

# HEARTBEAT

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Issue #73

Fall 2019

### Lawmakers visit Heartland office

Area lawmakers took time to visit with Heartland employees and utility representatives to discuss issues and legislation that may impact electric service.

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### Local teen travels to DC for co-op tour

A student from St. Paul High School represented Heartland at this year's Washington DC Youth Tour.

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### Three seats open on Heartland board

Heartland members interested in serving on the co-op's Board of Directors can file for a seat starting December 26..

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### Don't skimp on cheap chargers

Safety testing shows that cheap chargers are less likely to meet safety and quality guidelines than the higher-priced brand-name replacements.

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## High wire act



Heartland's Andy Chester attaches wire to a support pole during a recent upgrade at our Devon Substation.

## Improvements today invest in our future

Earlier this year, Heartland's Board of Directors and senior leadership team met for two days to develop strategic initiatives that need to be focused on over the next 3-4 years at Heartland. The topics range anywhere from enhancing Heartland's already strong culture of safety of our employees

and the public, how to address the aging electrical infrastructure of the cooperative, and how can Heartland find ways to continue to enhance the value of living in rural Kansas to the consumer-members of our cooperative.

Heartland continues to ask for the feedback of our members. We recently sent out a survey to thousands of our members to help us understand how well the Cooperative is meeting your needs. In addition to the survey, starting in 2020 Heartland will hold district meetings to provide opportunities for consumer-members to meet with their representatives on the Board of Directors. These are people like you, who live in your community. Heartland will be asking some specific questions that will

### KEEPING YOU INFORMED



MARK SCHEIBE  
HEARTLAND CEO

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## INFORMED: From page 1

help us decide the path forward on the strategic initiatives in the next few years.

It is sometimes hard to think how properly maintaining the power lines running throughout the country will provide more reliable electricity. Let me use an analogy for a minute: Imagine driving down a road built in the 1940's and 50's and no maintenance had ever been done on it before. No potholes filled, no cracks sealed, no lines re-painted, and no sections had been replaced, ever. Would you like to drive down that road? This analogy explains why Heartland Rural Electric Cooperative is focused on providing the quality of service every consumer-member expects while keeping electric rates as affordable as possible.

And just like with potholes, or our own annual visits to the doctor, dealing with issues early has significant advantages. Delaying what needs to be done comes with big consequences. As the decades take their toll on our infra-

structure, service reliability suffers if we don't properly invest in maintaining and rebuilding our powerlines. Weakened poles can be brought down by summer storms, and brittle old wire fails during icy winter winds. Proper maintenance and improvements today pays off in reliability for us, and for future generations.

Ongoing improvements need to be made to the electric grid to keep it modern and serving you with power, no matter what storm blows through the community. These improvements will help save money tomorrow, but will require some tough choices today. We are led by consumer-members like you, who understand and listen to the community. As Heartland considers changes to our rates, capital credit retirement, and borrowing policy, we will ask for your opinion on options to know what is most important to you. We also want to continue to communicate with our members and increase our ongoing dialog so that we can know the needs of each individual community Heartland serves.

Our commitment is still the same; to meet our members needs for safe and reliable electricity at a reasonable cost.



**Heartland crews, including Ryan Stifter here, were working at our Hiattville substation recently to install coverup. The dark red protective coverup helps keep birds, snakes, and other animals from making contact with live substation equipment. This reduces outages and helps us keep the power on for our members.**

## Convenient access to your Heartland account

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## Lawmakers look at issues that affect utility service

As leaders in the communities they serve, Kansas electric cooperatives continue to engage their consumer-members and policymakers through Co-ops Vote, a non-partisan campaign focused on boosting voter turnout in areas served by cooperatives and educating voters and policymakers on issues important to rural Kansans.

As part of this year's Co-ops Vote activities, Heartland Rural Electric Cooperative hosted Kansas legislators at their Girard office to discuss topics related to the delivery of affordable and reliable electricity in rural areas.

Lawmakers in attendance were Sen. Richard Hilderbrand and Reps. Ken Collins, Joe Newland and Richard Proehl. Bruce Blair, Crawford County Commissioner and Girard Mayor Mickey Pyle were also in attendance.

