



Alan W. Wattles

## Across The President's Desk

## EPA's power plant rule threatens electric reliability

As a member of MCEC, keeping the lights on at a cost you can afford is the focal point of everything we do. Transparency is one of our core values, so in addition to sharing co-op successes, I believe we also have a responsibility to tell you about the challenges, too.

In May, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a rule that impacts energy production from power plants. The power plant rule will undoubtedly threaten access to

reliable electricity for our local community and communities across the country.

The rule constrains existing coal and new natural gas plants by requiring them to install carbon capture and storage (CCS) — a technology that has potential but has not been proven to be viable as required. No power plant in North America currently uses CCS at the scale and levels mandated by EPA. When power plants aren't able to comply with EPA's CCS

requirements, they will be required to shut down, significantly limit operations or switch fuels. These unrealistic standards will force the unnecessary and early shutdown of many power plants that currently provide reliable electricity 24/7.

Renewable sources, such as solar and wind, are important components of our overall generation mix. But, given the intermittent nature of these energy sources, we simply cannot

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## IMPACTS OF THE EPA'S POWER PLANT RULE

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) power plant rule threatens access to reliable electricity for millions of Americans. The EPA's power plant rule will:



- 1 Force the premature closure of many power plants that currently provide electricity 24/7.
- 2 Mandate the deployment of unproven carbon capture and storage technology.
- 3 Jeopardize the reliability of the grid at a time when America is already facing a surge in electricity demand.
- 4 Heighten the risk of rolling power outages to relieve pressure on the electric grid.
- 5 Increase costs for consumers as utilities are forced to pay for new power generation to comply with the EPA rule.

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depend on them, because the wind doesn't always blow, and the sun doesn't always shine. The need for always-available power-generating resources is still essential.

The timing of the power plant rule is equally troubling. At the same time the EPA is leading our nation down the path to fewer power plants, utilities are facing a surge in electricity demand — driven by the onshoring of manufacturing, the growth of the American economy and the rapid expansion of data centers to support artificial intelligence, e-commerce and cryptocurrency.

Many states have already experienced rolling outages, and if the supply of electricity is further threatened by the EPA's power plant rule, the problem will only get worse. In fact, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), the nation's electric reliability watchdog, recently forecasted that over the next 5 years, all or parts of 19 states are at high risk of rolling power outages during normal peak electricity demand conditions.

It's also no secret that when demand is high and supply is low, costs go up. We're concerned about threats to reliability as well as cost increases to our members.

I don't say all of this to worry you, but I do want our members to understand the challenges that lie ahead.

Just as we've always done, we will look for solutions that serve our members best. We are joining electric co-ops across the country to fight these regulations, and we are working with our local elected officials to help them understand the consequences this would have on all Illinoisans.


Co-ops are no strangers to innovation, and we're taking proactive steps to address today's energy challenges and tomorrow's energy needs. We've led the charge on industry endeavors, such as community solar projects, and we'll continue to explore new technologies and strategies that bolster reliability and our local grid.

Electric cooperatives like MCEC deliver power to 42 million Americans. At the end of the day, our top priority is to meet our members' energy needs, and we must have reliable electricity available to do that.



If you're interested in learning more about policy impacts to power reliability, or to make your voice heard visit [voicesforcooperativepower.com](http://voicesforcooperativepower.com).

## What is a **TRANSFER SWITCH**?



A transfer or throw switch is an essential mechanism that safely shuts off power to the electrical grid before backup power is used. This switch is sometimes referred to as a double-throw switch, as it controls two separate circuits.

The switch's job is to safely transfer power from its primary source to a backup power source, enabling users to maintain power during an outage. It works by connecting a generator to your home's main circuits to provide backup power.

Properly installed transfer switches are essential because they prevent dangerous backfeed into the power grid, which endangers utility workers and others.

Make sure your permanent generator and switch are installed according to code and working properly. Never plug a portable generator into a wall outlet, as this can cause backfeed.

