



Harrison Rural Electrification Association, Inc.

RR 6, Box 502
Clarksburg, WV 26301-0502
800-540-HREA

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner
www.harrisonrea.com



Bigger doesn't mean better

IS BIGGER REALLY BETTER? This debate has been argued over time, and everyone has their own opinion that is probably based on some personal experience or event.

We have all seen the movement to large shopping complexes that offer a wide variety of choices from nationally branded retailers, which eliminates the local, small independent owners. We enjoy the availability and convenience of this one-stop shopping, but are we really satisfied with the experience? Some may actually enjoy the adrenaline rush and competitiveness of trying to obtain that latest hot selling item before someone else, but do any of us enjoy the blood pressure rise of standing in line to check out when only two or three of twelve check-out lines are open? Do we enjoy going into that big box store and spending significant time either looking all over for what we want or trying to find an employee who can point us in the right direction? If we

have questions about an item, how easy it is to find someone knowledgeable to help us?

From a business standpoint, there are advantages to being bigger. Big businesses usually enjoy greater buying power, the ability to spread costs over a wider range of the population, and the ability to offer more employment opportunities to the local economy. The down side of big is that they are usually financially or earning-per-share driven and lose sight of the real reason they were created in the first place. In order to attain those financial goals, they make decisions to cut jobs, eliminate or reduce services, and erode the quality of their product. So again, is bigger really better?

This debate came to mind due to some recent mandates passed down by our governing authorities. The first came within the last couple years after a major snow event occurred in the southern part of the state around Christmas. An investigation of electric utilities concluded that government oversight and the establishment

Manager's Corner

by Terry Stout,
CEO/General Manager



of reliability standards were required to ensure utilities were addressing this issue on an annual basis. Months of meetings and hearings ensued with thousands of dollars spent to argue and determine where these reasonable reliability standards should be set. During this entire process, we at HREA complied with all data requests and followed the proceedings with much interest. The question we had was, "why was all of this necessary?" As a cooperative and an RUS borrower, HREA has always had to maintain reliability standards. Every four years or so when HREA created its new work plan, outage statistics, down line voltages, etc., were reviewed to determine the most affordable and efficient upgrades to alleviate these problems. To HREA, this has been and always will be standard operating procedure, and we were a little surprised that others had gotten away from this practice.

The next example came within the last few weeks. After the derecho and Hurricane Sandy, another investigation ensued to try to determine why the outages took so long to restore. The major factor identified was trees on and off rights-of-way that were damaged, which hindered the restoration process. Once again, recent

(Continued on page 22)

Board of Directors

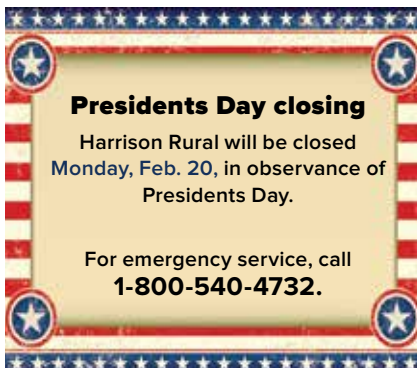
C.B. Sharp, Dist. 1..... President
Glenn Cox, Dist. 3..... Vice President
James Stuart, Dist. 4..... Sec.-Treas.
Greg Robertson, Dist. 2 Ron Watson, Dist. 5
Philip McMillan, Dist. 6 Jeff Nelson, Dist. 7

Terry Stout, General Manager

Lloyd MasonIT Manager
Sam Satterfield..... Operations Manager
Scott Wyckoff Line Supervisor
Jon Paul McAllister..... Staking Technician
Jodi Swiger Editor

Office Hours

7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday



An Island called Ta'u

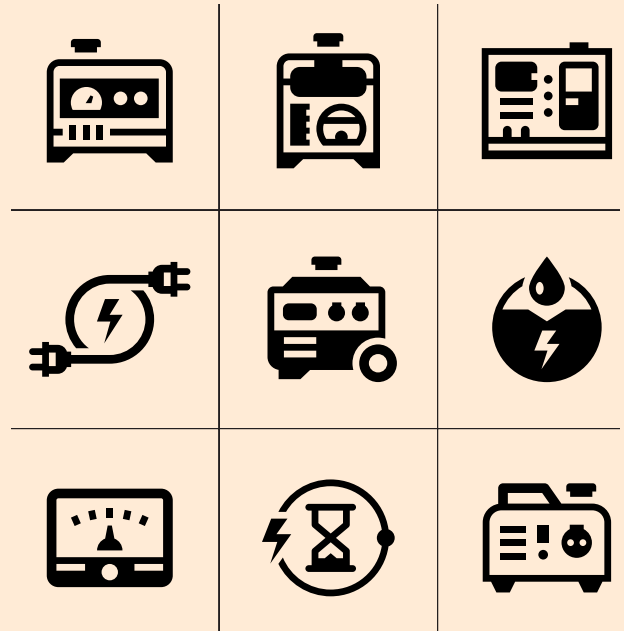
BY LLOYD MASON

ON A SMALL, FAR AWAY ISLAND, there was an experiment. This experiment was bold and was clearly needed. It had lots of good reasons to begin, so let's unpack the energy footprint of the island of Ta'u.

