



APRIL ■ 2009



REAL PEOPLE. REAL POWER. Tideland Topics

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEMBER-OWNERS OF TIDELAND ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION

LINE ITEM: Electric bills will include program cost details

Tideland EMC members will soon see a new line on their electric bill representing the cooperative's investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency programs. While Tideland has always provided energy-saving strategies for our member-owners, the North Carolina legislature has developed a specific formula that electric utilities must adhere to.

In 2007, the North Carolina legislature created a Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard (REPS) which requires electric cooperatives to eventually meet 10% of their power requirements through renewable energy projects and energy efficiency measures. Our current operating target is 3% by 2012. That will increase to 6% in 2015 and the full 10% by 2018. The legislation includes annual cost caps for consumers which likewise increase in years 2012 and 2015. The impact to our members by rate class for complying in 2009 is shown below:

Rate Class	Monthly Charge	Annual Cost Cap
Residential	35¢	\$10
Small Commercial	\$1.73	\$50
Large Commercial	\$17.30	\$500

By carefully selecting a menu of services that meet the interests and needs of our member-owners, Tideland has worked hard to keep compliance costs to a minimum since the legislation was enacted. We have held an Energy Star

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REAL CHANGE:



Thank you for participating

At press time, several hundred Tideland members had returned last month's Operation Round Up enrollment postcard.

Thank you for your generosity in providing assistance to those who most need it during these difficult economic times.

You have our assurance that member contributions will be invested wisely in assisting those who most need help.

lighting contest to encourage members to install compact fluorescent bulbs. We offered appliance rebates during the NC Energy Star sales tax holiday. The cooperative now offers 0% interest energy improvement loans for members with qualifying credit scores. We recently conducted a water heater kit pilot project and will roll the program out to the full membership in the months ahead.

The REPS charge will be recalculated annually to reflect ongoing expenditures and increasing compliance requirements.

Message to our Member-Owners: Our place at the table

By Cecil O. Smith, Jr.
General Manager & CEO

Editor's Note: Due to the critical importance of pending energy legislation, we will resume our board member series of articles in the June issue of Tideland Topics.

This year is poised to be the most important legislative year for electric cooperatives since passage of the Rural Electrification Act in 1936.

Pressure is mounting to pass federal legislation that will establish renewable energy requirements while also seeking reductions in carbon emissions. Electric cooperatives must have a place at the negotiating table to make sure our needs for reliable and affordable electric service continue to be met.

Renewable Mandates

Nationally, electric cooperatives meet 11% of their generating needs through renewable resources, outpacing the industry average of 9%. When the opportunity presents itself to cost effectively tap renewable resources and provide economic development benefits for

local communities, electric cooperatives are first in line to lead. But what if the resources are not readily available to a region? What if the utility infrastructure is not in place to deliver renewable energy to the customers who need the power?

Consider Tideland's own territory. Even if we had documentation to support the siting of a commercial wind farm, including year long wind studies at the appropriate elevations, eastern North Carolina still lacks the transmission assets necessary to deliver wind power to the masses. And while it takes 2 to 3 years to site a wind farm, it currently takes 5 to 10 years to site a large transmission project. Such realities must be reflected in legislative timelines.

Furthermore, a 25% federal REPS requirement could increase electric

rates 12% by 2030. That is in addition to the costs of the NC REPS.

Carbon as a Commodity

Proposals are also being considered that could make carbon a commodity and leave pricing to for-profit market forces. Given recent events on Wall Street, that is an unsettling prospect. Should carbon become a tradable or taxed commodity, retail rates for Tideland members are projected to increase 2% to 30% annually. Such wide ranging cost projections reflect how little legislators understand the electric utility business and how vulnerable consumers are if uninformed politicians proceed undeterred. You have the power to keep that from happening.

Call to Action

This month's Carolina Country includes a cover

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*For the beauty
of the earth*



While April 22 is officially designated as Earth Day, it's easy to lead an earth-friendly life year round. And your electric meter is the perfect place to start!

- Switch to compact fluorescent lighting and bring burned out bulbs to Tideland EMC for recycling
- Wash clothes in cold water; 85% of the energy associated with clothes washing is for water heating
- Unplug electronics and chargers when not in use to reduce phantom power losses

Energy savings a national priority

WIND
ENERGY
FACTS

With the passage of the federal stimulus bill there's money available to help many Americans weatherize homes and make energy efficiency improvements. But how can you connect with these resources? Tideland EMC is ready to help as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 goes into effect.

