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RG&E consumer news



Range Pilot Lights: *Insulating your home: part 7* On or Off?

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You are being bombarded from all directions with suggestions that claim to save you energy. While many of these ideas are sound, others such as the suggestion that you turn off your gas range pilot lights are not, for reasons I will explain.

The range pilot light consumes about one-third of the total gas used by the range, about 300 cubic feet per month equal to a cost of about 50 cents. During the winter the heat from the range pilots is added to the room. Without these pilots, the furnace would have to run longer to make up the difference, so the actual total saving is questionable. Although some saving of gas might result, there is a safety factor which must be considered, leading one to conclude that it is not practical as an energy conservation measure.

The American Gas Association points out that on a range with a top burner pilot light, if the pilot accidentally goes out, the gas escaping is not enough to create a hazard. However, if the top burner pilot goes out unknown to the user, and the burner turned on, enough unburned gas can

escape to create a hazard. For this reason the National Safety Council has also warned against turning off range pilot lights.

In addition, data from the National Commission on Product Safety shows that most injuries from gas ranges are accidents that happen when matches are used to light ranges without automatic burner ignition systems (that is, without pilot lights).

Energy conservation is important. But some suggestions such as this one, are just not sound when we consider all the factors. RG&E offers two booklets with safe energy-saving ideas that are effective. Send for the "Watt Watcher's Handbook" and "53 Ways to Save On Your Gas and Electric Bills" by sending the coupon on this page. The booklets are available without charge.

From the Home Service Department Buying Beef in Quantity

If you are thinking of buying beef in large quantities, you should have an understanding of what to look for and how to go about it. Too many people have been disappointed with their purchases only because they haven't known what to specify when ordering.

USDA Standards

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has set standards to help the consumer in decisions of quality and edible portion percentage. Grades of beef sold as retail cuts begin with USDA Prime and Choice, respectively highest in tenderness, juiciness, and flavor. USDA Good is tender and somewhat leaner but may lack some of the juiciness and flavor of the higher grades. USDA Standard has little marbling of fat, resulting in mild flavor and dryness unless prepared with moist heat. USDA Commercial comes from mature animals (the top four grades are restricted to young animals) and will be flavorful but require long, slow cooking with moist heat to tenderize. The three lowest grades — USDA Utility, Cutter, and Canner — are seldom, if ever, sold as retail cuts. They go mostly into ground beef or processed meat items such as hot dogs.

Another USDA standard is the "yield grade." This is a percentage measuring the yield of boneless, closely trimmed retail cuts from the high value parts of the carcass — the round, loin, rib, and chuck — to non-edible portions. Yield grades range from a high of one, 79.8% or more edible portion, down to five, 65.9% or less.

Forequarters and Hindquarters

A side of beef is divided into forequarters and hindquarters. Forequarters are usually more economical in price and yield — they have a smaller percentage of fat and bone to meat. However, the proportion of pot roasts, stewing meat, and ground beef is

greater than more tender cuts such as steaks and oven roasts. Hindquarters, on the other hand, yield a larger ratio of tender to less tender cuts but have more waste. If deciding between a forequarter and hindquarter, determine the variety of beef cuts and the method of cooking your family prefers, and consider the overall cost difference.

Check the Percentages

Beef may also be sold in packages consisting of several cuts of meats. The majority of the varieties may sound very attractive but find out the percentage of steaks and oven roasts to stew meat and soup bones, and the percentage of trim loss. If the beef is sold by "hanging weight," no excess bone and fat has been trimmed before pricing. You don't want to pay for a large quantity of waste.

Before signing any contract, protect yourself. Obtain a guarantee of return if your beef is found to be faulty after delivery. Be sure the company itself provides transportation for return — few customers have either the means or the strength to take back one hundred or more pounds of meat.

Packaging and Freezing

Come to terms on packaging and freezing. Find out if you must package the meat yourself, if the company will do it, if there is an extra charge for packaging. Ask if the wrapping paper is suitable for freezing (moisture — and vapor-proof), if the method of wrapping is airtight, if each package is labeled with cut and weight. Know whether or not the company "flash" freezes the meat for you at extremely low temperatures to eliminate flavor and texture loss, or if you must do it yourself.

