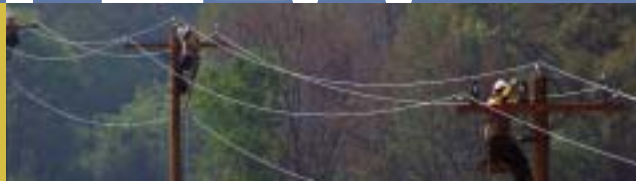


# COOPERATIVE REVIEW

Energy for Today, Power for Tomorrow.



## Tell Congress to Find a Balanced Solution

**U**nion Power and other electric utilities, especially in the Southeast, are now experiencing one of the most challenging times in our history to maintain affordable electric rates.

President Obama and Congress are addressing the issue of climate change and we can expect new laws or regulations. We must be involved to help them find the right solution—a solution that marries America's tradition of developing cutting-edge technology with our fundamental respect for the land on which we live and the air we breathe. The wrong solution will cause steep increases in electric bills for families, businesses and our economy as a whole.

The President's proposed budget will increase electricity prices for consumers as it seeks to raise hundreds of billions of dollars a year starting in 2012 by adopting a "cap and trade" system.

Cap and Trade would place limits on the amount of carbon and greenhouse gases industries can emit. The electric generation utilities such as coal plants will be forced to pay additional costs and fees. These costs will in turn be passed on to distribution utilities like Union Power and then passed on to our members.

Cap and Trade is essentially a tax that will flow through higher electric bills and then into the federal treasury. The administration is indicating that revenues raised through climate change legislation will help to pay for other government programs, budget shortfalls and tax relief.

What is disturbing is that legislation as it is written today could raise electric rates as much as 40 percent. We can't solve the issue of climate change by placing impossible burdens on the backs of hardworking Americans. We CAN have a cleaner environment and a healthy economy if we make the right choices.

Union Power Cooperative has joined NC Electric Cooperatives and several cooperatives in the Southeast to launch a program aimed at helping to craft an affordable national energy policy. The Find a Balanced Solution campaign explains current national energy policy issues and provides consumers with ways to get in touch with their elected officials to keep their electric rates affordable. The

Find a Balanced Solution campaign includes a toll-free phone number (**1-877-40-BALANCE**) and a website (**[www.findabalancedsolution.com](http://www.findabalancedsolution.com)**) that can connect consumers with their Congressional representatives. Listed below are a few frequently asked questions to help you when addressing rising electric cost issues with our members.

### Why will states in the Southeast be hit hard by energy legislation?

Southeastern states receive a lot of electricity from coal generation—North Carolina receives almost 50 percent of its power from coal generation. Those plants will be required to pay to emit greenhouse gases and the costs they incur will be passed to consumers.

### Do electric cooperatives support nuclear energy?

Yes. Nuclear power is the largest single source in the electric cooperatives' power supplier's portfolio. Nuclear energy is carbon-neutral, and the price of nuclear power has remained relatively stable in a time when the costs of other traditional generation sources, like coal and natural gas, have reached all-time highs. Co-ops believe that nuclear energy has to be part of any sustainable energy policy.

### Where do the electric cooperatives in the Southeast stand in terms of supporting the environment?

Environmental excellence is a priority among electric cooperatives. The cooperatives practice good stewardship in the areas of construction, operation and maintenance and seek to improve environmental awareness in our region of the country. We believe that it is possible to have a cleaner environment without causing financial burden to cooperative members or other energy consumers throughout the nation.

Find A  
Balanced Solution 

[www.findabalancedsolution.com](http://www.findabalancedsolution.com)

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## Focus on Member Service and Satisfaction

Financial performance, operational excellence, member service and satisfaction, and team effectiveness—these are the four focus areas that stood out after the recent process improvement reviews throughout Union Power. This month we will focus on the area of member satisfaction.

The premise behind this focus area is to meet or exceed member expectations by delivering valued products and services. It's Union Power's mission to provide safe and reliable power with exceptional value. Good value is represented in everything we do, whether it's answering a question over the phone or restoring electricity after a storm.

There have been many tools added to Union Power's website over the past year that add value for our members.

The Energy Advisor section was added to the site to help our members manage their energy use and to help find areas where they can save money. There are also customer service functions that can be handled through our website, 24/7. To a lot of our members it's valuable to look at account information and pay your bill online at anytime.

One way we measure member service and satisfaction is through conducting surveys. We participate in two surveys to measure member satisfaction. The American Consumer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) measures customer satisfaction on a 100-point scale, measuring satisfaction across more than 190 of the leading corporations in America. The TSE survey is also a customer satisfaction survey that rates Union Power on a

10-point scale, measuring things such as reliable service, providing good value, handling problems, and courteous service. Forty-three cooperatives located throughout 24 states are participating, generating more than 10,000 interviews nationwide.

In conducting these surveys, some members are randomly called but some are chosen from those who have recently initiated a service from us. Each quarter the results of these two surveys are examined closely to determine what areas of our operations need work. Changes are then made accordingly.

We're listening to what you're telling us. If you are called to answer a survey for Union Power, take the time to answer the questions. Your responses do make a difference.

## Union Power Receives Tree Line USA Distinction

The Arbor Day Foundation has named Union Power Cooperative a Tree Line USA Utility for the fourth year.

The Tree Line USA program is sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the National Association of State Foresters and recognizes utilities that meet three requirements: a program of quality tree care, annual worker training in quality tree care practices, and a tree planting and public education program.

"By following the Arbor Day Foundation's guidelines, Union Power Cooperative, as a Tree Line USA utility, follows quality tree care practices along with achieving the goal of providing safe and reliable electrical service," said Wil Ortiz, Union Power's system arborist. Ortiz further said, "Union Power follows nationally-recognized arboricultural standards and sets strict guidelines for its tree trimming contract companies."

