

# Rural Life



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[www.secpa.com](http://www.secpa.com)

**SUMMER HOURS**

Office Hours: 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m.  
Monday – Thursday

All offices of SECPA will be closed Monday,  
May 31, 2010 in observance of  
Memorial Day



## Who Will Pay for All of This?

BY RICHARD WILSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

It seems that today, everyone is an expert on how electric utilities should behave. For example Colorado legislators are proposing legislation requiring the shutdown of coal-fired power plants that are in good operating condition with several years of production left.



Richard Wilson

Colorado House Bill 1365 will require Xcel Energy to convert over 900 megawatts of coal-fired generation to natural gas or some other fuel. Since there is no other fuel to burn that does not create carbon dioxide and is not cost prohibitive, natural gas is probably the fuel of choice.

In most instances, burning natural gas creates a little more than half of the CO<sub>2</sub> that burning coal produces. Assuming there really is some cause and effect between CO<sub>2</sub> and global warming, a fact that is becoming more and more questionable with discoveries of misleading meteorological information from United Nation scientists, this is a Band-Aid at best. More importantly, for those of you who didn't notice, a couple of years ago the price per million Btu of natural gas was nearly double what it is today. Those prices most certainly will return and may be even greater. The cost of an equal number of Btu produced by natural gas is over \$5 as compared to \$2 for coal.

The bottom line is that Xcel's ratepayers will shoulder the burden for these decisions. You would think that Xcel would object to this. It didn't.

The Colorado Public Utilities Commission allows investor-owned utilities like Xcel, to recover about 10.5 percent on its asset base (Southeast Colorado Power Association's rate of return is normally under 5 percent.) IOUs have shareholders, many of whom are not utility cus-

tomers, who benefit from profits on this higher return in the form of dividends. The ratepayers provide the profit and shareholders reap the rewards.

The larger the amount of infrastructure that Xcel builds, the higher the rate base amount it is entitled to make a profit on. This fact really showcases the difference between

the investor-owned and cooperatives business models. In a co-op you, the ratepayer are the only shareholder. When the cooperative builds more infrastructure, the only thing that happens is depreciation and interest costs go up, putting upward pressure on rates.

Shutting down a perfectly good power plant and building a new one or converting the existing one is a costly chore. The Colorado Rural Electric Association, on behalf of the state's cooperatives, has taken a neutral stance on the bill mainly because it does not, at least not yet, involve the cooperatives power supplier, Tri-State Generation and Transmission. CREA and Tri-State have testified in legislative committees that this legislation is a slippery slope when a state's legislature begins dictating fuel sources for a private utility and its customers. This intrusion in the electric utility business, sure to increase electric rates, is but one of myriad "good ideas" that have the potential to drastically raise rates.

I encourage you to contact your legislators and let them know you expect them to keep in mind the availability, reliability and affordability of electricity as they debate potential legislation. Go to [www.ourenergy.coop](http://www.ourenergy.coop) and sign up today. (WIN\*John Rife\*, Lamar — account #1801830000)

As always around his time of year, I want to remind you to *[continued on page 6]*

## May Is National Safety Month

**S**outheast Colorado Power Association reminds its members of the importance of safe behavior around electricity and electrical equipment at all times. It could mean the difference between life and death.

“Electricity is an important part of each of our lives, but it also poses an inherent danger if safety rules are ignored. Everyone, young and old, must follow the safety rules for power lines and other electrical equipment,” said Richard Wilson, Southeast Colorado Power Association general manager. “National Electrical Safety Month is a great time to discuss basic, but extremely important, electrical safety rules together with your family. Taking simple precautions can help you avoid serious or fatal injury.”

Southeast Colorado Power Association urges everyone to observe the following three key precautions to ensure safety around electricity:

- Look up and live. Pay attention to the location of all overhead power lines. Most overhead lines are not insulated, and special care must be taken any time you're around them. Call Southeast Colorado Power Association at 719-384-2551 or 800-332-8634, if tree branches are within close proximity to power lines.
- Call before you dig. Call 8-1-1 at least 48 hours before beginning any digging project to have underground utility lines marked for free.
- Stay away to stay safe. If you spot an electrical wire down, assume it is energized and keep everyone out of the area. Immediately call 9-1-1 or Southeast Colorado Power Association at 719-2551 or 800-332-8634. Never go near or make contact with a downed power line.

If you have additional questions about electrical safety, call us at Southeast Colorado Power Association at 719-384-2551 or 800-332-8634. We want all of our members to have a safe spring.

