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Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



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Climate change

Keeping electric bills affordable

The United States and other countries have debated how to address the increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere for more than 20 years. Carbon dioxide (CO₂), the primary greenhouse gas (GHG), is also a product of fossil fuel combustion. For West Virginians, that means coal! CO₂ has increased in atmospheric concentration from a pre-industrial level of 280 parts per million to about 383 parts per million today. Many scientists believe high GHG concentrations will result in a warming of the earth's atmosphere and changes in the climate that will cause the polar ice caps to melt and the sea level to rise. Congress and the Obama administration are currently considering proposals to address climate change.

The objective of America's 900-plus electric cooperatives is to help Congress develop and pass a simple, affordable, flexible and effective

piece of legislation to address the nation's energy and climate change objectives. In 2009 electricity is intertwined with every American's quality of life and the nation's economic productivity.

In 1932 President Franklin Roosevelt declared that electricity was a necessity, not a luxury. He committed to making it available and affordable to all Americans. We must not turn our backs on that commitment from more than 70 years ago. We do not have to, and should not. Maintaining the affordability of electricity is the principle against which cooperatives will judge all climate change and energy legislation.

Carbon reductions and new costs are coming, by either legislation or regulation. President Obama's budget jump-started the debate by proposing that Congress auction 100 percent of all emission allowances under a "cap and trade system" and uses tens of billions in revenue to fund low-income and middle-class tax cuts. Congressional leaders continue to press for legislation that places a cap on emissions. No matter the option, consumers and the economy are facing new costs as CO₂

Manager's Corner

by
Gary Jackson,
CEO/General
Manager



emissions are priced and controlled.

Spurred by the U.S. Supreme Court's 2007 decision, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has the authority to act on the climate change decision for all of us. In April 2009 the EPA proposed an "endangerment finding" that, when finalized, will open the door to EPA regulations. Unfortunately, the Clean Air Act is not well-suited to addressing global climate change. It was developed primarily to address local and regional air quality issues, not global scale issues.

Finally, many components of climate change proposals will impact electric cooperatives. Several bills have been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2009, each addressing the issue with a different type of "cap and trade" or carbon tax programs. At this point, cap-and-trade legislation is the preferred route by most in Congress, and no one knows exactly how individual consumers will be affected by the final legislation that could be passed in the near future.

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Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Use your microwave for cooking whenever possible. They use 50 to 65 percent less energy than conventional ovens and do not heat up your house in the summer. However, conventional ovens may be more appropriate for larger-size items when cooking time is increased.

Source: Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

Board implements cost-cutting measures for annual meeting

This year's annual meeting, as in past years, will be held on the third Thursday in April at Liberty High School. (Time will be announced in March and April's monthly newsletter).

Although the date and place of the meeting remain the same, your board of directors has made some changes to this year's meeting designed to save the cooperative money.

First, dinner will not be served before the meeting in the school cafeteria, nor will there be any entertainment. Second, at this year's meeting, there will be no door prize drawing, and the usual awarding of

\$100 energy credits for two lucky members will not take place. Nor will there be the usual giveaways at the door, either. It hasn't been determined yet if those members attending will still receive a \$5 credit on their electric bill. Cake and coffee will be served in the cafeteria immediately following the business meeting.

We will have more information about the annual meeting in the March issue of *Country Living*, and your admittance card will be published in the April issue. We hope you can attend the meeting. We look forward to seeing you there.

Linemen light the world, one life at a time

There's a well-worn joke between lineworkers that goes, "If they sent a lineman to the moon, there wouldn't be a dark side."

Our line crews are known for their ability to maintain electric systems, extend distribution lines to growing communities and fix troublespots during storms. Despite these accomplishments, few linemen have experienced the wonder of providing power to a family for the first time. But that's changing fast.

Electricity is something most of us grew up with. With all this talk about climate change, energy efficiency and the impact congressional action might have on our monthly electric bills, we sometimes forget we're lucky to have power at all.

Currently, more than 2 billion people around the

echoing our success. Volunteers from across the nation are spreading rural electrification overseas, sharing light and hope with war-torn or forgotten communities.

