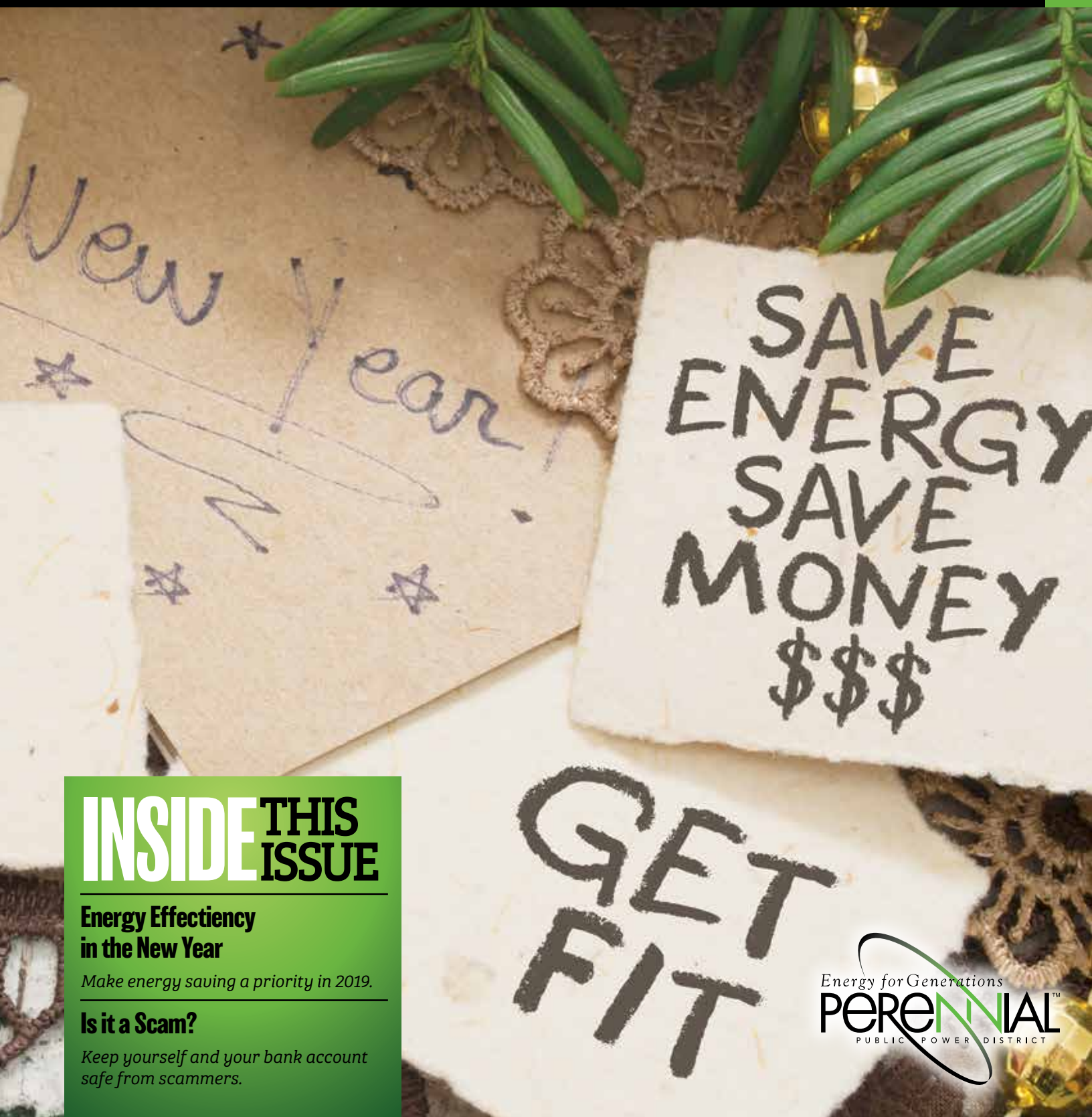


Perennial NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE
PERENNIAL PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT

December 2018
Vol. 19
No. 6



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Energy Effectency in the New Year

Make energy saving a priority in 2019.

Is it a Scam?

Keep yourself and your bank account safe from scammers.