Staff of Kansas Electric Cooperatives discussed issues including lack of access to high-speed, reliable broadband; renewable generation; retail wheeling; transmission and generation build out; and utility ratemaking for non-profit electric co-ops. KEC staff also outlined the economic impact electric co-ops have on their communities and

the United States: supporting nearly 612,000 American jobs and contributing \$440 billion in U.S. Gross Domestic Product between 2013 and 2017, or \$88 billion annually. In 2017 alone, electric cooperatives generated \$22.5 billion in federal, state and local taxes.

"It's really good to get to know the legislators and have a chance to make them aware of the issues happening throughout the state," said Mark Scheibe, CEO of Heartland REC. "It is also a good opportunity to build a relationship that shows we are a trusted voice as they are having questions from constituents or policy discussions under the dome in Topeka during the legislative session. We want them to be able to turn to us if they question a policy's impact to rural Kansas."

Sen. Hilderbrand expressed his appreciation for the services co-ops bring to rural Kansas and the opportunity to learn about their issues, as he is not a member of an electric co-op. "These organizations are vital to our rural communities, Hilderbrand said. "Without the electric cooperatives and other cooperatives, a lot of our rural constituents would not have



Kansas District 13 Senator Richard Hilderbrand, far right, talks about issues and state ballot measures during a "Kansas Vote" event held at Heartland Rural Electric Cooperative on Tuesday. Pictured from left are Girard Mayor Mickey Pyle, Rep. Joe Newland, Faith Warden, Ron Taylor and Don Davied of Heartland REC, Crawford County Commissioner Bruce Blair, and Hilderbrand.

access to many of the things we take for granted, including electricity."

Rep. Proehl echoed Hilderbrand's view of electric co-ops and their role in maintaining prosperous rural communities.

"Rural electric cooperatives have been a key part of rural Kansas since they were established in the 1930s," Proehl said. "They are a key component

to the quality of life for many of our families and businesses. Without the electric cooperatives, many businesses wouldn't be here today. We need to support those like the electric cooperatives that have invested so much in our communities over the years — it's a matter of life and death for rural communities to have these cooperatives."

## Gadgets and electronics are great Christmas gifts for everyone

This holiday season, give the gift of tech! If you're searching for the latest gadgets and electronics to gift but don't know where to start, we've got you covered.

Here's a list of ideas for your tech-savvy friends and family members, and with a range of prices and interests, there's sure to be something for everyone.

**Gifts for those on the go:** We all have that one friend who never stays in one place, so

they'll appreciate gifts that keep them charged and entertained while on the go.

A portable charger (or power bank) can keep their smart phones and tablets juiced, and the good news is this gift won't drain your wallet. You can purchase portable chargers online or at local retailers for as low as \$20. Typically, these compact devices can fully charge an iPhone three times before running out of steam.

A Bluetooth speaker is another great gift to keep those

on the go entertained. Whether they're listening to their favorite

tunes or watching the latest flick, Bluetooth speakers can clarify and amplify volume to satisfy any media enthusiast. Prices range depending on features, but you can purchase a quality Bluetooth speaker online or at local retailers for as



low as \$30.

### Gifts for the chef:

Every foodie knows that temperature matters when mastering the perfect cut of meat. A Bluetooth-connected thermometer

can help your chef ensure a delicious (and safe-to-eat) meal. Just download the associated app and keep an eye on the grill right from your smart phone or tablet.

A digital kitchen scale is a must for any culinary pro.

No more guessing—the easy-to-read digital screen ensures the exact weight or amount required for that perfect dish. Prices vary depending on the weight the scale can handle, but you can find a 13-pound max weight scale for about \$20.

### Gifts for Homeowners:

Having a regular or manual thermostat to adjust the temperature in your home is good. It just so happens that having a smart thermostat is better.

# O'Brien represents co-op on trip to Washington DC

St. Paul student Taylor O'Brien served as Heartland's representative this summer as he traveled to our nation's capital to attend the 59th Annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour with more than 1,800 peers from across the nation. Youth Tour was held June 13-20.

