



[Echoes of the Empire]

Energy Experts Working for You

IDLE SERVICES ARE BAD FOR BUSINESS

BY CLINT RAPIER, PE || SYSTEM ENGINEER

Empire Electric Association strives to maintain both reliable and affordable electric service to members. Maintenance and repair of the distribution system is an integral part of that process and even includes portions of the system that are not currently in use. This may include a section of line that is not energized, a transformer with no load or an electric service that is not currently active. This last item is known as an idle service.

Although the word idle does not sound like something of great importance or concern, an idle service should be extremely important to members of the electric co-op for several reasons:

- First, when a service is not being used there is increased probability that it will not be monitored by a member. Members are our first line of defense and best source of information when it comes to problems with a service. Over time, wires break, poles deteriorate, equipment rusts or hardware comes loose. With no one watching, there is greater possibility that a service can be neglected, causing it to become unusable or even unsafe with the passing of time.
- Second, idle services strand co-op assets, such as transformers, poles and lines, that must be maintained by the electric co-op but are not producing any revenue to cover those maintenance expenses. As a result, the costs are shared by everyone paying an electric bill (not the service owner) as the idle service is not generating revenue to cover the maintenance expense.
- Third are line losses. This term is used to describe the situation where a transform-



This photo shows an idle overhead service.

er with an idle service does not have load on it, but still takes power to energize the windings of the transformer, and some energy is lost to heat. It may not seem like a lot, but it adds up when you consider there may be a couple thousand idle services on our system at any given time.

- Fourth, the electrical service and associated hardware is considered part of the "plant." Every year, the co-op is taxed on the cumulative value of the plant. Just like the maintenance costs for idle services, the tax burden for idle services is born by everyone paying a bill, not by the idle service owner. The cost to maintain the system and to pay taxes on assets that do not generate revenue puts upward pressure on rates for all members.
- Lastly, a dry summer like this year brings fire concerns. We do our best to keep the lines safe, trees trimmed and poles replaced. Still, there is always a chance of something happening that might start a fire. A good approach to reducing this risk is minimizing the number of idle



This meter box was maintained after finding it without a cover over the meter socket.



This photo shows an idle underground service with an energized transformer, but no metered service.

services on the system by disconnecting taps, de-energizing unused lines and, in some places, removing unused sections of line if there are no services on it.

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OCTOBER CO-OP PHOTO CONTEST WINNER



Fall Foliage on Stoner Mesa – by David Lee Reineke

IDLE SERVICES *[continued from page 7]*

We ask for your help in identifying idle services on your property. What does an idle service look like? Most often, there is a meter “socket” (the metal box that holds the meter) sitting with a plastic cover plate instead of a meter. Another example would be a pole with a transformer (big grey can) near the top but nothing connected to it. It could also be an underground-fed service attached to a couple of posts, with an empty meter socket on it, but no meter. On occasion, there is a meter in place, but no one is taking service at that location.

The good news is that in almost all cases the co-op can retire line and remove

transformers and metering equipment for idle services at no cost to the consumer. Any consumer-owned equipment can remain but would be de-energized and therefore safer than leaving it energized. This is a win-win proposition.

We have plans to clean up idle services through a system-wide inspection. Where we find an unsafe idle service, we will take the opportunity to disconnect and de-energize the equipment and ensure our priority of safety for employees and members alike.

If you have an idle service, consider if it needs to remain or if it would be best to allow us to remove the associated equipment

for now — even if you plan to use it in the future. Not only does this improve safety, often the cost of reinstalling the service later is less if equipment has not been left to fall into disrepair. If you determine that you want an idle service removed, please contact our office and let us know. We will gladly send someone out to assess the situation and let you know what we can do.

We appreciate your help in this effort to reduce idle services from our system, and to keep our electrical distribution safe, efficient and equitable to all our members.



HOSPICE OF MONTEZUMA DONATION

Every day the Touchstone Energy hot air balloon is flown, a monetary contribution is made to a local charity on behalf of the sponsoring Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives. Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives is a national alliance of local, consumer-owned electric utilities across the country committed to providing high standards of service to customers large and small. This year, the Touchstone Energy hot air balloon participated in the Cortez Rendezvous Balloon Rally and donated \$1,020 on behalf of Empire Electric Association to Hospice of Montezuma.



Left to right: Enid Acosta, R.N., holds the check presented by EEA Communications Specialist Denise Moore, while Hospice of Montezuma Board President Kristine Nunn looks on.

CO-OP CALENDAR

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH

Empire Electric members are the most important part of our business and we are celebrating you on October 31. Stop by our office to say “hello” and enjoy a light lunch!

OCTOBER 8

Columbus Day

OCTOBER 12

Empire’s board meeting begins at 8:30 a.m. at its headquarters in Cortez. The agenda is posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at eea.coop. Members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting.

OCTOBER 31

EEA Customer Appreciation, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., 801 N. Broadway, Cortez

OCTOBER 31

Halloween

MY CO-OP EMPLOYEES



Rhonda Gregg joined Empire Electric as a part-time consumer services representative on September 5, 2018. Rhonda was previously employed at La Plata Electric Association in Durango. During her 21 years of employment with LPEA, she worked as a switchboard operator, an accounting clerk and a payroll specialist.

MY CO-OP ADVANTAGE

WE ♥ OUR MEMBERS

Member Appreciation

*October 31st
11 am to 1 pm*

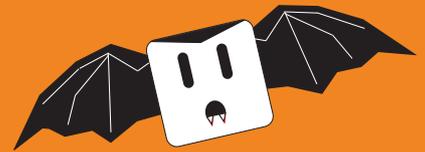
*Empire Electric
801 N Broadway*

*Come join us and have
a bite to eat, in
celebration of you,
our member.*



ENERGY VAMPIRES

DON'T LET THEM DRAIN YOUR WALLET



DON'T LET MONEY GET SUCKED OUT OF YOUR WALLET

Ghouls, goblins and ghosts are scary, but a high electric bill can be scarier. There may be electronics in your home sucking power out of your outlets and money out of your wallet, even when they aren't in use. Televisions, computers, DVD players, cable boxes with DVR, cell phone chargers, printers and game consoles are just a handful of culprits that unknowingly suck energy. Over time, the cost adds up.

Empire Electric Association has tips to help you stop energy vampires in your home:

- When possible, unplug electronics that you are not using.
- Plug electronics into a power strip and turn the power strip off when items are not in use.
- Purchase smart power strips for your computers and televisions. These devices sense when the computer or television is sleeping or off. The smart strip cuts off power to related electronics, such as DVD players, video game consoles and printers.
- Buy "low-standby" products. Most Energy Star-endorsed products draw smaller than average amounts of electricity when turned off.
- Avoid electronics with unnecessary features as these might use more energy.

For more energy efficiency tips, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Cooler temps are just around the corner! Is your home's heating system ready? Remember to replace furnace filters once a month or as recommended. If you heat your home with warm-air registers, baseboard heaters or radiators, remember to clean them regularly to increase efficiency.

Source: energy.gov

