

Regulation on Horizon for Carbon, With or Without Congressional Action Likely Increases in Electric Bills Will Result



**MESSAGE
FROM
MANAGER
ALAN
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Federal curbs on emissions of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas blamed as a principal cause of climate change, are quickly becoming a reality. It's just a matter of which government branch gets there first: legislative, executive—or both.

In December, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), part of the executive branch, declared that six key greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, are endangering public health and welfare. Emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases from motor vehicles are also said to contribute to dangerous air pollution under this “endangerment finding.”

“This action puts a ‘foot in the door’ for the EPA to promulgate sweeping new regulations that could impose strict limits on carbon emissions from power plants, driving up electric bills,” warned Glenn English, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), which represents the interests of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned and governed electric cooperatives.

The concern is that in addition to carbon-dioxide emissions from vehicles falling under federal Clean Air Act regulation, other emitters of carbon dioxide—fossil fuel-fired power plants included—may also soon be subject to EPA oversight.

“The Clean Air Act as written was never designed to deal with carbon, and it would be awkward at best and probably a disaster at worst,” English added.

Electric co-ops believe that any controls on carbon dioxide should be established by Congress, where the impact of these proposals can have a full public debate. Unfortunately, a climate-change bill passed by the U.S. House last summer (HR 2454) and another reported by the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in November (S 1733) include what co-op leaders think are unachievable goals and timelines for reducing carbon-dioxide emissions, inadequate technology development incentives and no guarantee that electric bills will remain affordable. Current proposals will saddle consumers in fossil fuel-dependent states with higher bills to essentially subsidize and lower electric bills for those in other regions.

What’s more, Senate leaders have said that climate-change legislation has stalled and will not likely be picked up until sometime in the spring. This legislative logjam makes it all the more important for co-ops and consumers to pay careful attention to the EPA’s current efforts.

English said that any climate-change legislation should protect consumers and pre-empt use of the federal Clean Air Act and any other existing laws. Otherwise, utilities and businesses could be burdened with the task of trying to comply with more than one set of regulations.

“Regulation of carbon dioxide as a pollutant will occur with or without congressional input. But Congress must not simply add new legislation on top of old regulations. Any climate-change bill should become the roadmap—the single strategy—for reducing carbon-dioxide emissions at federal, state and local levels,” English said.

“By staying engaged in the process, electric co-ops can have a measurable impact on the outcome.”



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The battle continues to balance environmental concerns with affordable electricity. Make your voice heard by visiting www.ourenergy.coop.

Electric co-ops are fighting to ensure that any climate-change policy goals adopted are fair, affordable and achievable.

To make your voice heard in this debate, join NRECA’s Our Energy, Our Future grassroots awareness campaign at www.ourenergy.coop. To date, more than 600,000 of your fellow co-op consumers across the country have already done so.

AT COMANCHE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Conservation Matters

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Keeping an Eye on Your Electrical Use

Learning to track how much electricity your home consumes is a great way to start managing your home's electric use.

You can purchase devices at stores or from Comanche Electric Cooperative that provide a constant, digital reading of how much electricity your home—or an individual appliance—is using. One type of device, such as the Kill-A-Watt, fits between an electrical outlet and an appliance to give you an instant reading of how much electricity an appliance draws.

Another type connects to your electricity meter and wirelessly relays information on use to a small screen inside. Called an in-home display, the device looks similar to a wireless weather monitor and can help make consumers more aware of energy being used day to day. Research conducted by the Cooperative Research Network (CRN), the research arm of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, shows that most consumers who have an in-home display use less energy than those without one. And even after homeowners stop paying attention to the devices, most still use 1 to 3 percent less energy

than before.

“The question of whether in-home displays catch on and become permanent fixtures in the American home is still open,” said Brian Sloboda, program manager with CRN. “However, for anyone wanting to take a proactive approach to understanding electric consumption, the in-home display may be worth exploring. You could use the knowledge that an in-house display provides to change the way you use electricity in your home and save some money.”

There's also the old-fashioned way of tracking electricity use: reading your meter. As your home draws current from power lines, your electricity meter keeps a steady record of every watt being used. Many meters today are digital, replacing the older design that uses spinning discs and dials.

Digital versions make tracking



Devices such as the Kill-A-Watt give instant electricity readings.

energy use a breeze: Jot down the number you see and check it again in a month. The difference between the two represents the amount of electricity that has been used for that month, or a typical billing period. Check it more frequently to get an idea of how you use electricity in a given week, or even day by day.

To read an older model meter (with spinning dials), write down the numbers as shown on the small dials from left to right. Some of the dials spin clockwise, some counterclockwise,

but record each number closest to the dial hand. Once you have the full reading it can be compared to later readings, as described above.

If you have any questions about reading your meter or learning more about how much electricity your home uses, please contact Comanche Electric at (325) 356-2533.

