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Finding the value of electricity

Increase in cost of power is modest compared to gasoline

NOWADAYS, CELL phones and personal digital devices are a part of our culture. Everyone, it seems, is connected on the go—whether they're just making phone calls,



text messaging or checking email. Such communication freedom is a luxury for which we pay, generally without grumbling.

So why is it that when it comes to electricity—a necessity in our modern world—many of us grumble and complain when the electric bill comes every month? We expect electricity to be there at the flip of a switch, and when it's not, we get angry or frustrated.

I'm no different—I expect the lights to come on every time, too. And as the CEO of Lynches River Electric Cooperative, I have a special responsibility to make sure your electric service is safe, reliable and affordable. I also believe that when compared to other commodities, electricity remains a great value. For example, over the past 10 years, gasoline has shot up 10.9 percent on average every year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The graphic above shows other comparisons. Meanwhile, electricity has increased just 3.7 percent a year nationally for a decade.

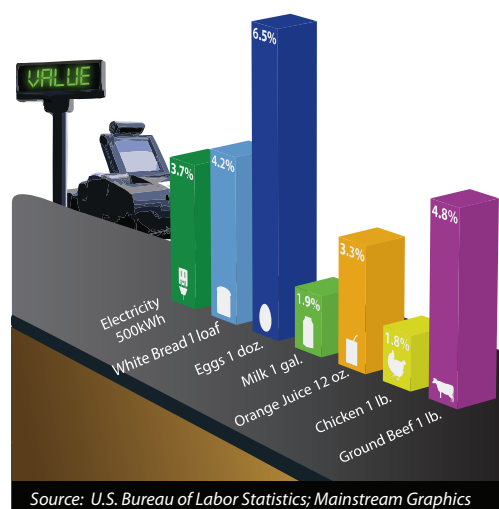
When you consider how reliable electricity is, the value goes up even more. Of course, we're working hard to reduce even brief service interruptions and increase our reliability.

Those cell phones I mentioned earlier? Nearly a third of all U.S.

'Check out' the value of electricity!

Next time you're at the grocery store, think about the way prices for bread, eggs and other consumer goods have risen over the years. Electricity remains a value!

Average annual price increase between 2000–2010:



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Mainstream Graphics

households have four electronic devices, such as cell phones, plugged in and charging, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Our appetite for electricity shows no signs of slowing down.

So the next time you flip a switch, use your toaster or run your washing machine, remember the value electricity holds. And know that we at Lynches River Electric Cooperative are looking out for you by working together to keep electric bills affordable, controlling costs through innovation, and putting you, our members, first.

David A. Altman
President and CEO

What's black and round and 'green' all over?

BY WALTER ALLREAD

BLACK IS GREEN—in more ways than one—for Kyle Wittwer.

The Lynches River member began recycling and selling used pickle barrels over a year and a half ago. He outfits the sturdy black vessels as rain barrels or composters or sells them as-is for, well, just about anything.

Wittwer buys the barrels from a Raleigh-area contact who gets them from the Mt. Olive Pickle Company. The company can't re-use them and, as the Lancaster County resident notes, "They sell pickles, not barrels."

"I have them delivered to me. I then fully outfit them with fittings to become rain barrels," he says. Wittwer markets his Amazing Black Barrel via ads on Craigslist. He also sells his rain barrels to local nurseries. His "green," environmentally sensitive product is putting the young entrepreneur in the black, banking some of that good, old green stuff. "I have done so well with these that I now have a distributor in Charleston and in Columbia," he says.

"I consider this double recycling," Wittwer notes. "We recycle the barrels



WALTER ALLREAD

from the pickle plant so they don't end up in landfills and then our buyers recycle water to be used around the yard, in gardens, for flowers."

He's rolling out the barrels in places like Charlotte, where water rates go up as aquifers go down. Wittwer customizes some to capture water from gutters, but notes, "You don't even need a gutter." For some, he adds screening so the barrels' mouths open wide to gulp rain out in the open or catch the runoff under eaves.

As-is, the barrels are water-tight and the screw-off tops—"like an old Mason

Wittwer with a pickle barrel outfitted with a frame for use as a composter, left, and as a rain barrel, right.

jar," he notes—make them great for floating piers. They're also useful for storing things like dog feed, chicken feed or deer corn. Or bigger stuff, Wittwer says: "I've had Boy Scouts buy them. Scouts camp out in rural areas, so they'll leave their camping equipment out in the barrels."

The uses are endless, Wittwer says: "I've even seen people make lawn chairs out of these things!"

For more information, email amazingblackbarrel@yahoo.com.

News from the Board

GREETINGS, FELLOW MEMBERS,

At the May board meeting, we met with the architect and general contractor for updates on the new building. A groundbreaking took place Thursday, May 26, and construction will begin as soon as possible. We have instructed the general contractor to employ as many local contractors as possible. If you are a contractor and would be interested in this project, go to zconstruction.com and click on the "about" tab and then the "forms" tab to get to subcontractor information.

Mike Couick, president and CEO of the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, Inc., spoke at our May meeting. Couick reminded us that the cooperative system was founded in politics, and if it is to remain, it cannot distance itself from politics.

The board decided to hire an outside law firm to audit the Board of Trustees, past and present, and the management and policies of Lynches River. We, the current Board, believe this audit is necessary to review previous actions and to assist us in setting policies going forward. We will keep you posted about this matter.

See you next month.

Lynches River Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees