



# Rural HIGHLIGHTS

Local News from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

## Water heaters and hard water



Through the years, we have received numerous calls about electric water heaters. They are simple appliances that have not changed in the last 30 years. An exception would be the increased tank insulation, and heat pump water heaters are a whole different creature. Traditional water heaters are basically a metal or plastic tank with thermostats, elements and a pop-off valve for safety. Metal water heaters have anodes that

are self-sacrificing and designed to attract particle. There are two elements, an upper and lower, but they never work at the same time. Once the upper thermostat is satisfied, power is directed down to the lower thermostat. The lower element will do most of the work, but the top element is designed to have top heating priority.

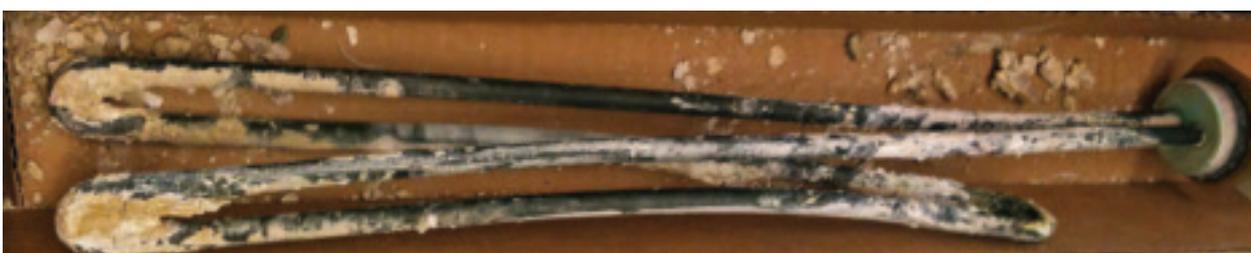
The cold water enters the top of the tank and travels down a tube into the bottom of the heater. The hot water is then drawn from the top of the tank. After initial heat up, the upper element will only function if the lower element cannot maintain tank temperature.

Far from an expert on water quality, I have experienced the negative effects that hard water has had on water heaters. We have changed elements on water heaters less than a year old. The calcium, magnesium, and other

solids tend to stick to water heater parts like a magnet. When heated, calcium carbonate can form on the element. This creates excessive heat in a single area, as opposed to heating a large quantity of water, resulting in element failure.

The tank needs to be drained to replace an element. A sure sign of sediment buildup is when water barely flows from the drain valve. Most water heaters will drain in 20 or 30 minutes, but a clogged one can take an hour or two. There have been times when I had to return the next day, because the tank was so full of sediment and drained so slowly.

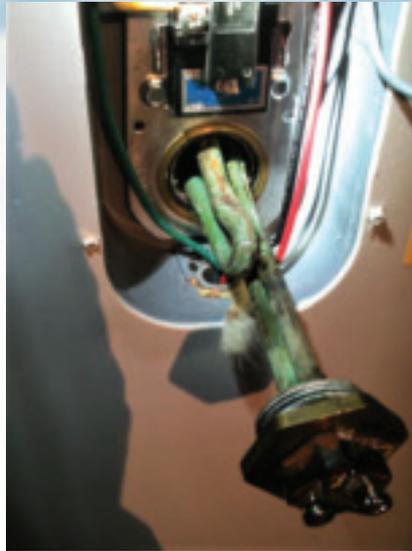
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The worst case is when the water heater simply will not drain at all. Twice, I have had to remove the element when the tank was full of water and under pressure. It is not difficult to install an element under these conditions, but it can be messy. There's also no guarantee the old element will resemble its original shape. It's often full of calcium buildup and has sprung apart, making it larger than the opening it must be removed from.

You may have hard water if you notice mineral deposits on your shower heads or spots on your dishes after cleaning. These signs may

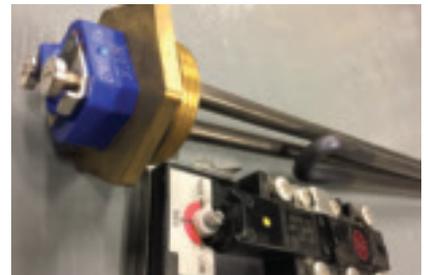


indicate a more serious problem. The scale buildup can eventually damage pipes and faucets, and greatly reduce the lifespan of your water heater. A typical water heater will last 8-12 years.

