



August 2026

Save money with a DIY home energy audit

Want to cut costs and make your home more comfortable? A DIY home energy audit can uncover hidden energy drains, like leaky windows, drafty ducts and inefficient appliances. Identifying trouble spots now can set you up for savings and comfort year-round.

YOUR STEP-BY-STEP EFFICIENCY GUIDE

Before you dive in, grab a few basic tools: flashlight, dust mask, tape measure and something to take notes (your phone works great!). We'll start with simple, no-cost changes you can do right away, then move on to tasks that take a little more effort.

Step 1: Adjust your thermostat

- Revisit your thermostat settings each season. Adjusting the temperature at night or when no one is home is a simple way to cut costs.
- Use a smart thermostat for even greater savings. It automatically adjusts based on your schedule.

Step 2: Lower water heater temperature

- Lower your water heater temperature to save money and reduce the risk of scalding burns. Some water heaters are factory-set to 140 F, but most households only need 120 F.

Step 3: Find and fix energy vampires

- Shut off energy vampires — devices that draw electricity even when turned off. This idle load can account for 23% of your home's energy use.
- Unplug appliances when not in use and fully power down devices like computers or gaming consoles.
- Use a smart power strip to shut off multiple electronics at once — it's an easy way to stop energy waste at the source.

Step 4: Check your lighting

- Swap out older bulbs, like incandescent or CFLs, for LEDs. They use less energy and last longer. Lighting can account for about 10% of your electric bill.
- Add dimmers or timers to cut down on wasted electricity.
- Don't overlook outdoor fixtures. Choose LEDs with features like daylight shut-off or motion sensors for even more savings.

Step 5: Review major appliances

- Look for the ENERGY STAR label when buying new. If your refrigerator, washer, dryer or heat pump is more than 10 years old, it may be worth replacing rather than repairing. Newer appliances are more energy-efficient and can often pay for themselves in savings within a few years.

- Check your heating and cooling systems. Their lifespan can range from 10-30 years depending on the type and maintenance. If yours is older, start planning ahead for an upgrade.
- Replace air filters to keep your system running efficiently.

Step 6: Seal leaks

- Air leaks can waste 10-20% of your home's energy each year, but they're often simple to fix. Here's where to look and how to seal them.
- Check baseboards, floor edges and wall-to-ceiling joints indoors.
 - Focus on where different materials meet outdoors.
 - Pay special attention to windows, doors, light fixtures, plumbing and outlets.
 - Use caulk for gaps around windows, doors and baseboards.
 - Add weatherstripping to doors and operable windows.

Step 7: Inspect insulation

Check attic insulation:

- Grab your dust mask and tape measure to check the depth of the insulation. It should be at least 12 inches deep, but you may need more depending on the type and your climate. Check EnergyStar.gov for recommended R-values.
- Spread insulation evenly. Loose-fill or blown-in insulation should be fluffy with even coverage, while rolled batt insulation should fit snugly with no gaps.

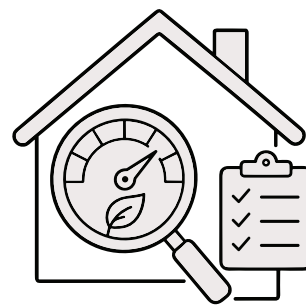
Inspect exterior walls:

- Check insulation by turning off the power, removing an outlet cover or switch plate and shining a flashlight into the cavity. Many homes built before the 1960s have little to no insulation, and houses from the 1960s-70s often need more.
- Call a professional to blow in insulation (from the outside or inside) if wall insulation is missing.

Don't forget the basement:

- Ensure rim joists (the area between the top of the foundation and the underside of the first floor) are well insulated in unfinished basements.
- Insulate the underside of the floor between the joists in crawl spaces.
- Add insulation to pipes and ductwork for an extra efficiency boost.

For renters: You may not be able to make major upgrades, but you can ask your landlord to seal leaks or start small with temporary fixes.



Connect with Minnesota's Electric Cooperatives at **FARMFEST**

Join Minnesota's rural electric cooperatives at Farmfest from August 4-6. As Minnesota's premier agricultural event, Farmfest attracts nearly 30,000 attendees and hosts over 500 exhibits and vendors in rural Redwood County each year.

Farmfest serves as a vital platform for addressing political and educational issues impacting farmers and rural communities across Minnesota. From policy discussions to showcasing the latest technological advancements in agriculture, the event offers valuable insights and networking opportunities for all attendees.

Minnesota electric cooperatives have a long history of participating in Farmfest and connecting with our agricultural partners. Be sure to visit our booths where we will be

showcasing tools and technology to make outdoor work easier and demonstrating our commitment to safety with an interactive electrical safety exhibit. Learn firsthand about essential safety measures to keep you and your family safe. See a live safety demonstration illustrating the need for caution when working near or moving large equipment around powerlines. Don't miss this opportunity to connect with Minnesota's electric cooperatives and discover how we're empowering farmers and rural communities across the state.

