



### More Power to You

# Cost of New Environmental Regulations Eventually Will Appear on Energy Bills

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**B**enjamin Franklin once said that two things are certain: death and taxes. I'd like to add a third certainty to the list: The cost of energy will increase as power suppliers comply with new environmental regulations.

The Environmental Protection Agency, primarily through amendments to the 1990 Clean Air Act and recent court actions, now requires that coal-fired plants reduce the amount of mercury emissions as well as other pollutants. The EPA mandates are expected to force utilities to retire or retrofit between 33,000 and 70,000 megawatts of generating capacity by 2015, according to a report from the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, which oversees the nation's bulk power grid.

The resulting billions of dollars in extra costs to bring coal-fired power plants into compliance will directly hit power suppliers, which in turn will pass those increases along to their wholesale customers. Eventually, those increases will appear on consumers' energy bills.

Rock Energy Cooperative does not own any power plants. Instead, we meet our members' energy needs with power we purchase from Alliant Energy, which generates almost 50 percent of its power from coal plants. From now through 2013, Alliant projects spending hundreds of millions of dollars on environmental upgrades to meet new regulations.

As a country, we use lots of coal to generate electricity, and these new regulations heavily affect coal plants. Illinois, like the United States as a whole, produces 50 percent of its power from coal, while Wisconsin generates 70 percent.

Even more regulations could be on the horizon. For example, in June 2010, EPA proposed two possible approaches for managing coal ash and other coal combustion byproducts (CCBs)—residues produced when coal is burned to make electricity.

One option, classifying CCBs as non-hazardous, will ensure that coal ash is handled safely and protect not just the environment, but also jobs and consumers.

EPA's other option—to regulate coal ash as hazardous—would hit coal-fired power plants with staggering

costs and significantly increase energy bills. The Electric Power Research Institute, a nonprofit utility research consortium, estimated the potential price tag of a hazardous CCB designation at \$54.66 billion to \$76.84 billion over 20 years.

Rock Energy and other co-ops have been actively urging EPA to consider the negative consequences of higher energy bills when setting new regulations. In fact, more than 10,500 comments from co-ops and their members were filed with the agency opposing regulating CCBs as hazardous.

Until EPA's various power plant rules are finalized, the bottom line remains unknown. But here's a fourth certainty that we can add to Benjamin Franklin's list. No matter what happens, Rock Energy is committed to working hard to provide you with safe, reliable power at an affordable price. We work hard to control local costs and do everything we can to make sure you receive the highest quality service for the lowest practical price.

We can all agree that a cleaner environment is better for everyone. We also need to understand that by

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## Wholesale Power Costs vs. Operating Expenses



About 70 percent of every dollar you pay your local energy cooperative goes directly for wholesale power costs. Bucket trucks, poles and wire, right-of-way trimming, payroll, and other operating expenses are covered by the rest.

Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association



# Power Supplier Choice Available Only to ComEd, Ameren Consumers

## Not-For-Profits Like Rock Energy Already Offer Lowest Practical Prices

Some Rock Energy Cooperative members who live in Illinois have mistakenly received letters from power suppliers that are offering a special introductory rate meant only for ComEd customers.

Illinois' deregulation law allows customers of ComEd and Ameren, both investor-owned utilities, to buy electricity from an independent power supplier. The law, however, does not apply to cooperative utilities, such as Rock Energy, or municipal utilities.

While offers like those being made to ComEd customers by unregulated power suppliers may appear attractive today, the power markets move up and down. These offers claim to provide a lower power price, but they do not represent all charges and require the customer to sign a 12- or 24-month contract with cancellation penalties. When making comparisons, consumers need to

be aware of these additional charges.

At Rock Energy, we're proud of the fact that we have been providing safe and reliable energy at the lowest practical cost for 75 years. We take a long-term approach to supply our members with stable and reasonably priced electricity.

Unlike investor-owned utilities and energy marketers, Rock Energy and other consumer-owned utilities aren't in business to make money. So when there are profits, they go back to you—our members—in the form of capital credits. Capital credits are like dividends based on usage, so the more electricity you purchase, the more capital credits are earned and eventually returned to you. In 2011, Rock Energy distributed more than \$600,000 in capital credits to eligible members on their May statements.

We appreciate the opportunity to serve your energy needs and welcome your questions. You can call us at (866) 752-4550 from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays or e-mail us at [questions@rock.coop](mailto:questions@rock.coop). ■

## More Money Available for Efficiency Projects

Additional funds through the Home Energy Efficiency Program are now available to Rock Energy Cooperative members who live in Illinois. Interested members should act now because funds are limited.



### How does the program work?

1. Call Rock Energy at (866) 752-4550 to arrange an energy assessment, which is required to qualify for the rebates. Appointments will be scheduled between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. A \$25 fee will be collected at the time of the in-home assessment.
2. You will receive recommendations about how to improve your home's energy efficiency, performance and comfort.
3. Decide what work will be completed and submit a proposal and cost estimate to us. We will return a signed copy, stating that funds have been set aside for you.
4. Work must be completed within 60 days.
5. Send us a completion form with copies of your receipts.
6. We will issue a check to you.

If you have questions about the program, call our office at (866) 752-4550 between 7:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. You also can visit [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop) and click on the Home logo. ■

### How much are the rebates?\*

Geothermal heat pumps.....	\$1,500
Air-source heat pumps.....	\$1,000
Central air conditioning.....	\$350
Natural gas or LP furnace.....	\$350
Heat pump water heater.....	\$250
Insulation/air sealing .....	\$500 maximum, 30% of project cost

\*Rebates will be approved for only one piece of heating or cooling equipment

# Tune in to Big Screen Energy Savings

The days of large console televisions with their wood grain exteriors and antenna wires or rabbit ears are long gone.

