

You Must Act To Combat Rising Energy Costs



Doug Rye
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Phone call after phone call after phone call at my office goes like this.

Ring. Hello, this is Doug Rye.

Caller: Doug, please help. I am using 20 percent less gas than last year but my (natural) gas bills are 40 percent higher than they were. I don't understand it.

Rye: Yes, I've been telling you that was going to happen. We are NOW at the beginning of an energy crisis that I fear is only going to get worse, not better.

Caller: What am I going to do?

Rye: First, thank God that it was a warmer than normal winter. I don't know what folks would have done if it had been a really cold winter.

Caller: I've got to do something or I won't be able to make it next time.

Rye: You have only ONE choice, I repeat, ONE choice. Did you hear me? ONE choice if you are going to stay in your present house. You must reduce your energy usage. You can do that by using less energy or by making your house more energy efficient. The latter is by far the best long-term answer. If you do both, you could obtain really great results for years to come ...

Folks, I do not make up these stories. These calls are for real and so are the answers. Please note that the solutions to your energy problems do take action on your part. As my dad used to say, "You can complain until you are blue in the face and it will not solve the problem." You must take action and the sooner the better.

Many of you have also noticed an increase in your electric bills. On our last electric bill, 20

percent of the total was for fuel adjustments. That's because fuel costs are rising and the electric cooperatives, along with other electric utilities, have no choice but to pass the costs on to you through what is known as a "fuel adder" on your bills. The main factor behind the rising costs has to do with coal shortages at the cooperatives' power plants. The railroad companies that bring the coal from Wyoming to Arkansas haven't been delivering coal in a timely manner, which has forced the cooperatives and other electric utilities to use more natural gas to generate electricity.

With the cost to generate electricity on the rise, now more than ever is the time for you to take action. If you make your home more energy efficient, as I've been teaching for 20 plus years, your utility bill can go down because you will be using less kilowatt hours.

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To help you do that, I plan to devote the next few articles to existing house energy improvements. So get your pen, paper and checkbook ready and get ready to do something about it. In the meantime, if you have questions, feel free to call me at my office, 501-653-7931.

Editor's Note: Your electric cooperative has many tips on ways to make your home more energy efficient. Contact your local electric cooperative for more information or visit www.stopenergyleaks.coop or www.touchstoneenergy.coop and click on the Energy Efficiency tab at the top of the page.

Doug Rye, a licensed architect living in Saline County, Ark., is the popular host of the "Home Remedies" radio show and a promoter of energy efficiency building. To order Doug's video, call Doug at 1-888-Doug-Rye.

Speech Contest Winners Announced

Three South Dakota teens won a total of \$2,300 in scholarships as part of the 47th annual Resource Conservation Speech Contest, sponsored in part by the state's Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives.

South Dakota high school students first participated in a local contest sponsored by each conservation district. Two students from each district were then eligible to participate in an area contest. From there, the top two winners from each of the designated areas were eligible to advance to the state finals in Pierre.

Winning first place and a \$1,100 scholarship was Diana Schroeder. Schroeder is a senior at Hanson High School and is the daughter of Dan and Nancy Schroeder of Alexandria, S.D.

Receiving second place and a \$750 scholarship was Amber Knutson, a junior at Kadoka Area High School. She is the daughter of Brandy and Dayle Knutson of Kadoka, S.D.

Talya LaBarr was the third place winner and received a \$450 scholarship. She is a junior at Henry High School. She is the daughter of Kevin and Laurie Beaner of Henry, S.D.

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of South Dakota provided scholarships totaling \$2,300 to the winning contestants. The contest is co-sponsored by the South Dakota Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts.

The theme for next year's contest is "Clean Green Alternative Energy." For more information, contact your local conservation district office or the South Dakota Department of Agriculture at 1-800-228-5254.

