



JUNE 2020

THE WHEAT BELT CONNECTION

SMART THERMOSTAT OPTIONS

A COMPARISON OF THE MARKET'S SMARTEST AND MOST POPULAR

By Maura Giles ~ NRECA's Straight Talk

Heating and cooling costs account for about half of a user's energy bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. So, when it comes to reducing energy use and cutting home energy costs, the most impact can be made by programming the thermostat. The right thermostat settings could yield energy savings of 8-15%, and new technology is making it easier than ever to achieve those savings.



Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and may be controlled remotely through a tablet, smartphone or voice control. Some models use multiple sensors to monitor temperatures in various parts of the home for more balanced heating or cooling, track user temperature preferences and use the data to optimize your heating and cooling schedule. Some are designed for complex multi-stage systems that will control heating, cooling, dehumidifier and ventilation systems.

If you're interested in controlling your thermostat with your voice or an app, or in being hands-off and letting it learn your habits, you should consider a smart thermostat. To narrow your choices, factor in smart features, price and attributes that matter most to you, such as color, size or style, and make sure the chosen product supports your HVAC system.

The Nest 3rd Generation Learning Thermostat and
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Editor - Yolanda Hruska

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OUR NEW WEBSITE

Please visit us at www.wheatbelt.com and check out our new look. We hope you love it as much as we do!

A big thank you to Tri-State G&T for their help & support.

We welcome questions. Click "Contact Us" and use one of the listed options.

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Ecobee4 are the most popular and sophisticated devices in this category. Both devices are usually priced around \$250, but consumers can easily recoup their money in energy cost savings.

There are many similarities between the two thermostats. Both can be adjusted via computer, tablet, smartphone, Google Assistant or Amazon Alexa device (the Ecobee4 even has a built-in Alexa-enabled speaker). And both thermostats can interact with other smart devices and utilize geofencing—using your phone's GPS to determine if you're home, then automatically adjusting the temperature. Nest's geofencing works with multiple phones, while Ecobee supports just one phone. Ecobee makes up for this with its more sophisticated sensors.

The Nest and Ecobee offer for purchase, remote sensors that allow the thermostat to take readings from any room throughout your home and adjust the temperature accordingly. This can be an advantage if your thermostat is located near a draft or in direct sunlight. The Ecobee's sensors go one step further with occupancy sensing, which notices if there is movement in the house, in order to override geofencing if the primary phone user leaves the house and someone is still there.

While many of the features are similar, there are a few that are notably different and can help you determine which is right for you.

Nest, powered by a rechargeable battery, is a learning thermostat and automatically learns your schedule. When you begin using Nest, it makes a few assumptions and creates a baseline for its schedule. As you adjust the temperature up or down, Nest records it, and after a week, learns your schedule and the temperature settings you prefer. From then, it continues to learn and respond to your adjustments. Nest also records 10 days of energy use data that shows you a visual of the times your system turned on and off during those

10 days. Nest also sends a monthly email report that includes a summary of your energy use compared to previous months and other Nest users.

Ecobee must be hardwire installed, utilizes a touchscreen and can analyze HVAC data for 18 months. All temperature and motion data from the thermostat and sensors is recorded, and can be accessed online by the owner to help you monitor total energy use, how the weather influences your use, and how your home efficiency compares to other users in your area.

The two thermostats also can connect with various energy devices in your home. Ecobee recognizes dehumidifiers and ventilators, and Nest recognizes heat pumps and auxiliary heat.

For those looking for a smart thermostat with fewer bells and whistles, the Honeywell Lyric T5+ is one of the market's most popular, priced around \$135. While it can't sense your presence or learn your schedule, it does have the geofencing feature and can interact with other smart-home devices, such as turning on lights when you arrive or leave home.