This tiny island in the South Pacific Ocean was very much like many of the other little islands that make up the American Samoa — electric power only happened one way: by diesel generator. The diesel generator is a very common solution to the lack of power generation needed for the simplest of day-to-day tasks. Immediately, my mind goes to the old adage, "it's better to have a generator and not need it than it is to NOT have one and need it." All things considered, I think most would agree with this concept. We all need electricity, and we are all using much more electricity in our homes, work, schools, and well, everywhere else than we used too. Power is expensive to provide for many reasons, but for the purpose of this article, I will outline a few of the big costs. However, just know that the positive effects of petroleum are all around us.

First, you have to find the raw material. Then you need to mine it or drill it and collect it. Then it needs to be processed. Once processed, it will need to be moved to a place where it can be ignited. Then we collect the resulting energy for use. Finally, the distribution of electricity is delivered through a complex series of wire and voltage transformers to an individual's home or business. With all of that in mind, it seems to me the question is not "which one do we use?" The obvious answer is that we should be using what makes the most sense, which is a combination of practices. The truth is fossil fuels have helped us get where we are going for a very long time. Fossil fuels are a huge part of the plastics industry and many other industries too numerous to list here.

So with that said, let's get back to the island of Ta'u. The island boasts a whopping 600 residents and is completely cut off from what we would consider to be a traditional electric grid. That's not to say they have no power lines; it's just that they have no way of generating the needed power to then distribute to residents, other than by way of a generator. If they have no power plant, why not just build one, right? Well, then you are literally right back in the same boat. The answer until recently has been a triumvirate of diesel-powered generators. These generators, used in rotation and leaving two in reserve at any given



point, would require 300 gallons of diesel fuel per day to meet partial daily needs — and this adds up to \$422,400 a year!

Let's do some math for Ta'u to see what their power options could be. With an infusion of 8 million dollars, 5,328 solar panels and 60 power packs, there would be 8.8 solar panels per person and 10 residents per power pack. Had the residents funded the project fully, it would have meant \$13,333 per resident to construct. With a 25-year projected life cycle, that means each resident would end up paying \$533.32 per year, plus whatever maintenance the system may need. That would be a long-range return on the investment of around 2 million. Common sense tells us

Ta'u could be one of the most expensive places to heat or cool in the world because of geographic restrictions that cannot be helped. While they are seldom tasked with the bitter cold, the cost of heating or cooling with electricity must give one pause. Just the cost of transporting the fuel alone is daunting. Then what happens when the boat doesn't come for whatever reason? The lights don't work. The dramatic problems are not hard to see.

Many different solutions like this using various forms of technology are popping up all over the map. More and more, the technology of renewable energy is becoming cost efficient and reliable. We'll see what happens.

Till the next time @techcorner. ☞

LLOYD MASON is the manager of information technology at Harrison Rural Electric Association. He writes monthly on technology issues affecting our co-op.

Utilities are raising awareness about scams

Tips to avoid being duped

WHEN A SCAMMER CALLED Florida pet clinic operator Cindy Evers last year and demanded immediate payment on an overdue electric bill, it sounded real.

“They knew my account number and gave me a figure that I owed that’s close to what I usually pay on my electric bill,” Evers said. She paid, even though in the back of her mind, she knew her payment wasn’t late.

“I have pets under sedation, and I’m taking care of animals,” she said. “I think I just panicked, thinking they were going to shut my electricity off. I did what they told me to do.”

Evers lost \$900 because the call was a scam.

The scam that duped Evers has been plaguing utility consumers across North America for several years, robbing them of millions. Now, utilities are fighting back.

Recently, more than 80 utilities and energy industry organizations from across the U.S. and Canada joined forces to recognize the first-ever North American Utilities United Against Scams Day on Nov. 16, 2016.

Electric co-ops have increased their communication efforts, sending information directly to members and encouraging local TV stations and newspapers to warn citizens about the scam, how it works, and what people should do and not do if they are ever targeted.

Even the wariest consumers can be duped, however. The scammers are developing new tactics every day.

The “past due” scam, similar to the one Florida customer Evers experienced, goes something like this: A customer gets a call from an 800-number that looks like a valid utility company phone number. Widely available spoofing software allows crooks to display what appears to be an official number on caller IDs. The caller threatens to cut off power if the customer doesn’t pay.

But here’s the giveaway: The crook will demand payment via a prepaid debit card or money order within a specified time frame — often an hour or less. The scammer may even quote an amount that sounds like your typical monthly bill to make it sound more credible.

Scammers might direct the customer to a specific store nearby that sells the prepaid cards and instruct the customer to put money on the card and provide the card number to the scammer. Some scammers have even been bold enough to



contact potential victims in person, coming to the member’s house.