GET FIT



Good News - No Rate Increase, Again

Rates for electricity have not increased since January of 2013, and I am pleased to report that once again our rates will not increase next year. This is good news for all customers, but particularly for farmers as they have seen a significant drop in net income, as production expenses have risen, while corn and soybean prices have taken a deep dive since our last rate increase. The last thing they need is an increase in farm input prices.

Why is it that Perennial can go six consecutive years without raising its price of retail electricity? As much as I would like to claim that it is because of the astute management of the District, in fact,

it is largely due to the stable cost of the wholesale power that we purchase from Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) on behalf of our customers. We ride on their coat tails so to speak. NPPD has announced that the price for wholesale power will essentially remain the same in 2019 as it was this year, and for that matter what it has been for the past several years. Nearly seventy cents of every dollar that we collect from our customers is used to pay for wholesale power. Without question, it's the input price that drives our retail rate bus.

I don't want to give anyone the impression that our other costs of doing business, such as our cost of labor, materials, and overheads have no bearing on how much we charge the District's customers for electricity. Of course, they do. The cost of these items tends to go up every year. But, historically our growth in energy sales to new customers and the expansion of electric services for existing customers have been able to cover these increased costs.

Not having to raise rates while we continue to make investments in the District's electric system to maintain reliability of service, quite frankly, makes our board of directors and employees feel good. It's very rewarding to be able to pay for the nearly \$3 million of equipment, new power lines, and maintenance activities that we have in our 2019 Work Plan, without having to charge our customers higher prices.

As compared to the cost of other goods and services, the price of electricity here at Perennial, and throughout the rest state is still a good value. Nationally, electricity costs 15 percent more than

it does in our state. And while the Consumer Price Index has increased over 5 percent in the Midwest since 2013, electric rates have remained relatively flat.

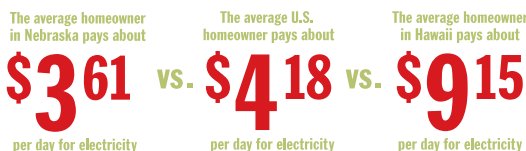
To further explain what a good value electricity is, all that we need do is compare its price to that of other items that we buy on daily basis. Our average daily cost of electricity is much lower than, for example, a fast food meal that people buy without questioning its price. Yet, it's upsetting to us when our electric rates

increase because electricity is a necessity. We can't live our lives without it. And because we can't cut electricity out of our budget, the best thing we can hope for is that its price will not go up.

No one can predict with great certainty what the future holds with respect to the cost of electricity. But I can say that next year, just as we have for the past five years, we will continue to make improvements to the District's electric system and operate the business as usual without an increase in rates. That is good news!



Jamey Pankoke
General Manager



A drive-thru meal COSTS MORE than a day's worth of electricity for an average Nebraska homeowner



Source: Energy Information Administration, Form EIA-861, "Annual Electric Utility Report." Data obtained November 2017. All data is final. Provided by the Nebraska Power Association.

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SmartHub Makes Energy Management More Effective.

When we introduced SmartHub we knew it would be a convenient online payment tool for our customers. SmartHub is a secure online payment option that allows you to take care of your bill quickly. Many of our customers also take advantage of the mobile app to access the tool at their fingertips.



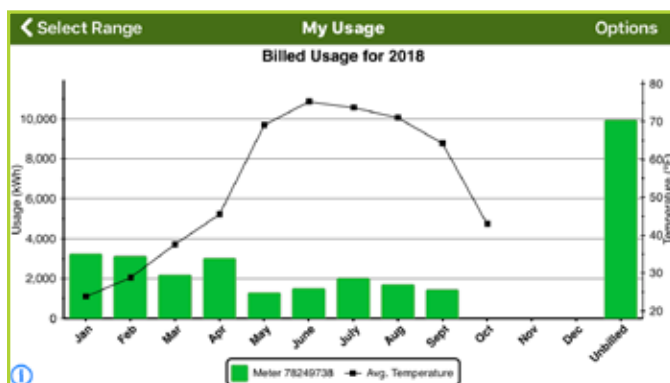
But there is another feature of SmartHub that may be overlooked: the ability to monitor and manage energy use. Having access to this information

could allow you to make real-life changes to the way you use electricity and ultimately what you pay every month.

