

# Linemen light the world, one life at a time

Years ago I heard a joke among our lineworkers. It went, "If they sent a lineman to the moon, there wouldn't be a dark side."

Our line crews are known for their ability to maintain electric systems, extend distribution lines to growing communities and fix troublespots during storms. Despite these accomplishments, few linemen have experienced the wonder of providing power to a family for the first time. But that's changing fast.

Electricity is something most of us grew up with. With all this talk about climate change, energy efficiency and the impact congressional action might have on our monthly electric bills, we sometimes forget that we're lucky to even have electric power at all.

Currently, more than 2 billion people around the globe live without electricity. And as electric co-ops across the country celebrate 75 years of providing safe, reliable and affordable central station electric service for rural Americans, another story unfolds, echoing our success. Volunteer linemen from Tennessee and across the nation are spreading rural electrification overseas, sharing light and hope with war-torn or forgotten communities.

These men and women are volunteering personal time to bring a sense of safety to folks in distant lands, sometimes simply by adding street lights. They're delivering dreams as they wire classrooms for electricity. Medicine can finally be refrigerated. Micro-businesses are born. With every mile of line built

they make me proud to be part of the electric cooperative family.

All of these amazing efforts are coordinated by NRECA International Programs — a division of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, service arm of the nation's 900-plus not-for-profit electric co-ops. Since its founding in 1962, NRECA International Programs has brought lights and power to more than 100 million rural residents in other countries.

But the nonprofit organization doesn't just put up a few utility poles and leave. That's not the co-op way. Staff members, along with volunteers like lineworkers, teach locals how to build and maintain simple power grids and run their own utilities. They introduce the co-op business model and show what electric power can do for schools, health clinics, farms and local economies. In fact, Judy Beets, a former employee at Holston EC, has been part of the electrification effort ongoing in the country of Bangladesh.

Co-op volunteers from the United States are active in 12 countries today, ranging from Costa Rica to southern Sudan. You can help, too. To watch videos of linemen assisting overseas or to make a donation supporting these electrification efforts, visit [NRECAFoundation.coop](http://NRECAFoundation.coop).

Sure, if they sent lineworkers to the moon, there'd be no dark side. And with the support of electric cooperatives, volunteer linemen and co-op members like you, there won't be a dark side of the Earth, either, in a few years.



**Larry Elkins**  
General Manager  
Holston Electric  
Cooperative



Serving more than 30,000 customers in  
Hawkins and Hamblen counties.



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Board of Directors  
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Vice President: William W. Bales  
Secretary-Treasurer:  
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To report an outage or  
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423-272-8821 or 423-235-6811  
day or night.

# Regulation on horizon for carbon, with or without congressional action

Federal curbs on emissions of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas blamed as a principal cause of climate change, are quickly becoming a reality. It's just a matter of which government branch gets there first: legislative or executive — or both.

In December, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), part of the executive branch, declared that six key greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, are endangering public health and welfare. Emissions from motor vehicles of four of those greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, are also said to contribute to dangerous air pollution under this “endangerment finding.”

“This action puts a ‘foot in the door’ for EPA to promulgate sweeping new regulations that could impose strict limits on carbon emissions from power plants, driving up electric bills,” warns Glenn English, CEO of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, which represents the interests of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned and -governed electric cooperatives.

The concern is that with carbon dioxide emissions from vehicles falling under federal Clean Air Act regulation, other emitters of carbon dioxide — fossil fuel-fired power plants included — may also soon be subject to EPA oversight.

“The Clean Air Act as written was never designed to deal with carbon, and it would be awkward at best and probably a disaster at worst,” English adds.

Electric co-ops believe that any controls on carbon dioxide should be established by Congress, where the impact of these proposals can have a full public debate. Unfortunately, a climate-change bill passed by the U.S. House last summer (H.R. 2454) and another reported by the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in November (S. 1733) include unachievable goals and timelines for reducing carbon dioxide emissions, inadequate technology development incentives and no guarantee that electric bills will remain affordable. Current proposals will unfairly penalize consumers in fossil fuel-dependent states by sad-

dling them with higher bills to essentially subsidize and lower electric bills for those in other regions.

