

If You Are Going To Pay For It, Why Not Own It?



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Well, I wasn't sure what the title of this month's column should be but I'm sure it got your attention. And isn't that what a title is supposed to do?

I have spent my entire adult life helping folks just like you have more energy-efficient houses. It was important years ago and it is even more important now. In some places, utility rates have

already increased considerably. In many other areas of our country, there are proposals to raise utility rates very soon. In my hometown, electric rates will increase 50 percent this month. And guess what? All of a sudden, many of the folks in our church and around town want to talk to Doug Rye.

When I was working in a western state recently, I was advised that approval had already been granted for a 10 percent rate increase for each of the next five years. That is actually more like a 70 percent increase when compounded.

The stories go on and on. Fortunately, many families will be able to pay the increased bills. But others may have to decide between food, medicine or utility bills. My heart feels for those of you in that situation.

Folks, it is time – I mean starting today – for us to start thinking of energy improvements as investments, not just costs. In fact, statistics have shown for several years that energy improvements are among the best investments we can make. The improvements usually increase the value of your home, save you money each month and make your house more comfortable.

When I talk to people about investing money for energy efficiency in their new house or existing house, the question is often asked, "What's the payback?" That question has always puzzled me somewhat because they don't ask about the payback for the kitchen cabinets, bathroom fixtures, drapes, furniture, fireplace or anything else in the house

for that matter. I guess the reason they don't ask is because those items have NO payback. Only by making energy efficiency improvements will you eventually get a payback. The payback for a roof radiant barrier might come in just one or two good hot summers through your energy savings, while the payback for ceiling insulation might take only one hot summer and one cold winter. Payback times will vary by improvement but there IS a payback.

Now, pay close attention. I mean it. Let's say you make energy improvements that cost \$2,500 and saves you \$40 per month on utility costs. At the end of 5.2 years, you will have saved \$2,500 – that's a good payback. In addition to getting your money back, you will continue to make at least \$40 every single month in the future at today's utility costs. As utility rates increase, that amount may be \$50, \$60 or \$70, etc., per month savings.

Folks, it is time – I mean starting today – for us to start thinking of energy improvements as investments not just costs.

Now let's say you do not make the improvements. In that case, you will send the utility company \$40 extra per month. At the end of the 5.2-year period, you will have paid out the \$2,500 and you still haven't made the improvements. I could do five more pages here but I hope you get the point. You are going to pay the costs of the improvements either way – so why not own them? I hope you will take this to heart and take action because this most certainly is from my heart, y'all.

See you next month.

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

Touchstone Energy® Scholar of the Year Named

Thirty-six top high school seniors were recognized Saturday afternoon during the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Scholar of the Year Banquet at Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell, S.D. Each of the invited students had been selected as a “Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week” during the 2006-2007 school year.

During the event, the name of one of the scholars, Alan Haarstad of Iroquois High School, was drawn at random as the “Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year” and received a \$1,000 scholarship. Alan is both a scholar and an athlete.

Electric cooperatives in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota are the sponsors of this program that recognizes students for outstanding academic and community achievements. The scholars of the week were nominated for this honor by principals and faculty from throughout the KSFY-TV viewing area. A television news reporter interviewed each weekly scholar and the interviews

were broadcast during KSFY’s Thursday evening news and Friday morning show. In addition, each student received a \$100 honorarium from their local Touchstone Energy cooperative.

To read about all of the Touchstone Energy Scholars of the Week, visit this Web site: <http://touchstoneenergyscholaroftheweek.coop>

Touchstone Energy Scholars of the Week

Renugan Raido, Lincoln High School
 Krista Webb, Estelline
 Katelyn Abraham, Madison High School
 Malory Bartels, Clark High School
 Jason Hagemeyer, Washington High School
 Casey Michel, St. Mary Catholic Schools
 Abby Harmon, Hurley
 Daniel Woodraska, Kimball High School
 Jentre Olsen, Platte Community School
 Sarah Knippling, Chamberlain High School
 Emma Erickson, Gayville-Volin High School
 Brett Monson, Webster High School
 Darin Schmidt, Elk Point-Jefferson
 Shawna Knutson, Irene High School
 Mica Olson, Mitchell Christian School
 John Hommes, Central Lyon Comm. School
 Dan Rohlf, Brandon Valley
 Greg Eide, Rosholt High School

Clint Schindler, Lake Benton High School
 Allison Bruggeman, West Lyon Community School
 Abby Feehan, Dell Rapids High School
 Wendy Kummer, Parkston
 Dana Waldner, Redfield High School
 Carli Ellwein, Frederick Area School District
 Courtney Peterson, Sisseton High School
 Caitlyn Ingle, Harrold High School
 Xiang-Yu Chen, Lincoln High School
 Laura Eidsness, Henry High School
 Abby Plucker, Parker High School
 Alan Haarstad, Iroquois
 Jenalee Doom, Wagner Community School
 Katie Waldner, Willow Lake
 Allison Fink, Tripp-Delmont High School
 Elisa Chan, Roosevelt High School
 Julie Santella, O’Gorman High School
 Mikaela Sechser, Harrisburg High School

Construction Starts on Second Groton Unit

With the first unit completed last July, construction for another unit began this spring. Contractors mobilized at the Groton Generation Station near Groton, S.D., to begin work on a second generating unit.

According to Dick Shaffer, Basin Electric mechanical engineering supervisor and project coordinator, the last permit required before construction could start was a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). It was received April 26, 2007.

An air permit from the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources and a permit to construct from the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission were received earlier this year.

The FONSI, written and issued by the Rural Utilities Service, reports that construction of a second unit at the Groton Generation Station will not have a significant impact on the surrounding air quality, water quality, socioeconomics, aesthetics, ambient noise levels, local traffic, flood plains, wetlands, prime farm

land, federally listed or endangered species or critical habitat or historic properties.

Shaffer said the second unit will basically be a duplicate of the first unit: a 95-megawatt capacity LMS100® gas-fired turbine. Groton Generation Station Unit 1 is the first and only commercial application of the LMS100 turbine so far and Unit 2 will be the second. The major difference from Unit 1 is that Unit 2 will not have a synchronous clutch. The LMS100 is a simple-cycle gas turbine designed by GE Energy, which uses a combination of frame and aeroderivative technology.

“Construction was delayed due to wet conditions in the area, but now that things have dried up a bit, we’re well under way,” Shaffer said.

The second unit is scheduled to be operational in June 2008.

Basin Electric is a consumer-owned, regional cooperative headquartered in Bismarck, N.D. It generates and

transmits electricity to 121 member rural electric systems in nine states: Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming. These member systems distribute electricity to about 2.5 million consumers.

Editor’s Note: Basin Electric’s generating resources include three coal-based power plants — the Antelope Valley Station, Beulah, N.D., the Leland Olds Station, Stanton, N.D.; the Laramie River Station, Wheatland, Wyo.; an oil-based peaking station — the Spirit Mound Station, Vermillion, S.D.; nine combustion-turbine generators (natural gas) in the Gillette, Wyo., area; two gas-fired peaking stations — the Groton Generation Station near Groton, S.D., and the Wisdom Station Unit 2 near Spencer, Iowa; four wind turbines — two near Minot, N.D., and two near Chamberlain, S.D. Basin Electric purchases the entire output of three wind farms owned and operated by FPL Energy — one near Edgeley/Kulm, N.D., and one near Wilton, N.D., and another near Highmore, S.D.; and two other 750-kilowatt wind turbines, one located near Pipestone, Minn., and another near Rosebud, S.D. Basin Electric also purchases the entire production of four recovered energy projects located along the Northern Border Pipeline.