Minnesota's electric cooperatives are proud to supply the electrical needs of most farms across the state, serving members in every Minnesota county.



Visit us along with other
Minnesota Electric Cooperatives,
at Farmfest 2026 and enter for
a chance to win a grand prize!

FARMFEST 2026

AUGUST 4-6 • REDWOOD FALLS, MN

Bring this coupon to Booth #2201

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

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You must be a member of one of the participating
electric cooperatives to be eligible to win.



South Central Electric Association

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

2026 REBATE PROGRAMS

The recipient must be a South Central Electric member. Any checks or credits will be made in the name or account of the member. The program will end when funds are exhausted; additional rebates may be added at a later date. The completed applications will be processed on a first come first served basis as they are received in our office. Rebate applications can be requested by calling the St. James office or available online at www.southcentralelectric.com.

REBATES:

Dehumidifier	\$20
Credit applied to the energy bill	
Air Source Heat Pumps (ducted)	\$300
HSPF rating over 9.5 or HSPF2 rating over 8.07	\$500
Ductless/Mini-Split Heat Pump.....	\$350
Ground Source Heat Pump.....	\$300/ton (Limit 10 tons)
Air Conditioner/Heat Pump Tune Up.....	\$30
LED Yard Light.....	\$25/ea. (limit 3)
Managed Electric Heat.....	\$20/kW
Radio controlled, qualifies for a discount of \$0.031/kWh on system usage.	
Stored or dual fuel heat. Heat pumps are not eligible for this program	



Must be an Energy Star®
appliance to qualify.

Power Your Home When We Can't

with a
Briggs & Stratton®
Home Standby
Generator.



You can be confident that South Central Electric works hard every day to keep your lights on. For those times when mother nature strikes, we still have you covered with our generator program. You can purchase a whole home Briggs & Stratton® Power Protect generator from South Central Electric. If you lose power, the generator automatically takes over. When power is restored, it automatically shuts down. Power when you need it without the hassles of portable or PTO generators.

Estimated cost of \$10,000 to \$13,500 includes the following:

- Briggs & Stratton® Power protect+.
- Minnesota winter ready with battery warmer, oil heater & battery charger.
- Automatic transfer switch.
- Electrician installation.



*Generators run on LP or Natural Gas.
Estimate does not include costs of gas
installation from your gas provider.*

**Call our office to learn more at
(507) 375-3164**

Carr's Tree Service

Storm season is here in Minnesota, which means by the time you are reading this, there is a fair chance a storm has already rolled through your area, knocked over a few branches, and reminded everyone that trees do not always check the calendar before causing trouble.

At Carr's Tree Service, many of you know us through utility line clearance work, but we also provide private residential and commercial tree care services across Minnesota. With 25 ISA Certified Arborists on staff, we are always happy to take a look at tree concerns, storm damage, hazardous trees, or general tree health questions.

One thing some people may not know is that we also love saving trees. With emerald ash borer now active across much of Minnesota, there are still many ash trees worth protecting through treatment. In southern Minnesota, however, it is getting harder to find untreated ash trees that are still healthy enough to save.

As storms increase and our plant health care services continue to grow, we are also looking for good people to join our team. Whether someone is looking for a job or a long-term career, Carr's Tree Service is a great place to work.



SCEA WATER HEATER PROGRAM

SCEA's peak shave water heater program provides members with a Marathon water heater at a discounted price for participating in the load management program.

The cost for water heaters is **\$750**. This is a great value for members. SCEA pays the cost of the electrician to wire the water heater and radio control. The member would pay any costs incurred by a plumber.





Business Spotlight

Drainage Solutions Inc

Established in 2023 with over 20 years' experience in the farm drainage industry, Drainage Solutions specializes in small and larger farm drainage projects including small repair to system tiling. Using the latest gps and laser technology, drainage problems are address for aging underground systems to new for Agriculture, commercial and residential customers

We also have experience in Sewer and Septic systems, water line installation, basements and general excavating repairs and installs. Owned by Nigel Bentley with 2 Full time employees we operate as a small team who pride ourselves on honest professional work. Contact Nigel at 507-351-6154 or email drainagetile@gmail.com for answers to your problem areas.



ONLINE PAYMENT & BILLING w/ SMARTHUB

Pay your bills on-line with South Central Electric's on-line bill payment system, SmartHub. Download the SmartHub app for your mobile device or tablet from the APP Store or Google Play.

To get started visit our web site southcentralelectric.com and click on the SmartHub logo. Once you are at the SmartHub site you'll have to sign up as a first time user by clicking the "New User" link and follow the prompts.



This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

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The Board meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at South Central Electric's building at 71176 Tiell Dr., St. James, MN.

Please see our website for a summary of the board meetings.