The My Usage section of SmartHub provides several tools to help you analyze your past and current usage, as well as plan for the future.

Average Usage

Have you ever wondered when you typically use the most energy? Is it on Saturday when the whole family is home? Or does your electricity usage spike when the kids get home from school? The average usage tool allows you to see what your typical electricity use is for a specific time period. You can view your average usage by month or day of the week to discover when you use the most electricity.



Usage Explorer

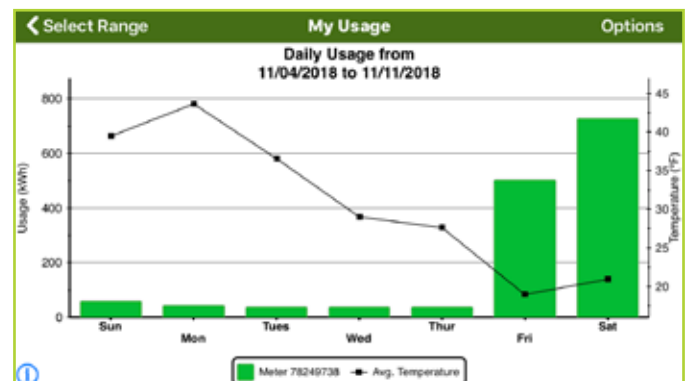
The usage explorer tool gives you a detailed look at your past and current usage, all in one place. You can look at your electricity usage by month, day and even hour.

Usage Comparison

The usage comparison tool lets you compare two bills worth of electricity usage side-by-side. For example, you could compare the difference in your electricity use year by year, month by month or any other combination.

Weather Overlay

One of the best features of SmartHub is the weather overlay feature which shows how your electricity use changes with the temperature. Electricity use typically follows weather patterns closely. When the outdoor temperature is high or low, you'll probably see the amount of electricity you use go up, as well.



Because our billing cycles run about a month behind, it's easy to forget about February's winter cold snaps when you get the bill in the nice March weather. The temperature overlay makes it easy to go back and look at the weather patterns that affected your bill. This overlay is available on the usage explorer, usage comparison and average usage charts.

Usage Planning

With the usage planning tool, you can mark specific points in time to help you keep track of the difference in your energy bill. For example, you could mark when you installed a new water heater or heat pump to see how your electricity usage changes going forward. This is a great way to track savings from any energy-efficiency improvements you make to your home.

Make a New Year's Resolution to Use Less Energy Next Year

Two of the most common New Year's resolutions are saving money and dieting, home owners can combine these two by going on an energy diet. By adopting some easy, low-cost strategies, you can save on energy costs all year long.

- 1. Adjust the thermostat.** Properly adjust the thermostat when the home is unoccupied to avoid wasting energy by heating (or cooling) an empty house. For simplicity



you can install a programmable thermostat and it will adjust itself for you. If you go the programmable thermostat route, you should set it to adjust

when you are away from home or asleep, and you won't sacrifice comfort to save on heating and cooling costs. According to energy.gov, a programmable thermostat can save you up to 10 percent off your heating and cooling costs. Some of the newer thermostats available allow you to adjust the temperature setting from your mobile device. If the weather is different than expected that day, you can adjust the temperature and save money even when you are not at home.

- 2. Use sunlight to your advantage.** During the winter open curtains and take advantage of Nebraska's amazing sunshine to help warm and brighten your home.



Use the sun to your advantage.

In summer use light colored window shades or blinds to reflect heat back outside and keep your home cooler. Using natural light also helps reduce costs for lighting.

- 3. Maintain heating and cooling systems.** Clean or replace furnace filters regularly and have the system checked by a qualified technician. We have a rebate for Cooling Tune-Ups to help pay for the cost of having your system checked



Mark when filters are replaced to keep them up to date. NRECA photo.

by a qualified technician. We also have paired up with FilterEasy to help you remember to change your furnace filters regularly. For more information on both of these programs, visit our website perennialpower.com or call our office at 402-362-3355.