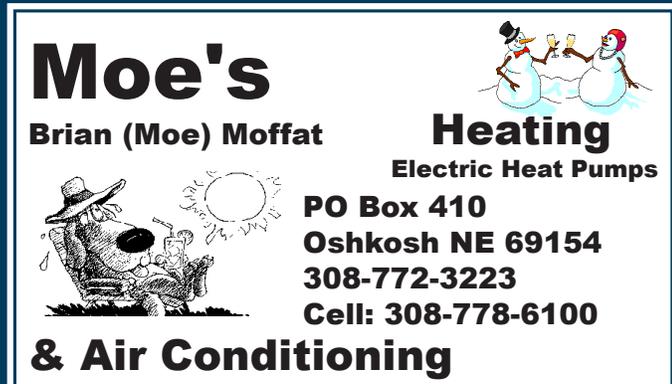
A smart thermostat is a good investment that can help you save energy and money in a more convenient way than ever.



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TIM'S TIDBITS

KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON

We plan and plan and plan. We plan for events we do not believe we will ever see. We plan for events that we believe are sure things. We attempt to think of everything that can go wrong and prepare to deal with it. These past few months have shown why we plan for things we never think we will see. The shutdown of our nation due to the Corona Virus is not something we thought we would have to deal with. However, through our planning for events such as these, it became a seamless transition for us to move to an alternative way of keeping the lights on.

Not keeping the lights on is not an option in today's world. Can you imagine how compounded the pandemic would have been if the power went out because nobody was able to keep the lights on? We have prepared for these types of events in all that we do. We have invested in technologies over time that allow for remote work. We have structured our processes to allow business to continue, while still keeping our team safe. Ultimately, we need to keep the team healthy and safe so that they can continue to keep the lights on. We have planned for the economic conditions, structuring around mitigating risks. We work with other utilities so that we can help each other in times of crisis. We have a robust network of people on whom we can rely, to keep this critical part of our country going.

We provide service at cost, no more, no less. We work to keep our rates as low as we can, without sacrificing reliability and safety. In good times and in bad, we work hard to provide a service as efficiently and inexpensively as possible.

My hope is that you did not notice anything different

with your electricity service throughout this pandemic. Outside of having our facilities closed to the public, hopefully we were able to keep your lights on, be available to answer your questions, and continue providing a reliable service without skipping a beat.

Though we hope this is a once in a lifetime event, we will continue to plan for these types of disruptions and be able to keep the lights on. Thank you for all you do for our communities and for your support during these challenging times.



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PREPARATION & AWARENESS ARE KEYS FOR FARM ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Farming is among the more dangerous occupations for several reasons, including potential for encounters with electrical hazards. Before taking to the fields, the

Safe Electricity program urges farm workers to be aware of overhead power lines and to keep equipment and extensions far away from them.

- Keep yourself and equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines in all directions, at all times. Use a spotter when moving tall equipment and loads.
- Use care when raising augers or the bed of a grain truck. It can be difficult to estimate distance, and sometimes, a power line is closer than it looks. Use a spotter to make certain you stay far away from power lines.
- Always lower equipment extensions, portable augers, or elevators to their lowest possible level, under 14 feet, before moving or transporting them. Wind, uneven ground, shifting weight, or other conditions can cause you to lose control of equipment and make contact with power lines.
- Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting larger modern tractors with higher antennas.
- Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path. If power lines near your property have sagged over time, call your utility to repair them.
- As in any outdoor work, be careful not to raise any equipment, such as ladders, poles, or rods, into power lines. Remember, non-metallic materials, such as lumber, tree limbs, tires, ropes, and hay, will conduct electricity, depending on dampness and dust and dirt contamination.
- If you are on equipment that contacts a power line, do not exit the equipment. When you step off the equipment, you become the electricity's path to ground and receive a potentially fatal shock. Wait until utility workers have de-energized the line and confirmed it is safe for you to exit the vehicle. If the vehicle is on fire and you must exit, jump clear of the vehicle with both feet together. Hop as far from the vehicle as you can with your feet together. Keep your feet together to prevent current flow through your body, which could be deadly.

Electrical work around the farm can also pose hazards. Often, the need for an electrical repair comes when a farmer has been working long hours and is fatigued. At such times, it's best to step back and wait until you've rested.

<https://safeelectricity.org/public-education/tips/preparation-awareness-keys-farm-electrical-safety/>



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