BARC NEWS

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Energy-Efficiency Tip of the Month

SEAL AIR LEAKS

An easy way to save energy is to seal air leaks and holes where plumbing pipes run through walls in your home. You can also check wall-mounted cabinets for plumbing holes or air gaps in the back.

Fill any holes or gaps with spray foam. Wear protective gloves and use a damp rag for cleanup.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

Closing Announcements

BARC offices will be closed Monday, Sept. 5, for Labor Day.

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Chief Executive Officer
Bill Buchanan

BARC Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Fuel Rate Increase Affecting Members

Manager's Message

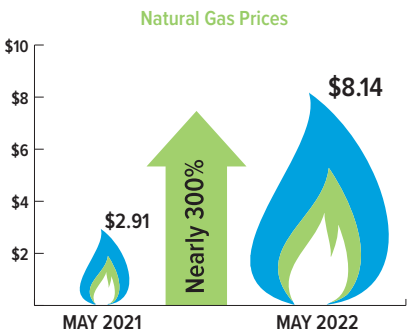
Bill Buchanan
CEO, BARC Electric Cooperative

In June, BARC distributed letters and emails to its members making them aware of a fuel rate increase effective July 1, 2022. The cooperative is also sharing this information in the August magazine for its members.

Volatile fuel markets have necessitated energy fuel price increases since the beginning of 2022. On May 1, 2022, BARC Electric Cooperative's wholesale power generation supplier, Old Dominion Electric Cooperative, increased its costs to its 11 cooperative members as a direct result of higher natural gas prices. Unfortunately, the situation of volatile markets and rising natural gas fuel prices are causing another rate increase.

Natural gas pricing is determined by several factors, including supply and demand, weather, imports and exports, underground storage levels, and natural gas production. On May 5, 2022, market natural gas prices closed at $8.78 per MMBtu, compared to $2.925 per MMBtu in May 2021, Throughout the month of May, natural gas prices fluctuated between $7 and $9 per MMBtu. This fluctuation increased fuel costs for ODEC, as well as for most utilities across the nation. In the past six months, the average market fuel costs have increased by 130%.

BARC did not raise demand charges on your billing statements with this increase, but you have recently seen an increase on your billing statement: Electric Supply Services (power purchased from wholesaler) due to these increased fuel costs. We are hopeful that this will be the last increase for 2022 but cannot make any guarantees due to continuous market fluctuations with the costs for fuel and natural gas.



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

What does this mean for you as a BARC Electric member? The increase to your monthly electric statement will cost a household using 1,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity per month approximately $18.90 or $0.01890 per kWh.

Unlike investor-owned utilities, BARC and its power supplier ODEC are not-for-profit organizations that do not benefit from these increases. The additional costs to your electric statements are solely for the purpose of paying for fuel costs necessary for power generation, ultimately providing power to your home or business.

As your cooperative, BARC realizes and cares that our members are facing pricing increases across the board with rising costs and inflation. BARC and ODEC are faced with the same challenges while striving to provide reliable and affordable power to co-op members. BARC will continue working with ODEC and its board of directors to manage fuel market issues as we all work through this period of energy inflation and volatility.

Power Outages and the Restoration Process

by Tish Blackwell

At BARC, our mission is to improve the quality of life in the communities we serve. We accomplish this by providing reliable electric service, broadband service and renewable energy options through solar to our consumers. Our cooperative's roots began in the 1930s to build a reliable electric system to serve residents in rural communities who were not included as part of electrification in more populated areas of the country. The design of our electric system was to build as "straight" as possible. And while this made sense early on, it provides challenges today in maintaining rights-of-way and repairing power outages on our system, especially in the rugged terrain that makes up our service territory.

On Friday, June 17, a quick but severe storm hit BARC's service territory causing significant damage. The cooperative's entire service territory was impacted with widespread outages affecting to about 8,000 members at 139 individual locations. BARC continues assessing storm damage and, as of July 1, replaced 17 broken power poles across the service territory, cleared numerous trees and repaired multiple downed power lines. Damage to BARC's electric system also included damage to one of its power transmissions lines and three power distribution lines.

BARC crews were immediately out in the field assessing the damage and working on power restoration efforts. We also had help from Northern Neck Cooperative in Warsaw, Virginia, Prince George Electric Cooperative in Winsdor, Va., and Lee Electrical Construction in Aberdeen, N.C. Due to the significant damage from the storm, some members were without power for multiple days. We want to ensure members understand the work involved to restore power.

As much as we work to clear rights-of-way and maintain our electric system, there is no avoiding power outages. The first question we all have when power goes out is "How long until it will be restored?" Many of ask why it takes time to restore power. It is not as easy as flipping a switch to get the power flowing again. To understand the restoration process, you need to understand what our crews encounter when they respond to outages.