Tree Line USA utilities include both investor-owned and public providers. Union Power has demonstrated commitment to public education, tree planting, and quality tree care. One part of that involves employees assisting in Earth Day events as well as education in the local schools to get children interested in learning about trees and their importance to our environment.

"Tree Line USA utilities deserve recognition for their commitment to providing safe, efficient service, while helping protect and preserve community trees," John Rosenow, chief executive of the Arbor Day Foundation said. One of the greatest objectives of Tree Line USA, and a major contribution of the program, is replacing the outdated line-clearance practice of topping trees with natural pruning. Natural pruning trains trees to grow

around wires and retain more of their natural form. This results in healthier trees and reduced clearance costs for utility companies, since natural pruning has to be done less frequently than topping.

Another important requirement is the incorporation of a tree replacement program. "We are able to address planted trees under our wires that are

not suitable to that location. We are able to offer more appropriate sized trees and plants."

The Arbor Day Foundation, a non-profit education organization, is dedicated to tree planting and environmental stewardship. Conducting proper tree management is one highly visible way we at Union Power Cooperative are providing value and reliability to our members.



# BRIGHT IDEAS



Hemby Bridge Elementary school students displaying blankets made from old auditorium curtains funded by Bright Ideas grant.

## Grant Goes a Long Way

Talking about making \$200 go a long way, that's exactly what music teacher Stebie Thompson of Hemby Bridge Elementary School did. In November 2006, Ms. Thompson won a \$200 Bright Ideas grant entitled *Curtains of Warmth*. The grant was used to purchase a sewing machine so that the school's old stage curtains could be turned into warm and heavy blankets for people at the Union County Community Shelter.

Over the next two years, Ms. Thompson and her students worked on transforming the curtains into blankets. Of course, as many projects go, there were a few things that came up that were unexpected, but they worked through them.

On February 10, Ms. Thompson and her students presented the eight large and eight small *Curtains of Warmth* blankets to Derrick Burnell of the Union County Community Shelter. "There are several people in our county who are in need of these blankets (at this very moment) and the winter months are the hardest. These students should be very proud of this wonderful and needy donation," stated Derrick Burnell.

This is just one of many success stories. Since its inception in 1994, the Bright Ideas program has awarded more than \$6.5 million in grant money to North Carolina teachers to fund more than 5,900 projects touching the lives of more than

1 million students.

Teachers can learn about the program and apply online now at [www.ncbrightideas.com](http://www.ncbrightideas.com). Grants up to \$2,000 are available.

Bright Ideas grants finance innovative and creative classroom projects that would otherwise go unfunded. North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperatives have financed a variety of hands-on projects, including activities in music, art, history, language, reading, science, career-planning and information technology. All North Carolina certified K-12 teachers are eligible for a Bright Ideas grant, the only program exclusively for the state's classroom educators.

## Electricity Theft and Vandalism Pose Safety and Financial Concerns

Theft involving electricity and related materials is a problem all electric utilities face from agricultural operations to housing complexes to business offices from coast to coast. Although electricity can be easily acquired through a utility, some people are still willing to risk physical damage or loss of life just for the sake of some free kilowatt-hours. Stealing electricity is illegal under North Carolina law and violates electrical codes. When people tamper with the meter, they are stealing electricity, putting themselves, their neighbors, family, and pets all at risk for electric shocks, power surges, sparks, and fire from exposed voltage.

Compensating for electricity and related material theft, drives up prices for all Union Power members. Keeping power safe and affordable is a priority for Union Power. That is why we routinely inspect cooperative meters and equipment, to ensure we're doing our best to protect you from the risks of electricity theft. We take a proactive

approach to this serious problem, eliminating theft and reducing related costs. As a member of Union Power, you can help us prevent power theft by reporting any suspicious activity at one of our meters.

Contact us immediately by calling 704-289-3145 or 1-800-922-6840 if you suspect someone is gaining access to our power supply without paying his or her fair share of the costs. Rest assured we'll keep your name anonymous. When people steal from the cooperative, they're stealing from you, too!



PLAY IT

# SAFE

## The Basics of Electrical Safety

May is National Electrical Safety Month, and it is a great time to brush up on the basics of electrical safety. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, electrical fires claim the lives of 485 people in the United States each year and injure more than 2,300. In addition to this, more than 400 people die in the United States each year from electrocutions. These statistics show how important it is to use extreme caution when dealing with electricity.

### By following a few simple steps, you can rid your home of electrical hazards:

- Use the correct light bulbs in all lamps and light fixtures. Look inside the light fixture and you will find a label that will tell you what wattage is right for that fixture. If you are using a compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulb, look at the package to determine wattage equivalents.
- Cover all of the electrical outlets in your home with faceplates and do not overload outlets with multiple adaptors or power strips.
- Check your electrical cords regularly for frays, cracks, or kinks and replace them if they are damaged.
- Only use extension cords as a temporary solution and minimize their use whenever possible.
- Do not tie or knot electrical cords and never let furniture sit on cords.
- Unplug all small appliances in your house when you are not using them.
- If your lights flicker or if your power repeatedly goes out, call an electrician.

Following simple electrical safety precautions in your home can help keep you and your family safe. In recognizing National Electrical Safety Month, learn the basics of electrical safety and teach your family how to stay safe near electricity.

Cooperative Review is published monthly by

# Union Power Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative   
**Energy for today, power for tomorrow.**

Union Power Cooperative provides safe and reliable power with exceptional value to over 65,000 members in Union, Stanly, Cabarrus, Mecklenburg, and Rowan counties.

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### SERVICE CHARGES:

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**Late Payment Charge**  
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**Dual Meter Comparison**  
\$50 (refunded if not accurate)  
**Trip Charge**  
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