"The state of our economy has left many co-op members searching for ways to make ends meet," explains Tideland energy advisor, Heidi Smith. "Making the most of each energy dollar is high on everyone's list of concerns. The stimulus bill may benefit you directly if you're considering energy efficiency improvements."



WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Investing in a few basic measures to secure a home from outside elements could provide major benefits. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) says weatherization—the process of sealing air leaks and properly insulating a home—can reduce heating bills by up to 32 percent, resulting in average energy savings of \$358 per year.

As a result of the stimulus package, DOE's Weatherization Assistance Program is expanding with a goal of weatherizing one million homes per year. In the past, only households that earned up to 150 percent of the national poverty level

were eligible to participate. The stimulus bill extends eligibility to those with incomes below 200 percent of the national poverty level. For a family of four, that's an income limit of \$44,100.

Program participants receive a professional energy consultation with an analysis of energy bills, a blower-door test to locate air leaks and advice on how to be more efficient. Work-

ers then arrive to make energy upgrades like insulating walls and roofs, sealing air leaks, and installing more efficient heating and cooling systems. The process to weatherize a home through the program

usually takes two days with an average cost of \$2,500. Since some homes have different needs, the stimulus bill allows up to \$6,500 to be spent on each home.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TAX CREDITS

For members not eligible for federally funded programs, the stimulus plan provides a homeowner efficiency tax credit of up to \$1,500, or 30 percent,

of the cost for new energy upgrades, including weatherization activities as well as installation of efficient heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. Efficiency tax credits were already available for 2009, but carried a \$500 limit (with additional caps for certain types of upgrades) and only covered up to 10 percent of a member's investment. This change effectively triples the amount of financial investment you get credit for, and, coupled with how much you'll save on energy costs each year, it makes efficiency measures much more affordable.

Tax credits directly lower a member's federal income taxes, and are generally more valuable than tax deductions because they reduce taxes owed dollar-for-dollar. In contrast, a tax deduction, like a home mortgage or charitable gift, lowers taxable income and may only offer small savings. For example, a \$1,500 tax deduction for someone in the 25 percent tax bracket would lower taxes owed by \$350; a \$1,500 tax credit for energy efficiency efforts will lower taxes owed by \$1,500!

For more information about federal and state tax incentives call Tideland EMC at 1-800-637-1079 or visit www.tidelandemc.com.

FOR WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE DETAILS:

Beaufort County:
MARTIN COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION (252) 792-7111

Craven and Pamlico counties:
TWIN RIVERS OPPORTUNITIES (252) 637-3599

Dare, Hyde & Washington counties:
ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL, INC. (252) 482-4459

1.

The world's largest wind turbine is in Germany. The 7 megawatt unit can power 5,000 European homes. It would only power 1,776 U.S. homes due to higher energy consumption per household.

2.

By the end of 2008, the U.S. had 23,000 megawatts of installed wind capacity. In 2000, the total was 2,566 megawatts.

3.

The states with the most operational wind capacity are Texas, Iowa and California.

4.

North Carolina has no utility scale wind projects. Areas deemed most "windy" in the state lack the transmission infrastructure to carry wind energy to population centers. Stimulus package dollars could help bridge the gap.

2009 Weatherization Program Eligibility

The federal Weatherization Assistance Program began in 1976, and in 2009 the stimulus package expanded eligibility for the program to households whose income falls below 200 percent of the national poverty level. Each state has unique eligibility guidelines. Call your local weatherization agency to find out more. (See list on Page C)

Persons In Family	Poverty Income Level	x 200 Percent
1	\$10,830	\$21,600
2	\$14,570	\$29,140
3	\$18,310	\$36,620
4	\$22,050	\$44,100
5	\$25,790	\$51,580
6	\$29,530	\$59,060
7	\$33,270	\$66,540
8	\$37,010	\$74,020
For families with more than 8 persons, add \$7,480 for each additional person.		
<i>SOURCE: 2009 Poverty Levels for the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia, US Dept. of Health and Human Services; US Dept. of Energy</i>		

REAL PEOPLE.
REAL POWER.

Tideland Topics

www.tidelandemc.com

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ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS: THURSDAY, MAY 14

BEAUFORT COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 6:30 P.M.

Incumbent Directors Will Retain Seats



Jimmy Burbage
District 4



Paul Sasnett
District 5



Wayne Sawyer
District 6



Clifton Paul
District 8

Tideland Electric's nominating committee met on February 10 to consider candidates for four director districts. The following candidates were nominated: Jimmy Burbage, Paul Sasnett, Wayne Sawyer and Clifton Paul. No candidates were nominated by written petition. In accordance with the cooperative's bylaws, unopposed candidates are deemed elected to the board for a three year term. Next month the cooperative will issue its 2009 annual report to members in Carolina Country magazine.

