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NET2013
Save the Date
Where Electric Co-ops and Businesses Meet
Learn more.

Regulatory Update
The Trickle-Up Effect
State Regulations Often Precede Federal Rules
Several environmental issues stirring national debate that have an impact on electric cooperatives
Learn more.

Technology Brief
Rooftop Units
Learn more.

Tools and Resources
Valuable Resources at your Fingertips!
iMap Weather Radio Weather the Storm Using Technology
Learn more.

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Marcus Fister to Leave YUM! Brands, Inc.
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For more information contact:

Kathryn Momot
Touchstone Energy
703-907-5707
Kathryn.Momot@nreca.coop

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NET2013

Save the Date

Where Electric Co-ops and Businesses Meet

NET2013 will be returning to the Grand Canyon State for the thirteenth annual NET – New & Emerging Technologies Conference January 29-31, 2013 at the Westin La Paloma in Tucson, Arizona. The very first NET Conference was held in Tucson and we’re excited to be returning to our roots.

Key Accounts and Energy Managers will enjoy summit programs on Tuesday, January 29th while the NET Conference will officially kick off on Wednesday, January 30th. Pre-conference training will be held on Monday. For more information, including speakers, content, networking opportunities and more will be coming soon. In the meantime, please contact Kathryn.Momot@nreca.coop or at (703) 907-5707.

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NET2013 Conference
Jan. 29 - Jan. 31

CHECK OUT THE ONLINE BUSINESS ENERGY ADVISOR

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives
4301 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22203-1860 Tel: 703.907.5500 Fax: 703.907.5554

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Alan Shedd, Editor
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Regulatory Update

The Trickle-Up Effect

State Regulations Often Precede Federal Rules

Renewable portfolio standards (RPS) for electric utilities, hydraulic fracturing of shale gas reserves, haze regulations, and more—once had taken on state-level or regional importance before they reached Congress.

For example, legislative and regulatory oversight of hydraulic fracturing (also called fracking) for natural gas found in shale deposits has been primarily a state concern—whether to approve drilling permits and how to alleviate local road and infrastructure damage. Then claims surfaced connecting fracking to groundwater contamination and increased methane emissions. While bills have been introduced in the 112th Congress to promote shale gas extraction, there’s now also a push for federal oversight of these operations.

Before (so far unsuccessful) congressional proposals to impose a federal RPS reached a floor debate in Congress a few years ago, 29 states and the District of Columbia had already adopted their own RPS laws that require utilities to add increasing amounts of “clean and green” electricity to their retail power supply mix (ranging from 10 percent to 40 percent) by a certain date (mostly between 2015 and 2030); eight other states have adopted renewable energy goals. Since the economic downturn, congressional debate shifted from an RPS to a broader clean energy standard (CES) that includes renewables (such as wind, solar, and hydro) along with high-efficiency natural gas turbines (when replacing coal-burning power plants), coal-fired stations equipped with carbon capture and storage capabilities, and nuclear power. CES proponents plan to renew their push to get Congress to pass legislation this year.

Of course, state legislation sometimes mimics federal trends. In the wake of congressional debate on the role of clean coal technology, several states enacted bills that provide incentives for clean coal generation. Some states have also required utilities to prepare for the addition of carbon capture and sequestration equipment to coal plants.

In other situations, states may develop more affordable solutions than federal alternatives. A 2011 regulatory battle in North Dakota pitted a state regional haze plan against an U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) program that would have cost consumers an extra $800 million with little to show for the investment.

Although North Dakota air quality is consistently within EPA’s health-based standards, the agency sought to intervene, despite the fact that the state regional haze program provides a reasonable implementation schedule that has resulted in significant improvements. When Basin Electric Power Cooperative, which generates and delivers power to 135 electric distribution cooperatives in nine states, put its grassroots network into action, EPA backed off efforts aimed at forcing the Roughrider State to impose requirements that would lead to the installation of expensive, but unnecessary, equipment.
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Technology Brief

Rooftop Units

For much of the country, early onset of near record temperatures has building occupants, energy managers, and maintenance staff thinking about their cooling systems. Rooftop HVAC systems are the workhorse of the commercial market — more than 60% of commercial buildings rely on them. They are available in a wide range of sizes from 1 ton to more than 100 tons of air conditioning capacity but 80% of the units installed are 10-tons or smaller. Designed primarily for convenience and low-first cost installation, rooftop equipment efficiency typically lags behind other HVAC options — even when new.

According to a recent Pacific Northwest Labs study, more than 50% of the units installed have been in service for more than 10 years, 45% for more than 20 years though in the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) HVAC Applications Handbook, the median service life is 15 years. Rooftop units often receive the minimum possible maintenance with repair or replacement on failure being the most common. Their wide-spread use, low efficiency aggravated by minimal service, and age make rooftop equipment a prime target for energy efficiency improvements.