Tips for protecting yourself:

- Do not assume the name and number on your caller ID are legitimate. Caller IDs can be spoofed.
- Never share your personal information, including date of birth, Social Security number, or banking account information.
- Never wire money to someone you don’t know.
- Do not click links or call numbers in unexpected e-mails or texts — especially those asking for your account information.
- Most utilities will NOT require their customers to purchase prepaid debit cards or money orders to avoid an immediate disconnection.
- If you receive a call that sounds like it may be a scam — or if you believe the call is a scam — hang up, call the police, and report the incident to your local utility.

You can help others by alerting your family members and friends. Share the scammers’ tactics described in this article or those you have heard about. You can also help raise awareness and warn others by reposting scam awareness information on social media using the hashtag #stop-scams. ☹

TRACEY WARREN writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

Don't just sit there — Get moving!

Health advice can vary widely, but one thing health and fitness experts seem to agree on is that sitting for much of the day is bad for overall health, especially cardiovascular and back health. Luckily, most research says an hour of brisk exercise can counteract the harmful effects of sitting. And what about improving the health of your back, spine, and adjacent muscle groups? Here are some exercises suggested to help remedy muscle strain and weakness caused by sitting, and all are appropriate for most work environments.

- **Stand up:** If you're taking a call or in a long meeting, or if you can read that document while on your feet, try standing instead of sitting — even if it's just for 5 to 10 minutes.
- **Walk:** Take that call while walking the halls.
- **Leg swings:** To loosen your hips, glutes, hamstrings, and inner and outer thighs, swing your right leg backwards and forwards as far as you can while holding something for balance. Do 15 to 20 swings, and then switch legs. Also try side-to-side swings.
- **Squat:** Livestrong.com's instructions for a proper squat are to start with your feet hip-width apart. Keeping your core engaged and back straight, push your hips back and down as if you were going to sit in a chair. Drive your heels into the ground to return to the standing position. Focus on squeezing the glutes at the top before descending back into the next rep. Throughout the entire movement, keep the knees from caving in or diving forward excessively. Go for 10 to 12 reps.
- **Backbend with wall support:** To improve posture and strengthen stabilizing core muscles, Prevention.com recommends a supported backbend. "Stand facing away from a wall, your heels about 1 inch away from the baseboard. With your arms over your head and elbows bent backward so that your palms are facing the wall, slowly lean back and catch your bodyweight with your hands. Walk your hands down the wall until you begin to feel a stretch. (You may also need to step farther away from the wall as your back bends.) Be sure to start slowly; as your back gets stronger, you'll be able to go deeper into the backbend. Place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth, drop your jaw, and breathe in and out through your nostrils as you hold the backbend."



com recommends a supported backbend. "Stand facing away from a wall, your heels about 1 inch away from the baseboard. With your arms over your head and elbows bent backward so that your palms are facing the wall, slowly lean back and catch your bodyweight with your hands. Walk your hands down the wall until you begin to feel a stretch. (You may also need to step farther away from the wall as your back bends.) Be sure to start slowly; as your back gets stronger, you'll be able to go deeper into the backbend. Place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth, drop your jaw, and breathe in and out through your nostrils as you hold the backbend."

• **Starfish reach:** Prevention.com also recommends this stretch, which some may find reminiscent of elementary school PE class. "Stand with your legs slightly wider than hip width. Reach your arms high in the sky with palms facing forward. Spread your fingers. Rise high on your tippy-toes." It's adjustable to all ability levels and easy to do anywhere.

It might feel peculiar or awkward to exercise at work, but that's okay. Close your door or grab a friend and an empty room. You can do this — your body will thank you. ☺

Bigger doesn't mean better

rules have come out requiring government oversight and detailed reporting of right-of-way clearing programs. The requirement calls for a program that covers end-to-end cycle-based right-of-way trimming with spot trimming as necessary. In addition, it is expected that these programs will likely be costlier and result in higher costs to the ratepayers that will be offset by fewer and shorter disruptions in the future. Once again, this has been HREA's standard operating procedure for decades. The only adjustments have been efforts to increase the miles cleared annually, thus shortening the time to complete a full cycle. Those adjustments have been made so as to minimize the impact on our membership as much as possible.

From these two examples, we asked ourselves a question: "Have the bigger utilities moved away from or just modified these standard operating procedures?" Obvi-

(—continued from page 19)

ously, we don't know why internal decisions were made at these utilities; all we know is that HREA and other cooperatives don't and won't operate that way. We were founded on being in touch with the needs of our members, and we make decisions that we believe are in the best interests of the membership in its entirety. We enjoy the benefits of being a small utility, knowing our members, and interacting with the membership on a personal basis. We aren't perfect — nobody is — but we do strive to meet the needs of our membership in the most efficient and affordable manner possible.

In the future, we hope to grow, but we must do so in a manner that benefits all of us. In short, we don't believe that bigger is better — especially if the focus is shifted from you, the member. ☺