

Rural Life



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WINTER HOURS
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Monday – Friday



Co-ops Voice Support, Concerns About Climate Change Legislation

BY RICHARD WILSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Over the summer, the United States Senate has been grappling with the complex issue of climate change and carbon dioxide reduction. It has become apparent during this time that these issues are complicated. Much debate is still occurring over whether man-made CO₂ is indeed causing climate change. There is also much debate about whether global temperatures are rising and by how much. The bill's most likely result is that little of the enormous amount of money collected by government through taxes added to your electric bill will be used to actually try to solve perceived CO₂ issues. This legislation is bad business.

During this time, rural electric cooperatives across the nation have been encouraging their members to voice their opinions on any such legislation. This legislation, if it were to pass, will most certainly affect the availability, reliability and especially affordability of electric power. By going to the website, www.ourenergy.coop, you can join the ranks of tens of thousands of folks who have voiced concern over the proposed legislation. If you have not done so, please take a moment to share your thoughts about this legislation with your elected officials.

Your electric cooperative has spent considerable time and money updating

and maintaining your electric system this year. A new Rural Utilities Service work plan was approved this year totaling nearly \$12 million for upgrading and rebuilding projects over the next three years. In conjunction with the work plan, a new loan application to RUS was also approved for the same amount. Aging lines and older equipment will be rebuilt or replaced. Much of Southeast Colorado Power Association's lines and equipment are over 50 years old, some even older. While SECPA certainly has gotten its money's worth out of this infrastructure, it doesn't last forever. Severe storms over the last few years have stressed many parts of the system. When these areas are not replaced, continual maintenance has to be performed, many times after outages have occurred because of the stress.

We will finish a major electronic upgrade to our substations this year that will enable personnel to continually monitor and record load and line characteristics for each substation. We can monitor things like line loss and begin to address any issues that increase losses. Every kilowatt-hour we purchase that is used up by line loss is money out of your pocket. This equipment will allow us to better utilize the substations and reduce maintenance costs.

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JACK'S CONSERVATION CORNER

Insulate Attic, Basement for Greater Savings

Because they are usually pretty accessible, attics are one of the easier places in the home to inspect and insulate. And if there is no insulation, it's usually the most cost-effective insulation project you can do. Keep in mind the rule that you want to insulate any surface that divides inside living areas from outside spaces. Therefore, in an attic that is not heated or cooled, the ceiling should be insulated because it is the barrier between the conditioned and the unconditioned spaces.

Insulating the attic

Go into the attic to determine existing insulation levels. In addition to checking the area around its entrance, look deep into the attic's recesses. Sometimes insulation around the attic access is fine but not so good in harder-to-reach areas. This is particularly true with blown insulation. As you check the attic, watch your step. There is often nothing but drywall between the floor joists.

While in the attic, see if there is insulation on the attic door or hatch. These areas can be insulated by attaching a fiberglass batt to the upper side, or for entrances with pull-down ladders, you may need to buy or build an insulated box to cover it. Another alternative is using an insulating blanket designed for a water heater. They are pretty inexpensive and can be adapted as an insulating cover for the hatch. While it may seem inconsequential, the attic entry door is often a significant percentage of the total attic floor area. It should also be weather-stripped for a tight seal.

Unheated attics that have no flooring are the easiest to insulate. Simply add blankets, batts or loose-fill between the floor joists. Keep insulation back away from heat producers like recessed light fixtures or exhaust flues. Also, be sure the insulation does not block attic ventilation. A wooden baffle can be placed to hold insulation batts back from blocking the air passage. Sometimes plastic or Styrofoam air channels are attached to the underside of the roof to keep the passage clear. When loose-fill insulation is

installed, it's a good idea to clean the soffit vents afterward to ensure they are not blocked.

Insulation can be in the form of pre-cut batts or blankets inserted between joists, or loose-fill spread evenly across the attic floor. Loose-fill can be carried up in bags or pumped up using a rented pumping machine. If the attic has a finished floor, loosen a few boards and blow insulation between the floor joists. Using anything other than blown insulation would require tearing up the flooring. If the attic has no insulation, see if vapor barriers are recommended in your area and, if recommended, where they should be placed.

If the attic has some existing insulation, you can add additional loose-fill or apply another layer of unfaced batts at cross angles to the joists.

Attics used as living spaces and having heating and/or cooling should have insulation in the ceiling and walls. Some of these areas may be readily accessible, but others may be covered with finished interior wall or ceiling materials. Check to see if there is insulation behind them. If there is none, your choices are to blow in loose-fill from outside the home or strip off the finished wall and ceiling materials and install blankets or blown insulation from the inside.

