

CO-OPS FOUGHT FOR CONSUMERS

Guest Editorial



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Start with arrogance. Add greed, deceit, and financial chicanery. What do you get? A company that wasn't what it was cracked up to be.

So starts *Fortune* magazine's Dec 24th cover story on the collapse of Enron, a company focused on creating instability and chaos in the energy marketplace. A company that, in a dramatic way, makes it easy for consumers and policy makers alike to understand how different electric cooperatives really are from others in the energy industry.

While Enron was working to create chaos in our industry, electric co-ops have been on the front lines, fighting for consumers and the stability in energy markets they need to live secure and prosperous lives.

The American people have learned a lot about the rapacious "Enron culture." Each morning's newspaper and each evening's newscast brings a new episode of the twisted tale. A *Washington Post* headline pro-

claimed, "Enron's culture fed its demise." And congressional investigations have brought out more details about the relationship between Enron and Arthur Andersen, the company's now infamous auditor.

But the warning flags signaling potential harm to consumers exposed to Enron's tactics have been up for a long time. We've known that this Houston-based company worked hard to create as much turmoil in the energy markets as they possibly could. Enron thrived on it.

Public Utility Holding Company Act (PUHCA, pronounced POO-ka) was enacted in 1935 to bust up the huge, monopolistic holding companies that dominated the electric utility industry during the 1920s and 1930s. PUHCA was enacted to protect electricity consumers, shareholders and non-utility businesses by limiting the reach of these holding companies. Finally, PUHCA, when enforced, restricts merger-mania.

A *New York Times* article two years ago quoted an unnamed Enron executive as saying that Jeffrey Skilling, a protégé of company founder Kenneth Lay, was "constantly challenging us to take advantage of the turmoil." A November 2001 story in the same newspaper quotes another Enron executive as saying that the company's

objective was to create a "regulatory black hole" and then be the "first mover into a market and to make money in the initial chaos."

By contrast, electric cooperatives put consumers first. We stand for stability and reliability in an increasingly unreliable marketplace. We're fighting for the right regulatory and legislative solutions to make good on that promise.

To protect consumers, policy makers need to carefully scrutinize the dangers of "market power" and look for solutions that will actually protect consumers. We need to modernize PUHCA (Public Utilities Holding Company Act) to deal with today's marketplace, not repeal it as many have advocated. We need regulators who will do their jobs instead of abdicating their responsibilities while companies like Enron wreak havoc.

The future of the policy debate about changes in the energy industry will be a complex one. Regional transmission organizations (RTOs) market power, interconnection standards, net metering, codes of conduct are but a few of the concepts we must master in order to be effective advocates for the consumers we represent. At each turn in the road, we must ask ourselves how we're doing in creating a more stable and more reliable marketplace.

Our vision of the future must reaffirm our consumers-first orientation. We are in business to be advocates for our consumers. What hurts consumers hurts us. What is best for the consumer is best for us.

It is that simple. ■



More Local News
on Pages 28 & 29

WARNING... WARNING... THIS IS A MESSAGE FROM...

New National Weather Station, NOAA Radio

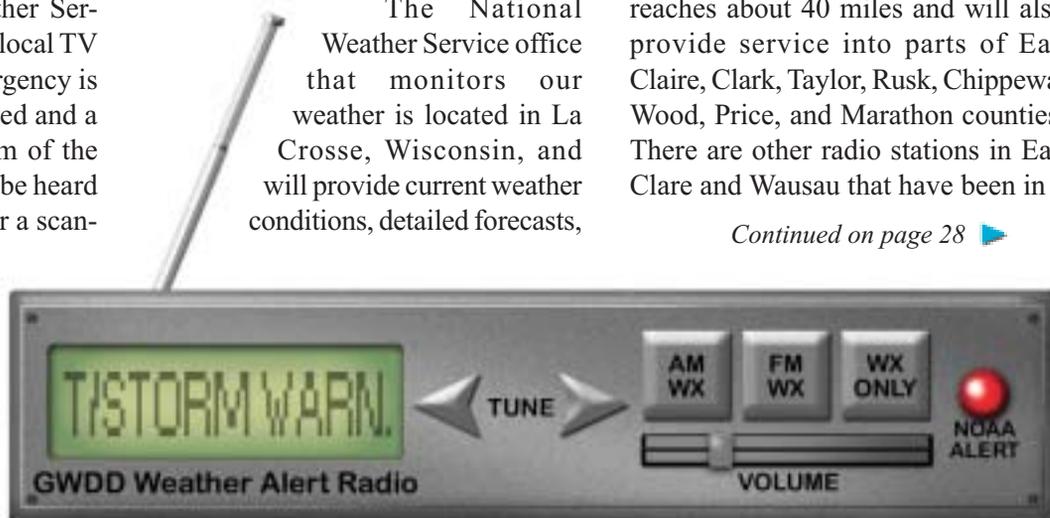
Did you know that Clark County and the surrounding counties now have an emergency alert radio station, which is operated by the National Weather Service? We all have seen on our local TV stations when a weather emergency is declared; the tones are sounded and a crawler is seen on the bottom of the screen. The weather alert can be heard if you have a weather radio or a scanner with the correct frequency in its memory. The Wisconsin Educational Communications Board (ECB) installed the new weather radio station near Withee early this year. The station ID is KZZ-77, and broadcasts are on a frequency of 162.425 MHz. This radio expansion

project is another step closer to complete coverage across Wisconsin. The ECB has been instrumental in adding new broadcast stations.