These men and women are volunteering personal time to bring a sense of safety to folks in distant lands, sometimes simply by adding street lights. They're delivering dreams as they wire classrooms for electricity. Medicine can finally be refrigerated. Micro-businesses are born. With every mile of line built, they make the electric cooperative family proud.

All of these amazing efforts are coordinated by NRECA International Programs—a division of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), the service arm of the nation's 900-plus not-for-profit electric co-ops. Since its founding in 1962, NRECA International Programs has brought lights and power to more than 100 million rural residents in other countries.

But the nonprofit organization doesn't just put up a few utility poles and leave. That's not the co-op way. Staff members along with volunteers like lineworkers teach locals how to build and maintain simple power grids and run their own utilities. They introduce the co-op business model and show what electric power can do for schools, health clinics, farms and local economies.

Co-op volunteers from the United States are active in 12 countries today, ranging from Costa Rica to Southern Sudan. You can help, too. To watch videos of linemen assisting overseas or to make a donation supporting these electrification efforts, visit NRECAFoundation.coop.

Sure, if they sent lineworkers to the moon there'd be no dark side. And with the support of electric cooperatives, volunteer linemen and co-op consumers like you, there won't be a dark side of the earth, either, in a few years.

NRECA International Programs: Lighting the World

NRECA International Programs and volunteer linemen are building electric distribution lines in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Nigeria, Philippines, Senegal, Southern Sudan, and Yemen. As this map shows, co-op linemen are working around the world to provide power.

Did you know?

More than 2 billion people live without electricity—64 million in Latin America, 500 million in Africa, and more than 1 billion in Asia.



Learn more at NRECAFoundation.coop

Source: NRECA International Programs, ShareAlike

globe live without electricity. And as electric co-ops across the country celebrate 75 years of providing safe, reliable and affordable central station electric service for rural Americans, another story unfolds,

Regulation on horizon for carbon ... with or without congressional action

Federal curbs on emissions of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas blamed as a principal cause of climate change, are quickly becoming a reality. It's just a matter of which government branch gets there first: legislative, executive—or both.

In December, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), part of the executive branch, declared that six key greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, are endangering public health and welfare. Emissions from motor vehicles of four of those greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, are also said to contribute to dangerous air pollution under this “endangerment finding.”

“This action puts a ‘foot in the door’ for EPA to promulgate sweeping new regulations that could impose strict limits on carbon emissions from power plants, driving up electric bills,” warns Glenn English, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), which represents the interests of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned-and-governed electric cooperatives.

The concern is that with carbon dioxide emissions from vehicles falling under federal Clean Air Act regulation, other emitters of carbon dioxide—fossil fuel-fired power plants included—may also soon be subject to additional EPA oversight.

“The Clean Air Act as written was never designed to deal with carbon, and it would be awkward at best and probably a disaster at worst,” English adds.

Electric co-ops believe that any controls on carbon dioxide should be established by Congress, where the impact of these proposals can have a full public debate. Unfortunately, a climate change bill passed by the U.S. House last summer (H.R. 2454) and another reported by the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in November (S. 1733) include unachievable goals and timelines for reducing carbon dioxide emissions, inadequate technology development incentives and no guarantee that electric bills will remain affordable. Current proposals will unfairly penalize consumers in fossil fuel-dependent states by saddling them with higher bills to essentially subsidize and lower electric bills for those in other regions.

What’s more, Senate leaders have admitted that climate change legislation has stalled and will likely be picked up sometime in the spring. This legislative logjam makes it all the more important for co-ops and consumers to pay careful attention to the EPA’s current efforts.

English insists that any climate change legislation

should protect consumers and preempt use of the federal Clean Air Act and any other existing laws. Otherwise, utilities and businesses could be burdened with the task of trying to comply with more than one set of regulations.

“Regulation of carbon dioxide as a pollutant will occur with or without congressional input,” English explains. “But Congress must not simply add new legislation on top of old regulations. Any climate change bill should become the roadmap—the single strategy—for reducing carbon dioxide emissions at federal, state and local levels.

“By staying engaged in the process, electric co-ops can have a measureable impact on the outcome.”



