

FEC POWER Source

Vol. 18 No. 09

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



A Whole New Meaning To Summer Heat(er)

She lives in a modest home in eastern New Mexico. It's only 1500 square feet. Why then, she wondered, were her summer electricity bills running more than \$600 per month? She didn't have anything that could be a big energy hog, like a swimming pool, and she never left doors and windows open while she ran the air conditioner. What could it be?

Frustrated, she called Farmers' Electric Cooperative hoping we could help her. We frequently get callers concerned about high bills like this and we've learned, through experience, what causes most of the high bills. When we arrived at the house, we asked her to tell us anything she knew that might help us in our investigation.

“Well,” she said, “the air conditioner seems to run all the time, but the house won't even cool down to 80 degrees.”

“Ah, that helps to narrow it down a bit.” We went to work, and it didn't take long to find the problem.



We measured the temperature drop across the air conditioner coil and found that the air on the “cool” side wasn't much lower than the air on the warm side. And both were much warmer than they should be.

OK, that could be a disconnected duct in the attic, we thought, similar to what we've seen in the past. A quick look in the attic, however, showed that wasn't the case here. Besides, a disconnected duct would increase the bill, but it almost certainly

wouldn't quadruple it.

Our next step was to turn off the breaker to the electric resistance heat (a.k.a. strip heat) in the HVAC system. This is basically a giant toaster inside the air handler. Heat pumps use it for supplemental heat. In some homes, it's used as the primary heat source. It's not cheap, though, especially considering that the same electricity going into a heat pump will yield two or three times more heat.



Anyway, we turned off the breaker to the strip heat and watched what happened to the meter. In the summer time, turning off the strip heat should have no effect at all on how fast the meter spins because it shouldn't even be running. Heating is for cold weather.

In this case, the meter went from spinning fast enough to saw wood to moving as slow as a turtle.

“Well, we found your problem, ma'am. Your heating and cooling system were both running at the same time, making you spend a lot of money to stay uncomfortable.”

This problem often results from a thermostat wired incorrectly so that the system kicks on the strip heat when it shouldn't. Since anyone can go down to the home improvement store or the internet and buy a thermo-

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Manager's Message...



Lance Adkins, GM

Have Your Voice Heard Before October 16!

I'm taking a risk with this article, recognizing I may start to sound like a broken record with yet more comments on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) efforts to regulate and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from power plants. With almost sixty-five cents of every dollar members pay to Farmers' Electric going toward the purchase of wholesale power. I truly believe this is a critical issue for members. These regulations are expected to

"We believe these changes will increase the cost that members of Farmers' Electric pay for electricity as well as all other goods and services members purchase."

drive the cost of electricity higher in coming years and the costs associated with new power plant development for the next two decades. Through our national association, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) we continue to evaluate the impact and costs of proposed regulations directed at existing power plants.

In early June, the EPA released proposed regulations that would require a reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from existing power plants. Titled the "Clean Power Plan" and often referred to as the 111(d) rule, referring to the specific section of the Clean Air Act, the rule spans some 1,600 pages including supporting technical data and legal documents. Currently, an open comment period closes on October 16 of this year and the EPA expects to issue the final rule by June 2015. While it is expected that a number of entities will request extension of the comment period, extending the time line for issuance of the final rule is unlikely.

Under the proposed rule, each state is tasked with developing, implementing, and monitoring plans to achieve CO₂ reductions and can work in cooperation with other

states on a regional plan. New Mexico rural electric cooperatives met with the New Mexico Environment Department at the end of August to discuss planning options. Because most of our wholesale power is generated outside the borders of New Mexico in Texas and Oklahoma, for Farmers' Electric, this process will be interesting. New Mexico is required to reduce CO₂ emissions by 33.9%, Texas by 38.4%, and Oklahoma by 35.5% by 2030 with the most significant reductions required in states that have existing power plants that burn coal.

