

Broken Record Reverberates Truth



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Prices Continue to Rise at the Plug

When I asked my grandson if he wanted to listen to a record, he asked, "What's a record, Papa Dan?"

I suppose now I could say, "I don't want to sound like a broken CD or MP3 (how about eight track or cassette)." But unlike those technologies that completely stop when damaged, a broken record just keeps repeating itself over and over again annoying the listener until he gently (or not) kicks the record player. I don't want to sound like a broken record, but for ten years I've been warning (and annoying some of you) over and over about what would happen if we didn't demand some major changes in national environmental and energy policy.

What happens if you subsidize the most expensive power generation and regulate, legislate and litigate against all forms of conventional generation? What happens if you complicate the process even farther by threatening more restrictions while the opposition refuses continued subsidies? What happens when power suppliers need additional generation and they (and their bankers) are reluctant to invest billions in facilities that may be disallowed tomorrow? The simple answer is you try to avoid risk by not building anything, or you gamble with billions hoping you will get a plant built and will be able to use it long enough to recover your costs. The result is ever increasing costs of wholesale power—the electricity we buy to deliver to you. If America had a prudent, consistent, dependable energy and environmental policy, electricity prices in this country would be going down—not up.

When you can't build a power plant, or litigation and regulation make it so expensive that it isn't

practical, you try to get by. Most of the time you have more than enough low-cost capacity, but a few times a year (usually on a very cold or a very hot day) you run short. What do you do? You could just pull the plug on some consumers. That might work in some parts of the world, but I doubt it would be very popular with most Americans. You could buy power on the open market when everyone else is buying (if it is available) or invest in gas turbines and run them. That's very expensive. You could ask consumers to use less electricity during peak times, but without a price incentive, most won't bother.

Since 2007 the price of the power that your cooperative purchases to deliver to you has doubled. Most of that is in peak demand cost.

That's the dilemma. We've been asking our members to shift as much electrical usage as possible to non-peak times. Most have made no changes, and those who have, received no individual reward. That's why your co-op is pursuing peak demand billing for all consumers. Like all power suppliers in America, we are trying to squeeze every drop of



Black Hills Electric Cooperative members own some of the lowest production costs and cleanest burning power plants in the world.

capacity out of the existing power system because it is impossible or impractical to build generation of any kind in this country. Since 2007 the price of the power that your cooperative purchases to deliver to you has doubled. Most of that is in peak demand cost. That cost is reflected in the "power cost adjustment" line on your bill and the increase in the electric heat rate. That's

the cost of American energy and environmental policy. The rest of your bill has remained virtually unchanged for almost twenty years.

It's not just the record that is broken.

BHEC Annual Meeting Fri., June 1, at Hot Springs

Black Hills Electric Cooperative Connections

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Home Show March 23-25



Visit us at the Black Hills Home Builders' Home Show Friday, March 23 through Sunday, March 25 at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center arena in Rapid City. The three-day show is from noon to 8 p.m. on Friday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is \$6.

Representatives from Black Hills Electric Cooperative will be joined by other Black Hills area electric cooperatives to offer advice on heating systems, water heating, lighting options, energy-saving ideas and more. Look for the large, colorful cooperative booth as you enter the civic center arena. In addition to staff from each cooperative, representatives will be available from other area home improvement companies.

Committee Selects Incumbents

The 2012 nominating committee met in late February and selected candidates for the upcoming election at the cooperative's 67th annual meeting.

More than 4,800 postcards were sent in January to members in the two geographical zones with director elections. Nineteen application packets were mailed to members interested in being a candidate for one of the three positions. Only the incumbent directors returned completed applications.

The nomination committee selected Dwayne Breyer as the candidate from Fall River County and Al Perry and Gary Kluthe as candidates from the Lawrence, Meade and Pennington Counties zone.

This year's annual meeting will be Friday, June 1, at Hot Springs. Registration will begin at 5 p.m. at the Mueller Center lobby. Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. in the auditorium and the business meeting will be at 7 p.m. in the theater.



Gary Kluthe, left, and Al Perry, center, are candidates from the Lawrence, Meade and Pennington Counties geographical area and Dwayne Breyer, right, is the candidate from the Fall River County geographical area.

Getting Together at Co-op's Area Meetings

This year, Black Hills Electric Cooperative's seven area meetings helped raise almost \$3,800 for local civic groups.