Learn more at: [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org)

### MCEC line outages July 2024

Date	Duration	# Out	Map Location	Cause Desc	Substation
07/04/24	3:11	6	Nelson Ln	Trees, Other	E. Carondelet
07/08/24	1:01	2	Albert Ln	Lightning	Millstadt
07/09/24	0:48	9	Lake Forest Dr	Lightning	Waterloo
07/16/24	1:37	14	Triple Lakes Rd	Lightning	E. Carondelet
07/16/24	1:18	2	Country Side Ln	Installation	Smithton
07/16/24	0:28	15	Kopp Rd	Lightning	N. Waterloo
07/16/24	0:52	11	Kostelac Ln/ Il Rt 163	Trees, Other	E. Carondelet
07/16/24	0:36	3	Schmidt Ln	Lightning	Smithton
07/16/24	0:33	151	Gall Rd	Weather, Other	N. Waterloo
07/16/24	0:40	14	Urbana Rd	Trees, Other	Smithton
07/19/24	1:10	50	Brandt Rd	Vehicles Or Machinery	Fults
07/21/24	1:04	65	Brickey Rd/ Prairie Rd	Vehicles Or Machinery	Poe
07/28/24	0:07	3	Small Ln	Trees, Other	Columbia
07/30/24	1:14	10	Hern Dr/ Sutterville Rd	Unknown	Fults

# Go above and beyond for a safe harvest

Modern farming often relies on data and equipment with GPS and auto-guidance systems. However, even with these modern conveniences, farm workers must remain vigilant. That's because farming is considered one of the most dangerous jobs.

Massive machinery is indispensable to farming, but the same impressive size, height and extensions make them particularly vulnerable to contacting power lines. That's why staying alert, focused and knowledgeable about potential hazards and safety procedures is crucial.

During a busy harvest season, the familiar sights around the farm can easily fade into the background, and farm workers can overlook the power lines overhead. However, failing to notice them can lead to deadly accidents.

## 360-degree awareness

Awareness of your surroundings — around, above and below — and planning safe equipment routes can significantly reduce the risk of accidents. Even with GPS and auto-steering, it's imperative that farm workers keep a close eye on the equipment's location and be ready to take action if necessary.

Exposed underground powerlines, defective wiring in farm buildings and extension cords are also hazards. Grain bins can pose a potential danger as well. The National Electrical Safety Code requires power lines to be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin with which portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used. If you plan to install new grain bins or you're concerned about the proximity

of power lines to existing grain bins, contact our Operations Department at 618-939-7171.

## Smart harvest safety tips

To ensure a safer harvest season, SafeElectricity.org recommends the following tips to avoid electrical accidents on the farm:

- **Exercise caution near power lines.** Be careful when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- **Use spotters when operating large machinery near power lines.** Ensure the spotters do not

can conduct electricity, especially when damp, dusty or dirty.

- **Never attempt to raise or move power lines to clear a path.** Doing so could result in electric shock or death.
- **Avoid using metal poles inside bins.** Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside or around bins.
- **Hire qualified electricians.** Ensure that qualified electricians handle work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

## 5 Tips for a Safe Harvest

Electrical safety during harvest season requires vigilance and proactive measures. Follow these tips to reduce the risk of electrical accidents.

1. Maintain at least a 10-foot distance from power lines when operating equipment like grain augers, elevators and other tall machinery.
2. Use a spotter to navigate safely around power lines and other electrical equipment.
3. Ensure all farm workers are trained on electrical safety procedures.
4. Regularly inspect all electrical equipment and machinery for signs of wear and damage.
5. Keep first aid kits and emergency contact numbers in an easily accessible location.



touch the machinery while it is moving near power lines.

- **Lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators before moving or transporting equipment.** Do not raise equipment, such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember that nonmetallic materials like lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay

While rare, the only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire. However, if it happens, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the machinery and the ground at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.



[www.mcec.org](http://www.mcec.org)

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