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Energy costs are monthly expenses that fluctuate throughout the year, since much of our heating and cooling usage depends on Mother Nature. This past month, I'm going to guess many of our energy bills will be increased thanks to the huge snowstorm we just went through! And although we can't control Mother Nature and her antics, we can make our homes more energy efficient and reduce some of our energy expenses by locating and switching off sources of phantom energy in our homes.

Reducing Your Energy Costs

Phantom energy usage occurs when a device is not performing its primary task but is still using electricity. Phantom energy users include many products that have a standby mode, such as microwaves, coffee makers and similar products that constantly display the time. Devices with remote controls, external power supplies and battery chargers are other examples of phantom energy culprits. These include televisions, cell phone chargers and cordless phones. These devices use electricity 24 hours a day when plugged into an outlet. Whenever I lived at home and in the dorm, I didn't pay attention to that phantom energy as much because, well, I wasn't paying for the bills! However, now that I am paying for my own energy bills most everything in my house stays unplugged when it's not in use and I only use the lights when absolutely necessary. Most people who visit my house compare it to a dungeon, but I am saving money!

The easiest way to reduce phantom energy usage is to

unplug these products when they are not in use. Sometimes this is easier said than done, especially if you regularly use the product. If you find yourself in that situation, you may want to consider purchasing a smart power strip to manage a group of electronics or a conserve power switch for small appliances.

Smart power strips are equipped with control outlets, switched outlets and constant outlets. The control outlets manage much of the power coming into the strip. When you plug a device into a control outlet and it goes into sleep mode, the strip will cut off the power to it and other devices placed on the switched outlets. The constant, or hot, outlet continuously provides power only to the product plugged into it. This is beneficial if you have devices like a fax machine or digital video recorder (DVR) that need to stay on regardless. Smart power strips are available at office supply stores and supercenters.

Conserve power switches are handy if you find it cum-

bersome to unplug all your small appliances or electronics after each use. These have an on/off switch that you can flip to control the power to a device, so you're not constantly plugging and unplugging your appliances or electronics. These switches are available online.

Reducing phantom energy use is one way to become more energy efficient. If you're interested in learning about other ways to manage your home energy use, the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service has a program to teach you how to use an online home energy self-assessment tool. This tool can help you understand how your home uses energy. For more information on this program or phantom energy, visit me at the Estill County Cooperative Extension Service or call 723-4557.

Educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.

VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

VA Starts Phasing Out Paper Benefit Claims

If you've been getting ready to file a paper benefit claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs, a deadline is looming that will force you to make a change.

The VA has tried recently to go paperless, meaning that veterans open and fill out a claim online. It says that speeds things up. The effective date becomes the date the file is first opened electronically, with one year to finish the details.

If you've wanted to stay with the old-school method and submit your claims via paper (even a letter or back of an envelope would suffice), you've been able to do that, with the effective date when your file is deemed complete.

Starting March 24, though, the VA is limiting your options. You can file online, or you can complete one of two paper forms. Form 21-0966 will be required as your Intent to File. This is the first step while you gather the balance of your supporting information. Then use Form 21-526EZ for official filing your claim.

That's it, period. If you don't follow the new rules, your claim will languish and you'll lose benefit time because nothing happens until you use the correct form, which is Form 21-0966. That one starts the clock running. And no, don't expect the VA to send you the right form, at least not quickly.

If don't own or use a computer, find someone who will help you file your claim electronically. Or talk to your VSO, who ideally will have a stack of Intent to File forms already printed out. You might even get your library to pull up the form and print out a few for you. Just put Form 21-0966 in Google.

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Estill Circuit Court Log

January 23, 2015

Craig Shearer, convicted felon in possession of handgun, drug paraphernalia, and persistent felony offender, pre-trial conference 3/27.

Charles Wayne Donahue, warrant endangerment 1st (3 counts), motion for additional discovery, motion to remove MCR bond condition sustained, pre-trial conference 3/27.

Christy Henry, make false statement to obtain increase of benefits over \$100 (2 counts), Commonwealth to provide discovery by preliminary pre-trial on 3/5 pre-trial conference 3/27.

James Rodney Adams, TBUT and theft by deception including cold checks under \$500, pre-trial conference 2/27. Motion to reduce bond/bail credit submitted.

David Coffey, sexual abuse, first degree, motion for bond release with home incarceration under submission, preliminary pretrial 3/5 and pre-trial conference

3/27.

Larry Glen Richardson II, burglary third degree, criminal summons issued for defendant to appear 2/27.

Jennifer Richardson, burglary third, arraigned, preliminary pre-trial 3/5 and pre-trial conference 3/27.

Kristie Gray, complicity to receiving stolen property, guilty plea accepted, sentenced and released to go to drug court.