What’s more, Senate leaders have admitted that climate-change legislation has stalled and will likely be picked up sometime in the spring. This legislative logjam makes it all the more important for co-ops and consumers to pay careful attention to EPA’s current efforts.

English insists that any climate-change legislation should protect consumers and pre-empt use of the federal Clean Air Act and any other existing laws. Otherwise, utilities and businesses could be burdened with the task of trying to comply with more than one set of regulations.

“Regulation of carbon dioxide as a pollutant will occur with or without congressional input,” English explains. “But Congress must not simply add new legislation on top of old regulations. Any climate-change bill should become the roadmap — the single strategy — for reducing carbon dioxide emissions at federal, state and local levels.

“By staying engaged in the process, electric co-ops can have a measureable impact on the outcome.”

Electric co-ops are fighting to ensure that any climate-change policy goals adopted are fair, affordable and achievable. To make your voice heard in this debate, join NRECA’s Our Energy, Our Future grassroots awareness campaign at [www.ourenergy.coop](http://www.ourenergy.coop). To date, more than 600,000 of your fellow co-op consumers across the country have already done so.



**Energy Efficiency**

*Tip of the Month*

Use your microwave for cooking whenever possible. It uses 50 percent to 65 percent less energy than a conventional oven and does not heat up your house in the summer. However, conventional ovens may be more appropriate for larger-size items when cooking time is increased.

Source: Touchstone Energy Cooperatives

# Mid-December snowstorm slams Holston EC area

A heavy, wet snow that started falling on Friday afternoon, Dec. 18, left accumulations of from 5 to 11 inches across the Holston EC service area and brought down trees, electric lines and power poles. Even as regular work hours were ending on Friday afternoon, HEC employees were responding to outage reports. The effort continued throughout the weekend and right on into the new week until all members had power restored by midnight on Monday, Dec. 21. More than 10,000 Holston EC members were without power at some point due to the storm.

Due to the widespread damage, Holston EC quickly requested assistance from other power systems not hit by the storm. In all, the cooperative had more than 60 workers — HEC linemen, engineers, service men and meter readers and line construction crews on loan from other utility systems and Asplundh contract tree trimmers — stationed throughout the 525-square-mile service area.

Holston EC members were quick to praise the restoration efforts. A comment from Tim Luttrell posted on the HEC Web site read, “We lost power, but as we listened to the radio traffic of your team working to restore power all over the county, we were deeply impressed. Thank you all so much, and please convey our thanks to everyone involved.”



Restoring power after a heavy, wet snow is a time-consuming process. Foreman Leonard Eidson and his line crew had to cut several trees and clear the road just to get to this outage location. After hiking up the hill to get to the downed line at left, the Holston EC crew had to pull the cable out of fallen trees and brush so they could splice the line together. Above, Jarrod Bachman, on the pole, and Stacy Hayes have one line span nearly repaired.



Employees rallied to accomplish any needed task. At left, mechanic Larry Green works to clear the Holston EC parking lots, and General Manager Larry Elkins, right, brings in lunch for office workers. Elkins also delivered transformers, equipment and meals to crews in the field.



Board President Otis Munsey observes the “war room,” where strategies are formulated to get power restored as quickly as possible to the most members. From left are system engineer John Long, Munsey, Director of Engineering and Operations Don Morrell and Service Department Supervisor Rick Crawford hard at work, analyzing outage data and information.



**A crew braves uncomfortable conditions to further the restoration effort. When crews arrived at outage locations, they were often forced to maneuver the bucket trucks into position amid slick snow and slimy mud.**



**After the snowfall, Holston EC trucks are among the first vehicles to cross the county roads. Cutting fallen trees out of the roadway was often necessary to get to the downed power lines.**



**Dena Alley, left, and Misty Bland answer calls. Once the snow began falling, Holston EC employees manned the nine incoming phone lines around the clock.**



**The heavy, wet snow not only broke tree limbs but uprooted entire trees that often fell across power lines, causing outages for miles around.**



**A brief sandwich break on the hood of a truck is lunch for this crew made up of Holston EC meter reader Derrick Siclari (second from left), lineman Chad McLain (center) and other contract linemen from neighboring power systems.**



**Fueling up the vehicles and restocking the trucks with parts are important steps in the daily routine.**



**Renn Lawson takes time to put on dry socks when his crew returns to the warehouse for fuel and supplies.**

## Board of directors selects David Britton to fill Holston EC district 4 vacancy

At the December meeting of the Holston Electric Cooperative board of directors, Dr. David Britton was named to fill the vacant District 4 seat on the board. The death of Danny Price in October left that district without a representative. The board's search committee recommended Britton after a review of the cooperative district rolls for eligible members and a formal interview process.