O'Brien joined teens from across Kansas and Hawaii to spend a week touring Washington, D.C. There, these student leaders learned more about our history and government, the co-op business model, and how to become community leaders.

"There are places in Washington D.C. that every American should see," said O'Brien. "The Capitol, White House, Smithsonian, the Vietnam Memorial. Everyone in the country should see it."

While in D.C., the students toured the White House, the U.S. Capitol, the Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Smithsonian museums, Mt. Vernon,



Arlington National Cemetery, the National Cathedral and many memorials and historical sites. They participated in a simulation at the new National Law Enforcement Museum. The students also attended a professional baseball game, a theater performance at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts and saw the pandas at the National Zoo.

O'Brien says it was the Vietnam War Memorial that had the biggest impact on him.

"It has an energy around it that you just feel and you know," said O'Brien, who had some family and family friends that served in the war.

"I found their names on the wall," he said. "I've been wanting to go to that for a long time."



**ABOVE: O'Brien stands in front of the US Capitol. LEFT: Kansas students raise the flag at Fort McHenry. BELOW: Senator Pat Robertson speaks to the Kansas students.**



The Smithsonian National Museum of American History was also a highlight for O'Brien.

"We could have spent the whole week at the Smithsonian and still wouldn't have gotten done seeing everything," he said.

"We also got to tour Mount Vernon, and see George Washington's house," said O'Brien. "The house was awesome, and seeing how they were built back then amazed me. It's built by a long stretch of river. I think that location was just beautiful. It was really cool."

The students also had a chance to visit with lawmakers, including Senator Pat Roberts and Representative Steve

Watkins, and see democracy in action.

"I see now how Washington DC works a little better," said O'Brien. "It is the heart of where everything runs."

As part of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's National Youth Day on June 17, all of the state groups convened to learn from inspirational speakers.

This year's keynote speaker was Mike Schlappi, a four-time Paralympic Medalist and two-time world wheelchair basketball champion, who shared his inspiring message, "Just because you can't stand up doesn't mean you can't stand out!"

## GIFTS: From page 3

The smart thermostat isn't called smart for nothing. Unlike manual thermostats, smart thermostats are programmable. So if you want to adjust the temperature at different times of the day, you just have to make the necessary settings on your smart thermostat. So if no one's home, you can set the thermo-



stat to run the required temperatures for only a few hours a day. When you leave the house, the smart thermostat will do as programmed, therefore giving you better control of your comfort at home.

A programmable thermostat helps prevent the overuse of your HVAC unit, which is often the case if you just leave it running at a continual temperature to keep from coming home to a house that's either too cold or too hot. You can turn your HVAC off if, say, you're going on a two-week vacation, then set the smart thermostat to turn the HVAC system on a few hours before your scheduled return. That means a lot of rest for your HVAC system, sparing it a lot of unnecessary stress. You can also control today's smart thermostats with your phone, giving you the ability to make adjustments while you're away.

With the way it automatically adjusts the temperature according to your settings, a smart thermostat can help you reduce your energy costs by as much as 30 percent. Energy efficiency is primarily the reason why many homeowners get a smart thermostat in the first place.

Sure, a smart thermostat tends to be more expensive than a manual thermostat, but with its significant contribution to your home's overall energy efficiency, you will end up saving more in the long run. And if you're the type

who forgets to turn the HVAC system off when leaving the house, a smart thermostat will probably be the smartest investment you can make

### Gifts for the pet owner:

Let's face it—pet owners would be lost without their fur babies. Luckily, pet tracking products continue to advance, so pet owners can always keep a watchful eye on their furry friends. Most trackers simply attach to your pet's collar.

Prices vary depending on the tracker's capabilities, but some features include water resistance, health monitoring and exceptional battery life. You can purchase pet trackers online or at your local pet store.

Speaking of keeping an eye on pets, you can also purchase surveillance

cameras for real-time monitoring—some cameras even allow you to toss treats to your furry friend while you're away. Addi-

tional features include a microphone (so you can talk to your pets), a built-in laser toy (for our feline friends) and the ability to snap a photo or take video from your smart phone. Prices vary depending on the bells and whistles, but you can purchase a pet camera for as low as \$40

With so many electronics available today, you're sure to find the perfect gift for your tech-savvy loved ones. Happy shopping!