## SECPA ANNUAL MEETING UPDATE

**T**he 2009 annual meeting of Southeast Colorado Power Association was March 25, at the Kiowa County Fairgrounds in Eads. One hundred members were present with more than 180 total attendees. A great meal was served by the Prowers County 4-H Council. The audience heard two informative presentations from young men sponsored by Southeast to attend the Leadership Camp and the Washington, D.C., Youth Tour. The first was Jade Meinzer from Edison High School, who was selected to attend the Leadership Camp camp in Clark, Colorado. The second was Garrett Grasmick, a student from Rocky Ford High School, who was selected to travel to Washington, D.C., to learn about how government and the electric cooperative systems work. Grasmick recited the speech he gave in a contest in Washington, D. C., to be the spokesperson for the Youth Leadership Council at National Rural Electric Association's annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. Both young men returned from their travels with interesting information and having learned about the rural electric program and having met others like themselves from around the United States. Southeast is extremely proud to have made it possible for these fine young people to enjoy these experiences and share their reactions.

Robert “Mac” McLennan of Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association was the guest speaker for the evening. McLennan updated the membership on future generation plans for Tri-State, as well as what's happening with the land, water and other assets that Tri-State purchased near Holly for a possible generating plant.

Scott Larsen, chief financial officer for Southeast, gave a positive financial report and noted the cooperative met its financial requirements in 2009. SECOM, the telecommunications division of Southeast, continues to play a positive role in your cooperative.

Board President Lawrence Brase gave a positive report for Western United Electric Supply, a cooperative owned in part by Southeast. Western supplies most of the electric hardware SECPA uses to construct power lines. Western returned over \$44,000 in capital credits to Southeast last year. Board President Mark Grasmick reported on current legislative activity involving the rural electrics. Because guest speaker McLennan had reported on Tri-State, Director Bill Wright just clarified a couple of statements made by McLennan. Wright also noted that Tri-State returned over \$355,000 in capital credits to Southeast last year.

The three directors up for election in 2009 ran unopposed, and retained their seats. They were Bill Wright, District 1 — Baca County; Brad Buck, District 3 — Kiowa County; and Shad Sullivan, District 7 — El Paso and Crowley counties.

Several cash prizes were awarded throughout the evening, with Warren Yule of Eads winning the \$500 grand prize.

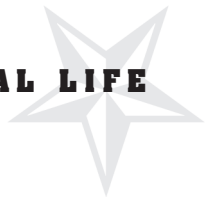
## Who Will Pay for All of This?

*[continued from page 5]*

keep safety first as you move around the farm and ranch. Irrigation pipe, tall equipment, conductive wires and other machinery can cause problems when brought in contact with electric power lines. Take a moment to look up and around when moving that equipment. Remind your children of the danger of

contact with a power line. These lines have been around for a long time now, some nearly 75 years, and it is easy to forget they are there.

As the rural electric cooperatives' old mascot, Willie Wiredhand, used to say, “Look up and live.”



JACK'S CONSERVATION CORNER

# How Many kWhs are Your Appliances Consuming?

**S**ECPA is putting into place some innovative programs designed to help its members identify where they are losing energy and to assist them in saving energy costs.

SECPA will make available to its members 14-day loans of Kill-A-Watt energy detectors, which are designed to enable people to determine which of their appliances are consuming energy.

According to Kara Hinkhouse, the program coordinator, detectors are simply plugged into any appliance and they will display the appliance's energy usage. They can be used on everything from large appliances like refrigerators and televisions to smaller ones like blenders, computers and irons. Larger, cycling appliances, such as freezers and refrigerators, will need to be plugged in for a longer period of time than smaller ones, but the devices can be used on all sizes of appliances.

The goal of the program is to help SECPA customers measure their energy

consumption and determine the efficiency of their appliances. The company hopes that using the detectors will help people make decisions about unplugging appliances that use a lot of energy or replacing those that cannot be unplugged.

The Kill-A-Watt detectors will be available at SECPA's offices in La Junta, Lamar, Springfield and Eads. Each one may be checked out at no charge for 14 days.

Those borrowing the detectors will be asked to sign a rental agreement with SECPA, and customers not returning the detectors will be charged a \$25 fee.

In addition to the Kill-A-Watt program, SECPA is also making compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) available to members for the low price of \$1 each. Hinkhouse explained that CFLs use 75 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs and last up to 10,000 hours. SECPA stocks 9-, 13-, 18- and 23-watt CFLs which are comparable to 40-, 60-, 75- and 100-watt incandescent bulbs.



Customer Representatives Kara Hinkhouse, Karen Menges and Marilyn Fisher display some of the CFL's and kWh detector available for consumer purchase and use.