- 4. Need a new appliance?** Think Energy Star®. Appliances and electronics account for about 20 percent of the average household's energy use. Efficient appliances can reduce your use of energy and water. For example, an Energy Star® clothes washer uses about 40 percent less energy than conventional washers while also reducing water bills.
- 5. Insulate your walls and attic.** Proper insulation is a cost-effective way to save energy all year round; insulation keeps your home warm in winter and cool in summer by slowing heat transfer.
- 6. Keep the cost of heating water low.** Water heating costs households as much as 18 percent of their energy costs. Set the water heater no higher than 120°F and consider installing a low-flow showerhead.
- 7. Switch to energy-efficient lighting.** About 10 percent of your energy costs go towards lighting. Just replacing five of your home's most frequently used lights with energy efficient bulbs, like LED light bulbs, could save you \$75 a year.

8. Use an electronic power strip for your electronic equipment. Many electronic devices use power when not in use. Often called “energy vampires” these devices cost families as much as \$100 a year. Use a power strip for electric devices and turn it off when not in use. Also, unplug chargers – they draw energy even when they aren’t connected to a device.



Switch off unused appliances with a power strip. *Touchstone energy photo.*

9. Stop energy leaks. Install weather stripping around doors and windows to ensure they are properly sealed. Caulk around leaky windows, doors, or any other part of your home that needs to be sealed where weather stripping is not appropriate.

10. Get Advice Before Making Larger Investments. Perennial Public Power District provides free walk-through home energy audits. Additionally, Perennial offers a Home Energy Advisor available on our website, to help advise customers on the best improvements to save on your energy bills. We provide a complete suite of rebates for everything from heat pumps to attic insulation – we’re your partner in energy savings.

Remind everyone in your family to make saving energy a priority. Turn off lights when you aren’t in a room. Turn off power strips to televisions, game systems, etc. that aren’t in use. Take shorter showers. Consolidate loads of laundry and dishes to make the best use of hot water. Work with your family to start a conversation about energy savings every month. It’s no secret that New Year’s resolutions can be hard to keep. To help you stay on track, set specific measurable goals. The money you save should provide enough incentive to keep you going all year long. Make a resolution for 2019 to be a more energy efficient year in your home!

Use Space Heaters and Electric Blankets Safely This Winter

Nothing can put chills down your spine quite like winter weather creeping its way through every crack of your home. To save money and stay warm, many chose to turn down the heat and plug in space heaters or electric blankets. While these products may be a simple solution from the cold, Perennial Public Power District and Safe Electricity warn that they can also cause fires if caution is not used.

Follow these tips for safely using space heaters and electric blankets:

- ✔ Read and follow all space heater and electric blanket instructions.
- ✔ Check space heaters and electric blankets before use. Cords should not be frayed, brittle, or cracked. The blanket should not have any charred or dark areas.
- ✔ One of the biggest causes of fires is one of the most easily avoidable. Many fires start when flammable products are placed too close to heating devices, such as space heaters. Space heaters should be kept at least 3 feet from blankets, clothing, paper, and other flammables.
- ✔ Place space heaters out of high-traffic areas and on a level, hard, non-flammable floor surface—NOT on carpets, furniture, or countertops.

- ✔ Look for a space heater that has guards from heating elements and automatically shuts off if it is tipped over or overheating.
- ✔ Do not attempt to warm your entire home using space heaters. Space heaters are useful in small areas, such as a study or living room. However, if you need to keep large areas warm, your home heating system will do the job more efficiently.
- ✔ Plug space heaters directly to the outlet, and never use an extension cord.
- ✔ Only use electric blankets with an automatic shut off designed to prevent the blanket from overheating.
- ✔ Pets should never be allowed to sleep on top of electric blankets.
- ✔ Electric blanket wires should never be bent or tucked under a mattress.
- ✔ Replace old or damaged electric blankets.
- ✔ Choose a space heater or electric blanket with a safety certification. You should look for the UL, ETL, or CSA mark on the device. These verify that the product has been tested and is safe to use.
- ✔ Always remember to turn off space heaters and electric blankets when not in use. Never leave one of these devices on unattended or after going to bed.

To learn more on how to avoid electrical hazards, visit SafeElectricity.org.

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Is it a Scam?

Here at Perennial you can count on us to take every precaution to secure your personal information and keep it safe. We share your concerns about the safety and security of your personal information. We protect and secure your personal information using the latest safeguards like firewalls and secure socket layers (SSL) to encrypt and protect sensitive transmissions. Perennial Public Power District never shares your personal or account information with any outside parties, in fact, our Bylaws forbid it.