## HREC to accept candidates for three board positions

Heartland Rural Electric Cooperative will soon be accepting nominations for the Heartland Rural Electric Cooperative Board of Directors.

Heartland REC's coverage area is divided into four districts and individuals who wish to run for a director's seat need to be active members of the cooperative and bona fide residents of the district they wish to represent. Packets of information for those seeking to be candidates for the Board of Director Election will be available at Heartland's Girard, Gas and Mound City offices starting on December 26, 2019.

Districts 1, 2, and 3 will each have an election for one seat on the board in 2020. There will be no election in District 4.

District 1 is Heartland's northernmost district, and includes the area around LaCygne, Pleasanton, Mound City and Blue Mound.

District 2 is Heartland's central/western district, and includes the area around Iola, Elsmore, Erie, Chanute and St. Paul.

District 3 is Heartland's central/eastern district, and includes the area around Prescott, Mapleton, Fort Scott, Hepler, Walnut and Farlington.

District 4 is Heartland's southernmost district and includes the areas around Girard, McCune, Pittsburg, West Mineral, Columbus, Oswego and Chetopa.

Potential candidates need to be nominated by written petitions signed by at least 25 Heartland REC members who are residents of the district to be represented. Potential candidates will also need to complete and return the Affirmation of Director Qualification form that is also included in the election packet. Signed petitions and the Affirmation of Director Qualification must be filed at the Heartland REC office in Girard, Kan. by 4:30 p.m. on January 20, 2020.

If more than two qualified members

from a district seek election, Heartland REC will hold a primary election to narrow the field to two candidates. Primary ballots would be mailed to members in the district on or before Thursday, January 30 and would need to be returned by 4:30 p.m. Monday, February 10. Ballots for the regular election will be mailed to members of the district on or before Monday, February 24, and will need to be returned by 4:30 p.m. Monday, March 9. Election results will be announced at the Heartland REC Annual Meeting, which will be held Tuesday, March 10, at Fort Scott Community College.

If no contest is created and only a single nominee from the district seeks an open seat, the nominee will automatically be assigned membership on the Heartland REC Board of Directors and no election will be held.

Each Heartland REC member who files a nominating petition to become a candidate for director will also need to designate a teller to serve on the Election Committee, which is responsible for counting ballots. Members of the Heartland REC Board of Directors serve three-year terms and are expected to attend regular meetings (which are currently held monthly in Girard) and any special meetings held as needed. Members of the Heartland REC board receive no salary for their services. A member of the HREC Board of Directors cannot be an employee of the cooperative or financially interested in a competing or similar enterprise. Nominees also cannot be closely related to a Heartland REC employee or current member of the Board of Directors. Additional details about the election process and director qualifications are included in the Heartland REC bylaws, which are available at our offices in Girard, Gas and Mound City.

Election paperwork will also be available at the cooperative's web site, [www.heartland-rec.com](http://www.heartland-rec.com)

# Study shows cheap chargers are a safety hazard

People are always losing their phone chargers.

As a solution, many people reach for the low-cost, generic plug-in USB chargers and charging cables found in the sea of impulse items that flank check-out lines. It can save money and it's so convenient, most people rationalize when making a purchase. Without much more thought, in the virtual cart or on the counter it goes.

Knockoffs can be great, but not when replacing original charging components, and for a variety of reasons. For instance, generic mobile phone chargers are less likely to meet safety and quality guidelines than the higher-priced brand-name replacements, according to an article in the *Annals of Emergency Medicine*, an international medical journal.

The article cites a significant injury that involved a generic phone charger near a bed. A woman experienced pain around her neck after resting on her bed with a generic iPhone charger (not an Apple brand) underneath her pillow. The charger was plugged into an outlet but not into her phone, which is not advised but a common practice. She felt a sudden burning sensation in her neck and instinctively pulled off a necklace she was wearing. The injury caused significant burn marks around her neck.