Ceilings that are also roofs can be big energy losers. For types with attractive beams and exposed roof boards, one solution is cutting panels of rigid insulation and installing them between the beams. Most types of rigid insulation must then be covered with wallboard for fire safety. With ceilings considered too attractive to cover, insulation can be added during a reroofing project.

If there is already some insulation in an attic or roof, it may be hard to justify the cost of installing more according to the principal of diminishing return on investment, in which case you can focus your energy efforts elsewhere.

Insulating the basement, foundation

Second only to insulating the attic, insulating basements and foundations walls

is often a cost-effective home improvement. It's one that can also make the home more comfortable.

Basements that are used as living space and heated or cooled should have insulation separating the living area from the outside air or ground. If there is none, you can build a wall frame similar to the above ground walls, attach it to the basement wall, add insulating batts between the studs and then apply wallboard over it all to give it a finished look. Just be sure to use vapor barriers as recommended for your area. In most parts of the country, the vapor barrier should face the living area. And check for moisture or drainage problems before covering an area with wallboard. (WIN *Virgil Lessenden, Arlington, account #1206040000)

Basements or crawl spaces that are not heated or cooled should have insulation under the floor, since the floor is the barrier between the living space and what can be considered the outside. Battis can be inserted between the floor joists and secured with flexible metal tongs or laced in place with wire wrapped around nails or held up with chicken wire. Make sure vapor barriers are used appropriately. In all but the most humid parts of the country they should face up or toward the living space.

Also, insulate the rim joist, the area on top of the foundation where floor joists abut the rim joist. Fiberglass batts cut to fit snugly or pieces of rigid insulation can be fitted into the rim joist area. Check local recommendations on vapor barriers. In most climates they should be installed facing toward the living space, so under the house, faced batts would have their facing up and the unfaced side exposed.

Simple payback

An energy investment's simple payback period is the amount of time it will take to recover the initial investment in energy savings, dividing initial installed cost by the annual energy cost savings. For example, an energy-saving measure that costs \$5,000 and saves \$2,500 per year has a simple payback of \$5,000 divided by \$2,500 or two years. *[continued on page 9]*



INSULATE

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While simple payback is easy to compute, its weakness is that it fails to factor in the time value of money, inflation, project lifetime or operation and maintenance costs. To take these factors into account, a more detailed life cycle cost analysis must be performed. Simple payback is useful for making ballpark estimates of how long it will take to recoup an initial investment.

CO-OPS VOICE CONCERNS

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telecommunication division of SECPA, has continued to grow this year. Sales in 2009 will be nearly \$2 million. With 13 employees and growing, SECOM has become a major part of the business, adding cash flow to SECPA. This year, SECOM completed a large project, constructing fiber cable between Pueblo and Trinidad using a \$780,000 U.S. Department of Agriculture grant that was awarded in 2008. With over 1,200 miles of aerial and buried fiber, SECOM has become a major telecommunication carrier and Internet provider in this neck of the woods. Continued growth is expected in 2010.

Your co-op staff and statewide and national organizations have been busy monitoring potentially harmful, costly legislation that may add fees to your power bill to pay for sundry causes. The co-op business model is constantly being explained to legislators because most are from urban areas and have no idea that co-ops are member owned and governed and are not-for-profit businesses. When they hear how we work, they often modify their position on how a bill will affect us. Going forward, this will become more and more necessary because of fewer rural legislators.

With the holiday season about here, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your continued patronage and support. On behalf of your board of directors and employees, please have a safe and happy holiday season.

Give the Gift of Light This Year

The holiday season is here, and it's time to start thinking about gifts. Southeast Colorado Power Association can help you give a gift guaranteed to be used and appreciated. You don't even have to fight the holiday shopping crowds to buy it. Give the gift of light.

SECPA's gift certificate makes it easy for you to provide a credit on someone else's electric account (as long as he or she is a SECPA customer). Just fill out the form below and return it along with your payment to any SECPA office or a SECPA drop box. You can also call SECPA with the information and use your credit card, or simply type in the easy fill-in form on

SECPA's website at www.secpa.com. Now that's an easy way to shop for holiday gifts.

We will credit the recipient's account with the amount of your gift. (Please make gifts in \$5 increments, i.e. \$5, \$10, \$15.) You will receive a confirmation of the gift, and the recipient will receive a card listing your name and the amount of the credit he or she received. (You may remain anonymous if you wish.)

For more information, call SECPA or log on to SECPA's website at www.secpa.com. A SECPA gift certificate can be given any time throughout the year.

SECPA GIFT CERTIFICATE

I/we would like to provide the following person(s) a credit of \$ _____ on their SECPA electric account.