The Hermosa area meeting led the way with 113 people attending. Rockerville was next with 95. Hermosa also had the most donations with \$585.

Each February, Black Hills Electric's directors and employees host soup suppers in seven of the cooperative's communities. The food is prepared by local civic groups in those communities and served by co-op personnel.

The suppers are free to everyone. The co-op pays for the food and any donations are given to the civic organization co-sponsoring the event.

Members are encouraged to ask questions about their co-op and visit with their directors and staff.



BHEC's General Manager Dan Hutt, right, serves soup to Don Lynde as Norma Lynde, front, works her way to the dessert table. Also serving are Alan Michalewicz and Dwayne Breyer. Corey Tomovick, front left, and Alice Tomovick try to decide which soup to try.



Dwayne Breyer, vice president of BHEC's board, dishes up soup at Rockerville.



Former BHEC director Art Lampert reads the Johnson Siding Fun Facts from last year's meeting. Lampert served on the cooperative's board from 1988-94.



Dan Hutt, left, Alan Michalewicz, center, and BHEC Board President Al Perry provide soup and comradery to people going through the soup line at Whispering Pines. Staff and board members donate their time to help with the co-op's appreciation meetings.



BHEC's General Manager Dan Hutt answers questions from those in attendance at the Whispering Pines area meeting. The meetings give members the opportunity to visit with co-op employees and directors and keep up on what is happening with their cooperative.

101 Easy Ways to Save Energy and Money

As energy costs increase and people add more and more electric appliances and electronics in their homes, members' electric bills continue to grow. Now, an interactive website may be able to help BHEC members reduce their energy bills and save money.

Touchstone Energy's website at www.togetherwesave.com contains a wealth of information on energy savings, including *101 Easy Ways to Save Energy and Money*.

The downloadable pamphlet includes tips on heating and air conditioning, water heating, laundry and much more.

Tips include: No. 2 – For households with one or two members, a 115°F set-

ting on a water heater may work fine.; No. 18 – Make sure the outdoor dryer exhaust door closes when the dryer is off.; No. 28 – Set the refrigerator tem-



perature to 34° to 37°F and freezer temperature to 0° to 5°F; No. 89 – When using a fireplace, reduce heat loss by opening the damper in the bottom of the firebox (if provided) or open the nearest window slightly.; and many other energy saving ideas.

To download your copy of 101 Easy Ways to Save Energy and Money or to take an interactive tour of your home's energy needs, go to www.togetherwesave.com.

Type in your zip code and follow the instructions.

Cleaning A Marathon Water Heater

Cleaning the tank of your Marathon water heater does not have to be a dreaded task.

If your water is hard, calcium and other minerals build up on the water heater elements. This mineral build up then flakes off and settles in the bottom of the tank. Over time, the sediment can clog the drain valve and may even-

tually reach the lower element, causing it to short out.

Periodic cleaning with a wet vacuum system can help extend the life of the water heater and keep the tank and drain valve clean.

Use a universal hose adapter for your wet vacuum. Drain the water heater and remove the bottom element. Use a three-foot piece of clear vinyl tubing to vacuum out the tank through the lower element opening.



(l-r) A universal hose adaptor. Three-feet of one-inch inside diameter vinyl tubing. Vacuuming through element opening.



Be Prepared

With Black Hills Electric's outage detection software, cooperative personnel may know you are out of power before you do.

The software checks all of BHEC's meters several times a day. If a meter indicates an outage, crews are dispatched immediately to find the problem. The software is just one way that the cooperative works to minimize outages and keep reliability high.

Widespread outages are rare but blinks are more common. A blink is when a breaker or switch opens along

any portion of the power system because of a large, quick rise of electrical current called a fault.

A fault can occur when lightning strikes, a tree branch touches a



line, a wire breaks or even when small animals contact transformers or other equipment, sometimes miles away from your house. A relay senses the fault and tells the breaker to open, preventing the flow of power to the problem site. After opening, the breaker quickly closes. The brief delay, which allows the fault to clear, usually lasts less than two seconds. The breaker can help prevent a larger outage from occurring.

If there is a widespread outage, don't get caught in the dark. Large-scale outages usually are caused by weather-related events, such as blizzards or severe storms. It is a good idea to keep an emergency kit ready for such events.

A well-stocked emergency kit should include a flashlight, extra batteries, a battery-powered radio, candles and matches or lighter, first aid supplies, canned foods, a can opener, bottled water and blankets.

Planning ahead may save your life.