

Clean Air Act Needs Overhaul



MESSAGE FROM MANAGER LEROY T. SKLOSS

Back in the early 1970s, when environmental protections in the United States were few, Congress passed the Clean Air Act, a seminal piece of legislation that helped reduce pollution emitted by vehicles, industrial facilities and power plants.

But like a well-worn jacket that's been mended many times, the act has been changed in a piecemeal fashion over the past 40 years—the last major amendment was passed in 1990. These moves have created a patchwork of rules that helped dampen investment in electricity production.

Today, power generators must comply not only with numerous rules and regulations adopted by the U.S.

Karnes Electric Cooperative will continue to push for common-sense approaches to state and national policies.

Environmental Protection Agency as it interpreted the Clean Air Act, but also with court decisions over how these rules should apply. These complex and sometimes ill-fitting regulations mean fewer power plants will be built and many older ones will shut down because of uncertainty over what will come next.

Glenn English, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, in his address to electric cooperative directors/trustees and chief executives during the association's recent 2012 annual meeting,

called on Congress to revisit the landmark environmental law and give it a complete overhaul with today's environmental situation in mind.

"It's time to recognize that over the past 40 years, much has been accomplished in improving the environment of this nation—no question about it," English said. "It's also time for us to recognize rules and regulations and court decisions that addressed problems over the past 40 years—their time has passed."

He continued: "What we need today is for Congress and the president, our government and political leadership, to set new goals for the future—10, 20, 30 years down the road—and work with us to help rewrite the Clean Air Act so we can move in a direction without being hindered by a lot of old rules, regulations and court decisions."

Well, you might ask, what does this have to do with me?

You, as a member of Karnes Electric Cooperative, can have an effect on the situation. If the 42 million members of electric cooperatives

across this nation work together and speak with a loud enough voice, our elected officials will listen. We saw this a couple of years ago with the

grassroots Our Energy, Our Future campaign, during which 500,000 co-op members asked Congress to keep electricity affordable.

Your electric cooperative is always looking out for you. We believe that educating you, our members, about policies that affect the quality of your life will lead to better laws and regulations. Karnes Electric Cooperative will continue to push for common-sense approaches to state and national policies, such as the Clean Air Act. As a member, you can help by making your voice heard.

HUNTING DOWN VAMPIRE ELECTRONICS

Most homes these days never quite shut down for the night. Although lamps may be off, dark rooms are typically spotted with the tiny red and green lights of appliances.

All of those little lights, clocks and seemingly "sleeping" appliances, however, are using electricity. Sometimes called vampire electronics, these devices suck up 5 percent of all energy used in the United States and cost consumers more than \$3 billion every year. For the average homeowner, vampire electronics can add 20 percent to monthly electric bills.

Devices that use remote controls, such as TVs, DVD players and ceiling fans, are prime suspects. Any digital displays, such as those on microwave ovens, are working against your electric bill. And many of those chargers around the house—those that keep cellphones and power tools at the ready—constantly draw power when they're plugged in.

Unplugging these vampires effectively drives a stake into their energy-consuming hearts. Power strips provide another way to thwart them. Simply plug appliances into a power strip and switch it off when those appliances aren't being used.

You wouldn't leave a water hose running, and you certainly don't want to offer these vampires a steady drip of electricity.

Spotting Vampire Electronics

Many of the devices on this list constantly draw power while plugged in, which can quickly add up on monthly electric bills.

External Power Supplies
Computers, printers

Remote Controls
Window A/C units, TVs, DVD players

Digital Displays
Washing machines, microwaves, VCRs

Rechargeable Batteries
Battery chargers, cordless telephones, power tools



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

This year's

KARNES ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ANNUAL MEETING

will be held on
Monday, June 4

*Next month's issue will contain important
information about the meeting.*



KARNES ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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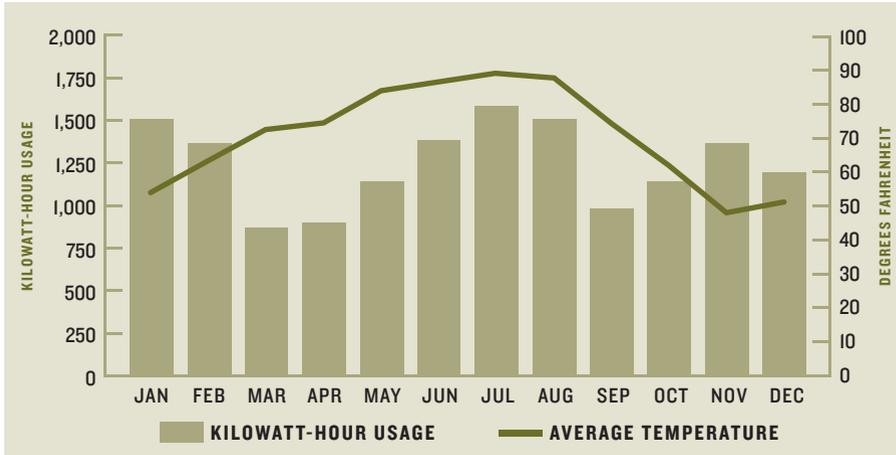
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As temperatures rise and fall, so will the number of kilowatt-hours your home uses.