Turns out, money burns when my water heater is set above 120 degrees.

Find out how the little changes add up at TogetherWe Save.com

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BRECKENRIDGE

A Sweetheart of a Town



BY SHIRLEY DUKES

February 14 is Valentine's Day: a day when couples across the nation present their sweethearts with flowers, candy, jewelry and candlelit dinners. According to the Greeting Card Association, an estimated 1 billion Valentine cards are sent each year, making Valentine's Day the second-largest card-sending holiday of the year. (history.com) Most everyone has his or her own Valentine's Day traditions. These traditions can be as unique as the individuals who celebrate them and are too numerous to compile in this small space.

However, in my wanderings I found a town within our service territory that seems to really get caught up in the Valentine's Day celebration. That town is Breckenridge. Located in Stephens County at the intersection of Highways 180 and 183, and with a population of approximately 6,000, Breckenridge is large enough to be entertaining, yet small enough to portray a "down home" image. I am sure there are many other February 14 traditions and celebrations going on in the town, but in just one short day here I found the following:



Round Up For Heart

If you want to have a good time, contribute to a good cause and have a really "feel-good" experience, then Round Up for Heart is the ONLY place to be. The event, which is the brainchild of Dr. Tom and Lisa Echols, originated as a way to keep the men of the community out of trouble with their wives on Valentine's Day by taking them out to dinner and

a dance. But that feel-good feeling comes for the participants in the nature of the proceeds. You see, this is not just your everyday dinner and dance: All proceeds from the event go to West Texas Rehabilitation Center (WTRC).

For those of you who are not familiar with the WTRC, it is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation founded in 1953 as a treatment center for children with cerebral palsy.

What started with one location and one physical therapist treating 17 patients now includes three locations and more than 200 employees who proudly work together as an integrated team to provide a wide array of outpatient physical, communication and hearing services to the thousands of children and adults across West Texas who are challenged by disabilities and/or disorders. WTRC is the only provider in West Texas to offer the full complement of outpatient rehabilitation treatment services.



Chairman Dr. Tom Echols and wife Lisa Echols, Chairman Robert Langford and wife Lisa Langford, Lee Ruth Gilliland and West Texas Rehabilitation Center CEO Woody Gilliland.

WTRC's philosophy to provide quality care regardless of the patient's financial status also distinguishes it from other providers of outpatient rehabilitation care.

The 2nd Annual Round Up For Heart will be held on Saturday, February 13, at the Women's Forum in Breckenridge. The Valentine's Day-themed meal—a steak dinner—will be catered by West Texas Rehab's very own Chuckwagon. Music for the dance will be presented by Twisted Country from Albany, featuring John Caldwell and Randy Palmore.

Kudos to chairpersons Dr. Tom and Lisa Echols from Stephens County and Robert and Lisa Langford from Palo Pinto County, as well as Cheri Bates from Breckenridge, for their hard work and dedication to the project. The 2009 Round Up For Heart was a huge success with an almost-full house. The cost for the event is a suggested donation of \$100 per person. Reservations are required, and with a maximum occupancy of 150, there is not much additional room, so get your tickets as soon as possible. This year, a silent auction is also planned.

So be sure to get those reservations as quickly as possible. Information and tickets can be obtained by calling Animal Medical Clinic in Breckenridge at (254) 559-9739, or by calling Marjorie in the Donor Relations Department of WTRC at (325) 793-3510. For further information on the center, log on to www.westtexasrehab.org.

Breckenridge Fine Arts Center

Valentine's Day at the Breckenridge Fine Arts Center (BFAC) is a day dedicated to the youngsters in the area. Breckenridge native Teresa Everett is an artist, a teacher and a mother of six children, yet still finds time to lead monthly workshops at the center. She has an art education degree and a teaching certificate and has been children's art coordinator at BFAC for about six years. Each year on a Saturday close to Valentine's Day, BFAC hosts a Valentine Workshop. Headed up by Teresa, the workshop is a fun time for children to meet, have fellowship and make Valentine cards for the people they care about. The workshop is \$2 per participant, and all materials are provided. The children are divided into three groups: 4 years through kindergarten, first and second grades, and third through sixth grades. Each group works on a project geared toward their age level. This year's Valentine Workshop is scheduled for February 13.

"One of the main intentions of our Fine Arts Center is to instill fine art in the hearts and minds of children," said Van Moore, local resident and administrator of the center. "At the age of 8 to 12, most children reach their limit in



Students from the first- and second-grade class have fun with their valentine projects at the 2009 workshop. Clockwise from left are Sam Sloan, Anna Reaugh, Evan Moore and Sage Lindsey.

artistic ability. However, when a child is exposed to exceptional artwork and instruction, the likelihood of them overcoming that limit and improving to become quality and/or professional artists is greatly increased. We hope that our monthly children's workshops fuel that inspiration in those kids ... my success as an artist, designer, and now administrator is just one of the many results of our rich children's art instruction history."

