




Harrison Rural Electrification Association, Inc.

RR 6, Box 502

Clarksburg, WV 26301-0502

304-624-6365

Your Touchstone Energy® Partners 

www.harrisonrea.com

Rising electricity rates, and what's driving them

I believe we all know that electricity is the lifeblood of our U.S. economy. It powers our homes and businesses; provides entertainment; powers computers and runs various forms of transportation. Electricity is the most flexible and most controllable form of energy available. Clearly, electricity is a commodity we all tend to take for granted. We rarely think about it, unless we don't have it!

Additionally, as Americans, we tend to believe that the power of choice is only a flip of the switch away. With advances in technology coming daily, we see more efficient electric technologies making electricity even more valuable every day. Today's electricity costs are generally inexpensive and make up only a moderate part of a consumer's monthly budgeted expenses — on average, about 3 percent.

Rising electricity costs are primarily due to higher fuel prices. These increases in fuel prices directly reflect what we charge to supply energy to our members. For a Cooperative to be able to provide enough energy for the seasonal needs of our members, the Cooperative secures wholesale power supplies from a generating facility. These contracts run for various lengths of time. HREA currently is in the third year of a five-and-one-half-year con-

tract. Finally, these combined figures, along with the costs of transmitting power across other utilities' transmission lines, are the factors that your Cooperative uses to establish our current member rates.

The power industry continues to face new challenges daily. At a time of record high fuel prices and numerous increases in environmental issues, electricity comes with an even higher price tag. The many other costs associated with generating electricity are rising without control too. The prices charged for the necessary components to provide the power to our members is rising. Climate changes and disasters in the southern parts of the United States have caused higher prices for our poles and associated hardware used to build and maintain our lines. Likewise, the prices of steel, aluminum and copper are rising to unprecedented levels. Although your Cooperative has little control over these issues, we strive to remain as competitive as possible.

Energy prices are increasing all across the United States. Recently announced rate increases range from Alabama Power Company's 11.5 percent rate increase to a 72 percent increase for customers of Baltimore Gas & Electric in Maryland. Customers of Pepco, in Maryland, will see a 39 percent increase this year. The Tennessee Valley Authority has announced a second increase in less than a year with a 7.5 percent increase to be followed by a 9.95 percent increase. Columbus Southern consumers in Ohio will have an annual 3 percent increase in 2006, 2007 and 2008. Additionally, Ohio Power customers will see a 7 percent annual increase over the same period.

These sharp rises in costs impact utilities and

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Manager's Corner

By
Gary Jackson,
CEO/General
Manager



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Long-range plan improving reliability

Back in 2002, your Board hired an electrical engineering consulting group from Columbus, OH, to prepare a 30-year Long-Range Plan (LRP) in accordance with Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Bulletin 1724D-101A. This study analyzed the present distribution system, established goals for a distribution system to serve the Cooperative's future loads and recommended major improvements needed to supply the Cooperative's intermediate and long-range load levels.

The objective of this report is to guide the Cooperative toward an economical and orderly development of its long-term distribution system, assuring reliable service at the lowest cost to the members. Analysis of the existing system showed the Cooperative needs a main loop around its service territories, with power supplied by a number of substations. It also recommended the systematic replacement of aging facilities and conductors. Both recommendations not only increase system reliability, but also aid in providing needed system capacity for both the intermediate and

future system loads.

At the December 2002 Board meeting, your directors adopted this 30-year LRP and submitted it to the RUS for their approval. After the RUS approval, this plan became your Cooperative's "blueprint for the future." The new three-phase loop with substations is the most economical method for increasing reliability and for meeting the future demand for electricity. The "loop" also allows backfeeding of power between adjacent substations during an outage.

Substations connected to a main power grid of 138 kilovolts (kV) offer two advantages. First, 138 kV rights-of-way are wider and better maintained. The odds of a tree's falling on a main grid line are very low. Secondly, the cost of power goes down as the metering point voltage goes up. This savings will pay for the expense of the new substations. Our members get more reliable electric service without actually paying for the substations.

With reliable backup capability and adequate transformer capacity in mind, the study recommended that new substations be constructed to replace existing metering points nearing or exceeding

President's Corner

By
James Stuart



their capacity. Since the Oral Lake and Erie metering points were nearing their capacity, the first substation was built west of I-79 between the Meadowbrook and F.B.I. exits. This substation will handle all of the growth in the Charles Pointe development.

The new Salem-Gore Middle School and additional coal mines on the west side of Harrison County have dictated the location for the second substation. Again we will be buying power from the 138 kV grid. A 23 kV feed from this substation will feed the coal mines and the existing Jarvisville substation. A 12.47 kV feed from this substation will feed the new middle school and surrounding areas.

This upgrading of our existing system and expansion for the future means your Cooperative is striving to increase the reliability of your electrical service and to control the cost increases to an acceptable level.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAY GREETINGS!

This month, two employees celebrate birthdays. Billing Clerk Missie Stephenson will see another year come and go on Sept. 16. Serviceman Chris Davisson will add one more candle to the cake on Sept. 29. Missie has been with the Cooperative for more than eight years, and Chris has worked for HREA for the last 12-and-a-half years. Best wishes Missie and Chris for a very happy birthday. We hope to share many more birthdays with you in the years to come.



Rates ...

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consumers in different ways in every region and, no matter what sequence of events are used to formulate these rising costs of purchased power supplies, the consequences are always higher utility rates.

Electricity consumption has increased more than 21 percent since 1978. Electricity remains a valued asset that has become a way of life for all of us. Even with recent price increases, electricity prices remain comparable to, and even lower than, other important consumer goods.