The National Weather Service office that monitors our weather is located in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and will provide current weather conditions, detailed forecasts,

and most importantly, severe weather information 24 hours a day. This service is officially called NOAA Weather Radio. The broadcast signal typically reaches about 40 miles and will also provide service into parts of Eau Claire, Clark, Taylor, Rusk, Chippewa, Wood, Price, and Marathon counties. There are other radio stations in Eau Claire and Wausau that have been in

Continued on page 28 ▶



A weather radio will alert you to watches, warnings, or other important messages. There are many models and brands available, but they all serve the purpose of giving advance warning of dangerous weather.

The services that NOAA weather radio provides

- A regional forecast is broadcast 24 hours a day and provides a summary of anticipated weather for Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and northern Illinois. It is updated at 4:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 3:30 p.m., and 8:30 p.m.
- A five-day forecast for Northcentral Wisconsin is broadcast 24 hours a day and updated at 4:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., or whenever needed.
- Current weather conditions for selected locations across the upper Midwest are broadcast continuously and are usually updated around five minutes past each hour. When precipitation is approaching or within the listening area, a radar summary is provided.
- A short-term forecast of expected weather conditions in the next two to four hours is broadcast when precipitation is in the area or weather conditions are changing.
- A brief climatological report is broadcast from 8 to 10 a.m. and 8 to 10 p.m. This report will include high and low temperatures, along with precipitation for Medford, Eau Claire, and Wausau.
- Other statements are periodically run from time to time on a varied schedule. These statements may include information topics, or statements about extreme weather conditions.
- A warning alarm test is conducted every Wednesday between 11:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. If severe weather is forecast or threatens, the test is postponed until the next “good” weather day.

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NOAA Radio

Continued from page 4

operation for several years but their signal in this area has been weak. However, that has all changed.

Having a weather radio that monitors this signal is one of the best ways to be alerted when threatening weather moves into our area. They can remain idle until a watch, warning, or other selected statement is issued. A tone alert sounds and can grab your attention or wake you up. Otherwise, you can manually monitor conditions or forecasts anytime you wish. Information cycles every four to seven minutes continuously. This is a

Weather radios can be purchased at most electronic stores with an average price ranging from \$25 to \$70.

service that can save your life. Another benefit of the NOAA radio system is that it is also connected to the Emergency Alert System (EAS), which is designed to provide the President with a means to address the American people in the event of a national emergency. If you would like to learn more about the National Weather Service and the La Crosse office that serves us, you can go to their web page and find lots of great information, www.crh.noaa.gov/arx. Information for this article was provided by the National Weather Service, La Crosse office. ■



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Pay Stations

These businesses will collect your electric bill payments

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Curtiss Community Bank of Central Wisconsin	Spencer Spencer State Bank
Dorchester Dorchester State Bank	Stanley Ericksen's True Value
Gilman State Bank Gilman	Thorp Northwestern Bank M&I Marshall & Ilsely State Bank of Withee
Granton Citizens State Bank of Loyal	Willard State Bank of Withee
Greenwood Associated Bank Clark Electric Cooperative State Bank of Withee	Withee Redville Store State Bank of Withee
Loyal Hardware Hank Citizens State Bank of Loyal M&I Marshall & Ilsely	

Other convenient ways to pay your Clark Electric bills include:

- ✓ Using our drop box located in front of the office. This secure box lets you drop your payment off at a time that is convenient for you.
- ✓ Having your monthly electric bill charged directly to your Master Card, Visa, or Discover Card. This convenient way provides you with no hassles as everything is done automatically.



Note:

If you know of another business that would be a good paystation for many members, please let us know.

PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENTS

Simple Devices Can Save You Lots of Money

Do you have a surge protector on your electronic equipment? If not, you should. A simple device like the one shown here can save you lots of money in repairs or replacement costs if you get a surge or a lightning strike. Surge equipment comes in different types, from whole-house models to a little device that protects the microwave.

When buying a surge protector, you should look for certain things, such as a warranty; the bigger the warranty coverage usually means the better the device is. Does it have

outlets for plugs, cable/antenna connectors, and phone jacks? To properly protect your devices, you need to cover all the connections so that everything is protected. And the most important thing to remember when buying a surge protector, as when purchasing most things, is the cheapest is not the best.

One thing we have seen is that insurance companies are now starting to require some sort of protection. If there is no protection, they will not give coverage on the second incident. It is suggested that you protect your computer, TV/satellite equipment, stereos, answering machines, and everything that might have a circuit board. ■



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The Digital Service Plan

For \$6/month you can get protection for your satellite system, which will include the dish, LNB, and the first receiver. Additional receivers can be added to get coverage also!

What do you need to do? You will need to have a surge protector on the receiver(s) and maintain the minimum programming package from DirecTV. If you don't have a surge protector now, we can provide one at a reasonable cost.

It's that easy! No worries or hassles, just peace of mind knowing that Clark Electric Appliance & Satellite, Inc., is here to serve your needs. Contact us today to get signed up for this great package. Call us at 715-267-6544 or 866-279-6544, or just stop on in.

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*Clark Electric Appliance & Satellite, Inc.
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