"In a study conducted by Electrical Safety First in the United Kingdom, Apple provided 64 generic chargers for safety testing. Fifty-eight percent of these generic chargers failed the electric strength test, indicating a breakdown of the insulation barrier," the article states.

Although it is tempting to pick up an inexpensive phone charger to save money, buying and using cheap chargers is one place you might not want to cut corners. Using an authentic replacement charger made by your mobile phone's manufacturer is always a better choice.

Along with a potential burn and fire hazard, using cheaply made charging components and devices can also cause shock and electrocution. Serious potential dangers aside, they may cost you more in the long run since they can cause damage to your phone.

Do not leave items that are charging unattended.

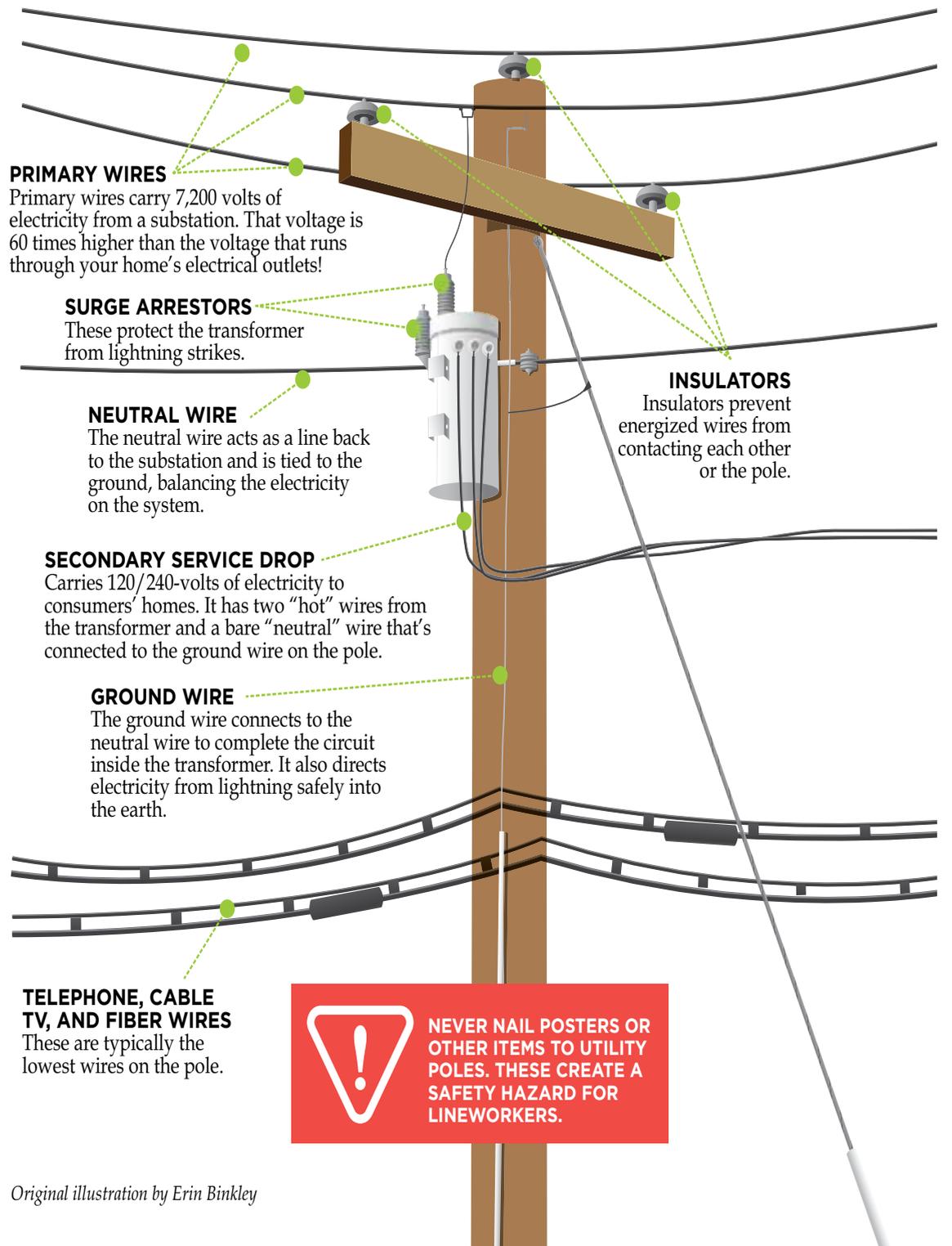
Always keep charging items away from flammable objects, especially bedding, and do not take them to bed with you. Tell kids and teens to NEVER place any charging device under their pillow. The heat generated gets trapped, which could cause the pillow or bed to catch fire.