Our Place

CONTINUED FROM PAGE B

wrap asking you to directly participate in the legislative process by expressing your concerns about energy costs to Congress.

Please take a moment to tell Congress what you are already doing to control energy costs and make ends meet during these difficult economic times. Then ask lawmakers to do their part by considering the cost of energy legislation on your household budget.

The time is now to be informed, engaged and most importantly heard in the halls of Congress.

—Thanks for the—
HIGH
 —MARKS.—



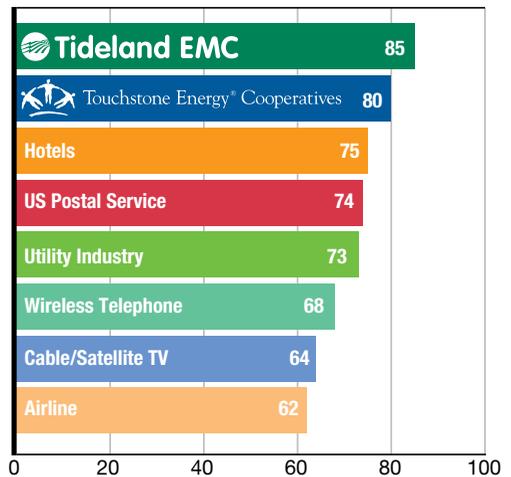
Touchstone Energy co-ops, including Tideland EMC, continue to validate their tradition of superior customer service with their latest score from the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI).

In the second quarter of 2008, co-ops ranked well ahead of their utility industry counterparts, as well as a variety of other industries. The ACSI measures customer satisfaction on a 100-point scale, measuring satisfaction across 43 different industries and more than 200 companies nationwide.

We'd like to thank our members for helping us score an "85" in the recent ACSI*. Your feedback puts Tideland EMC a full 12 points higher than the utility industry average.

Even though ACSI recognizes "customer" satisfaction, Tideland EMC members are in fact "owners." That's an important distinction. And it's why we strive to provide a level of service that's second to none.

We're honored to garner your confidence and trust, especially during these difficult economic times. You can count on all of us at Tideland EMC to strive even harder to maintain your faith in us for many years to come.



Source: American Customer Satisfaction Index Scores, 4th Quarter 2008



Looking out for you.



*Touchstone Energy ACSI member ratings using the ACSI customer satisfaction survey questions are compared to the ACSI ratings of residential customers of the U.S. largest investor-owned energy utilities.



Larry The Audit Guy

Exposing the truth one leaky duct at a time

Tideland energy auditor Larry Johnson conducted over 30 home inspections during the month of February. Every home he visited, from single wide manufactured homes to newly constructed upscale homes, had glaring energy problems. Most were easily detected with a simple visual inspection. We hope this collection of photos will inspire you to explore your own home and search out high energy bill culprits and hidden dangers.

A very bad marriage



Doublewide manufactured homes are joined at the marriage wall. Unfortunately we've yet to see a marriage wall that is properly air sealed. The same is usually true for the heating and air conditioning system's crossover duct.

Insulation Frustration



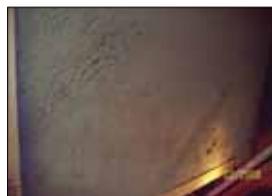
Perhaps the Rolling Stones said it best: You can't always get what you want. In this case the homeowners didn't even get what they paid for: R-38 cellulose.

The Droops



Pop quiz: If warm air rises, why do you suppose this homeowner's heating bill went through the roof this winter? Yes, we know. Easy question. Of course with all that heated air going to the attic snow melts extra fast!

Filter Economics 101



Do you see it? There's a high bill in there somewhere! Actually two. A high energy bill and a high repair bill when the

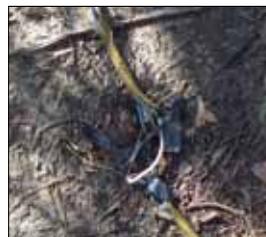
heating system needs to be fixed or replaced. Better to buy a clean \$2 filter every month.

How do I leak thee?



Using mastic to seal the ductwork would have prevented this high bill scenario. How common are disconnected ducts? Keep reading to find out!

Path to Ground



For a few dollars this dangerous cord should have been replaced. Not only did it present an electrocution hazard, it was likely leaking power. It was one of several cords plugged together to run power tools deep in the woods.



Well, the pipes never freeze!



Nearly 1 in 4 homes have a completely disconnected duct. Old homes, new homes: duct leakage is an equal opportunity, high bill culprit.