Maintenance

We all know that basic maintenance is money well spent both for extending the life of equipment and maintaining performance and energy efficiency.

Pay your equipment a visit — Even if the rooftop systems are under a service contract, a visual inspection can be very informative. How does it look?

- Inspect the cabinet to make sure the panels fit tightly. Sometimes screws that secure the panels are misplaced or work loose allowing air leaks.
- On a hot day is there a good flow of condensate from the drain? Broken or plugged p-traps on the condensate line are common and can lead to leaks.
- Check the filters — Dirty filters can restrict air flow, reducing cooling performance and reducing efficiency by as much as 5%. The frequency of filter replacement will depend on the location and application. Record keeping will help fine-tune the service interval. Make sure new filters fit properly and the filter doors seal securely — don’t rely on a rubber flap door with friction latches – screw or tape them shut if needed.
- Inspect the coils — If the filters have not been maintained properly, your equipment could have dirty coils.
- Look at the v-belt — They should be properly adjusted. Notched v-belts can save 3% over standard v-belts
- How does it sound? Vibration and rattles can be an indication of eminent failure.
- While you are there and before the manufacturer’s nameplate fades from view, record the make, model, and serial number of each unit. Tracking maintenance by unit can help with inventory and identify problems.
- Check controls — Most rooftop units are fitted with rudimentary controls. Temperature sensors, thermostats, outside air damper controls, and economizers should be checked.

Upgrades

There are some interesting after-market upgrades that can be installed to improve rooftop system performance and efficiency.

- Failure Detection and Diagnostics — Several companies sell equipment with sensors and remote reporting that monitors equipment performance to detect when a system deviates from expected operation. The information can be used to diagnose faults and announce problems as they occur.
- Advanced control strategies — Several retrofit control measures offer significant energy saving potential
- Demand-controlled ventilation (DCV) — using CO2 sensors, the system introduces only the amount of ventilation air needed to meet occupancy requirements
- Optimum start and ventilation lock-out during start-up — using a
simple timeclock, or more accurately with DCV, cut ventilation air during start-up to reduce heating and cooling loads

- Air Economizers – use outdoor air for “free” cooling when conditions are favorable in some applications and climates
- Variable-speed drive fan controls – modulate supply fan speed in response to load
- Smart thermostats – internet-enabled thermostats support remote setpoint and time schedule adjustment as well as remote monitoring and trend reporting.

New Equipment

If you are planning equipment replacement or a new facility with rooftop HVAC, be sure to evaluate high-efficiency options. New equipment offers energy and demand reduction, improved comfort, reduced failure risk and the incremental cost can have a simple payback period within two years in warm climates given the high hours of operation typical for commercial systems. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 established minimum performance standards that took effect in 2010. Older units of less than 5 tons often had a Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) of less than 6. Current minimums are 13. Larger systems (up to 20 tons) must now have a minimum Energy Efficiency Ratio (EER) of 11.

The opportunity for higher efficiency doesn’t end at these minimums. Many of the advanced monitoring and control strategies discussed under advanced retrofits are being built into new systems. Further, advances in variable speed drives and variable volume-variable flow refrigerant systems offer higher performance.

For more information, see http://www.touchstoneenergy.com/efficiency/ba/ Documents/HighEfficiencyRooftopUnits.pdf

Also visit ENERGY STAR® Light Commercial Heating and Cooling website:
http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=find_a_product.showProductGroup&pgw_code=LCA

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Tools and Resources
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iMap Weather Radio • Weather the Storm Using Technology

Touchstone Energy is excited to announce its partnership with Weather Decision Technologies to provide consumers with a severe weather alert App that can be downloaded to iPhones and iPads. Among other features, the phone wakes you up automatically, beeps, speaks to you, and provides alerts for your current and saved locations. In short, the app allows you to identify dangerous incoming weather wherever you are.

No energy manager should be without a notification system that can give early warning of dangerous weather which can protect property and save lives. For a limited time, Touchstone Energy will provide your team with up to two free Redemption Codes from the iTunes store (a $9.99 value). Contact Kathryn.Momot@nreca.coop to request yours today.

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Marcus Fister to Leave YUM! Brands, Inc.

Best Wishes to our Friend and Colleague

Effective July 31, our friend and colleague Marcus Fister has decided to resign his energy management post with YUM brands (KFC, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell) after 14 years of service to pursue new opportunities. Marcus has been a valued customer for Touchstone Energy Cooperatives and a frequent attendee at the NET Conference over the years. We wish Marcus well in his future endeavors. If you would like to join us, please drop Marcus a line at Marcus.Fister@ufpc.com

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