



Cooperative review

December 2007

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 
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A Newsletter for Members of Union Power Cooperative

Electric Infrastructure: *Vital For North Carolina's Growth*

North Carolina's electric cooperatives were founded more than 70 years ago to provide residents in rural parts of the state with electricity. However, many of the places that were once rural in our state are now bustling communities, and this growth is increasing the demand on our electric infrastructure system.

Here are a few reasons why energy demand is increasing:

- North Carolina's population is expected to increase by half in the next 25 years.
- An increase in the number of residents means more schools, more emergency facilities and more shopping malls, all of which require heating and cooling.
- As technology has advanced, electronic devices have become more commonplace, creating more strain on the electric infrastructure system.
- North Carolina's electric infrastructure system is facing demands for which it was not originally designed, and much of the infrastructure is based on technology developed more than 50 years ago.

Here are ways we can get ahead of the demand and continue to best serve you:

- When necessary, build new or make enhancements to existing generation facilities, substations and transmission lines.
- Invest in renewable energy resources and practice energy efficiency.

Union Power Cooperative and you, our members, must look at upgrades to electric infrastructure as both an investment in the future and a shared responsibility. We need your help to stay ahead of growing energy demands caused by an increase in population as well as more electronic conveniences. Union Power has and will continue to take the necessary steps to provide adequate and reliable power to our growing communities. Growth of electric utility distribution systems requires that facilities such as substations and transmission lines are sited in and near areas where the population has expanded.


Union Power, along with other cooperatives in North Carolina and our statewide association, NCEMC, are working to educate our members and the public at large as to the necessity of siting these facilities. In fact, this year we produced an



educational video entitled, *Electric Infrastructure: Vital to North Carolina's Growth*, along with other materials to share with the public. This video is available for viewing on our web site, www.union-power.com, and explains why we need to build new electric infrastructure, the science behind siting facilities where they are needed, and the call for support. There is a link to the video within the Infrastructure news story on the home page

As always, we promise to provide to you safe, reliable and affordable electricity both now and in the future.

Visit www.union-power.com

 to view Union Power's video, **Electric Infrastructure: Vital to NC's Growth.**



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Members Enjoyed

Union Power's 68th Annual Meeting

A crowd of more than 1,100 members gathered on the campus of Wingate University, on Saturday, October 13, for Union Power Cooperative's 68th Annual Meeting. The weather could not have been any nicer with sunny skies and fall-like temperatures.

This year's meeting included one of the best Health and Safety Fairs, where 30 organizations were represented. Cholesterol checks and flu shots were some of the most popular areas of the Health Fair. Pinky the Clown was at the Kids Festival where she entertained nearly 100 children with games and face painting. Fish the Magish entertained the children at the Kids Festival as well as some adults while he walked around in the Health Fair.

Austin Auditorium was the site for musical entertainment



More than 200 members took advantage of the free cholesterol checks that were offered at the Health Fair

by Queen Charlotte Chorus. They entertained with their four-part harmony, barbershop-style singing.

At the business meeting, incumbents William Wilson, Richard L. Simpson, and Ralph E. Johnson

were re-elected to serve three-year terms on Union Power's Board of Directors.

Members were shown a video production entitled, *Electric Infrastructure: Vital for North Carolina's Growth*, that explained the need for new

electric infrastructure such as transmission lines and substations. It also explained the science behind how those facilities are sited.

Other highlights of this year's meeting included the distribution of member dividend checks worth over \$2 million to eligible members. Members who were unable to attend the Annual Meeting should have already received their checks in the mail. Cash prizes totaling \$2,500 were given out after the business meeting making several Union Power members very happy. The grand prize of \$500 went to Violet Hartsell of Concord.

We want to thank all the members who attended the Annual Meeting this year and encourage you to join us again next year.



April Wu of Waxhaw drew out the names of the winners for the door prizes.

Solution to Budgeting Worries

Members normally experience seasonal fluctuations in electrical use throughout the year. This change in electrical use may create a budgeting problem for some members. Levelized Billing can help you by making your payments nearly the same each month. This service is available for residential members only.

The levelized bill will be based on the average electrical usage for the most recent twelve (12) months or, for new members, the available electrical use history. This is adjusted monthly until twelve months of history is available.

The bill is averaged so the amount does not stay the same but increases or decreases slightly as consumption changes.

Another option to help with your budget is Union Power's Budget Billing. Based on the previous 12-month history, the Cooperative determines a fixed dollar average. This average is billed each month until November. A new average is taken each November with any debits or credits figured into the new average. To qualify for this method, you must have a zero balance and must always pay your future bills by the due date. This service is available for residential members only.

Please visit our website at www.union-power.com or call 704-289-3145 to get a Budget or Levelized Billing form. Fill the form out and return it to Union Power Cooperative to be considered for these programs.



Also, these billing plans can be paid each month by drafting your checking, savings, or credit card accounts. If you would like to participate in our payment draft plan, you can find the form on our website, www.union-power.com, or you can call 704-289-3145.

