



SASKWATCH

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Tips to Go Greener Help the Environment & Save Money

- Remember to follow the 4 Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover.
 - Install compact fluorescent bulbs which use 60-80% less energy, last 6-10 times longer, and can save you about \$125 a year.
 - Wash full loads of laundry and switch to cold water. 85% of the energy is used to heat the water.
 - Choose a front-loading washing machine. It uses 40% less water and 50% less energy.
 - Use a clothesline. A dryer generates six pounds of greenhouse gases with every load.
 - Clean or replace your furnace filter every 1 to 2 months.
 - Consider purchasing a new ENERGY STAR® qualified furnace with a variable speed motor to save up to \$627 annually.
 - Lower your thermostat 4-5 degrees C (7-9 degrees F) overnight and when no one's home.
 - Repair leaky ducts and seal drafty doors, windows and baseboards and save up to 30%.
 - Install plastic film on windows.
 - Keep return air/heating vents clear of furniture, rugs and drapes.
 - Open south facing drapes on sunny days.
 - Close your drapes and blinds during the night.
 - Reduce your electric water heater from 140 to 120 degrees and save \$150 a year. Reduce heat loss by insulating tank and water pipes.
 - Reduce your daily shower from 15 to 10 minutes and save over \$100 a year.
 - Install low-flow showerheads. During a ten-minute shower you'll reduce your water usage from 160 to 76 litres.
 - Install new low-flush toilets and use 6 litres/flush compared to 23 litres, with older toilets.
 - Wash full loads in your dishwasher and air-dry on the "energy saver" setting.
 - Turn off those little gadgets you keep plugged in, like your ipod, cell phone and Blackberry chargers. Even keeping the coffee pot plugged in is wasting energy and costing you money.
 - Save energy and your computer monitor by searching with a black screen. Less energy used on monitors means less coal, oil, uranium, and other fossil fuels are being consumed. Details and information at: www.blaxle.com
 - Contact your utility company to see what tax incentives and rebates are offered for replacing power-hogging and water-guzzling appliances with eco-friendly ones. Info at: www.energystar.gov
 - Find out what the big energy users in your home are (and get suggestions for changes) with an easy home energy audit at: www.saskenergy.com
- More suggestions and ideas at:
www.oee.nrcan.gc.ca
www.climatechangesask.ca
www.environment.gov.sk.ca/gogreen
- (Energy Efficiency Programs, page 2)*

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Consumers' Association of Canada, Saskatchewan Branch, active since 1947, is a non-profit, volunteer-driven association committed to fairness in the marketplace and improving the quality of life for consumers. Through information and education, CAC Saskatchewan assists consumers make wise use of personal resources and endeavours to represent the consumer interest, in marketplace issues, with business and governments.

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2008-2009**

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Message from the President

Greetings from the Saskatchewan Consumers' Association. We are very pleased with our newly formatted *SaskWatch* which hopefully you find informative and interesting. Comments and suggestions for future issues are most welcome.

With the end of summer, we have entered a season of high consumerism with the re-opening of schools, institutes and universities. Just a reminder to be "**Consumer Wise**" and monitor what you're being charged at the cash register to ensure it's the advertised or tagged price.

Over the last three months the Association has made representation on behalf of you, the Saskatchewan Consumer, regarding the SaskPower Cost of Service Study and the

proposed increase in SaskEnergy rates. The detailed presentations are accessible on our website and additional information is included in this issue.

For this and subsequent issues we plan to include regular articles that focus on raising Ecological Consciousness. We hope to encourage our readers to introduce more "green practices" into their lives. Every individual step in this direction will expand the "green" footprint and together will impact on creating a sustainable environment for future generations.

Lastly, I wish our rural subscribers a bountiful harvest and everyone a Thanksgiving Day in which we enjoy the fruits of this harvest.

Maura Gillis-Cipywnyk

Energy Efficiency Programs

Saskatchewan EnerGuide for Houses (SEGH): provides grants up to \$5,000 to make energy efficient upgrades to your home.

Energy Efficient Rebate for New Homes: Build your new home with ENERGY STAR® qualified, R-2000 certified or EnerGuide rating of 80 or above and you may qualify for up to \$2,400 in rebates.

Saskatchewan Home Energy Improvement Program (SHEIP) for Low and Moderate Income Households: provides financial assistance to help make energy efficient improvements. Contact Sask Housing at: 1-866-388-8433.

Programmable Thermostat Rebate: Install a programmable thermostat and you may be eligible to receive a \$15 rebate.

