

Power Plant Rule threatens electric reliability

BY JASON BROTHEN



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At Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC), keeping the lights on at a cost our members can afford is the focal point of everything we do. Transparency is one of our core values, so in addition to sharing co-op successes, I believe we have a responsibility to tell you about the challenges, too.

In May, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a rule that impacts

energy production from power plants. The power plant rule will undoubtedly threaten access to reliable electricity for our local communities and communities across the country.

The rule constrains existing electric generation plants powered by coal and new natural gas plants by requiring them to install carbon capture and storage (CCS), a technology that has potential, but has not been proven to be viable as required. No power plant in North America currently uses CCS at the scale and levels mandated by the EPA. When power plants

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IMPACTS OF THE EPA'S POWER PLANT RULE

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) power plant rule threatens access to reliable electricity for millions of Americans. The EPA's power plant rule will:



- 1** Force the premature closure of many power plants that currently provide electricity 24/7.
- 2** Mandate the deployment of unproven carbon capture and storage technology.
- 3** Jeopardize the reliability of the grid at a time when America is already facing a surge in electricity demand.
- 4** Heighten the risk of rolling power outages to relieve pressure on the electric grid.
- 5** Increase costs for consumers as utilities are forced to pay for new power generation to comply with the EPA rule.

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aren't able to comply with EPA's CCS requirements, they will be required to close, significantly limit operations or switch fuels. These unrealistic standards will force the unnecessary and early shutdown of many power plants currently providing reliable electricity 24/7.

LYREC receives nearly 90% of its power from Basin Electric Power Cooperative and the remaining 10% from the Western Area Power Administration. Basin Electric's resource portfolio is a diverse energy supply. The all-of-the-above energy strategy includes coal, natural gas, oil, hydro, wind and solar.

Renewable sources, such as solar and wind, are important components of our overall generation mix. But given the intermittent nature of these energy sources, we simply cannot depend on them, because the wind doesn't always blow and the sun doesn't always shine. The need for always-available power generating resources is still essential.

The timing of the power plant rule is equally troubling. At the same time the EPA is leading our nation down the path to fewer power plants, utilities are facing a surge in electricity demand, driven by the onshoring of manufacturing, the growth of the American economy and the rapid expansion of data centers to support artificial intelligence, e-commerce

and cryptocurrency.

Many states have already experienced rolling outages, and if the supply of electricity is further threatened by the EPA's power plant rule, the problem will only get worse. In fact, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, the nation's electric reliability watchdog, recently forecasted over the next five years, all or parts of 19 states are at high risk of rolling power outages during normal peak electricity demand conditions.

It's also no secret when demand is high and supply is low, costs go up. We're concerned about threats to reliability as well as cost increases to our members. I don't say all of this to worry you, but I do want our members to understand the challenges that lie ahead. Just as we've always done, we will look for solutions that serve our members best. We are joining electric co-ops across the country to fight these regulations, and we are working with our local elected officials to help them understand the consequences this would have on all Montanans and North Dakotans.

Co-ops are no strangers to innovation, and we're taking proactive steps to address today's energy challenges and tomorrow's energy needs. We will continue to explore new technologies and strategies that bolster reliability and our local grid. ■

Empowering small towns

In the quiet town of Savage, where community bonds are strong, the small town faced a challenge familiar to many - the lack of recreational facilities for youth.

Led by the owners of The Burns Creek Inn, the town embarked on a journey to raise funds for a much-needed basketball court.

Families and businesses volunteered their time and skills, from materials and equipment to expertise. One of the many sources that assisted in the cost of the new basketball court was a grant for \$1,000 The Burns Creek Inn received from Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up Trust.

After nearly three years of hard work by those in the community and surrounding areas, the town of Savage was able to hold its first Warrior three-on-three co-ed basketball tournament. Located miles from urban centers, where opportunities often seem scarce, this tightknit community rallied together to make the dream of a new basketball court a reality. ■



Operation Round Up grants awarded

The Operation Round Up (ORU) board granted \$4,500 in June. This program is made possible due to the generous Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative members who round up their bills each month.

The ORU board meets quarterly to review applications. The next application deadline is Sept. 15. If you would like more information on ORU or would like to download an application, go to www.lyrec.coop. ■



Operation Round Up granted the Richland County Cancer Coalition \$1,500 to assist in the cost of bringing the Sun Bus to Sidney. The Sun Bus is a mobile clinic that provides free skin checks by a dermatologist, facial skin screenings, sun safety education and free sunscreen samples.



Operation Round Up Trustee **Mary Hagler**, left, presents Sidney Middle School students with \$500 to help with the cost of the Where Everyone Belongs program, which is a peer mentoring program that helps students transition from elementary school to middle school. The goal of this program is to equip students with coping skills, resilience and a strong support network to help navigate challenges and maintain positive mental wellbeing throughout their lives.



The Sidney Tendo Booster Club received \$2,500 from Operation Round Up to help with the cost of bringing Stephen Lambdin, a former Olympian and current strength and conditioning coach, to Sidney. This free seminar will be open to all athletes. Lambdin was the heavyweight taekwondo competitor in Rio in 2016, fighting for Team USA. He travels around the United States presenting Level Up seminars.

5 Tips for a Safe Harvest

Electrical safety during harvest season requires vigilance and proactive measures. Follow these tips to reduce the risk of electrical accidents.

1. Maintain at least a 10-foot distance from power lines when operating equipment like grain augers, elevators and other tall machinery.
2. Use a spotter to navigate safely around power lines and other electrical equipment.
3. Ensure all farm workers are trained on electrical safety procedures.
4. Regularly inspect all electrical equipment and machinery for signs of wear and damage.
5. Keep first aid kits and emergency contact numbers in an easily accessible location.



JOHN REDMAN MEMORIAL

- Download an application at www.lyrec.coop
- Write a short essay: What is a life lesson you learned throughout high school that you wish you would have known going into your freshman year? How would this have enhanced your high school years?

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- ✓ The applicant's parent/legal guardian must be a LYREC member.
- ✓ The applicant must be enrolled as a full-time college student in the Fall of 2024.

MORE INFORMATION



CONTACT US
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DEADLINE: OCTOBER 17

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