If you have any reason for concern or suspect a problem, call Perennial at 402-362-3355 to verify identification.

What should you do if you suspect someone is currently at your home or place of business impersonating a Perennial Public Power District employee?

- Call Perennial at 402-362-3355.
- Do NOT let the individual inside your home.
- Do NOT go outside with the individual.
- Do NOT provide them with your account number, any personal or financial information.
- Call the police if Perennial has confirmed it is NOT one of our employees.

If you suspect someone has already visited you impersonating a Perennial Public Power District employee to obtain personal or financial information, please contact us immediately at 402-362-3355.

What Scammers May Do:

Unauthorized Phone Calls (Spoofing)

Spoofing is the latest scam, which makes you think a phone call is coming from a legitimate company rather than who's really on the line. Lawbreakers can mislead customers by changing their outgoing number to make it appear as if they are calling from Perennial Public Power District. The more sophisticated scammers have even copied or duplicated Perennial's recorded options to fool uninformed victims. They usually claim the customer's account is past due and that their electricity is about to be disconnected if they do not provide payment immediately. Often, the customer is asked to purchase a pre-paid debit or credit card and provide the account number on the card. With access to the account number, the criminals use the money on the pre-paid card for their benefit.

In-Person Collection Visits

Criminals have been known to visit customers in-person, claim the customer's account is past due and that their electricity is about to be disconnected if they do not provide payment immediately. When Perennial is visiting for a collection call, they will be in uniform and traveling in a vehicle marked with Perennial Public Power District logos. Criminals, operating in Nebraska have frequently targeted senior citizens or those speaking English as a second language.

Perennial Public Power District does NOT call or visit customers to ask for personal or financial information like a credit card, debit card, banking information or social security number over the phone.

Email Scam

Digital scammers have been targeting utility members with an email linked to a false payment website. The email subject line reads "Is Your Perennial Electric Bill Due Tomorrow?" with a link to mint.com, a bill paying service not connected to Perennial Public Power District.

What Perennial Public Power District is Doing

When an account is past due, a past due notice is mailed to the account billing address. If the account is not paid, we call the primary account telephone number with a pre-recorded courtesy reminder letting them know the account is past due. If a payment is due, customers may contact Perennial Public Power District to make a secure payment in one of three ways:

- Call us at 402-362-3355.
- Visit us our office to make a payment.
- Leave a payment in the Geneva Drop Box (but no cash can be accepted at this location).
- Pay Online through SmartHub, our secure customer portal.

When Perennial Public Power District Visits

If a Perennial employee needs to visit a customer's home for a service-related issue or a collection call, they will be in uniform with a Perennial Public Power District logo. They will also arrive in vehicles marked with Perennial Public Power District logos.

If you have any reason for concern or suspect a problem, please call Perennial Public Power District to verify the identity of the employee at 402-362-3355.



Important Dates to Remember

December 24-25, 2018 - Christmas

Perennial's office will be closed in observance of Christmas. Wishing you a joyous Christmas!

December 31, 2018 - Deadline for Applying for Utility Line Scholarship

Perennial is offering a \$1,000 per year scholarship to a student planning to enroll in an accredited utility line program. Applicants must reside within Perennial's service area to be eligible.

January 1, 2019 - New Year's Day

Perennial's office will be closed in observance of New Year's Day. Have a safe and happy New Year!



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Got holiday leftovers? When possible, use the microwave to reheat food. Microwaves use as much as 80 percent less energy than a standard oven.

Do you have any leftover turkey from your holiday celebration? Try out this quick turkey casserole that can be cooked in your microwave.

Microwave Leftover Turkey Casserole

Servings: 6

Ingredients:

- 4 cups cooked turkey, cut in small pieces
- 1 1/4 cup minute white rice, uncooked
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 tbsp butter
- 2 cups milk
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese, divided

Directions:

In a 2-qt. microwave safe bowl, mix onion and butter. Cover and microwave on high for 2 minutes or until butter has melted. Stir in milk. Cover and cook on high for 3 to 5 minutes or until milk is steaming. Stir in rice. Cover and let stand for 2 minutes. Add remaining ingredients (only 1/2 cup cheese). Cover and microwave for 5 to 6 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining cheese.