PST Exemption: on all ENERGY STAR® qualified furnaces, boilers, ground and air source heat pumps.

Share the Warmth Home Energy Efficiency Program: SaskEnergy, Salvation Army & Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology volunteers team up to help Saskatchewan homeowners lower energy costs.

For more information on the above programs go to: www.saskenergy.com

EcoENERGY Retrofit Initiative: is a federal program to help Canadians retrofit their homes, buildings and industrial processes. Participating in the SEGH Program automatically qualifies you for a matching grant under this program. For more information go to: www.oee.nrcan.gc.ca

SaskWatch is available on line. Check out our web at:
www.consumersask.com.

Getting a Grip



It was snowy, windy and bone-chillingly cold - the perfect conditions for testing winter versus all-season tires. When a team of law enforcement officers, engineers and scientists gathered at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Academy (Depot Division) in Regina, Mother Nature certainly gave her full cooperation. *"We chose Regina not only for the facility but also because we were pretty well assured that we would get the conditions,"* says Glenn Carroll, a Canadian Police Research Centre project manager at the time of the testing.

Other players included the RCMP's Regina Police Driving Unit, the National Institute of Justice based in Anchorage, Alaska, scientists from the U.S. Army, and engineers from the Ford Motor Company in Michigan.

After testing winter tires from five manufacturers, the team confirmed that winter tires have a clear advantage on snow and ice. *"Even the worst performing winter tire outperformed the OEM (original equipment manufacturer) all-season tires,"* says Bruce Richter, program manager with the National Law Enforcement & Corrections Technology Center in Anchorage. *"Even when we shaved the winter tires to simulate 50 per cent tread wear, the performance was still superb."*

The results aren't surprising really, when you consider that all-season tires are produced for the global market and designed for the four seasons in North America. All-season tires harden in just below freezing temperatures, while winter tires stay flexible in extremely cold conditions. All-season tires are a compromise for all driving conditions and, as a result, they are adequate but not exceptional in wet, dry or snowy conditions. Snow tires, on the other hand, are specifically designed to provide better traction and braking in deep snow conditions, as well as greater stability and control on slushy roads. Full results of the testing are available at: www.nlectc.org.

Adapted from an article by Chris Sarauer and reprinted with permission of "Westworld Saskatchewan" magazine.

Tips for Winter Driving

- Use winter tires on all four wheels, not just on the drive wheels.
- Monitor tire pressure regularly: check when tires are cold and don't inflate above the tire rating or the manufacturer's recommended pressure.
- Slow down and watch your speed. Winter driving conditions mean visibility can be reduced. It also takes longer to stop and manoeuvre in slippery conditions.
- Make smooth steering adjustments. Jerky, rapid movements can lead to loss of control.
- Watch well ahead of your



vehicle to anticipate potential problems from hazards in your path of travel and changing road conditions.

- Store snow tires in a cool, dark, dry indoor location away from electric motors, as the ozone produced by electric motors can damage the tire rubber.
- Remove winter tires once the roads are clear of snow and ice and the reasonable threat of any spring storms has passed, then reinstall in the fall as soon as road conditions warrant.

Sources: CAA Saskatchewan, RCMP, CBC Marketplace

Allergy Alerts & Food Recalls

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is mandated to safeguard Canada's food supply and the plants and animals upon which safe and high-quality food depends. To find out what products have been recalled or to sign up to get notices by email go to: www.inspection.gc.ca or call: 1 800 O-Canada.

Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services (CCTS)

The CCTS was established a year ago, but few Canadians are even aware there's an agency where they can take their cellphone and internet gripes. In their first year, they fielded over 5,000 inquiries, with almost 2,000 qualifying for investigation, but compared with similar agencies in other countries, the figure is paltry. Consumer groups say the low number doesn't reflect a lack of angry customers, but the CCTS has spent the past year getting up and running and has yet to promote itself to the public. More info at: info@ccts-cprst.ca or phone: 1-888-221-1687.

Don't Get Caught by "Phishers"

SaskTel is warning customers about "phishing" expeditions that appear to be legitimate email requests, but are really attempts by fraudsters to obtain personal information. "Phishing" is tough to thwart because it's almost impossible to tell a phony email from a legitimate one. You shouldn't click on links in an unsolicited email to access a financial account since a fake email request could be used to steal your credit card number, savings account, or identity. Unless you're absolutely sure of the source, access your account only on your own, directly through a browser, or call the company at a phone number you've verified.