Philippi Covered Bridge part of America's history

Seventeen covered bridges still are in existence in West Virginia. Probably the most famous of these is the Philippi Covered Bridge located in Barbour County. The bridge serves local as well as U.S. 250 traffic and is the nation's only covered bridge that serves a federal highway.

The Philippi Covered Bridge was built in 1852 when the General Assembly of Virginia authorized the construction of the Beverly-to-Fairmont Turnpike. The turnpike needed a bridge across the Tygart River at Philippi, and Lemuel Chenoweth was awarded the contract to build it. The bridge was constructed of yellow poplar and was 26 feet wide and 285 feet long.

A tollgate was placed at the east end of the bridge to collect fares from those who used it. A horse and rider was charged 10 cents; a two-horse carriage was charged 35 cents; a cow cost 1.5 cents and farmers were charged 5 cents to move a score of sheep across the bridge.

Probably the most famous event that occurred at the bridge was the first land battle of the Civil War. On June 3, 1861, Confederate troops under the command of Colonel George Porterfield were attacked by Union troops and forced to retreat. The Union troops took command of the bridge and used it as a barracks. The Union position in western Virginia was strengthened and their possession of the bridge discouraged secessionist movements.

The bridge that exists today is an authentic representation of the bridge during the Civil War. The original bridge was severely damaged by fire on Feb. 2, 1989. Plans for its restoration began almost immediately by local preservationists. A committee of local officials and citizens decided to return the bridge to its original appearance with

rounded arch entrances, horizontal siding and a red wooden-shingled roof.

The restoration was truly amazing. The West Virginia Forestry Association furnished yellow poplar logs, 3 1/2 feet across to replace structural beams that couldn't be repaired. The logs were too large for modern sawmills, so a special

sawmill was set up near Belington to saw the logs into rough shapes and sizes. Local carpenters

learned 19th century carpentry techniques and used hand tools to fashion mortices, tenons and trunnels to interlock the beams.

Forestry Association members also contributed the horizontal poplar siding and shingles. The historic bridge was reopened for public use in September 1991.

The Philippi Covered Bridge reminds us of another time and another way of life, and will remain a part of America's history.

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The office of Harrison Rural Electric Cooperative will be closed Monday, Sept. 4, so our employees and their families can celebrate Labor Day.

If you need assistance, you can contact the Cooperative at 304-624-6365

LABOR DAY

We wish you a safe and fun Labor Day Weekend!



Employee spotlight

This month, our featured employee is **Christopher Davisson**. Chris has been with HREA for more than 12 years and holds the position of serviceman.

Chris has a busy schedule every day. He does the majority of connects and disconnects; installs, tests and reads meters; programs meters for the automatic meter reading system (Turtle®); collects on delinquent accounts; works as a groundman during outages and fills in on the standby crew when needed. Chris works closely with Billing Clerk Missie Stephenson on customer issues and has a lot of direct contact with many of our members.

Chris graduated from Liberty High School where he lettered in football, wrestling and track. He attended Fairmont State College for a while and

majoring in civil engineering. He spent one summer working for the Co-op as summer help, and he made such a good impression on everyone that as soon as there was an opening, Chris became a fulltime employee.

A lifelong resident of Harrison County, Chris lives in Sardis. He has one daughter, Emily Rae, who is nine years old. In addition to spending every spare moment with Emily, Chris likes to play pool and is an occasional golfer.

Chris' easygoing disposition and strong work ethic makes him a valuable employee of Harrison Rural Electric. Chris plans to retire from the Cooperative, so we all will have the benefit of his attributes for years to come.



Italian Heritage Festival scheduled for Labor Day weekend

The 28th Annual West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival will be held in Clarksburg on Sept. 1, 2 and 3. Rated in the "Top 100 Events in North America," the festival offers events, Italian cuisine and fun and games for all ages. Every year, the three-day street festival brings more than 100,000 visitors to Clarksburg.

The festival was created to show the pride West Virginia Italian-Americans have in their cultural heritage. The festival opens with the crowning of Regina Maria. "Regina" means queen and "Maria" was the name of the first queen of Italy. The festival con-

cludes with the traditional festival ball. The main stage is located on the courthouse plaza and has hosted celebrities such as Tony Danza, Kathy Mattea, Jo Dee Messina, Dion and Fabian. Of course, we cannot fail to mention our local celebrity band, Amici, which performs every year to the delight of all. Also, a special children's area and stage was added a few years ago where one might run into a "Rugrat," a magician or Happy the Clown.

If you enjoy good food and a lively atmosphere, the Italian Festival is the place to go. Enjoy, and *benvenuti!*

Is your refrigerator running?

You never know when your refrigerator could be running overtime without having to.

A few simple checks can make sure it's running efficiently. It's best to do this routine maintenance once a year, especially if your fridge isn't brand new.

First check the door gasket to make sure it's not damaged. It's also a good idea to wash it if it's dirty or sticky. Second, vacuum or wipe down the condenser coils, and if there's an air filter, clean that too.

Test the temperature of the fridge with a refrigerator or outdoor thermometer. About 37 degrees is best for the refrigerator and 0 degrees is best for the freezer.

If you find the temperatures are not right, check for a few culprits before calling a repair specialist. Make sure the thermostat is at the right setting.

Other causes could be dirty condenser coils, a damaged door gasket, a sagging refrigerator door or heavy frost accumulation. Also, the door should not be left open too much.

If you've checked all those potential problems, you may have a damaged evaporator fan or condenser fan, a broken defrost timer or refrigerant that might have leaked out. Then it's time to call the repair specialist.

Source: Fresno Bee