



# The Perspective

An Editorial by Chief Executive Officer Doug Johnson

Our commitment to members in 2006 is to continue providing a strong cooperative to meet your needs now and in the future.

One way we'll accomplish this is by implementing strategic technologies. As technology changes our world, it is also improving our ability to serve our member-owners.

Wrapped within a total computer system conversion upgrade that will be completed in late 2006, our technology projects touch all areas of the cooperative from our financial systems, billing and customer service records to our mapping of poles, substations and other electric plant, engineering systems, and outage reporting.

Our new system is designed to integrate all of our business and customer service applications into one tool that all departments can utilize. Not only will this produce operating efficiencies, the most important result will be streamlined, higher level customer service to our members. Our goal is for this to be a smooth process and

## Positioning for the Future

most changes – except for a new bill format later this year – should be seamless for members.

Also to be upgraded is our Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. You may be more familiar with the term "PowerLine®" – the toll free number you call to report outages, check account balances and get other information. Most members contact us by telephone and the new IVR will allow us to handle more calls in a timely manner. It will also be tied directly to our mapping system, which will help us respond faster to power outages.

Another significant technology enhancement is the upgrade of our SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) system. Centralized in our corporate office work management center, SCADA gathers and analyzes our electric plant system information to help us better respond to and even prevent outages.

In evaluating technology improvements, we equally weigh the cost and benefits they offer to our members. That's because as a not-for-profit business, Blue Ridge Electric is committed to putting you – the member – first and foremost in our long-range plans and in our everyday work of serving the people of northwest North Carolina.

## Credits to Continue for Load Control

Due to current high energy costs, the load control credit program that was originally scheduled to be eliminated this year will stay in effect through 2006 but will remain closed to new sign ups.

The credit for water heaters gives participating members a \$1-per-month credit while the credit for air conditioners is \$2.

The load control credit program was originally implemented by many utilities in the 1980s to help reduce loads on the power distribution system and lessen the need to purchase wholesale power during peak pricing periods. Since then, the wholesale power market has been restructured and the savings from this program are not as beneficial.

The cooperative appreciates your participation in the load control program, and we will utilize it periodically for brief periods when it can produce savings.

## Pole Inventory Scheduled

Members should be aware that a power pole inventory will take place throughout 2006 as we work to update our records and identify all attachments to poles. Contractors will be supplied with identification for their vehicles. You may see contractors in the field but no home access is necessary.

## The Enlightener



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PowerLine® 1-800-448-2383  
(PowerLine is an automated account information and outage reporting system.)

Toll Free 1-800-451-5474  
(for members outside the service area)

To report an outage at any time, call one of the numbers listed above.

### Office Hours

8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday  
Night deposit available

Visit us on the web:

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



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## Be Prepared Before A Storm Hits

Power outages can occur during or after winter storms if power lines are damaged. The following tips will help you to be prepared, safe, and more comfortable if severe weather causes an outage:

### Prepare an emergency kit including:

- Battery powered radio
- Flashlights
- Extra batteries
- Bottled water
- Canned and non-perishable food
- Manual can opener
- First-Aid kit
- Extra blankets and quilts



In your kit, include an emergency telephone list to contact the police, fire department, hospital, Blue Ridge Electric, and local emergency management office if needed. You may also want to have a traditional telephone on hand since cordless phones don't work without power.

### What to do if you are experiencing a power outage:

Verify if you are the only one in your neighborhood without power. If that's the case, check your breaker box to make sure all breakers are in the ON position. If you still don't have power call Blue Ridge Electric. For the fastest way to report an outage,

use PowerLine® our automated information and outage reporting system at 1-800-448-2383.

As a precaution, be sure to turn off all appliances, especially any heat-producing electric equipment such as electric stoves, ovens, irons or hair curlers. Leave one light fixture on so you'll know when power is restored.

### The danger of downed power lines

Downed power lines can remain energized and therefore dangerous or even deadly.

You should never touch a downed power line or any object that is in contact with one. Never drive your car over power lines. If a power line falls over your car while you are driving, stay inside your car until you receive trained assistance.

Most importantly, remember to always stay away from downed power lines and report them immediately to Blue Ridge Electric.





# The Trading Post

## FOR SALE

**1968 Norris camper**, 20', sleeps 4, \$1,200. '84 Basstracker tournament TX 17' alum. 43-lb. trolling motor, trailer, & more, \$2,500. Call 336-372-5602.

**Singer Touch & Sew** sewing machine, model 758, all attachments, recently serviced, \$65. Call 828-963-9315.

**1975 Kincaid piano**, burgundy, \$500. Call 828-264-7902.

**Gas logs**, one set Vermont propane vent-free logs for fireplace, 24", \$200. Call 336-877-4175.

**Children's ski helmets w/goggles**, Boeri brand in ex. cond. Purple/green/black, and lavender/white, \$25 ea. or both for \$40. Call 919-673-1532.

**2003 Dodge Grand Caravan SE**, silver, CD, all power, garage kept, 35,200 mi., equipped w/power lift and power scooter, \$15,000. Call 704-892-4191.

**Persian rug**, 8' x 10', traditional design, navy with burgundy and coral. Beautiful condition, certified highest

quality, \$1,500. Call 336-219-0050.

**1993 Toyota 4-Runner SR5**, white, all power, sun roof, CD player, good tires, 150K mi., runs well, some body rust, \$3,999. Call 828-295-9853.