Preserving Old Music

If you don't know what to do with all your old music, you can donate it to the Saskatchewan Preserving Old Music Society who collect, catalogue, and store copies of music so this music doesn't completely disappear. For info phone: 584-0268 / 545-1360.

National Car Scrapping Program

The Federal Government is putting \$92 million towards a national car scrapping program to get older vehicles off the road. According to Environment Canada, these pre-1996 models produce about 19 times more air pollutants than newer cars and trucks. This program, expected to be fully operational by January 2009, will offer incentives to owners of pre-1996 vehicles to scrap their cars and choose more environmentally-friendly forms of transportation.

In Case of Emergency (ICE) Program

ICE will enable first responders to quickly contact the right person in the case of an emergency. The idea was thought up by a paramedic in the UK who found that at the scenes of accidents there were always mobile phones with the patients, but people didn't know which number to call. You simply have to put the acronym ICE before the names you want to designate as key contacts or next of kin - creating entries such as ICE1, ICE2 and ICE3. Be sure it's in your kid's cell phones, as well.

Right to Know Day - September 28

It was established on the 28th of September, 2002 in Bulgaria to celebrate the creation of the international Freedom of Information Advocates Network. The goal is to raise global awareness of individuals' right to access government information and to promote access to information as a fundamental human right. The Right to Know Day has grown and is celebrated in over forty nations worldwide. Check out: www.righttoknow.ca

Right To Know Week - Sept. 28 to Oct. 4

Professor Alasdair Roberts, an acclaimed international access to information expert, will be the keynote speaker on September 30, in Regina. On October 2, in Saskatoon, Right to Know Presentation is featuring Suzanne Legault, Assistant Information Commissioner of Canada. For more details: www.oipc.sk.ca/RighttoKnow.htm

PIECES

Bits & Pieces

Pruning Ban Lifted September 1st

The pruning of elm trees is prohibited from April 1st to August 31st to reduce the risk of Dutch Elm Disease. The beetles that spread the deadly disease are most active during this period and fresh cuts attract them. Now that the ban is over, home-owners are encouraged to prune their elm trees, since regular pruning helps keep trees healthy and better able to resist diseases. For more information, or to report a suspicious tree, call 1-800-SASK ELM.

Do You Employ Family Members?

If you do, and they pay for Employment Insurance, you and your family member(s) may qualify for a substantial refund. To find out if you qualify, go to: ei-refund.com or call an EI Refund Specialist, toll free, at: 1-888-999-2221.

Passport Needed

Starting June 1, 2009, a U.S. law will require Canadians to present a valid passport to enter the U.S. by water or land. A law already exists requiring Canadians to have a passport when entering by air.

Update Your Driving Skills

Take a 55 Alive Course from Sask. Safety Council:

- Gain more confidence behind the wheel
- Improve awareness of traffic hazards
- Identify and correct bad driving habits
- Voice concerns in a relaxed environment
- Update knowledge of traffic laws and technology

For more information phone: 306.757-3197.

Did You Know ...

- 30% of the electricity a TV (and other electronic equipment) uses is consumed when it is "off" as it's always drawing energy in order to turn on instantly?
- We breathe about 26,000 times a day, inhaling around 14,000 litres of air, so the air we breathe is important to our health, and if air quality deteriorates, our health can be affected.
- Saskatchewan has the highest rate of growth in greenhouse gas emissions in Canada.

Reduce Your CO² Footprint by Eating Locally

On average, each ingredient used in last night's dinner traveled approximately 2,000 kilometres. That's a lot of gas and resulting pollution. It also means your food spent a lot of time in transit. Getting fresher, healthier, tastier food (and reducing your CO² footprint) can be as easy as selecting locally produced foods. By eating locally, you can save over 200 kilograms of carbon emissions a year.

Digital Television Consumer Notice

After August 31, 2011, all analog televisions will require a converter box to receive Canadian over-the-air broadcasts using an antenna. U.S. TV stations, broadcasting over the air into Canada, will make this change in February, 2009. All Canadians will need to know what type of TV they own and how they receive broadcast signals to understand how to prepare. People with analog TVs, using over-the-air signals, will have to add a digital-to-analog converter box, or use a television with a built-in digital tuner. Those who already have televisions with a digital tuner or who subscribe to cable or satellite service should see no change. For questions contact the CRTC: www.crtc.gc.ca. (*Canadian Office of Consumer Affairs*)

Uses for Coffee Grounds

- Sprinkle a spoonful of used grounds over the soil of a potted plant once a week for high nitrogen, effective, chemical-free fertilizer.
- Keep bugs out of your kitchen by placing a pinch of coffee grounds in the corners of your cabinets.
- Place a small dish of used grounds where you don't want cats to go, like under the Christmas tree or near your potted plants. They can't stand the smell.

