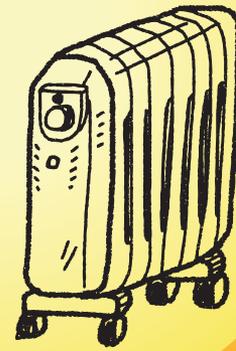
“Better heat through amazing technology.” These units are typically some form of radiant heater. That means the heater warms the objects in the room rather than the air itself. Radiant heat is very nice, I prefer it when I can get it. But their technology isn’t any better than any other radiant electric heater. The bottom line is that 1,500 watts is 1,500 watts no matter how you convert it to heat in an electric heater.

I will say this for the products, they look very nice. They appear to be well-built, will blend nicely with most living spaces and offer additional features like filters, UV germ killers and remote control. But they also command a huge price, often \$200+.

For my money, I can go to the nearest purveyor of portable electric heaters, plunk down \$35 and get the same heating performance and comfort. That leaves me a sizeable chunk of change for a dinner with my wife at a pretty nice place.

Using portable electric heaters to reduce your total energy bill can work if you do the following:

- Reduce the temperature on your main heating system. If you don’t mind it cool, go to 60 or 62°.



- Make sure areas with pipes in exterior walls don’t get so cold the pipes will freeze.
- Only use the portable electric heater when you are in the room with it. When you leave, turn it off.

This strategy can save you up to about 10 percent overall. Keep in mind your electric bill is going to be higher as a result. Be careful when you see or hear these ads. While they aren’t outright falsehoods, they are a close second. If you have any questions about supplemental electric heating, just give us a call.



Tina Glenn

Valentine’s Day is a great time to serve this cake.

TINA’s Tastings

TRIPLE CHOCOLATE CHERRY CAKE

- 1 box Duncan Hines Decadent Triple Chocolate cake mix
- 1 can cherry pie filling
- 1 stick butter, melted
- 1/3 cup water

Spray the bottom and sides of a slow cooker with cooking spray or wipe down with vegetable oil and turn to high-heat setting. Pour in the cherry pie filling. Sprinkle the larger package of cake mix over the cherry pie filling. Melt the butter in the microwave and drizzle over the cake mix. Place a double layer of paper towels over the top of the slow cooker and place the lid over the paper towels. Turn the heat down to low and cook for 1½ hours. Mix the small topping package with water. After 1½ hours, remove lid and paper towels and dollop the topping over the top of the cake. Replace the paper towels and lid and continue to cook for another ½ hour. Turn slow cooker off and let the cake cool, or serve warm with ice cream or whipped cream, if desired.