Do not touch charging electronic devices with wet hands or while standing in water.



## WHAT'S ON THAT POLE?

This illustration shows the basic equipment found on electric utility poles. The equipment varies according to the location and the service they provide.



Original illustration by Erin Binkley

# Upgrade your garage door for insulated savings

*Dear Jim: I do woodworking projects in part of my garage which is beneath two bedrooms. It has an old uninsulated garage door. What should I look for in a new efficient door? - Ronald T.*

Dear Ronald: Replacing the inefficient garage door sounds like a good idea. This is both for your comfort when working on projects and to reduce energy losses from your house. If the builder installed such an inexpensive, inefficient garage door, the bedroom floor above the garage may not be properly insulated either.

When evaluating energy efficient projects, keep in mind heat energy moves in all direction including downward. If your garage does not have a heating duct leading to it, but it stays reasonably warm, heat is leaking in through adjacent house walls and down from the bedroom floor. This makes your heat pump run more as heat is lost through the old garage door.

Before you invest in a new efficient garage door, inspect your existing door. If it is in relatively good condition and there are no significant drafts coming from the joints between the panels, consider installing a garage door insulation kit. Some do-it-yourself kits increase the insulation value by R-8.

A typical kit includes vinyl-backed fiberglass insulation batts, retaining clips, and tape. Cut the batts to fit the

door panels. Apply strips of double-sided tape on two spots on each panel. Stick the retaining clips on the tape and push the insulation over them. A top clip snaps over each retaining clip to hold the insulation securely in place. Also, put one-quarter-inch adhesive-backed foam weatherstripping in the joints.

Several other advantages of installing an insulation kit are reduced outdoor noise in the garage (and bedroom above) and reduced lighting costs. The exposed white vinyl backing reflects much light so you should need fewer lights on when working on your woodworking projects.

If you decide a new garage door is needed, there are several basic options.

The most common garage door materials are wood, insulated steel, insulated fiberglass, and aluminum/glass. Of these, the insulated steel or fiberglass offer the best efficiency with insulation as high as house walls. The overall high efficiency results both from the

insulation value and the rigidity of the door which remains airtight over its life.

Many insulated steel doors are “wind-rated” for severe weather areas. Even if your area does not have frequent severe, high-wind storms, install the horizontal galvanized steel supports across the inner surface of the garage if they were included. While the door is



**ABOVE:** After clips are stuck to garage door, the fiberglass batts are pressed over the clips. **BELOW LEFT:** This garage door panel has polyurethane foam insulation and interlocking seals between the panels to minimize air leakage.

rolling up to open, the door edges are not interlocked to support each other. Without the supports, the panels may flex and develop fatigue cracks over time.

If you prefer the appearance of wood, but want higher efficiency, select a clad insulated steel garage door. A one-half inch-thick polymer coating is applied over the exterior steel skin. It has authentic wood grain molded into the surface so it looks identical to real stained wood. A two-inch thick door with the polymer coating provides R-20.4 insulation. Another attractive option is an embossed simulated wood painted finish providing R-18.4 insulation.

A very popular garage door style today is a simulated swing-open carriage type. It still rolls up like a typical panel garage door, but from the street it appears the two doors would swing open on hinges. These attractive doors often have some type of decorative glass across the top panel for aesthetics and for natural light in the garage.

An insulated steel door is probably the least expensive design to meet your efficiency and comfort needs. The foam

inside the door can be either preformed rigid polystyrene or foamed-in-place urethane foam. The urethane foam has a higher insulation level. A lower-cost 1-3/8 inch thick door with rigid polystyrene still provides R-6.3 insulation.