And there's no more using needle nose pliers to change channels after the knob breaks or fiddling endlessly to adjust the horizontal and vertical holds. Today's televisions offer larger, thinner screens and, thanks to digital cable or satellite connections, provide a virtually unlimited number of channels.

However, some models require a tremendous amount of energy to operate—almost as much as a refrigerator. And the average American household owns 2.93 TVs, according to a 2010 Nielsen report.

All of this energy use adds up. The Natural Resources Defense Council found that U.S. televisions use more than 46 billion kilowatt hours per year, or about 4 percent of residential electricity use.

In response to consumer concerns, TV manufacturers are designing sets that use less energy without sacrificing screen size or resolution.

If you're in the market for a new TV, these tips will help you tune in to big screen energy savings.

Although a high-definition TV (HDTV) transforms the latest blockbuster movie into a theater-like living room experience, these sets generally use more power because of better picture clarity. Also, energy consumption often relates to screen size. The larger the screen, the more electricity required.

Four types of TVs are currently available: plasma, liquid-crystal display (LCD), rear-projection, and cathode ray tube (CRT). CRT televisions are the most difficult to find because they employ old technology and screen sizes rarely top 40 inches.

Plasma screens often are cited as the largest energy user—mainly because their large 42- to 65-inch screens typically draw between 240 to 400 watts. Most consume electricity even when turned off.

LCD TVs don't need much power to operate—111 watts on average. Most LCD screens range in size from 21 inches to 49 inches. These TVs fall into two categories: those with cold-cathode fluorescent lamps to illuminate

the screen and backlit models employing a light-emitting diode (LED).

LED units offer several benefits, notably better picture quality and thinner and lighter screens. They also use slightly less energy, at 101 watts.

Rear-projection televisions tend to be the most energy efficient and boast the largest screen sizes. However, due to their overall weight, rear-projection sets are not as readily available as plasma and LCD models.

Shopping for an energy-efficient television can be difficult. Television manufacturers rarely advertise energy consumption, and it almost never appears on in-store labels, though new ENERGY STAR requirements may change that in 2012.

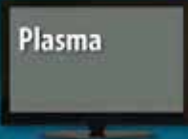
Faced with these difficulties, consumers need to conduct their own energy use research through unbiased online sources such as CNET.com, an online journal for the technology industry. Look for specific model numbers, which you can take to the store. ■

## High-Definition Television Comparison Guide


The power used by an active television is determined by three factors: screen size; technology type, such as plasma or LCD; and picture brightness, which nearly always depends on user-selected picture settings.

Type of TV	Typical Size	Typical Price	Average Energy Used
 Liquid Crystal Display (LCD)	13-65 inches	\$200 to \$8,000	111 watts (standard)
			101 watts (LED)

LCDs are the most popular HDTVs, mainly because they're flat and available in a tremendous range of sizes and prices.

 Plasma	42-65 inches	\$800 to \$7,000	301 watts
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Available in a limited range of sizes (mostly big), plasma TVs outperform LCDs in tests comparing overall picture quality.

 Rear-projection	50-73 inches	\$1,000 to \$3,500	N/A
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Rear-projection TVs are the most efficient but are getting hard to find because flat-panel models are often cheaper.

Source: CNET.com (April 2010)

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



### Member Appreciation Day 2011

## PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Saturday, Sept. 17 • 8 to 10:30 a.m.

REC Headquarters, 2815  
Kennedy Road, Janesville, Wis.

Watch for  
details!

## Get Connected

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year, must be picked up)**



**Pitchers Mound, 2745 Prairie Ave., Beloit – (608) 207-3224**

Serving food and drinks from 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. seven days per  
week. DJ and bands on Saturday nights. Ten TVs to watch your  
favorite teams.

**\$1 Off Menu Items**

For a complete listing of current deals, visit [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop). Terms and  
conditions subject to change as desired by participating businesses.  
You also can use your Co-op Connections Card to receive a discount on  
prescription drugs and to print online coupons.

## More Power to You

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implementing what the EPA is mandating, there will be a monetary cost to everyone that will ultimately show up on your energy bill.

### Members Cheer Snappers to Victory

We couldn't have asked for better weather or better baseball on June 25 for our 10<sup>th</sup> annual Rock Energy Night at the Ballpark. Clouds rolled in to cool off an otherwise steamy day, and a ninth inning Beloit Snappers home run sent the game into extra innings, creating added anticipation for the fireworks finale.

Rock Energy members and employees ate hundreds of hot dogs and slices of pizza and participated in fun between-inning games. One lucky member even won the 50/50 raffle, going home with an extra \$500.

After the Snappers beat the Cedar Rapids Kernels by a score of 8-7 in the 10<sup>th</sup>, a spectacular fireworks show capped off an enjoyable evening spent with family and friends.

Co-op members can buy discounted tickets for the rest of the Snappers 2011 regular season at our Janesville and South Beloit offices. Tickets originally priced at \$6.50 are just \$2 each. While you're in the office buying tickets, please share your ideas about how we can improve our service to you. ■

*The first 30  
Rock Energy  
kids at the  
ballpark  
on June 25  
received a  
Snappers ball  
souvenir.*



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