



BALANCING THE GRID: *Promoting Growth and Saving Energy at the Same Time*



**Dunn Energy
Cooperative**
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

By Jesse Singerhouse,
General Manager

If you are a regular reader of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*, or someone who has heard our peak alert commercials, you may have noticed something that seems a little contradictory. On one hand, we are encouraging the use of electricity for things like appliances, water heaters, and heat pumps. On the other hand, we send out peak alert messages asking you to turn off or delay using non-essential appliances until after 8 p.m. in the summer. So why are we promoting energy growth and energy conservation at the same time? It is actually the smartest way to keep your electricity rates stable and affordable.

When I think about our electric grid, I often compare it to the highway/interstate system. There are 2–4 hours each day when the two-, four- or eight-lane interstates can't handle all the traffic, and it would be clearly beneficial to have more lanes. But the other 20+ hours each day the number of lanes we have available work just fine and some lanes don't see much traffic. Large cities also promote things like carpooling and taking public transportation to help reduce congestion on the road.

Our electric grid works the same way; we must have enough generation sources, transmission lines, substations, poles, distribution wires, transformers, and meters to handle

By shifting some of your electricity use to earlier in the morning or later at night, we may avoid buying higher-priced peak power.

the single highest demand hour each year. Many of the other hours of the year see lower demand. We also promote energy conservation to help reduce demand on the electric grid.

Your cooperative works diligently to flatten the peak (load management). When we send a peak alert notice or ask you to participate in our load management program we are trying to reduce “rush hour traffic.” By shifting some of your electricity use to earlier in the morning or later at night we may avoid buying higher-priced peak power. Those savings help keep your energy rates lower. Using our highway analogy, this reduces the need to expand the number of lanes.

Your cooperative also looks for ways to fill the valley (beneficial load growth). If you think about that same highway at 2 a.m., there is probably little to no traffic on it. The infrastructure is already built and paid for, but it is not being used. (2274005) That is where beneficial load growth comes in. By selling more electricity when the grid is underutilized, we can spread our fixed operational costs like line maintenance, tree trimming, and staffing over more total energy sales. This makes your energy cooperative more efficient and helps keep rates stable for every member. Our goal is to balance and optimize the electric grid.

By flattening the peak and filling the valleys of the electric grid your cooperative will be in a better position to safely deliver you reliable, affordable, and environmentally responsible energy.

Working for You

Hidden Account Numbers

If you find your account number hidden in the pages of this magazine and you call and tell us before the next issue is mailed, we'll put a **\$50 credit** on your electric bill. Happy hunting!

Last month's winners: Robert & Harriet Shumski and David Wulle.

TROUBLESHOOTING A HIGH BILL

Let's talk about your energy usage

This time of year we get a lot of phone calls with members saying their bill seems unusually high, so we thought we would take a few minutes and a page or two to discuss usage, how to see trends in your own usage, and how we can help you when you need it.

First, let's answer the question of whether or not your bill is unusually high, or if it's just high compared to the last couple of months. Now, this is important because July usage (summer heat and humidity) looks a lot different than May usage (cool and typically without HVAC usage) and we want to compare apples to apples.

This section on your bill has a lot of information, but for troubleshooting your energy use you want to focus on the kilowatt-hour (kWh) usage.

Now ask yourself these questions:

- » **Do the top and bottom lines scoot out further than the rest?**
- » **What's the actual difference in usage between the two?**



If the top and bottom lines both extend farther than the rest, you know you have a summer heavy load. The question is, is your usage in line with the same month last year? If so, you've answered your first question. Now, keep in mind, we're not going to get real excited about a 100 kWh difference, as that could be as little as a few extra cycles of the dishwasher running. Now, if you get to a couple hundred kilowatt-

hours or more difference, it might be beneficial to start looking into it.

If you feel it's a big difference, you have to ask yourself if you've changed anything in the last year.