In the next 15 minutes the sun will provide the earth with enough energy to supply all of humanity all of its energy requirements for the coming year!

(from Solar Freedom International)

SaskEnergy: CAC/SK Speaks for Consumers

In July, SaskEnergy applied to the Saskatchewan Rate Review Panel (SRRP) for a Commodity Rate increase for the coming year and then submitted a further application on August 11th which substantially reduced the proposed increase.

The current rate is \$6.57/Gigajoule (GJ), the July application was for \$10.21/GJ, and the August application was for \$8.71/GJ.

The Commodity rate is a flow through of the cost of the natural gas plus the costs associated with purchasing it, reselling it and operating the gas inventories. Because the price of natural gas is very volatile, projecting the price

a year in advance is challenging.

With the assistance of an expert consultant, CAC/SK submitted questions to SaskEnergy, CAC/SK Board member Arne Paus-Jenssen made a presentation to the SRRP, and a final submission was submitted to the SRRP.

Among the concerns that CAC/SK raised were:

- The efficiency of SaskEnergy as a purchaser of gas.
- The large impact the rate increase will have on consumers, particularly those with limited means.
- The review process and the information provided make it difficult for individual consumers to participate in the hearings.

The SRRP recommended that the full amount requested in the August application be awarded, and on Sept. 10th the Government reduced that rate to \$8.51/GJ.

SaskEnergy has submitted a further application to increase the Delivery Rate (all the other costs incurred by the Corporation) effective November 1st, which is still being considered by the SRRP. If approved, the total increase in an "average" residential consumer's bill will be about \$19.50/month.

To read CAC/SK's full submissions, please go to our web site at: office.cacsk@sasktel.net

by Ruth Robinson

Five Amazing Things Your Cell Phone Can Do

Your mobile phone can actually be a life saver or an emergency tool for survival

(1) Emergency: The Emergency Number worldwide for Mobile is 112. If you find yourself out of the coverage area of your mobile network and there's an emergency, dial 112 and the mobile will search any existing network to establish the emergency number for you, and interestingly, this number 112 can be dialed even if the keypad is locked.

(2) Keys locked in the car? If your car has remote keyless entry, and you lock your keys in the car, if you can reach someone who has the other 'remote' for your car, you can unlock the doors. Call them on their cell phone from your cell phone. Hold your cell phone about a foot from your car door and have the other person press the unlock button on the car remote, holding it near the mobile phone on their end. Your car will unlock. Distance is no object.

(3) Hidden Battery Power: If your cell battery is very low, press the keys *3370# to activate. Your

cell phone will restart with this reserve and show a 50% increase in battery. This reserve will get charged when you charge your cell phone.

(4) How to disable a stolen mobile phone: To check your mobile phone's serial number, key in *#06#. A 15-digit code will appear on the phone's screen. Write it down and keep it safe so if your phone gets stolen, you can phone your service provider and give them this code. They can then block your handset so even if the thief changes the SIM card, your phone will be totally useless to them.

(5) Free Directory Service for Cells: Cell phone companies are charging \$1.00 to \$1.75 or more for 411 information calls. Since most of us don't carry a telephone directory with us, when you need to use the 411 information option, simply dial: (800) FREE411, or (800) 373-3411 without incurring any charge at all.

The National Do-Not-Call List (DNCL)

On September 30th the National Do-Not-Call List officially begins operating and will allow Canadians to reduce the number of telemarketing calls they receive. The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is organizing the Do-Not-Call List and has awarded a five-year contract to Bell Canada to operate it. Registration is free and will last three years, after which individuals will have to re-enter their information. Canadians can register landlines, cellphones and fax numbers.

The list, however, will have some exemptions: *"Consumers may still receive calls from registered charities, political parties, and newspapers*



seeking subscriptions. Companies with whom a consumer has an existing business relationship will still be able to call, as well as those conducting surveys," said the CRTC statement. *"Telemarketers will have 31 days to update their calling lists ... if people continue to receive non-exempt calls 31 days after they have registered, they can file complaints with the National DNCL operator."*

To register your number(s) on the National DNCL, you will be able to log on to: www.LNNTE-DNCL.gc.ca as of

September 30, 2008, and follow the instructions, or call 1-866-580-DNCL

Warnings & Recalls

For a listing of all recalls, and complete information about them, including: recall date, product name, full product description, hazard identified, corrective action, and images of the recalled products, go to: www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cps-recalls. Here is a partial list of August and September recalls.