**Composting toilet**, Enviro-Let, low-water, \$1,000. Call 336-385-1640.

**Ladies golf clubs**, complete set, Power Built, right handed, Carolina blue golf bag, \$185. Call 336-902-9495.

**Noritake china**, 97 pieces, perfect, \$600. 49-piece set Gorham sterling, seldom used, \$600. Two great canoes w/paddles, \$325 ea. Call 336-384-1701.

## WANTED

**Pepsi** collector series 1973 Warner Brothers cartoon glass with "Slow Pokey." Call 704-857-4118.

## MISCELLANEOUS

Lady would like to contact anyone traveling to Phoenix, Arizona in late January 2006 or early February. Call 336-246-3024.

## Do Phantom Loads Haunt Your Home?

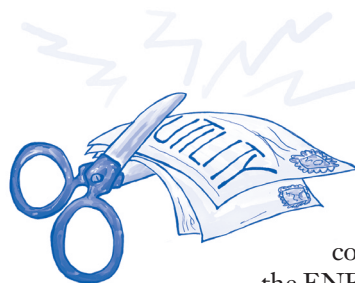
Many devices in your home consume electricity even when they appear to be off. These can include instant-on TVs, microwave clocks, VCR displays, telephones, and computer peripherals. Phantom, or standby, loads add up to a huge waste of electricity in the U.S. that costs consumers more than a billion dollars per year. The total phantom load in most American homes varies from 1.5 to 4 kilowatt-hours per day, or several dollars per month for most families.

One way you can eliminate phantom loads for devices like TVs, stereos, VCRs, and computer printers is by plugging them into a power strip that is equipped with its

own power switch. Simply switch the power strip on when you need to use the appliance, and off when it's not in use. Note also that any appliance that has a cube-shaped transformer on the end of its cord is creating a phantom load. That's why these transformers feel warm even when the device is off.

Consumers can benefit from reduced phantom energy consumption by always looking for the ENERGY STAR® label when buying appliances.

This information is from John Krigger, a nationally recognized author of numerous energy efficiency books, including *Surviving the Seasons*, and *Residential Energy: Cost Savings and Comfort for Existing Buildings*. For more information, visit [www.srmi.biz](http://www.srmi.biz).



## Energy Cost Stabilize But Remain High

More than 30 years have passed since the electric utility industry faced the circumstances we confront today — a period of long-term increase in demand for electricity and rising costs of power supply due to higher fuel costs used to generate electricity. In addition, global competition for limited energy and other resources will affect our cost of doing business. As a result, monthly electric bills have risen for many Americans.

The good news for electric cooperative members is the increases they may experience, on average, shouldn't be as severe as what we've seen at the gasoline pump or what's projected for natural gas. The bad news, most analysts agree, is we could see

several years of pressure on the electricity industry.

Blue Ridge Electric is addressing these challenges in several ways. Your senior management team is working on our long term power supply contracts to help us better manage rising costs. Our employees are also improving operating efficiencies in daily operations. And, we are investing in new technologies that improve efficiencies and reliability.

As consumers, please remember to conserve energy. We offer many energy efficiency and energy audit resources on line at [www.BlueRidgeEMC.com](http://www.BlueRidgeEMC.com). Or contact your local Blue Ridge Electric office for a copy of the brochure "Energy Savers: Tips on Saving Money and Energy at Home."

## Members Only News Plan Ahead in Event of Emergency

If you registered with Blue Ridge Electric as having a "medical alert status" (for example, you're on oxygen, dialysis or Lifeline) you should still have a personal household emergency plan in case a power outage occurs.

To ensure your safety and well-being, your emergency plan may include back up power sources as well as someone who can check on you and take you to a shelter or other location with electricity if needed. Contact your local emergency management center for more information.

The medical alert status of your home gives you priority

restoration only when an outage is limited to your home. In the event of wide spread outages such as those that can occur with severe winter weather, we are obligated to repair the system in a manner that restores electricity to the greatest number of people in the safest, most efficient manner. Additionally, your home may not be able to receive power until the circuit or substation you receive power from is repaired.

Contact Blue Ridge Electric if you need a medical alert status coded to your account. To ensure your safety, also have an emergency back up plan in place.

## Resolutions Due

Members may now submit proposed resolutions for consideration of presentation at the 2006 Annual Membership Meeting.

Proposed resolutions should state their relevance to the cooperative's mission, objectives, operations, and how they relate to the membership.

Resolutions must be in writing and received by 5 p.m., March 31, 2006. Address resolutions to Doug Johnson, PO Box 112, Lenoir, NC, 28645.

Proposed resolutions are reviewed by the Resolutions Committee for compliance with policy. Recommendations for resolutions to be presented at the annual meeting are made by the committee to the board of directors at their April meeting.

The Resolutions Committee is composed of chairpersons of the cooperative's district Member Advisory Committees and members of the board of directors' Policy and Member Relations Committee.

NOTICE - Members of Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation are invited to submit ads for the Trading Post. However, no real estate, business, or ads for animals will be accepted. We will place ads in the "Trading Post" on a first-come, first-served basis, and we reserve the right to refuse any ads due to space limitations or questionable content. Ads will be limited to a maximum of four lines. We do not accept ads for wood or coal-burning appliances, or electric thermal storage units. Prices should be included on all items. Ads should be mailed to: Cornelia Cornell, Production Supervisor, the Enlightener, Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation, PO Box 112, Lenoir, NC 28645.