**COOPERATIVE
ACTION NETWORK**

**STAND WITH US
AS WE FIGHT
TO KEEP
ELECTRIC BILLS
AFFORDABLE.**

ACTION.COOP

We believe these changes will increase the cost that members of Farmers' Electric pay for electricity as well as all other goods and services members purchase. In the analysis provided by the EPA, they claim that electric rates will increase modestly, yet assert that electric bills will be lower. While I'm not sure how higher rates result in lower electric bills, I assume the EPA is expecting consumers to become more energy efficient and use less electricity.

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POWER SOURCE

is published monthly
by Farmers' Electric
Cooperative, Inc.

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ACTION.COOP from PAGE 1

At Farmers' Electric we understand who will pay for these changes – it is the members of the Co-op and consumers across the country. We continue to ask EPA and our congressional delegation to slow the pace of new regulations and to make sure the costs of these changes do not make electricity unaffordable.

Unfortunately, the EPA has no requirement to consider the cost of regulations to consumers and congress is unwilling/unable to accomplish meaningful change or slow the pace of regulations. I would like to see our New Mexico congressional delegation provide leadership and cooperation. Presently, I don't think we are getting the representation we expect and deserve in Washington. Congress continues to point fingers while regulatory agencies run rampant with new regulations.

Beginning late last year, we asked that members of Farmers' Electric get involved in the discussion to let the EPA and Congress know we are concerned about the cost of their laws and regulations. Coop members across the country are lending their voice to the debate by contacting the EPA. Our goal nationally is 1 million contacts and we are approaching the 800,000 contact mark. To date, just 186 members of Farmers' Electric have let their voice be heard. I ask that you log-on to www.Action.coop today and send a message to EPA regarding the rules they are working on right now.

If you have already made the contact, thank you! If not, I hope you will take the time and contact them today.

Until Next Month,

HOT from PAGE 1

stat, a good number of these problems result from "Do-It-Yourself" jobs, but not always. We have also seen instances where a relay in the air handler failed and caused the strip heat to come on in the summer time.

It's puzzling to think that someone wouldn't notice that the heat is running in their home in summer, but they don't feel heat coming out of the vents. That heat gets mixed with the cool air from the air conditioner. They cancel each other out, both using even more energy because they're fighting against each other.

Got high electricity bills in summer that you don't understand or can't explain? You might want to have your strip heating checked.

**Call 1-800-445-8541 for
outages and emergencies**



Be A Responsible Sportsman

It's bird season, and deer season is right around the corner. It's during this time of year that electric cooperatives experience a higher rate of outages which are caused by careless people shooting at power equipment such as line insulators, utility poles, power lines, transmission towers, and transformers.

We realize that the majority of hunters and shooting enthusiasts proceed cautiously when enjoying their sport and at the same time respect the property of others. But there is a small minority that don't understand that shooting at power facilities and related equipment is vandalism – a crime punishable by fines and/or jail.

This type of vandalism is very dangerous. Not only can someone be injured by a stray bullet, but the resulting power outages present risks to electric co-op personnel who must repair the damage and to the customers who may depend on the power for life-support equipment.

So please, check your target area carefully and respect the property of others. If there's anything but your game or your target in the sights, don't pull the trigger. If you are hunting or shooting on private land, *always ask the landowner first.*



Poles Being Treated/Replaced In Your Area

Continuing through the next couple of months, GLS, Ground Line Services out of San Antonio, Texas, will be testing and treating poles for Farmers' Electric, (FEC). The crews are presently testing poles in the rural Tucumcari and Logan areas.

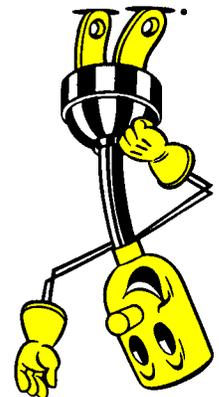
GLS crews can be identified by signs on their vehicles reading "FEC Contractor" with the FEC logo. Crew members will also have a letter on their person identifying them as FEC pole treating contractors.

Pole testing and treating is a yearly maintenance program that FEC performs to help ensure that we can continue to supply safe, reliable electricity to our members.

For those poles marked for replacement, crews continue changing those out as time allows. Currently working in the Santa Rosa area, those crews anticipate moving toward Tucumcari within the end of the month. Additionally, contract tree-trimming crews are also steadily working in and around Santa Rosa.



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