When choosing a steel door, look for one with a polymer thermal break separating the outdoor and indoor metal skins to reduce heat loss. This is not a factor on a fiberglass door. A 24- to 27-gauge (lower gauge number is thicker) galvanized steel skin is durable. Hot-dipped galvanized steel tracks and 14-gauge hinges are advisable.

If you have children, look for tight-sealing, pinch-resistant panels. The edges are designed to push a finger out of the panel joints as the door closes. Also select a door with interlocking panel joint design which creates a tight, long air path to minimize leakage. If you want glass in the garage door for natural lighting, select double-pane, insulated glass.

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Send inquiries to James Dulley, Heartbeat, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit [www.dulley.com](http://www.dulley.com).

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For more information contact *Heartbeat* Editor Ron Graber at our Girard office or call 1-800-835-9586. He can also be reached at [rong@heartland-rec.com](mailto:rong@heartland-rec.com)



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# Be safe when using propane in your home

## What is propane?

Propane is a portable, clean and efficient energy source which supplies about four percent of total U.S. energy needs. It is a byproduct of natural gas processing and petroleum refining, and exists as both a liquid and a gas.

Propane is sometimes referred to as liquified petroleum gas, LP gas, or LPG. About 90 percent of our propane is produced in America, making it a stable, domestic energy source. It is nontoxic, colorless and virtually odorless - but, for your protection, odor is added so it can be easily detected when necessary. The chemical odorant that is added is called ethyl mercaptan, which has a strong smell similar to rotten eggs.

1910, Dr. Walter O. Snelling, a chemist and explosives expert with the U.S. Bureau of Mines, was asked to investigate vapors coming from the gasoline tank vent of a newly purchased Ford Model T. Snelling filled a glass jug with the gasoline from the car and discovered on his way back to the lab that volatile vapors were forming in the jug, causing its cork to repeatedly pop out. He began experimenting with these vaporous gases to find methods to control and hold them. After dividing the gas into its liquid and gaseous

components, he learned that propane was one component of the liquefied gas mixture. He soon learned that this propane component could be used for lighting, metal cutting, and cooking. That discovery marked the birth of the propane industry.

## Is propane clean?

Yes, propane is one of the cleanest burning fossil fuels. It creates less pollution than many other fossil fuels, providing all of us with cleaner, more breathable air.

Propane is a valuable alternative to electricity and significantly reduces emission of greenhouse gases.

## Propane use - safe handling tips & information

Many homes and businesses use propane gas for heat, hot water, cooking and electricity generation. It's important that you use caution when handling tanks, fuel lines, appliances and generators to ensure safety.

Here are some important propane safety tips:

- Don't use or store propane tanks in basements or living spaces
- Properly secure portable propane tanks when transporting
- Do not leave portable propane tanks in cars or closed vehicles
- Secure temporary tanks when used for building heat, hot water, or cooking
- Contact a qualified propane service retailer to connect tanks to appliances
- Do not use propane gas BBQ grills inside

■ Refrain from using stoves or ovens for space heating

■ Do not use portable electric generators indoors – keep them outside of buildings

■ Have a qualified propane service technician connect appliances and perform a leak test

## If you smell gas

■ Immediately extinguish all smoking materials and open flames

■ Get everyone out of the area where you suspect the gas is leaking

■ Turn off the gas supply valve of your propane tank if it is safe to do so

■ Once away from the leak, contact your propane supplier. If you can't reach them, call 911

■ Do not return to the area until your propane retailer, emergency responder, or qualified service technician determines it is safe to do so

## Don't run out of gas

Serious safety hazards, including fire or explosion, can result. If an appliance valve or a gas line is left open when the propane supply runs out, a leak could occur when the system is recharged with propane.

Air and moisture could get into an empty or depleted storage tank, which can cause rust build-up inside the tank. Rust can decrease the concentration of the odor of propane, making it harder to smell. If your propane tank runs out of gas, any pilot lights on your appliances will go out. This can be extremely dangerous.