A water softener is the most popular choice for dealing with hard water. They remove the ions dissolved in the water. Most water softeners use salt and must be maintained. The salt that replaced the hard minerals can accelerate the corrosion of anodes in metal water heaters, so you may want to inspect them more frequently. A water heater should also be checked regularly to ensure there are no leaks.



Flushing is another option to prolong the life of your water heater. This involves draining all the water to remove the particles floating in the bottom of the tank. Water heater flushing is recommended yearly, but most homeowners ignore such advice.



### Steps to flushing an electric water heater:

- Turn off electricity and water to the water heater and allow to cool.
- Turn on any hot water faucet or open the w/h pop-off valve.
- Drain water from the heater's tank using a garden hose.
- Inspect a portion of the drained water by using a bucket.
- If sediment is found, refill heater and drain again.
- Continue this process until water is clear.
- Disconnect the hose and close the valve.
- Turn on the water and check for leaks.
- Turn off faucet and close pop-off valve once water is present.
- When tank is completely full, turn on the electricity.

# Protect your pets from electricity

You do all you can to keep your pets healthy: you take them to the veterinarian for checkups, feed them well and ensure they are up to date on vaccinations. After all, for many people, pets are part of the family.

Two-thirds (67 percent) of U.S. households, or about 85 million families, own at least one pet, according to the 2019-2020 National Pet Owners Survey. The survey was conducted by the American Pet Products Association, and the numbers are up 11 percent from 1988.

There is something else you can do for your pets, and that is to keep them safe around electricity. Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative and Safe Electricity offer these tips:

- Puppies and other pets love to chew on electrical cords. Keep cords out of sight or hidden with a cord cover. Provide teething or play alternatives.
- Watch your pet around dangling or sagging cords, including phone or tablet charging cables. Unplug charging cables once your devices are charged. Not only do they draw a small amount of energy when not in use, but the dangling cords are just crying to be played with.
- Watch where you place lamps and other plugged-in items. Lamps can be

a fire hazard if they are knocked over, especially if they have halogen bulbs.

- Do not leave your pet alone around items that get hot: curling irons and straighteners, an outdoor grill, a portable heater and other electric appliances, including cooktops.
- Pet proof your home much like you would for a baby or toddler. If you suspect your pet has

been shocked or burned, take it to the vet right away. Owners may not realize a pet has been shocked until a few hours later when it has trouble breathing. Other symptoms include ulcers in the mouth and lesions on the tongue and gums.

**For more information about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safeelectricity.org).**



*This little guy was kind enough to help us with a meter installation.*

# Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

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## 2020 budget approved

At the Dec. 19, 2019 regular board meeting, the board approved the 2020 operating budget, which includes a 3 mil PCA credit. The PCA credit will apply to kWhs purchased in all rate classes for 2020. Board summaries can be found on our website at recc.coop.

## Nominating committee to meet March 12

The board of directors will select nine co-op members to serve on the nominating committee, which will meet on Thursday, March 12 at 6:30 p.m. The committee will select candidates for director elections in three districts, to be held at the RECC Annual Meeting on June 11, 2020 in Chatham.

Director positions up for election to three-year terms this year are District 4 (incumbent Thomas Hart of Atwater), District 5 (incumbent John Beatty of Waverly, not seeking reelection) and District 6 (incumbent Mel Repscher).

Candidates may also be named by petitions signed by 15 or more members in that district. Petition forms are available from the co-op office in Auburn. All petitions must be returned by May 12, 2020 to be eligible for director elections at the annual meeting.

### Members serving on the nominating committee are:

#### District 4:

Mike Hart  
25445 Slightom Rd.  
Waggoner, IL 62572

Susan Fuchs-Holt  
3250 Morrisonville Ave.  
Farmersville, IL 62533

Brett Slightom  
26257 W. Frontage Rd.  
Farmersville, IL 62533

#### District 5:

Galen Bailey  
12896 Union School Rd.  
Auburn, IL 62615

Garry Niemeyer  
8370 Auburn Rd.  
Auburn, IL 62615

John Megginson  
13950 Lead Line Rd.  
Auburn, IL 62615

#### District 6:

Brian Abshire  
319 E. 1400 North Rd  
Pawnee, IL 62558

Ted Chapman  
3004 S. Spresser St.  
Taylorville, IL 62568

Thomas Vail  
1913 W. Vandever St.  
Taylorville, IL 62568

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Placing hot food in the refrigerator makes the appliance work harder than necessary, using more energy. Allow food to cool down before you place it in the fridge.