In summary, the most important step to satisfaction you can take is research into your potential purchase.

A vapor seal is important

Adequate insulation will go a long way toward reducing your heating and cooling energy consumption, but if it's wet it just doesn't do the job. Furthermore, wet insulation can lead to costly structural damage in walls and ceilings and it may cause exterior paint to peel.

How does it get wet? Moisture gets into your home's atmosphere from everyday activities such as bathing, dish-washing, laundering, cooking and even breathing. If you have a power humidifier it adds moisture to the air. This moisture is not a problem unless it seeps through your walls and ceiling into your insulation. There it condenses and collects, reducing the effectiveness of the insulating material, while holding moisture in the house structure.

The way to combat these problems is to stop the moisture from going beyond the interior walls of your house. This is done with a vapor seal, also called a vapor barrier. Made of many different materials the vapor barrier is impervious to moisture as long as it is intact. If it is torn or if the edges are not sealed tightly, moisture can seep through it and into the insulation.

The backing on batt and blanket insulation is a vapor seal, whether it is made of aluminum foil or kraft paper. These batts must be installed so that the backing is toward the interior of the house. The flanges should be stapled every six inches along both sides, and the backing should not be torn.



Adequate insulation helps reduce your heating and cooling energy consumption.

Friction fit insulation, loose-fill, urea foam and cellulose fiber insulation need separate vapor seals. Two-mil thick polyethylene should be installed toward the interior of the house and again the barrier should not be torn or punctured in any way. Some interior paints will form an effective vapor barrier when it's impossible to install a separate vapor seal.

Some plastic insulations do not need any vapor seal as the insulating material serves as a vapor barrier also.

Good moisture control also includes venting high moisture areas. Clothes dryers, kitchens, and bathrooms all should be vented directly to the outside to carry away moisture-laden air.

If you have a power humidifier make sure you limit the relative humidity to the manufacturers recommendations particularly in cold weather.

What do you do if you can not put a vapor seal in your attic? This is where most moisture problems occur because the moisture collects and runs down the interior walls, causing unsightly stains and structural rot. As we said above, you should have a vapor seal right above the ceiling, but there are circumstances that make this impossible. In such a case make sure your attic is well ventilated to carry away excess moisture. Weatherstrip any openings to the attic to make sure your ventilation isn't carrying away heated air as well.

If there is insulation in your attic and you want to add to it go ahead, but never lay a vapor seal over the existing insulation. Doing so would form a moisture trap and compound all the problems discussed above.

This month at RG&E's Consumer Information Center you can learn a lot about insulating your home. Come in and see what a difference proper insulation makes.

The Center is located on the Main Floor of 89 East Avenue and is open during office hours.

Home Owner's Seminar To Be Held This Month

The annual Home Owner's Seminar, sponsored by the RG&E Residential Department, will be held this spring on April 17 and April 24. On both nights the Seminar will be held in the RG&E Auditorium at 89 East Avenue and will begin at 7:30 P.M.

For over ten years these seminars have been helping thousands of owners of new homes and remodelers of older homes understand the importance of proper wiring, good heating and air conditioning systems, and what constitutes adequate insulation. This year the Seminar will stress energy-saving ideas. Ideas that will provide you more comfort in your home and more utility of electrical-mechanical systems.

On Wednesday, April 17, the Seminar will feature House Wiring, Insulation, and Ventilation and Humidification. Heating and Air Conditioning will be the topic of the second Seminar, Wednesday, April 24. Representatives from the Residential Department will discuss both Gas and Electric Heating.

Refreshments will be served and a door prize will be awarded at both sessions. There will be free parking for participants of the Seminar in the Company lot on Lawn Street behind the Main Office.

For your free tickets to the Seminar, fill in the coupon on this page and let us know how many you need and for which nights. (You may, of course, and probably should, attend both sessions.) Or, you can receive tickets by calling the Residential Department 546-2700, and asking for extension 2751. Tickets are required for admission.

FILL OUT AND RETURN THIS COUPON TO:
Dept. 34 Rochester Gas and Electric
89 East Avenue, Rochester, N.Y. 14649

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