Bravetti Stainless Steel Deep Fryer, Model F1053B: (Unit may overheat, causing the plastic base to melt and damage counter-top surfaces).

VAIO TZ Notebook Computers: (A short circuit may occur posing a remote burn hazard to the consumer. Irregularly positioned wires near the computer's hinge and/or a dislodged screw inside the hinge can cause a short circuit and overheating).

Black & Decker® brand Infracore™ Toasters: (An electrical component in the toaster can overheat and ignite the circuit board, posing a fire hazard).

Phil & Teds e3 Single Buggy, e3 Twin Buggy and sport v1 Single Buggy Strollers: (The stroller's hinge locking mechanism poses a laceration hazard to the user folding and unfolding the strollers).

"Sky Scrambler" Wireless Indoor Helicopter: (The rechargeable lithium ion battery inside the helicopters can overheat, catch fire, and pose fire and burn hazards to consumers).

"Geometric Stacker" by Melissa and Doug: Wooden stacking toy set. (*Surface paint on the toy contains barium in excess of the allowable limit).

"Wooden Alphabet & Number Blocks" by First Learning: 50 piece wooden alphabet and number block set; item no. 8409; UPC # 834162008198. (*Surface paint on the wooden toy blocks contains barium in excess of the allowable limit).

"Pop Up Toy" by Galt: Wooden block with 4 pop up pegs (spring action); product reference no. AO138L; UPC 5011979101389: (*Surface paint on the toy contains barium in excess of the allowable limit).

** Some forms of barium are safely used in medical and commercial applications, while other forms of barium can be toxic, causing adverse health effects such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and cramps as well as more severe symptoms. Children's toys coated with paint containing barium, in excess of the allowable limit, are strictly prohibited in Canada.*

You Asked

Q: What should I consider when buying a furnace?

A: *Consumer Reports* has not done a product comparison since there are only two main manufacturers in North America and all products function in a similar way. They recommend that it's more important to get the right size for your house and - most important - get it properly installed. Before making a purchase, ask a certified heating contractor to determine the right size of furnace for your home, taking into account recent technology developments, the heat loss/heat gain characteristics of your house, and other factors. An *EnerGuide for Houses* evaluation can help you identify possible measures to improve the overall energy performance of your home before you decide on the size of the furnace. Finding a qualified plumber is therefore more important than anything else. Remember

to get three estimates and ask many questions. Also ask your neighbours and friends for recommendations. And remember, Energy Star qualified furnaces and boilers are exempt from PST.

For further information call the CAC/SK office.

Q: What is the law regarding Universal Product Code (UPC) or bar code?

A: There is no law legislated, instead an agreed upon Scanner Price Accuracy Voluntary Code is in place, which was launched June 11, 2002 by the Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores, the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors, the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, and the Retail Council of Canada. Over 5,000 retailers across Canada are Voluntary Code participants.

The code applies to all scanned

Universal Product Code (UPC), bar coded, and/or Price Look Up (PLU) merchandise sold in stores, with the exception of goods not easily accessible to the public (e.g. prescription drugs), and individual price-ticketed items.

Attention shoppers: Pay close attention when your purchases are being scanned at the checkout. If the scanned price is higher than the shelf price, you can get it for free, up to a \$10 maximum. This is one of the key features of the Code, which is endorsed by the Competition Bureau. If the correct price of the product is higher than \$10, the retailer will give the customer a discount of \$10 off the corrected price.

For detailed information call the CAC/SK office. If a Code of Practice problem cannot be resolved at the store level, call 1-866-499-4599 to register your complaint.

Membership / Subscription

- I'd like a one-year CAC/SK membership (includes a one-year subscription to *SaskWatch*) \$25.00
- I'd like a one-year subscription to *SaskWatch* (4 issues) \$10.00
- I'd like to make a donation of \$ _____ \$ _____
- Total enclosed: (please make cheques payable to CAC/SK) \$ _____

- I would like to become a CAC Saskatchewan volunteer. I am interested in volunteering in the following areas: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street: _____ City: _____ Code: _____

Renewal Notice: Your membership expiry date is on the top line of your address label. We value you as a member and want to serve you in the interest of a fair marketplace. We look forward to serving you in the future and hope you will renew your membership.