Tommy Bowling, receiving stolen property under \$10,000, convicted felony in possession of handgun, and persistent felony offender, first degree, arraigned. Will hire own attorney, owns real estate. Bond remains as set at \$25,000 cash, pre-trial and status hearing set for 3/7.

Kevin Scott Abney, public intoxication, possess forged prescription for legend drug, forger of prescription, and persistent felony offender, second degree, preliminary pre-trial on 3/5

and pre-trial conference on 3/27. Hearing on disqualification of commonwealth due to conflict on 2/27.

James A. Bailey, intend defraud/scheme/artifice to obtain benefits under \$10,000 (4 counts), and possession of marijuana, pre-trial conference set for 3/3. Bond set at \$10,000 surety unsecured.

February 3, 2015

Dustin Willis, diversion completed, do order dismissing.

Kyle Matthew O'Hair, failed to appear, re-docket when served.

Beatrice Howell, pretrial diversion revocation, passed to March 3 on wo cases.

Lisa Ann Kelly, expungement hearing, review filed/KRS.

Ronda Lee Smith, diversion completed, do order dismissed

Bobby Dee Proffitt, diversion completed. Do order dismissing.

Larry Glenn Richardson II, hearing set for March 3 on Commonwealth's motion to avoid prosecution.

Tim Shortridge, failing to report and make restitution. Sentencing March 3. Bond reduced to \$2,500 cash.

Alfred Trent, not transported. Reschedule for March 3.

Autumn F. Reed, sentenced per plea, five consec-

utive with five on two cases. Judgment to be entered.

Michael Hickey, defendant sentenced.

Kyle E. Combs, defendant sentenced.

Kristen White, defendant sentenced.

Charles Henry Hale Jr., complicity to theft by failure to make required disposition and persistent felony offender, put on fugitive document.

Misty Dawn Wilson, criminal possession of forged instrument second (2 counts), plea rejected as to diversion, three for three status, defendant to withdraw plea or be sentenced.

Jeffrey Scott Estes, criminal mischief, first, public intoxication, disorderly conduct, 2nd; escape third, fleeing or evading police, and persistent felony offender, second, placed on fugitive document.

Michael Jon Harlow, order entered.

Carol Ann Isaacs, operating motor vehicle under the influence, promoting contraband, first; possession of a controlled substance, third degree; and controlled substance not in proper container, preliminary pre-trial set for March 5, status earring, April 7, to set pre-trial conference and trial if no plea.

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a "share" on a set of Longaberger Santa Belly baskets.

Shirts will be sold at both RCP performances December 13th & December 14th.

Visit Citizen's Guaranty Bank if you would like to order T-shirts in sizes we do not have readily available.

Collecting by Larry Cox

Arrowheads

Q. My family farm is in Iowa, and I have scouted for arrowheads ever since I was a youngster. I have several hundred in my collection, and wonder if you can recommend a good, basic reference book to help me identify the specimens I have. — Ken, Davenport, Iowa

A. There are several excellent references, but one I think is exceptional is "Overstreet Indian Arrowheads: Identification and Price Guide" by Robert M. Overstreet and published by House of Collectibles. This guide is filled with life-size illustrations of arrowheads grouped by nine geographic areas in the United States: Northeast, Eastern Seaboard, Gulf Coastal, Southern Central, Desert Southwest, Great Basin Westward, Northern High Plains, Northern Central and Eastern Central. Iowa is in the Northern Central region. In this guide, there are tips on grading and even an experts' guide on how and where to purchase authentic relics.

Q. I have inherited my older brother's comic-book collection. I know nothing about vintage comics. Can you recommend a good price guide that I can use to determine values? — Anita, Mound City, Illinois

A. I have several comic-book references, but the two I keep checking are "Comic Book Checklist & Price Guide" by Maggie Thompson, Brent Frankenhuff and Peter

Bickford (Krause, \$19.99); and "The Standard Guide to Golden Age Comic Books" by Alex G. Mallow and Stuart W. Wells III (Krause, \$19.99). Both books are thoroughly illustrated and accurately reflect the marketplace. As with most collectibles, condition is extremely important. For example, the first issue of Archie comics, which was published in 1942, is valued at \$25,000 in mint condition. In lesser condition, it would worth only a fraction of that amount.

Q. Recently, I purchased a "Bubbleman" Pez dispenser. How old is it, and is it worth more than the \$15 I paid for it? — Steve, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma

A. Your Bubbleman was issued during the fall of 1996 and was only available from Pez through a mail-in offer. Although they bear a copyright date of 1992, they weren't marketed until four years later. According to "The Collector's Guide to Pez: Identification and Price Guide" by Shawn Peterson, the various Bubbleman figures are valued in the \$3 to \$10 range.

Write to Larry Cox in care of KFWS, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475, or send e-mail to questions-forcox@aol.com. Due to the large volume of mail he receives, Mr. Cox cannot personally answer all reader questions, nor do appraisals. Do not send any materials requiring return mail.

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