Can we vent?



Dryers must vent to the outdoors; not under your house, not into your utility room. Outdoors.



Vents also need smooth, straight runs to avoid lint buildup and dryer fires. Clean the vent exit, too!



Danger Ahead!



An electrocution or housefire nightmare waiting to happen. This is not a good place for wire clothes hangers!

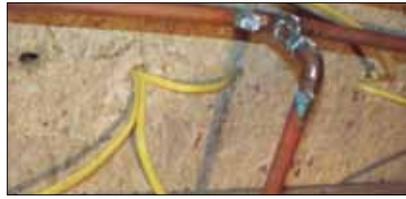
A good place for a stick up



Someone please stick some floor insulation up there! We're still trying to figure out how this house passed inspection. On the day of the audit the crawlspace was nearly as warm as the home's interior. The energy audit was conducted in February.

The final cut

The average home has enough air leaks to equal 2 open windows. In this case the contractors missed their cuts: once for a wire and again for an air conditioning register. No attempt was made to caulk or foam any of the wire and plumbing



penetrations. A thin piece of metal was used to cover the register goof.



Larry's Recommendations:

1. Change air filters monthly
2. Measure your attic insulation
 - Should have no less than R-38
 - Fiberglass batts 11½"
 - Loose cellulose 10½"
3. Check ductwork for leaks
4. Lower your water heater thermostat & install an insulating jacket
5. Clothes dryers must vent outdoors
6. Insulate & weatherstrip attic access
7. Routinely service your HVAC system
8. Dispose of garage kept freezers
9. Make sure the crawlspace is dry & covered with 6-mil plastic
10. Before replacing your HVAC system
 - make sure a heat-gain/heat-loss
 - calculation has been performed

Straw Bale Gardening

By Kent Rogers

Kent Rogers of Wake Forest has successfully cultivated a vegetable garden in bales of straw. Kent points out that the method produces good-looking, healthy plants without weeds, and is especially convenient for people who don't have a large plot of ground to till, or who are physically unable to do a lot of kneeling, bending, raking and hoeing.

Here is some of his advice for people interested in straw bale gardening. Kent is a member of Wake Electric, a Touchstone Energy cooperative. You can contact him by mail at 13028 Powell Rd, Wake Forest, NC 27587, and by e-mail at kent.rogers@earthlink.net.

Getting started

I have learned that any type of straw or hay bale will work. Pine straw will not work. Bales that are tightly packed work best.

Use bales with regular twine if you can, because the twine will rot along with the bale. Synthetic twine does not rot but will be OK. Shop around for bale prices.

Arrange your bales in rows so they can help hold each other together. Orienting the bales with strings on the ground works best.

If you make more than one row of bales, put them wide enough apart so your lawnmower can get between them. And because you'll be watering them, place bales where the water will drain away.

You can use seeds if you add some potting mix on top of the bales for germination. I transplant my vegetables directly into the bales.

It takes 10 days to prepare your bales.

Days 1-3: Water the bales thoroughly each day.

Days 4-6: Sprinkle the bales with ½ cup of ammonium nitrate or sulphate (34-0-0) per bale per day and water it in.

Days 7-9: Cut back to ¼ cup of the nitrate/sulphate per bale per day and continue to water it in.

Day 10: No more nitrate/sulphate, but continue to keep the bales damp.

Day 11: Transplant your veggies into the bales. Use a trowel to help make a crack in the bale for each plant. Place the plant down to its first leaf. I like adding some potting mix to chink the crack around the plant. Close the crack back together.

How many plants per bale?

Try 2 or 3 tomato plants, 3 peppers, 2 sets of squash, up to 4 cucumber sets, and 3 or 4 okra plants per bale.

Be prepared to stake or trellis any plant with a stalk. I recommend using a tall trellis for tomatoes. Tomatoes can easily get 8 feet tall.

I don't recommend corn with this method. They will get too top heavy.

Water the bales as needed but at least once a day in the beginning. Just don't let the bales get dried out.

I recommend some sort of liquid fertilizer. I use liquid Miracle Gro as needed.

The bales may start to sprout, but that is no problem. I give my bales a "haircut" every so often with a knife.

I don't have nearly the worms, bugs, or other pests as a traditional garden, but use pesticides or fungicides as needed.

At season's end you can use the bales for mulch, or bust them up and set new bales on them next year.

For additional info and a lot more photos, please visit my online bale gardening thread at: www.4042.com/4042forums/showthread.php?t=12405



Plan on using a trellis of some kind for tall stalks like this okra.