This program is also designed to encourage customers to conserve energy. The bulbs are available at all four SECPA offices. Because CFLs have a small amount of mercury in them, recycling bins are located in each office, Hinkhouse noted. CFLs that have burned out may be brought in and recycled.

## SEEK SHELTER WHEN YOU HEAR THUNDER

**A**ccording to the National Weather Service, lightning kills an average of 62 people each year in the United States. In 2008, 27 people died from a "bolt out of the blue." The majority of these fatalities occurred outside, but caution must be taken indoors as well.



Follow the tips below to keep you and your family safe from lightning this summer:

- Seek shelter immediately if you hear thunder; lightning is not far away.
- Find shelter in a substantial building or in a fully enclosed vehicle with the windows rolled up.
- Do not seek shelter under trees, in picnic or rain structures or in open-frame vehicles. Avoid objects like electric wires or metal fences.
- If you cannot find shelter in a building or closed-frame vehicle, keep your feet together and crouch on the ground using the "lightning crouch:" keep feet together, squat low, tuck head and cover ears.

### ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

**P**roperly hooking up your clothes dryer can help save on energy costs. The outdoor dryer exhaust door should close when the dryer is off. Check to make sure the dryer vent hose is tightly connected to the inside wall fitting. The vent hose should not be kinked or clogged.

Source: Touchstone Energy Cooperative

### 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 P.W. Pearson, account # 1606150200.



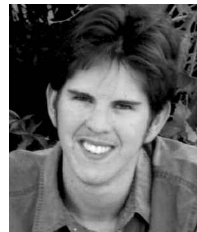
Joshua Doak



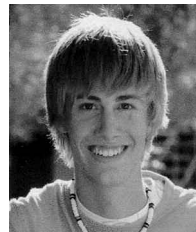
Brittney Dickerson



Chelsea Butler



David Proctor



Kyle Reed



Ryne Schroder



Jade Meinzer

## SECPA Scholarship Winners Announced

**L**ike every year, we received a tremendous number of scholarship applications. The applicants were extremely bright and talented, which gives us a lot of hope for the future. Everyone should be proud of the youth in their communities. We certainly are.

This year Joshua Doak from Edison High School was the winner of a \$1,000 Basin Electric Scholarship. Brittney Dickerson of McClave High School and Chelsea Butler of Kim High

School each won \$500 scholarships from Tri-State Generation and Transmission. Three \$500 scholarships from SECPA were awarded to David Proctor of Swink High School, Kyle Reed of Lamar High School and Ryne Schroder of Vilas High School. A \$700 Kenny Anderson Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Jade Meinzer of Edison High School.

Congratulations to all the winners for a job well done.

## Colorado Launches Rebate Program to Save Money, Cut Back on Energy Usage at Home

*Get money back for appliances, solar panels, insulation, home efficiency improvements*

**C**oloradans can now tap into millions of recovery act dollars. The rebate program allows people to save money, boost the economy and save energy through the Governor's Energy Office's statewide rebate program. This initiative is designed to bring energy efficiency and renewable energy to tens of thousands of Coloradans and will provide nearly 75,000 rebates worth approximately \$22 million.

Coloradans can connect easily with opportunities to save dollars and do some good for the economy and the environment by visiting the Recharge Colorado website to sign up for rebates on a wide array of appliances, services and equipment that will save energy, reduce energy bills and create jobs for Colorado. The website and rebate program offer Colorado consumers a service unprecedented in scope, providing comprehensive and localized information about rebates, financial incentives, contractors, energy conservation tips and availability of goods and services across the state.

Items eligible for rebates include:

- Equipment, such as dishwashers, clothes washers and refrigerators, as well as furnaces and hot water heaters.
- Residential energy efficiency measures, such as insulation and air sealing, duct sealing, whole-house energy audits and whole-house energy monitors.

- Renewable energy projects, including solar photovoltaic systems, solar hot water systems for homes and businesses and small wind installations.

About one-third of the rebates are for Energy Star appliances, furnaces and hot water heaters. The bulk of the funding for the program is provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Local partners across Colorado provided additional dollars.

"Coloradans are unique and our goal was to develop a rebate program and education campaign that would match the 'do it yourself' ethic that is a hallmark of this great state," said

GEO Director Tom Plant. "We look forward to providing Coloradans this opportunity to save money, save energy and participate in our New Energy Economy. We invite consumers to discover the wealth of energy-saving information available to them through this one-stop clearinghouse at our Recharge Colorado website. Connecting people to this information will, in turn, mean more jobs and business for the companies that provide these valuable services."

Consumers should logon to the Recharge Colorado website to apply for and reserve rebates. Now is a good time to make your home more energy efficient.



Visit [www.rechargecolorado.com](http://www.rechargecolorado.com) for information on rebates.