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Finding the value of electricity

Nowadays, cell phones and personal digital devices are a part of our culture. Everyone, it seems, is connected on the go — whether they're just making phone calls, text messaging or checking e-mails. Such communication freedom is a luxury we pay for, generally without grumbling.

So, why is it that when it comes to electricity — a necessity in our modern world — many of us grumble and complain when the electric bill comes every month? We expect electricity to be there at the flip of the switch, and if it's not, we get angry or frustrated. There are many times when nature's just not all that fair!

I'm no different — I expect the lights to come on every time, too. As general manager of Harrison Rural Electrification Association, I have a special responsibility to make sure your electric service is safe, reliable and as affordable as I can make it. But, I also believe

that when compared to other services, electricity remains a great value.

For example, over the last 10 years, gasoline has shot up 10.9 percent on average every single year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. A loaf of white bread has increased 4.2 percent annually, and a dozen eggs 6.5 percent per year.

In comparison, electricity has increased around 3.7 percent a year nationally for the past decade. When you consider how reliable electricity is, the value goes up even more. While many outages in West Virginia are due mainly to tree-related issues, we strive to keep our system's foliage in check without overspending and continually having to raise rates. We currently dedicate approximately \$600,000 a year to maintain rights-of-way in our service area, that's more than \$110 a year for every member on our lines.

Those cell phones I mentioned earlier? Nearly a third of all U.S. households have four electronic

Manager's Corner

by
Gary Jackson,
CEO/General
Manager



devices, such as cell phones, plugged in and charging, according to the Residential Energy Consumption Survey by the U.S. Energy Information Administration. In the last 30 years, the amount of residential electricity used by appliances and electronics has increased from 17 to 31 percent. More homes than ever use major appliances and central air conditioning. Digital video recorders (DVRs), computers and multiple televisions have become ubiquitous.

Clearly, our appetite for electricity shows no signs of slowing down. So the next time you flip a switch, use your toaster or run your washing machine, remember the value electricity holds.

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Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

When buying a new appliance, check the black and yellow EnergyGuide label. This label provides an estimate of the product's energy consumption and efficiency. It also shows the highest and lowest energy efficiency estimates of similar models. Most major appliances — such as refrigerators, dishwashers and clothes dryers — are required to have these labels.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Don't let electrical hazards haunt Halloween!

Halloween is the most festively frightening night of the year. But don't make yours fraught with danger. Here are some safety reminders:

- As you're decorating, make sure you and your parents check for cracked sockets, frayed, loose or bare wires, and loose connections.
- Fasten all outdoor lights securely to trees and other firm supports. Do not use nails or tacks that could puncture insulating cords and damage wires.
- Make sure decorative lighting is well-ventilated, protected from weather and remains a safe distance from anything flammable like dry leaves and shrubs. Do not coil extension cords while in use or tuck under rugs or drapes.
- Make sure all outdoor electrical lights and decorations are plugged into an outlet protected with a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). If your outlets aren't equipped with GFCIs, have an electrician install them or buy a GFCI adapter plug. Don't overload outlets with too many extension cords and strands of lights.
- Keep power cords off walkways and porches that trick-or-treaters may use. You don't want them to trip.



- Have mom or dad leave the porch light on for trick-or-treaters, and be sure to turn out all spooky lights and decorations before leaving home or going to bed. This will also save energy.

For more tips visit www.SafeElectricity.org.

Source: *Electric Consumer*

A matter of Principles

You might be surprised by the number of co-ops around you. Co-ops have been formed to sell produce and electricity, offer financial and banking services, provide housing and health care, and much more.

So where did the bright idea for co-ops come from? It's a matter of principles (seven, to be exact). The modern movement traces its roots to a store started by weavers in the town of Rochdale (pronounced Rotch-dale) in northern England in 1844. The group was guided by a set of principles drawn up by one of its members, Charles Howarth. When introduced into the U.S. by the National Grange in 1874, these "Rochdale Principles" fueled a cooperative explosion.

Although stated in many ways, the Rochdale Principles require that a cooperative must be open for anyone to join. Every member retains one voice, one vote. Electric co-ops hold member business meetings annually, allowing members to elect fellow consumers to guide the co-op and have a say in how their utility is run.

There also have to be real member benefits. For

example, members of electric co-ops often get money back (called capital credits or patronage refunds) when the co-op's in good financial shape. More than \$550 million has been returned to members by electric co-ops over the past seven decades — nothing to sneeze at.

Education remains another big focus. Electric co-ops provide safety information in schools, share ideas on how to make your home more energy efficient to keep electric bills affordable, and make sure elected officials and opinion leaders know about the co-op business model. Because there is strength in numbers, co-ops tend to stick together when tackling regional and national issues.

Perhaps most important of all, co-ops are independent and community-focused, not tied to the purse strings of far-flung investors. Co-ops help drive local economic development, fund scholarships, support local charities and work to make life better in the areas they serve — the heart of the cooperative difference.

Learn more about cooperatives and the principles that define them at www.go.coop.