Our Energy, Our Future

A Dialogue With America

Electric co-ops are fighting to ensure that any climate change policy goals adopted are fair, affordable and achievable. To make your voice heard in this debate, join NRECA’s *Our Energy, Our Future*™ grassroots awareness campaign at www.ourenergy.coop. To date, more than 600,000 of your fellow co-op consumers across the country have already done so.

Happy Presidents' Day!

Harrison Rural Electric Association will be closed Monday, Feb. 15, for Presidents' Day. We will return Feb. 16.

A little preparation can go a long way

House fires can happen in seconds: in one instant, you could go from whipping up dinner to watching flames spring up from the stovetop.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, 410,500 fires—or 78 percent of all reported structure fires—occur in homes. In the right hands, a household fire extinguisher can save lives and protect property should a small fire start.

“Every home should have at least one fire extinguisher, and you need the right type and you must know how and when to use it,” says John Drengenberg, consumer affairs manager at Underwriters Laboratories (UL), the not-for-profit firm that tests and sets minimum standards for electric-consuming items.

Fire extinguishers should be placed in easily accessible areas of the home, close to where they might be needed (such as in a kitchen, garage or bedroom). Some basic rules to keep in mind when using household fire extinguishers:

1. If the fire is not spreading and remains confined to a small area, use the appropriate type of extinguisher. Select a multi-purpose extinguisher (rated A, B or C) with the UL mark that can be used on all types of fires such as wood, cloth, paper, flam-



mable liquids (gasoline, oil, grease, oil-based paint) and energized electrical equipment including wiring, fuse boxes, circuit breakers and appliances.

2. Know both your limits and those of the fire extinguisher.

3. Periodically inspect your extinguishers to determine if they need to be recharged or replaced.

Extinguishers need to be recharged or replaced after each use—even if you haven’t used the entire extinguishing agent. Check the gauge on the fire extinguisher for this information.

4. When operating a fire extinguisher, stand at least six feet away from the fire and keep your back to a door so you can escape easily, if necessary. Remember the word PASS:

- Pull the pin, hold the extinguisher away from you and release the locking mechanism.
- Aim low, pointing the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
- Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.

- Sweep the nozzle from side to side.

“Fire extinguishers for home use are not designed to fight large or spreading fires,” stresses Drengenberg. “Rather than fighting the fire, your number one priority should be getting out safely.”

Source: Underwriters Laboratories

Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning

According to Underwriters Laboratories (UL), more than 500 people die each year from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning in the United States. During the winter months, incidents of CO poisoning increase due to the use of heating equipment.

With that in mind, prevent CO poisoning by installing and maintaining a carbon monoxide detector:

Have a qualified technician inspect fuel-burning appliances at least once a year. Older or damaged appliances emit carbon monoxide due to wear and tear.

Notice signs that signal a CO problem: streaks of carbon or soot around the service door of your fuel-burning appliance; the absence of a draft in your chimney; excessive rusting on flue pipes; moisture collecting on the windows and walls of furnace rooms; fallen soot from the fireplace; small amounts of water leaking from the base of the chimney, vent or flue pipe; damaged or discolored bricks at the top of your chimney; rust on the portion of the vent pipe visible from outside your home.

Signs of CO poisoning include headaches, dizzi-

ness, fatigue, confusion and breathing difficulties. If someone has these symptoms inside the house but not outside, it may be a result of CO.

Install a CO detector outside bedrooms, as most poisonings occur while people are sleeping.

Follow the manufacturer’s directions for installing the detector.

If your unit is hard-wired into your home’s electrical system, you should test it monthly. If it runs off of a battery, test the detector weekly and replace the battery once a year.

Never use charcoal grills inside homes, tents or campers. Don’t leave vehicles running in an enclosed garage, even to “warm up.”

If your CO alarm sounds, immediately open doors and windows for ventilation. If anyone is experiencing symptoms of CO poisoning, evacuate the house and call 911. If the alarm sounds, but no one is experiencing symptoms, continue to ventilate the house, turn off fuel-burning appliances and call a qualified technician to inspect your home.

Source: Underwriters Laboratories