Stay Safe this Holiday Season

The holiday season is filled with festive parties, colorful decorations, and dazzling lights. However, the things that make holidays so special and memorable can also create serious electrical hazards. Each year, approximately 1,300 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries related to the improper installation and use of holiday lighting and decorations. In addition, there are approximately 500 Christmas tree fires annually, resulting in an average of \$20 million in property loss and damage each year. Stay safe with these tips regarding trees, lights, decorations, and fireplaces as you celebrate the holidays with your loved ones this winter.

Trees:

- * When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant". Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate that the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.
- * When purchasing a live tree, make sure it has fresh, green needles. Trees that have dried out over several weeks are quicker to ignite.
- * When setting up a tree at home, make sure to place it least 3 feet away from heat sources such as fireplaces, radiators, space heaters, heating vents and televisions.
- * Make sure the tree is out of the way of traffic and does not block doorways.
- * Heated rooms dry live trees out rapidly, so be sure to keep the stand filled with water.
- * Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.

Lights:

- * Use only lights that have been safety tested and approved by Underwriters Laboratory (UL). Look for the UL label on the box and on each string.
- * Before plugging in the lights, check each string for broken sockets, frayed cords, or faulty plugs. Cut the plug off any damaged light strand and throw it away. This will prevent anyone else from ever using the damaged and potentially dangerous strand.
- * Keep extension cords in good condition. Use only UL-approved cords rated to carry the electrical load you will connect to them.
- * Don't overload extension cords by plugging in too many decorations. You should use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.
- * Keep electric cords away from high-traffic areas. Don't stretch them across a room where people can trip over them. Furthermore, make sure not to hide them under rugs or carpets.



- * Don't attach cords or lights to metal objects.
- * Always unplug lights before going to bed or leaving your home to prevent the lights from shorting out and starting a fire.
- * Outdoors, use only lights and cords rated for outdoor use. Don't lay cords across sidewalks, decks, or other walkways.
- * Make sure to fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use only insulated staples to hold strings in place, not nails, or tacks. Another option is to run the string of lights through hooks, which are available at hardware stores.
- * Check your light strings to determine the maximum number of strings that may be connected. Do not exceed this number.

Decorations:

- * Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded materials. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.
- * Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders and place candles where they will not be knocked down.
- * In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable. Keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children to avoid the child swallowing or inhaling small pieces. Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.

Fireplaces:

- * Use care with "fire salts" which produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires. They contain heavy metals that can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation and vomiting if eaten. Keep them away from children.
- * Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.



Energy-efficient LEDs

While shopping for those last-minute strands of holiday lights, you may come across an alternative to electricity-hungry lengths of incandescent bulbs: light-emitting diodes (LEDs). Though the name sounds straight out of science fiction, energy-efficient LEDs are a real way to cut electricity use, and holiday lights are just one way they're being used.

LED technology, with origins in the 1960s, breaks free of the hollow bulbs that all other lights use. When an electric current runs through the solid, semi-conductive materials in an LED, heat and light are the result. Although most LEDs are no bigger than a button, the number of uses for them is growing every year.

The power light on today's TVs, computers and other similar appliances now use LEDs. Even car brake lights, traffic signals and railroad crossings are using grids of these small lights.

But why the change from traditional, hollow bulbs? A big draw is the technology's staying power. A 75-watt incandescent light bulb will burn out after about 40 days of continuous use, and a compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL) after a year. An LED, however, can run constantly for four full years. And LEDs are currently as energy-efficient as CFLs, meaning they use roughly 66 percent less electricity than an incandescent bulb in producing the same light.

The main factor keeping the technology off shelves and out of your lamps at home is cost. Although colored LEDs (think traffic signals) are cost competitive, versions producing white light are pricey. A 75-watt incandescent light bulb costs approximately \$1. A comparable CFL can be purchased for \$2.50. But an equivalent set of LEDs would cost more than \$50, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

Still, LEDs are a promising alternative to the inefficient incandescent bulb. CFLs are the best bet for consumers these days, but keep an eye out for LEDs as research continues. Once the technology is tweaked, they could stand to save you quite a bit in lighting costs — an important part of keeping that electric bill low.



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

By resetting your programmable thermostat from 72 degrees to 65 degrees for eight hours a day (for instance, while no one is at home or while everyone is tucked in bed) you can cut your heating bill by up to 10 percent.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

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NC One Call Center
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Providing electricity and energy services to over 63,000 members in Union, Stanly, Cabarrus, Mecklenburg, and Rowan counties.

SERVICE CHARGES:

Security Deposit-charges vary
\$0, \$175, \$375

Connection Fee
\$25

Late Payment Charge

1% of the amount of bill.

Returned Check Fee

\$25

Meter Test

\$75 (refunded if not accurate)

Dual Meter Comparison

\$50 (refunded if not accurate)

Field Collection Charge

\$25 (only checks or money orders accepted, no cash)

RECONNECT CHARGES: (collected in advance)

Normal Hours

\$50 (if called in *before* 4:00 p.m.)

After Hours

\$100 (if called in *after* 4:00 p.m.)

Weekends and Holidays

\$100