Let's start with the BARC service territory BARC, which covers more than 1,950 miles of line from the Blue Ridge Parkway to east of the West Virginia state line supplying power to almost 13,000 meters. This area includes a lot of forest and mountainous terrain that is not easily accessible. So, when you think about how the electric system was originally built, in a straight pole fashion, think about where some of the poles are located to carry power lines. Often, these lines run across mountains, through densely forested areas and farmers' fields. Our lines and poles are not all located along roadways with easy access.

When reports of power outages begin to surface, our team immediately goes into action. We ping meters electronically around a reported outage to gain a wider perspective of how large of an affected area we have. We also log all outage reports into our system to account for each location that has lost power. Line crews are dispatched immediately to areas of identified and confirmed outage areas. Though we know we have reported outages, we may not yet know the cause.

Our line crews first must be investigators. They have to determine the location of the problem. Remember how we mentioned earlier that many of our lines are not easily accessible? This often creates challenges for our crews. They may not be in a position to directly drive to the problem area. At times they must drive around an outage area that can span several miles or walk a line for a mile or more to reach the outage cause. Think about that for a moment. This can be a tough task during the day, but at night in the dark, this investigation becomes more challenging. Though your home may be near a roadway, if an outage occurs on a power line feed that is far from your residence but has created an outage down the line, crews inspect fault indicators and cutouts on the line to determine the cause.

Some outages are easier to clear than others. When you experience a longer outage period, please remember that crews may be in a densely forested area dealing with rugged terrain and less-than-ideal conditions working to restore power. They may be dealing with downed trees and lines caused by a storm. For instance, approximately 75% of our lines run through forest areas. If you have traveled through our service area in Bath, Rockbridge, Highland, Augusta or Alleghany counties, you can picture what those areas look like and the difficulty in reaching a power line. Lines also run through overgrown fields and land masses that are not directly off a roadway and are difficult to access.

Identifying the cause and location of the actual outage is the first step of many to get consumers' power back online. We do our best to communicate all outages to our members. As reports come in from the field, we share outage causes and, if possible, duration periods, but we also want to keep our crews safe while they focus on their work to get your power restored as quickly as possible.

When crews reach an outage area, they often can encounter different scenarios depending on outage causes, including downed trees which require removal or cutting, downed power lines that may need to be replaced, or damaged power poles that may require replacement. Another likely source for outages are small animals that have made their way onto a transformer or made contact with a primary wire and a ground source. Small animals can create serious damage to electric systems and create widespread outages.

Once field crews determine outage causes, they immediately grab the tools and supplies they need to make repairs and get to work. A lineworker's tools can weigh 50 pounds, adding to the strain when climbing electric poles. Supplies they may need can include new line, replacement poles and machinery like bulldozers or track machines. After damage is identified, crews cut and remove downed trees, climb poles, and use bucket trucks to reach outage areas, while following safety protocols.

The last step crews take is to reenergize the protective device that opens and allows power to be sent your homes. You may see our line crews out doing this and think that is all there is to it. But as you have read, there are many steps that take place before this final action happens. We know power outages are no fun and that our members rely on us to provide reliable electric service. When the power goes out, though we may not be able to provide a restoration time, our crews are out working safely and quickly to get your power restored.

When larger outages occur on our system due to storms or an unexpected event, our team supplies updated information at barcelectric.com or at facebook.com/BARCElectricCooperative. We always want you to report your power outages to BARC by calling 800-846-2272 or by using the BARC mobile app, which you can download to your Apple or Android device. You can also use the online Customer Portal available on our website. We ask that you remember that social media is not monitored 24/7 and should not be your first communication source to report your power outage.

Area High School Seniors Earn College Scholarships

Three high school seniors from BARC Electric Cooperative service territory have each received $1,000 college scholarships awarded by the Education Scholarship Foundation of the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives.

The 2022 scholarship recipients are:

- Clara Fleshman, Rockbridge County High School
- Gage Kelly, Rockbridge County High School
- Harley Cunningham, Highland County Public Schools

The students were eligible for consideration because their parents or guardians are members of BARC Electric Cooperative. BARC wishes all three scholarship recipients, and all 2022 high school graduates, the very best for their future ahead.

"These scholarships reflect the strong commitment of electric cooperatives to advancing educational opportunities among our youth," says Russell G. "Rusty" Brown, chair of the Education Scholarship Foundation Board and chair of the board of directors of the VMD Association. "We commend these students on their academic success, knowing they represent a future generation of leaders in their communities."

The Foundation awarded Worth Hudson Scholarships of $1,000 each to 50 students. They are named in honor of Hudson, the first chairman of the VMDAEC Education Scholarship Foundation.

"We're extremely proud to be able to help these deserving young people from electric cooperative service areas continue their education, whether at a college or university, or in learning a trade," says BARC CEO Bill Buchanan.

Since 2001, the Foundation has provided approximately 840 scholarships totaling more than $860,000 to aspiring college students as well as to the next generation of electric lineworkers.

The Foundation is supported through tax-deductible donations and bequests from individuals, proceeds from fundraising events and CoBank's Sharing Success Program. One hundred percent of donations go to students for scholarships. For information on donating to the Foundation, visit vmdaec.com/scholarship.