Building a better world

2012 marks the International Year of Cooperatives

In today's uncertain economic times a question quickly comes to mind. We want our children and neighbors to succeed. We need a strong and sustainable community. But how do you build a better world?

History tells us when we band together we can do anything. Together, we can build a better world. That's where cooperatives come into play.

This month we kick off a year-long celebration marking the International Year of Cooperatives 2012. Our theme, "Cooperative Enterprises Build a Better World," resonates loud and clear in our turbulent national — and global — economy. The year offers a chance for us to showcase our legacy of innovation and achievement, and reminds us of what's important in business — putting people first.

You're a member of Harrison Rural Electrification Association so you know we're focused on providing safe, reliable and affordable power. But this community-driven business model doesn't stop at your light switch. There are 29,200 co-ops across America taking many forms, from farmers banding together to get a fair price on supplies to credit unions delivering low fees and reasonable interest rates on loans. Our business model works for dairy farmers and small business owners, financial institutions, grocery stores, insurance, housing and child care.

One out of every four Americans is a co-op member; there are more than 1 billion members around the world. Co-ops fill a community need, giving a voice to folks that profit-driven businesses often overlook. Co-ops share a common set of principles and values, including self-help and — one of my favorites — democracy.

Electric cooperatives may only serve 12 percent of Americans, but our lines cover 75 percent of this great nation. By banding together, we deliver power to 42 million rural Americans in 47 states — and we're not finished.

Through NRECA International Programs, co-op linemen are volunteering overseas to deliver electricity to 2 billion people living without power. Over the last 50 years, these efforts have provided light and hope to 100 million people in more than 40 countries. That's how electric cooperatives build a better world.

During International Year of Cooperatives 2012 it's important to remember co-ops put people first. We brought electricity to this community to improve our quality of life and keep young people from leav-

ing to seek opportunities in electrified-cities. Nearly three-quarters of a century later we still want our children to succeed.

We also want to celebrate our legacy of innovation. Co-ops adapt quickly to change, and we work together — cooperatively — to find solutions to improve service for our members. Can you imagine profit-driven utilities working together to keep bills affordable?

At Harrison innovation takes many forms, from our energy efficiency and renewable energy efforts to transforming the electric grid. Whenever a community faces a need — a challenge to make life better — the cooperative business model comes into play. By putting people first and innovating to meet member needs, cooperative enterprises build a better world. To learn more, visit www.go.coop.

Did You Know?

Electric cooperatives have retired \$9.5 billion to members since 1988 — \$626 million in 2010 alone. Because electric co-ops operate at cost, any excess revenues, called margins, are allocated and retired to members in the form of capital credits.

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in 2010

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Source: National Rural Utilities
Cooperative Finance Corporation

The Seven Cooperative Principles

Cooperatives around the world generally operate according to the same core principles and values, adopted by the International Cooperative Alliance in 1995. The International Cooperative Alliance is a global membership association of co-ops and co-op support organizations. Cooperatives trace the roots of these principles to the first modern cooperative founded in Rochdale, England, in 1844.

1. Voluntary and Open Membership

Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all people able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2. Democratic Member Control

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members — those who buy the goods or use the services of the cooperative — who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions.

3. Members' Economic Participation

Members contribute equally to, and democratically control, the capital of the cooperative. This benefits members in proportion to the business they conduct with the cooperative, rather than on the capital invested.

4. Autonomy and Independence

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If the co-op enters into agreements with other organizations or raises capital from external sources, it is done so based on terms that ensure democratic control by the members and maintain the cooperative's autonomy.

5. Education, Training and Information

Cooperatives provide education and training for members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperative. Members also inform the general public about the nature and benefits of cooperatives.

6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7. Concern for Community

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of communities through policies and programs accepted by the members.

HD cable boxes, DVRs, put a drain on household energy use

The high-definition cable box or digital video recorder (DVR) that sits innocently by your TV may be using more electricity per year than a new energy-efficient refrigerator. A recent study found that the boxes use \$3 billion in electricity every year in the U.S., with 66 percent of that power wasted while the TV is not being watched or the DVR not recording.

Unfortunately, until cable boxes and DVRs become more energy efficient, there's no easy solution for consumers looking to save energy, explains Brian Sloboda, a senior program manager specializing in energy efficiency with the Cooperative Research Network (CRN), an arm of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

"The simple answer is using the power button on the remote or adding a power strip to turn the power off when not in use," Sloboda says. "The problem is that when you cut off all of the power, your

DVR will not record programs. You also won't be able to get automatic software updates, and the program guide may be wiped out."

Your best bet is to ask your cable or satellite provider for a box carrying the ENERGY STAR label, which certifies that a product attains specific energy efficiency standards.

"Don't assume it's an ENERGY STAR box," Sloboda emphasizes. "Look for the logo on the front of the device."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which created ENERGY STAR in 1992, says it plans to tighten energy efficiency standards for high-definition cable boxes to an average of 29 kilowatts of use per year by the middle of 2013, down from a current average consumption of 38 kilowatts.

Sources: The New York Times, Cooperative Research Network