A graduate of Rogersville High School, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and the University of Tennessee College of Dentistry in Memphis, Britton has maintained a private practice in general dentistry in Rogersville since 1978.

Britton is no stranger to the electric cooperative community. His father, the late Noah Britton Jr., was a longtime member services director at Holston EC; his wife's uncle, the late Vernon Hale, served as Holston EC District 1 director from Hamblen County; and his wife's grandfather, the



Dr. David Britton

late Sam Miller of Surgoinsville, was a Holston EC board member and former board president.

Britton is married to Charlotte Miller Britton, who currently serves as Hawkins County director of schools. They have two daughters, Jennifer Britton and Amy Britton Jeffers; a son-in-law, Lance Jeffers; and one grandson, Landon Ames Jeffers, all of Rogersville.

In his leisure time Britton has traditionally enjoyed playing golf, boating on Cherokee Lake and going to University of Tennessee football games. However, his role as grandfather to 2-year-old Landon has quickly climbed to the top of his list of favorite activities. The Brittons are members of Rogersville Presbyterian Church.

We look forward to working with Britton as the newest addition to the seven-member board of directors and are confident that his background, education and experience will bring valuable contributions to the Holston EC board.

## Cold temperatures push the limits

Mother Nature provided this region with unprecedented cold weather in January, and now folks are going to have to pay the price. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Service, from Jan. 2 through Jan. 12, the temperature never exceeded 32 degrees Fahrenheit in the Tri-Cities area. For 11 consecutive days, the temperature did not surpass the freezing mark, which is the longest running record for our service area. During those days, the average daily high was 26 degrees, with an average low of 12 degrees. The average daily high temperature for the month of January is normally 45 degrees with an average low of 26 degrees.

"The shock of the frigid temperatures will be evident when customers compare their power use for the month of January 2010 to prior years," said Holston Electric Cooperative General Manager Larry Elkins. "While providing dependable electrical service is our highest priority, sharing information to better understand the effects of the recent weather on energy consumption is a key goal at the moment."

The cost to keep homes and businesses at a constant temperature increases as the outside temperature falls, and the warmer you keep your house, the more energy it requires. In fact, every degree above 70 adds 10 percent to the cost of heating your house.

"We're seeing meter readings in January that are double those from December," said HEC dispatcher Sheila Fobber. "This means many members can expect to pay at least twice



On Jan. 13, a local thermometer finally shows a reading above 35 degrees.

the amount of their previous bill. Some of the readings are so out of the norm that we're sending employees back out to verify accuracy. We have seen a few readings with more than 8,000 kilowatt-hours used for the billing cycle, which would mean the amount due would be approximately \$600."

In addition, the cold weather has stressed the Tennessee Valley Authority generation system. On Friday, Jan. 8, the total daily energy use was the highest in TVA history at 701 gigawatt-hours (gwh). With no relief on Sunday, Jan. 10, at 644 gwh, it was the highest Sunday total. The total weekly energy was also a new record at 4,603 gwh, 200 more than the previous week, forcing TVA to issue a Conservative Operations Alert.

"There will be many HEC members who believe their meters have been read wrong or are not working properly," said Elkins. "However, meters that aren't functioning properly actually slow down rather than speed up. These higher bills are hard blows for all during these tough times. If members want to review their use from last year or discuss their bills, we're here to do that."

"Also, Holston EC would like to make everyone aware of programs like Project Help and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program that are available to folks who qualify. Hawkins County residents can visit the Neighborhood Service Center at 904 E. Main St., Suite 1, in Rogersville to obtain an application to determine eligibility for assistance in bill payment. Those in Hamblen County should visit Central Services at 2450 Old Highway 25E in Morristown or call 423-586-9431."