

Somebody Help Me



Doug Rye
www.dougye.com

I'm writing this column during a break from a seminar at a hotel in the Midwest. I've just completed conducting seminars in Arkansas, Kentucky and Illinois. Next week, I'll be talking in Colorado and back to Illinois and on and on across this country.

And at every location, I am hearing this cry. "Our utility rates have risen drastically.

What are we going to do? Somebody please help me." Well, forgive me for saying I told you so. But the truth is, I've been telling you that this was going to happen for 20 plus years. It is now time to pay the fiddler, even if you don't like the music.

Well folks, I will help you if you really want to be helped. Now there isn't much you and I can do about energy rates but we do have a great deal to say about the amount of energy that we use. I have spent my entire adult life helping folks just like you use less energy and still be comfortable in their homes. I have taught literally hundreds of thousands of people how to construct their new houses so that they will be totally comfortable and have the lowest utility costs feasible. For years, I have used this statement. "Build your houses like I teach and your heating and cooling costs will always be half that of your neighbors." When my neighbor's energy cost is \$100, mine is \$50. As rates increase, when the neighbor's bill is \$200, mine is \$100. I'm sure you understand this principle.

Now, I never like to be the bearer of bad news.

But it most likely will get worse before it gets better. Let's look at the future. When the neighbor's cost is \$800, mine will be \$400. You see when the cost of energy was very low, it didn't make a lot of difference. But now and in the future, it becomes extremely important.

Remember your two choices. You can complain and maybe feel better for a couple of hours or you can implement a plan that will help forever. As the Jaycees say, "Plan your work and then work your plan."

Now there isn't much you and I can do about energy rates but we do have a great deal to say about the amount of energy that we use.

So read this column every month, prepare your energy plan and implement your plan as funds and time permit. So if you are serious, get your pen and paper and start making your plan. Write it down just like a honey-do list. Then implement your plan and mark items off one at a time.

I am answering your call for help. Just call me somebody.

Doug Rye, a licensed architect living in Saline County, Ark., and the popular host of the "Home Remedies" radio show, works as a consultant for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas to promote energy efficiency to cooperative members statewide. To order Doug's video, call Doug at 1-888-Doug-Rye. More energy-efficiency tips can also be found at www.ecark.org

Energy-Saving Tips

If you are a first-time homeowner, building a new home or just wanting to make changes to an older, existing home, Doug has written some energy-saving tips for you to consider. There is no better time to do this than at the beginning of a construction project.

- If you are clearing a lot for a new home or considering landscaping options, don't forget about the shade advantage trees add, as well as the evaporative cooling their lush canopies can offer.
- Window coatings are energy saving, especially for west-facing view windows. For most residential applications, low-emissiv-

ity (low-e) coatings are sufficient. They can cut heat gain by up to 25 percent without changing the window's appearance.

- When building a new home, try to keep glass area at 10 percent to 12 percent of the floor area of the house. (Example: 2,000 square feet x 10 percent = 200 square feet of glass).

- Did you know that the average water heater wears out approximately every 10 years? When installing a water heater, you should consider one that is guaranteed for life to never leak or rust and can save you approximately \$100 a year on your electric bill.

Don't Mess with Power Lines

Be Cautious When Moving Large Equipment

Approximately 1,000 people die each year from electrical shock according to the National Institutes of Health.

These accidents are avoidable and preventable.

Two significant public contact incidents occurred in just one week's time on the Sioux Valley Energy in Colman, S.D., electrical system. There were no injuries.

The first contact left thousands of customers without electricity and was believed to be the result of a careless grain bin mover who tried to transport a bin under a joint distribution and transmission line without enough

clearance. Five substations were knocked out as a result of the bin hitting the lines.

The second incident took place when a farmer, moving spraying equipment, came in contact with a 115,000-volt transmission line. This caused electrical power surges and blinking lights.

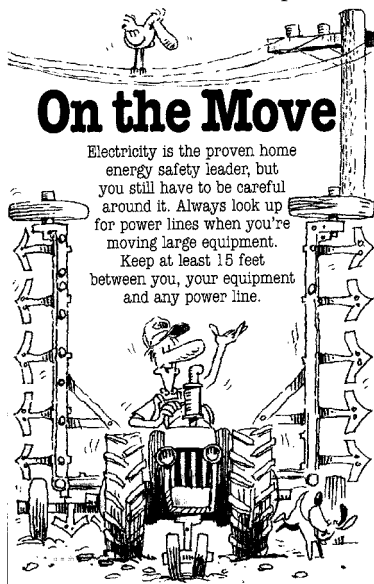
Although the power disruption did not leave customers in the dark, it did damage critical equipment on a Sioux Valley Wireless tower and affected several businesses that had to re-start processing equipment.

Public contacts – whether it's hitting a power line, a transformer in your back yard or even a cable in the ground – can be extremely dangerous.

Many Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives rec-

ommend following these guidelines from www.safeelectricity.org before moving any large equipment around power lines:

- Always lower a portable grain auger before you move it, even if only a few feet.
- Keep all objects at least 10 feet away from overhead lines. Know where all overhead power lines are located on your property and inform all workers about them.
- Plan your route between fields, to bins and elevators and on public roads so that you avoid low-hanging power lines. If someone else transports large equipment, always specify a safe route and explain why certain routes must be taken.
- Be sure you and everyone else in your operation know what to do in an emergency.
- If equipment gets hung up on a power line, the operator should NOT get off the machinery unless in immediate danger. If the operator touches the ground and the equipment at the same time, he or she will become a channel for electricity.
- If you must leave the equipment, jump as far away from the machinery as possible. Never get back on machinery that touches a power line until the utility company disconnects the line.



Co-op Owned Wind Resources to be Explored

The wind is a frequent visitor on the Dakota prairies, and Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Bismarck, N.D., intends to explore using that wind once again to its members' advantage.

Based on the outcome of several studies being conducted over the next two years, 200 or more megawatts (mw) of wind energy could be targeted for development.

Ron Rebenitsch, manager of member marketing, said that Basin Electric is looking at the Minot, N.D., area and central South Dakota for two potential projects of roughly 100 mw each. It's intended that the new development would be owned and operated by Basin Electric.

These projects would be in addition to Basin Electric's existing green and renewable resources, consisting of 136 mw of wind energy and 22 mw of heat

recovery generation in North Dakota and South Dakota.

To determine the areas with the most wind potential, available wind data and computer modeling information is being used to determine likely areas for initial siting. Local landowners are being contacted and environmental studies are expected to begin in the next few months.

"We will be setting up anemometers to gather wind data and evaluate the sites before any final decisions are made," Rebenitsch said.

In addition to the potential for wind, another key factor in deciding to proceed with a wind project is transmission availability and capacity. "Transmission access is critical to any project and dictates the general areas we can site a project," he said.

The pursuit of additional wind resources reflects Basin Electric's com-



mitment to its renewable energy goal, which was adopted at Basin Electric's 2005 annual meeting. The resolution calls for Basin Electric to provide at least 10 percent of its members' demand for electricity from green or renewable resources by 2010.

"Our region has some of the best wind resources in the world," Rebenitsch said, "and we are working to develop that resource for the benefit of our members."