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MISSION STATEMENT
 Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative will operate as a competitive provider of energy services and a partner with local communities, with a focus on safety, service and integrity.

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This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



The EPA's bad call

LIKE MANY OF US around here, I'm a big football fan. And while I admit my Tigers sometimes frustrate

me, it's the guys wearing stripes who can drive me up a wall.

Don't get me wrong, I respect the referee's role in protecting the players and the integrity of the game. However, some seem to think they are the main attraction, rather than the athletes. Their intervention can ruin a good game.

I think of the Environmental Protection Agency the same way. The role they fill is a critical one, but their recent set of regulations on power plants is a bad call. Unfortunately, the consequences will be much worse than merely losing a ballgame.

The EPA's latest interference in the energy industry threatens our access to reliable, affordable electricity. It's one more reason our cooperative's energy costs are rising, along with inflation and the increasing price of wholesale power from one of our primary power sources, Santee Cooper.

In May, the EPA issued a rule targeting existing coal and new natural gas power plants. The rule requires those plants to either greatly reduce their output or install carbon capture and storage, a technology that could one day minimize greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel power plants.

In theory, carbon capture and storage, or CCS, might sound like a neat idea. A power plant's carbon emissions could be injected deep underground rather than released into the atmosphere. But in practice, CCS is unproven and unbelievably expensive.

No utility in the country has successfully pulled off CCS at the level the EPA is requiring for America's fleet of power plants. And our experts estimate adding CCS to a single new

or existing plant could cost billions of dollars. Those added costs mean higher power bills for everyone.

The EPA's timing couldn't be worse—think fourth down in the last two minutes of a game. South Carolina urgently needs more power supply, not greater restrictions on our existing power plants or the ones our state needs to build. Our state has already struggled to supply sufficient electricity during the coldest hours of the winter, such as when freezing weather led to rolling blackouts in parts of South Carolina during Christmas 2022. And South Carolina's power needs are only increasing amid the state's rapid population and economic growth.

Renewable energy sources, such as solar farms, can help meet that need. But they aren't always available, especially on cold winter mornings and evenings when the sun isn't shining. To keep up, we will need to be able to rely on 24/7 energy sources including natural gas and, at least for now, coal. Yet the EPA seems intent on throwing its yellow flag and ejecting those reliable power plants from the game.

The job of keeping the lights on is hard enough during a challenging time for the energy industry. We don't need the government making it any harder or more expensive for you.

Rest assured, we aren't sitting on the sidelines on this issue. We are joining electric co-ops across the country to fight these regulations in court and in the halls of Congress.

When we're giving the referee an earful, we're speaking for you.

JIM LOVINGGOOD
 President and CEO

It's not how much you use—it's when you use it

The Member Empowerment Rate will convert to Winter Peak Hours on Nov. 1. Those hours are 6 to 9 a.m. from Nov. 1–March 31. During these hours, peak demand is the highest across the electric grid as families are getting up in the morning and HVAC units are often working their hardest.

Here are ways to reduce energy use during peak hours.

- ▶ Use a water heater timer to avoid heating during peak hours.
- ▶ Use a programmable thermostat to pre-heat your home before peak hours.
- ▶ Dry laundry before or after peak hours.
- ▶ Avoid using multiple large appliances simultaneously during peak hours.

Remember the peak window is only three hours each day, giving you 21 hours to use energy as you normally would. For a complete list of appliances, along with their wattage and kilowatt usage per hour, visit blueridge.coop/empowerment or scan the QR code.



We've put you in charge of your monthly bill. However, if you have questions concerning your bill or need additional information, our representatives are here to help. Call us at (800) 240-3400.

Winter peak hours
6–9 a.m.
Nov. 1 to March 31

Avoid energy use during these hours to maximize savings

Rising material costs

January 2020 to May 2024