The winning speech and contestant pictures can be found at the following Web site: <http://www.state.sd.us/doa/forestry/current-news/Speech/2008Speech-contest-winner.htm>

Basin Electric Among Leading Utility Green Power Programs

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) has released its annual ranking of leading utility green power programs. Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Bismarck, N.D., ranked among the "Top 10" in two categories: total sales of renewable energy to program participants and green power sales as a percentage of total retail electricity sales.

Using information provided by utilities, NREL develops "Top 10" rankings of utility programs in a total of five categories. The others include: total number of customer participants, customer participation rate and the lowest price premium charged for a green power program using new renewable resources.

Ranked by renewable energy sales, the green power program of Austin (Texas) Energy is first in the nation, followed by Portland General Electric, PacifiCorp, Florida Power & Light and Xcel Energy. Basin Electric ranked eighth with its wind resources.

"The market for green tags is rising rapidly and increasing the value of these assets. The revenue from these sales provides significant support for the development of our green resources," said Ron Rebenitsch, Basin Electric's manager of alternative technologies.

In the category of green power sales as a percentage of total retail electricity sales, Basin Electric ranked seventh with the cooperative's PrairieWinds program. The top three utilities in that category include: Edmund Electric with its program, Pure & Simple; Austin Energy with GreenChoice; and the City of Palo Alto Utilities with PaloAltoGreen.

NREL is funded by DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy and is the DOE's primary national laboratory for renewable energy and energy efficiency research and development. It performs analyses of green power market trends.

Visit NREL online at www.nrel.gov. View all category rankings at <http://www.eere.energy.gov/greenpower/resources/tables/topten.shtml>.

Co-op Scholarships Awarded

Basin Electric is awarding student scholarships for the 2008-2009 school year to children of member cooperative consumers, member cooperative employees and Basin Electric and subsidiary employees. More than 160 \$1,000 scholarships were awarded. Now in its 18th year, the scholarship program recognizes and encourages academic and community achievements of students in the region.

Megan Dibbern, Black Hills Electric
 Kristen Neth and Cassi Konopasek,
 Bon Homme Yankton Electric
 Kaitlyn Hemmingson, Butte Electric
 Christina Quiett, Cam Wal Electric
 Elizabeth Bosworth, Central Electric
 Joshua Kuipers, Charles Mix Electric
 Samantha Bryant, Cherry-Todd Elec.
 Adrian Reese, City of Elk Point
 Garrett Jepsen, Clay Union Electric
 Jordana Lamb, Codington-Clark Elec.
 Jessica Wedel, Dakota Energy
 Amber Vanderley, Douglas Electric
 Christopher Piehl, East River Electric
 Megan Braun, FEM Electric
 Travis Davis and Cole Elshere,

Grand Electric
 Not yet available, H-D Electric
 Stacy Olson, Kingsbury Electric
 Ida Clarke, Lacreek Electric
 Erin Sass, Lake Region Electric
 Stacie Nielsen, Lyon-Lincoln Electric
 Joshua Crance, Moreau-Grand Electric
 Kalli Dinger, Northern Electric
 Olfert Corica, Oahe Electric
 Katherine Zenk, Renville-Sibley
 Alexa Duling, Rosebud Electric
 Carly Rudolf and Jonathan Ellwein,
 Rushmore Electric
 Taylor Rish, Sioux Valley Energy
 Kellen Mastick, Southeastern Electric
 Philip Ragan, Traverse Electric

Sierra Goeden, Union County Electric
 Taylor Michalek, West Central Electric
 Stephen Kilber, West River Electric
 Emily Miller, Whetstone Valley Electric
Seven South Dakota students received one of 20 scholarships awarded to children of member co-op employees.
 Myles Larsen, City of Elk Point
 Stacy Bottolfson, Clay Union Electric
 Alison Slepikas, Dakota Energy
 Lisa Biegler, Moreau-Grand Electric
 Kevin Oliver, Northern Electric
 Carri Lucas, Rushmore Electric
 Andrew Gassman, Sioux Valley Energy