Recipient's name: _____

Account no. (if available): _____

Property address: _____

Your name: _____

Your phone number: _____

Your address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Please check one of the following:

Enclosed is my check

Please bill my credit card

Name on card: _____

Card number: _____

Expiration date: _____

Signature: _____

I wish to remain anonymous

YOU COULD BE A WINNER

If you find your name in this issue as follows (Win* your name, account number), please contact Paige Horn at Southeast Colorado Power, 719-384-2551 or 800-332-8634, to receive a credit on your next power bill. Last month's winner was Iliff Chick, #301960100.

Be Part of the 2010 Youth Tour

If you are a junior in high school, you could be one of the lucky students to win the chance to represent Southeast Colorado Power Association in the nation's capital next summer. The winner will join other students from around the state and country for an exciting week of learning and exploring Washington, D.C., June 11-17, 2010. To be eligible, your parents must be a member of Southeast Colorado Power. Fill out the following entry form and return to the address shown prior to January 4, 2010.

Student Information and Entry Form

This application can also be printed from SECPA's website at www.secpa.com. Please fill out the following information, detach the application and send it in. Dates, terms and conditions could change without prior notice.

Student's name: _____

Name on SECPA account: _____

Age: _____ Year of graduation: _____ Account no.: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone no.: (____) _____ High school phone no.: (____) _____

High school attending: _____

**Deadline for applications: January 4, 2010. Mail or bring application to:
Southeast Colorado Power, Attention: Youth Tour, P.O. Box 521, La Junta, CO 81050**

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

Do you need a scholarship for college?

Don't miss out on the seven college scholarships available through Southeast Colorado Power Association. They include:

- 3 \$500 SECPA scholarships
- 2 \$500 Tri-State Generation and Transmission scholarships
- 1 \$1,000 Basin Electric scholarship
- 1 \$500 Kenny Anderson Memorial Scholarship (for Crowley County or El Paso County graduating seniors only who meet the following criteria.)

To qualify for these scholarships:

- Your parents or guardians must receive electric service from SECPA.
- You must be a graduating high school senior.
- Applications must be received at SECPA offices by February 12, 2010.

Applications are currently available on our website at www.secpa.com, from your high school counselor or by emailing Jack Wolfe at jackw@secpa.com or Joy Grasmick at joyg@secpa.com, or call them at 719-384-2551 or 800-332-8634.

Keep the Fireworks Out of Christmas

It's not only our bellies that are overloaded during the holiday season. Too often, we overload our outlets with a dozen strings of light, electric candles and Santa and all his reindeer. This can result in sparks and sizzles as fuses are blown from the overloaded outlet. The simplest way to protect yourself is not to overload the outlet.

To figure out how much is too much, find your circuit breaker (or fuse box in older homes).

Circuit breakers and fuses act as "fail-safes" against electrical overload. They regulate the amount of current that can be drawn from a circuit. This current is expressed in amperes, or amps. Most circuit breakers and fuses regulate at either 15 or 20 amps.

If too much current is drawn from the circuit, the circuit breaker trips or the fuse blows, breaking the circuit to prevent an overload.

To determine how much electricity you're using with all those holiday decorations, you need to do a little math. Take the combined wattage of the fixtures and divide that number by the volts in your house (usually 120) to come up with amps.

Another potential hazard occurs when more than one outlet is wired to a single circuit. If you look at your

circuit breakers or fuse box, you may see a single circuit labeled "dining room" or "A/C unit and washer/dryer." You may find that all of the outlets in an entire room are connected to a single circuit. This means that you don't necessarily have to overload a single outlet to cause a fire — all of the outlets used at once might cause a fire.

It's not difficult to calculate the amount of power you're asking for from your outlets, and doing so can prevent a fire. Christmas lights are usually low wattage, coming in at about a combined total of 25 watts for 50 bulbs. If your circuit can handle up to 2,000 watts within the 80-percent amperage safety limit, you should be fine — the brightness of so many bulbs would probably burn your eyes out before it would burn out your electrical outlet.

This holiday season, familiarize yourself with the electrical specifications of both your home and the electrical devices you plug into your outlets. Pay attention to the number of items you use on a single circuit, and perhaps leave the extra decorations in the attic this year. And be sure to unplug all of your decorations before you go to bed.

CHRISTMAS SAFETY TIP

Never use lights on a metallic tree. A faulty wire could cause the whole tree to become electrified.



ENERGY TIP

Turn off kitchen, bath and other exhaust fans within 20 minutes after you are done cooking or bathing. When replacing exhaust fans, consider installing high-efficiency, low-noise models.