Electric Bills Reflect Weather Patterns

Minimizing movement of conditioned air can cut costs

Electric bills vary with the seasons, driven by weather and consumer-use patterns. Weather matters. When it's cold outdoors, family members generally want the house warm. When it's hot outside, air conditioners make living areas pleasant.

How much weather affects your electric bills depends on many factors, including your home's original construction materials, insulation and air leaks. Personal comfort plays a role too, as does the difference between the thermostat setting inside and temperature outdoors.

When a house stays at 68 degrees, but the outdoor temperature varies from minus 20 degrees in winter to more than 100 degrees on a muggy summer's day, demand for heating and cooling can be significant. Cooled air leaving a home essentially wastes the money spent to cool it. The same is true for air a homeowner has paid to warm.

R-value offers a way of measuring insulation's effectiveness (a higher R-value indicates more effective insulation). For example, on a 28-degree day, hourly heat loss from a residence set at 68 degrees could hit 2,464 British thermal units even through an 80-by-10-foot exterior wall packed with R-13 insulation. Reverse that situation on a scorching day—100 degrees outside—and heat gain indoors will still reach 2,464 Btu per hour.

To save money, set your thermostat 5 degrees closer (higher in summer, lower in winter) to the outdoor temperature. This simple change could result in a savings of 90 watts per hour of electricity—about 197 kilowatt-hours in three months.

In the meantime, adjust the thermostat. Keep blinds and drapes on the sunny side of your home closed in summer and open in winter. Find mysteriously "hot" or "cold" spots in the house and solve them by installing gasket seals around outlets and weatherstripping along doors and windows, replacing old windows, and upgrading insulation. When practical, adjust landscaping to provide shade for your property in summer and sunlight in winter.

Weather doesn't have to play havoc with electricity bills. There are a variety of tools, appliances and resources available to solve all sorts of energy challenges.

Some, such as new windows or a roof, require significant financing. But there are a lot of options that are inexpensive and simple that offer rewarding benefits.

Find more ways to save at www.togetherwesave.com.



Smart home landscaping can lower your electric bills. Trees on the east and west sides of your home provide shade—and reduce your cooling costs—during hot summer months. Shade for your air conditioner can save 10 percent of your cooling costs. And by adding vegetation to the north side of your home, you can block winter winds that trigger higher heating costs.



The dead soldier's silence sings our national anthem.

—The Rev. Aaron Kilbourn

The offices of Karnes EC will be closed Monday, May 28, in observance of Memorial Day.

CURBING COPPER THEFT

BY MAURICE MARTIN

Look at a piece of copper, and you can see why it's been popular with artists for 10,000 years. Its reddish-orange luster enhances jewelry and other decorative art. Ancient weapon makers also found it useful—axes with copper heads date back at least 5,000 years. More recently, engineers discovered that copper is an excellent conductor of electrical current.

In the past few years, copper's popularity has seen an uptick among another group: criminals. The increasing value of the metal has led to a wave of copper theft. Electric Safety Foundation International (ESFI) estimates that there are more than 50,000 copper thefts from electrical utilities in the U.S. each year.

Substation Grounding

Copper is swiped from many places, including construction sites, warehouses and abandoned homes. In some areas, crooks drag away entire air conditioning units so that they can remove the copper tubing at their leisure.

But copper theft from utility poles and electrical substations carries a particular concern. Copper energizes current-carrying conductors (wires) and plays a key role in grounding.

Substations—which contain expensive equipment for controlling the flow of electricity from high-voltage transmission lines to your home—must be grounded to the earth to prevent damage from lightning strikes and fault currents. When your co-op grounds equipment in a substation, it makes an electrical connection to a buried network of wires, called a ground grid, that dissipates an excess charge safely over a wide area.

But burying wires causes them to corrode. Buried “aluminum undergoes galvanic corrosion and can turn to dust in two years,” explains Emory Barber, director of cable and systems engineering at Southwire Company, one of the nation's largest manufacturers of transmission lines. “Given the same conditions, copper can last 60 years or more.”

Despite the extreme danger that comes with entering a substation, the copper wire inside is an attractive target. For the relatively small value of the stolen copper, crooks risk their lives and leave a dangerous mess that can be very expensive to clean up.

ESFI estimates the value of copper stolen from utilities—whether grounding wire substations, grounding wires off poles or even power lines themselves—to be about \$20 million each year. But the financial impact can run three times that amount. And when copper bandits strike, not-for-profit co-ops, like Karnes Electric Cooperative, have no choice but to pass the repair costs on to their members.