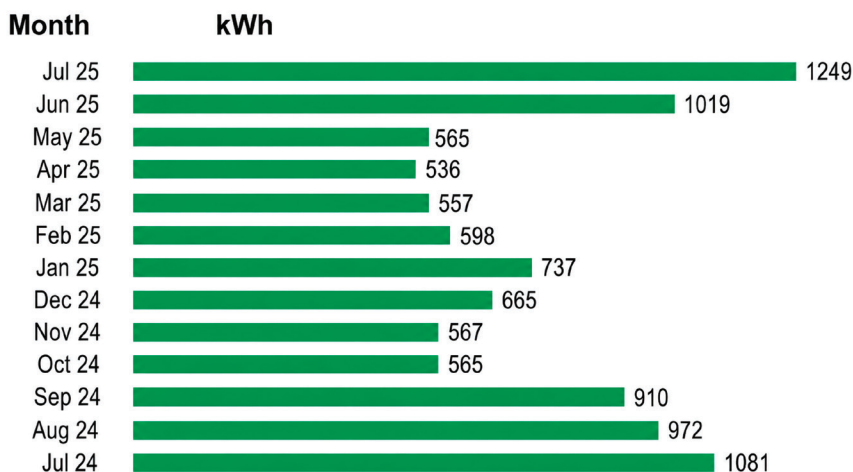
- » **Did you add a dehumidifier or an additional window a/c unit?**
- » **Did you add a pool for the kids, with a pool pump?**
- » **Speaking of kids, are there more at home this summer? Are they inside more than outside?**
- » **When was the last time you had an A/C unit tune-up?**
- » **Are the coils full of debris?**

Digging Deeper with SmartHub

If you can't think of anything in particular that you've changed since last year, then it's time to do some digging. The first stop is **SmartHub**. When you log in, navigate to the **Usage Explorer** to see your daily usage.

When you bring up the month in question and look at the daily usage, what do you see?

EXAMPLE: DAILY USAGE

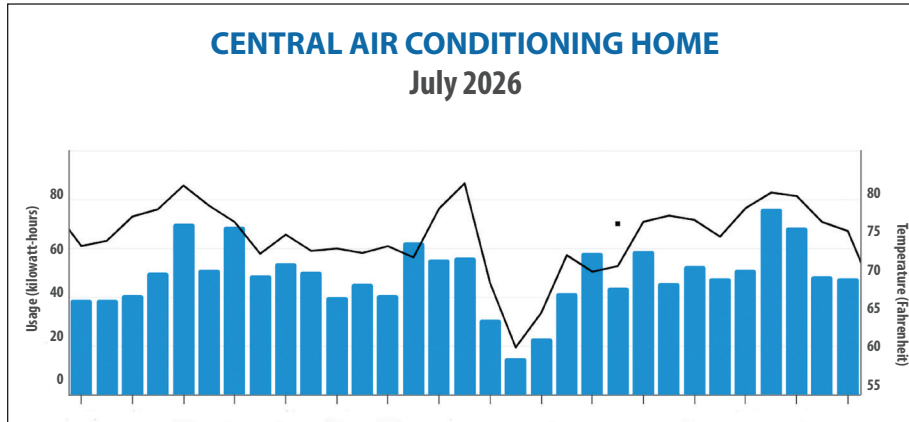


Your bill contains a lot of information, but when troubleshooting energy use, the most important number to focus on is your kWh usage.



