

Membership MATTERS



Wise Energy Investments

One of the wisest investments any of us can make is in energy efficiency. Making upgrades around the house generally pays big dividends in terms of less energy used or wasted, which results in reduced energy costs.

For qualifying energy efficiency work made at your residence during the coming year, Uncle Sam will foot up to 30 percent of the bill — not a bad deal! Through the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act — better known as the stimulus bill — the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) offers a personal tax credit for certain energy efficiency improvements made to existing homes during 2009 and 2010 and in some instances beyond.

For example, the credit covers 30 percent of the cost of adding qualified insulation materials and exterior doors, windows, and roofs designed to help reduce a home's heat loss or gain. It also includes efficient central air conditioners, air-source heat pumps, hot water boilers, and biomass stoves.

For weatherization-related work the credit covers only the cost of materials. With heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems as well as biomass stoves installation costs also count toward the credit.

So how does the math work out? For example, if you spend \$1,000 on new insulation, you would get \$300 back in the form of a tax credit.

To take advantage of the program, a home improvement must have taken place after Feb. 17, 2009 (the day the stimulus bill was signed into law), and products must meet specific energy efficiency criteria.

Since everyone's tax situation is different, you should consult your personal tax advisor to see if you can benefit from these tax credits and any improvements you may make. To review program guidelines, information on the tax credits, and qualifying energy efficiency improvements, visit www.IRS.gov/recovery.

Visit www.IRS.gov/recovery to learn about tax credits for home energy efficiency improvements.

THE *Perspective*

Smart Technology: For Now and the Future

Blue Ridge Electric was formed to benefit our members and the communities we serve. As we look forward to serving you in 2010 and beyond, our mission statement you see to the right guides us as we work and strategically plan for the future.

This month, I'll discuss a key way we're utilizing technology to both manage costs and deliver on our top priority for members: reliable electricity.

Today, the new frontier for the electric power industry is the smart grid. Our challenge is to invest in state-of-the-art technology which will allow Blue Ridge members to benefit from automation that provides instant access to energy usage information and the capability for consumers to become more efficient and smarter about energy consumption.

The electric grid spanning across our nation — quite literally the largest machine ever built — includes millions of miles of transmission and distribution lines that deliver power from generating stations to your front door. Contrary to popular belief, the grid isn't unintelligent; it has sustained us for almost a century, keeping electricity safe, reliable, and affordable. But you can compare the grid to a high school graduate, heading off for college. There's a lot of room for learning, in this case in the areas of energy efficiency and reliability.

The first step toward building a smarter grid involves installing a strong foundation of smart meters at homes and businesses that can talk back and forth to utilities about outages and electric use, and communicate important information to consumers.

Blue Ridge Electric is deploying smart meters and related automated devices, and they are now activated in Caldwell and Alleghany counties with plans for total system completion by the end of 2010. This technology is not only enabling us to offer more

convenient programs like FlexPay, our new "pay as you go" electricity program, it's also allowing members with activated smart meters to view their current energy usage at www.myusage.com. This information helps consumers better understand how and when they use electricity. The result in many cases is consumers who are more energy efficient and more in charge of controlling their energy costs.

Smart meters work in conjunction with our outage management software and our computerized monitoring and control system. Working together, this smart technology helps us improve reliability, including restoring service quicker when severe weather or other issues affect the flow of electricity.

Smart meters are also helping the cooperative to control operating costs, which is very important during a time of significantly rising wholesale power costs. Specifically, smart meters are helping your cooperative reduce operating costs by \$1 million annually and that will help us contain rising costs for our members.

At Blue Ridge Electric, our goal is to use this exciting new technology to reduce costs, improve efficiencies, and to provide real-time information for our members. We're committed to building a smarter grid, making it faster, more efficient, and smart enough to handle challenges this decade promises to bring. An intelligent, efficient electric grid will help consumers save money and may minimize future government mandated increases resulting from climate change and other policy goals. It's a critical part of the way we are investing in innovative technologies that make economic and environmental sense, allowing us to provide you with safe, reliable, affordable, and smart power!