A substation or pole that's left ungrounded becomes a dangerous place. Sometimes the thieves touch or cut the

wrong conductors, exposing themselves to lethally high voltages. Errant currents can damage electrical equipment, taking the substation or line “down” and interrupting power to consumers. The electricity can even endanger co-op employees, causing injury or death. ESFI estimates that 35 Americans die each year because of copper or other metal theft.

Foiling Thieves

To prevent theft before it happens, co-ops have embarked on multipronged initiatives. Many have launched intensive public relations campaigns about the issue; others have partnered with local Crime Stoppers chapters and posted rewards. Some co-ops are replacing much of the vulnerable wire with copper-clad steel. Copper-clad steel, which has been around since 1915, boasts the electricity-carrying properties of copper but contains very little scrap value. Although bendable, it can't be cut and removed with normal tools—even hydraulic bolt cutters.

Another technology that co-ops are employing is copper wire that bears identification information, allowing recy-



As the price of scrap metal remains high, copper has become a target for theft from electrical substations, which creates expensive clean-up for cooperatives and a potentially fatal risk for thieves.

cling centers to quickly identify the wire as stolen and contact law enforcement.

Also, keep in mind that no one should be in an electric substation except trained employees. Report any suspicious activity to local law enforcement and Karnes Electric Cooperative. Your diligence can help stop criminals and may even save a life.

Maurice Martin is a senior program manager for the Cooperative Research Network.



TAME YOUR TREES

We love our trees, but when branches are too close to power lines, they can cause power outages, fire hazards and safety concerns.

Here are some rules to follow:

- If a tree or a large branch is touching—or falls on—an electric line, call your electric cooperative immediately. Tree sap is an excellent conductor of electricity, so a downed branch on a line is an electrocution hazard as well as a fire hazard.
- Never trim trees that grow close to power lines; that is a job for professionals. Call Karnes Electric Cooperative for assistance and guidance.
- Use extreme caution when doing any overhead trimming. Branches often fall in unexpected places.
- Don't allow children to climb trees or build tree houses close to power lines.
- Plant appropriate distances from all power lines—those along the street or right-of-way, as well as those running to your home and outbuildings.
- When planting a tree, plan ahead. A tiny tree may eventually grow large enough to damage power lines and possibly interrupt power during storms. At maturity, your trees should be at least 10 feet away from power lines.



SALES TAX HOLIDAY

Save on Appliances
Memorial Day Weekend

Texas' fifth annual Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday this Memorial Day weekend is a great time to purchase new energy-efficient appliances without paying state or local sales taxes on qualifying items.

By purchasing an Energy Star-rated appliance during the tax holiday, you will not only save the sales tax, you will also save on your monthly utility bills by reducing your water and energy use.

The Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday begins Saturday, May 26, and runs through Memorial Day, Monday, May 28. The tax savings apply to the following

appliances and household equipment bearing the Energy Star label:

- Central or room air conditioners priced at \$6,000 or less
- Refrigerators priced at \$2,000 or less
- Ceiling fans
- Incandescent and fluorescent lightbulbs
- Clothes washers
- Dishwashers
- Dehumidifiers
- Programmable thermostats

Visit www.texaspowerfulsmart.org for details about the tax holiday.



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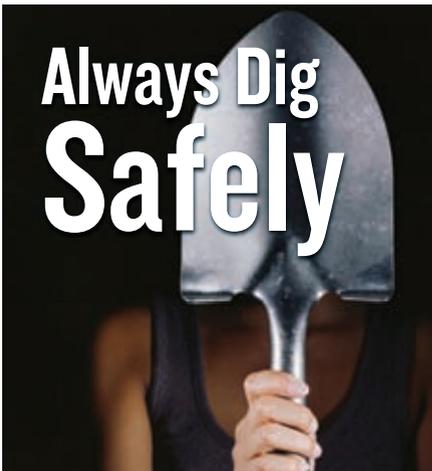
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RYAN MCCLAY

Always Dig Safely



Accidents can happen to anyone, even the most experienced professionals. Contractor Tom Dickey knows that all too well. That's why he and Safe Electricity urge everyone to dig safely.

One day at the end of a major project, Dickey's client asked to have an additional section for conduit dug—after Dickey's safety gear had already gone back to the shop. Instead of saying he'd have to come back the next day, he made a decision in

favor of time and efficiency over safety, and agreed to dig the 40-foot section.

This decision almost cost him his life. As an experienced professional, he knew all of the correct procedures, but while kneeling on the ground, he made a small slip as he used a shovel to adjust the conduit's path, contacting 7,200 volts from underground power lines. He survived, but he spent months in the hospital, endured multiple surgeries and still lives with pain every day.

Dickey stresses that even homeowners who put shovels in the ground risk their well-being and damage to underground utilities. The first step in safe digging is to call 811, the national Call Before You Dig number, to have underground lines marked at no charge.

"People have got to understand that when you deal with electricity and you do careless things, it changes your life. It changes the people's lives around you," says Dickey. "I'm lucky to be alive."

For more safety information and to see his story, visit SafeElectricity.org.