The center hosts nine children's workshops per year, as well as several fine-art workshops for adults that include photography, stained glass and painting classes. Costs associated with the workshops depend on the needs of each individual workshop or class.

But don't be misled into thinking that BFAC is a seasonal organization or merely a workshop provider. It is anything but! BFAC, along with the Breckenridge Library, was built and given to the citizens of Breckenridge by the late Mr. and Mrs. Lester Clark. Along with the ever-changing exhibits, BFAC is home to two outstanding permanent displays.

The Katherine Leach Doll collection consists of almost 750 dolls. When Katherine Coye Leach was 16 years old, she accompanied her parents on a trip to Europe, where she purchased several dolls, reinforcing her already intense interest and beginning a lifetime of doll collecting. Each doll is a collector's item, with some dating to 1860. Many were acquired during trips abroad with her family; others were gifts from friends. In 1992, Kathryn and Julian Leach of Fort Worth chose the Breckenridge Fine Arts Center as the permanent home for the late Katherine Leach's lifetime collection.

Also on permanent display is an exquisite collection of gowns entitled All That Glitters ... Festival Dresses of

Texas. These are lavishly decorated gowns and trains representing some of the grandest festivals in Texas: Buccaneer Days in Corpus Christi, Fiesta in San Antonio and Tyler's Rose Festival.

For each festival, gowns and trains are specially designed for that year's coronation. They are ornately decorated with millions of beads and rhinestones on velvet or satin, with most dresses having a matching headpiece similar to a crown or tiara. Together, the gown and train often weigh up to 75 pounds or more and take several people a year to complete. The lushness of the velvet and the glitter of the heavily encrusted beads and rhinestones make these creations true works of art. These magnificent dresses represent the pomp and ceremony of the coronation in which they were worn as well as the creativity and craftsmanship that went in to their design. The All That Glitters ... Festival Dresses of Texas exhibit currently consists of 26 dresses in a 2,600-square-foot gallery.

The BFAC is a nonprofit organization with a board of directors and an administrator.

Moore, a Breckenridge native, became the administrator of the center in 2004, and is the only paid staff member. Volunteers from within the community help to staff the center, which is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays through Fridays and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays. Funding for the center is through grants, donations and an endowment fund from their benefactors. Their main fundraiser is the annual Casino Night, which will be held February 20 in the main gallery and foyer of the center.

In 2010, BFAC will celebrate its 25th anniversary. Plans for the anniversary celebration are still in the works, so be sure to watch for news of that upcoming event!

For more information on the center, or to sign up for an event or donate money, visit the Breckenridge Fine Arts Center website at www.breckenridgefineart.org, or call Van Moore at (254) 559-6602.

SWEET TREATS *in* BRECKENRIDGE



BUCKAROO BAKERY



Pictured with some of her fine Valentine pastries is cake artist Felicia Speake of Buckaroo Bakery. Co-op members Jerry and Barbara Beene are owners of the bakery, which has been in business since 1982.

Buckaroo Bakery is at 130 E. Walker St. in Breckenridge. Stop by to place your order, or call them at (254) 559-3412.



SWEET STUFF AND COFFEE



Sweet Stuff and Coffee, located at 100 E. Williams, will have a nice selection of Valentine goodies to choose from. The chocolate cake can be made in white as well as chocolate, and the heart-shaped chocolate chip cookie is yummy! To place an order, call JoAnn at (254) 559-7050.

Show Your Appliances Some Love

This Valentine's Day, lavish a little affection and attention on your trusty household appliances—and you'll keep them humming all year long.

These simple maintenance tips can extend the life of your largest electric appliances and help them operate more efficiently, saving you money on your monthly energy bill.

Once a year, shut off the water to your water heater and drain the tank completely. Then turn the incoming water on and off alternately for 20 seconds to flush minerals and sediment that collect at the bottom of the tank and cause it to operate inefficiently.

If you have an older refrigerator with condenser coils at the back or bottom, vacuum them to remove dust that impairs the efficiency of the unit. To ensure that refrigerator and freezer doors seal tightly, place a dollar bill between the door frame and the gasket. If the dollar bill pulls out easily or falls out, the gasket needs replacing.

Pull your clothes dryer away from the wall and remove the vent tube from the back of the dryer. Using your hand and a vacuum, remove built-up lint from the back of the dryer and inside the vent tubing.

Remove plant overgrowth and debris from around the air conditioner's outdoor compressor unit or your heat pump to prevent the system from working harder than necessary to heat and cool your home. Have the air conditioner inspected and serviced annually.



A dirty light fixture cuts down on the amount of light emitted into a room. Clean it to make your home look brighter.

And, be sure to use the lowest wattage lightbulb appropriate for the fixture and function of the light.

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