An Editorial by
Chief Executive Officer Doug Johnson



Blue Ridge Electric's Mission Statement

To benefit our member-owners by providing reliable electric and energy services - delivered efficiently and with extraordinary customer care.



More News



At their February board meeting, the Board of Directors will appoint a Nominating Committee consisting of 12 members who will work together to nominate a select list of candidates to run for election to the Board.

Nominating Committee members may not be employees, agents, officers, directors, close relatives, or known candidates to become directors. The committee should have adequate representation reflecting the number of directors from each district, except one member representing the membership-at-large who must be of the minority membership and may be a resident of any district.

An in-depth training session with members of the Nominating Committee will be conducted prior to the committee's normal process of selecting board nominees for open board seats. The Nominating Committee will then meet on March 25 to develop the slate of board candidates for the available seats. A list of the candidates will be posted in each Blue Ridge Electric office the week after the March meeting of the Board of Directors.

Additionally, nominations by petition must be made on or before the first business day in April. Petitions must be signed by 15 or more members in good standing, with each signing his or her name as it appears on their electric service bill. Deadline for petitions is Thursday, April 1, at 5 p.m. Petitions will be posted in each Blue Ridge Electric office beside the list of nominees from the Nominating Committee.

Information about board nominees will be mailed to members in the May issue of *Carolina Country*.

The following are qualifications to serve as a director of Blue Ridge Electric:

- Must be receiving electric service from Blue Ridge Electric at their primary residence
- Must not be a close relative of an incumbent director or of an employee of the cooperative
- Membership must not have been suspended at any time during the 12 months preceding the annual meeting
- Must be at least 18 years old and legally competent and available to serve as a director
- Must not be employed by or in a position to financially gain from a competing enterprise of the cooperative or its subsidiary, or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the cooperative
- The Director-at-Large seat is reserved to represent the minority membership of the cooperative. Only African American, Native American, Asian, or Hispanic members are eligible for this seat.
- Must not have been employed with the cooperative for the previous six years if a nominee is a former cooperative employee
- To become or remain a director, a person must not have been convicted of a felony

Service Rules and Regulations Updated

The Service Rules and Regulations of Blue Ridge Electric have been updated and recently approved by the Board of Directors, primarily to reflect the addition of the new member FlexPay program and to update our line extension policies for new residential developments.

FlexPay offers members with activated smart meters a new electric service option of pre-purchasing electricity in smaller increments, in the amounts they choose and on the schedule they select. FlexPay is currently available in Caldwell and Alleghany counties and will be available in Ashe and Watauga counties later in 2010 as smart meters are activated in these districts.

A complete set of Service Rules and Regulations can be obtained at any Blue Ridge Electric office or online at BlueRidgeEMC.com.

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Members Only NEWS For Members of Blue Ridge Electric



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(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 am - 5:00 pm, Monday - Friday
Night deposit available.

Visit us on the Web:
www.BlueRidgeEMC.com

Resolutions Deadline

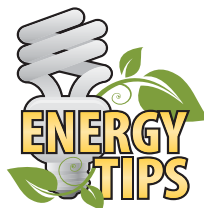
Members may now submit proposed resolutions for consideration of presentation at the 2010 Annual Membership Meeting.

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., February 26, 2010. 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 March 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.



TogetherWeSave.com

Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation, together with Touchstone Energy, is pleased to announce a new interactive energy conservation website found at TogetherWeSave.com. The site is designed to serve as a gateway through which consumers will easily learn what they can do to reduce energy consumption and the immediate cost-savings impact of those actions. The savings are also more accurate than other websites with weather data and rates specific to your situation when you type in your zip code and choose Blue Ridge Electric as your cooperative. Take a moment and check out:

-  The "Energy Savings Home Tour"
-  "Watch and Learn" videos
-  Energy Savings Tips

Visit TogetherWeSave.com and see how the little changes add up.