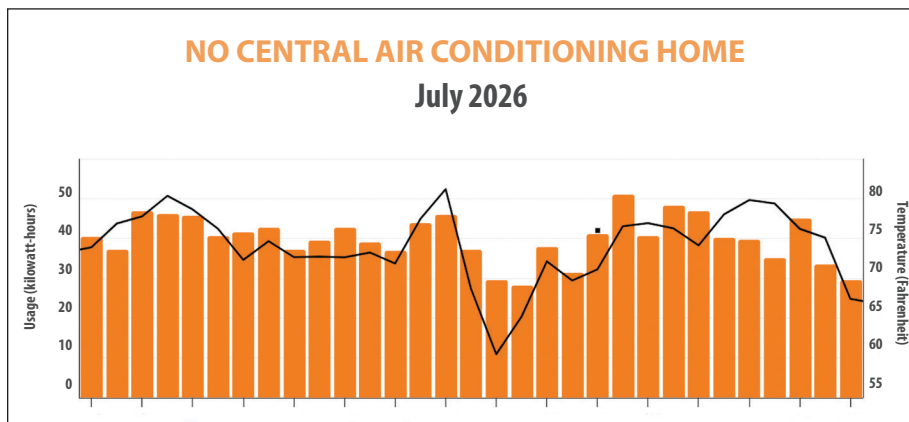
Is the daily usage roughly the same every day? That shows us that you have something drawing the same number of kilowatt-hours each day. This means it isn't something that turns on and off with the temperature (HVAC units).

Let's look at two different graphs, from two Dunn Energy employees, that tell us two different things.



The household in the graph above has central air conditioning, and their usage visibly goes up and down with the black temperature line. The hotter it gets, the harder the a/c unit has to work.

The household in the orange graph below does not have central air conditioning. The usage is relatively flat and minimally follows the temperature line. This member has a dehumidifier that runs all summer long and runs fans and a window a/c unit for when it's really hot. This coincides with constant daily draw for energy.



So, what do your graphs tell you? Is this month's usage in line with last year at the same time? Is your monthly usage flat because something is running all the time, or does it go up and down with the temperature?

If your energy used to go up and down with the temperature, but now it's flat, that means you probably have something plugged in and drawing constant power that you didn't have before.

These are the types of things you can learn about your usage just by logging into your SmartHub account. You find clues to lead you on the adventure of finding out what's driving your energy usage. As always though, if you need help, we're just a phone call or email away.

Get signed in today to start taking control!

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR ENERGY USE WITH SMARTHUB



SmartHub makes it easy to track and manage your energy usage—anytime, anywhere.

- ▶ View daily and hourly usage
- ▶ Compare month-to-month trends
- ▶ Track high-usage days
- ▶ Monitor billing history
- ▶ Set notifications and alerts

Log in at dunnenergy.com or download the SmartHub app today!



BEAT THAT SUMMER HEAT

Are the dog days of summer getting to you? Well, here are some ways to help beat the heat!

Create outdoor shade

Since the invention of air conditioning, many homeowners forget the benefit of low-tech strategies of cooling their home. Awnings, canopies, and properly placed trees reduce the amount of solar gain indoors.

Bring some shade inside, too

Draw the blinds or curtains when the sun is beating down on your home. Curtains and mini blinds keep the sun from heating your rooms. Did you also know that you can get sun blocking screens for your windows as well?

Block out the rays

Speaking of sun blocking for your windows, if you don't want to replace the screens, you can get some simple film tint for your windows. This simple DIY treatment is another option for blocking those heat-causing rays.

Stack open windows

Did you know that opening both upstairs and downstairs windows in a home will create what's known as the



Dog days of summer getting you down?
Check out these tips to beat the heat!

“stack effect” that releases hot air upstairs and lets the cooler air remain downstairs. This is best used at night to remove the hot air from the day.

Seal leaks in your ductwork

Leaks in your ductwork can reduce the efficiency of your HVAC system by up to 40%. If possible, look at your ducting and use either real (not the brand) duct tape or other measures to seal open joints and other holes.

Consider an energy audit

If you don't even know where to start on your home efficiency journey, consider having a home energy audit. The out-of-

pocket cost for members to have an audit done is \$250. That covers the cost of a certified energy auditor coming to your home to test everything from leaks in the windows to the depth of your insulation. At the end, you get a report telling you exactly where you should start to make your home more efficient. (2447002)

If you're interested in an audit, please reach out to our office at 715-232-6240 or email info@dunnenergy.com and we'll go over the details.

Hopefully, some of these ideas will help you beat that summer heat during these dog days of summer!

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