



# Polk County Rural Public Power District

*"Committed to enhancing the lives of our  
customers by providing safe, reliable,  
economical energy now and into the future."*

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

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PO Box 465

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*Joy To The World ~ Stromsburg City Square at Christmas Time*

***From our home to yours, Merry Christmas and  
Happy Holidays from everyone at Polk County  
Rural Public Power District.***

***Holiday closings:  
Friday, December 25th  
and Friday, January 1st***

# Lighting Up Your Holidays

By Erin Dickey

The fall holidays have been celebrated and the official countdown until Christmas can begin. Undoubtedly, you've noticed that store shelves have been filled with decorations of Santa,



snowflakes, reds, greens and holiday cheer for months now. Some of you have had your outside lights up for many weeks, while others are waiting for a free weekend to switch out the cornucopias for Christmas trees.

Totes, boxes and bags marked with 'Christmas decorations' in faded permanent marker have been drug out of the corners of basements, closets and attics.

Smells of cinnamon and pine fill the home as each unwrapped decoration sparks a nostalgic memory.

Some of the most memorable decorations that I dutifully unwrapped and placed around my childhood home were the Mrs. Butterworth wise men, the green ceramic Christmas tree with little removable bulbs of different colors, home-made ornaments and letter blocks that spelled out 'Noel' and 'Santa'.

The amber colored bottles of Mrs. Butterworth were transformed into regal wise men through the fine finishes of a hot glue gun and felt out-

fits in royal blues, reds, and purples with gold trim - complete with king-like hats covering their tops. They always earned the spot on top of the piano and would stare stoically back at me while I finger-picked out simple Christmas songs over and over again. The letter blocks were always the most interactive decoration in our house. The goal was to rearrange the locks into other words like "LEON" and 'SATAN' and see how long it would take for mom to notice. When putting the 'bulbs' on the green ceramic Christmas tree, I always tried to make the colors look even, I never wanted a red by a red or a green by a green - it was a hard task as eventually some color had to neighbor its twin color. The little switch would be rolled on with my thumb and the heat would quickly warm-up the ceramic into a heavy, shiny reminder of the snowy season.

Decorating the Christmas tree always took the most time as each branch was wrapped in lights and weighed down with hand-crafted ornaments from Elementary's past. The epitome of Christmas decorating was always felt at the moment the evening sky fell dark and the Christmas lights were plugged-in. The soft glow of lights would reflect on the frosted windows of winter's chilly night, Manheim Steamroller would orchestrate the background music and the smell of cinnamon would excite my senses as I knew it wasn't long until Christmas day would be here.

My faithful orange and white cat Herman, would secure the best spot in the house. Climbing up, around and in between Christmas presents she would curl herself up under the tree and blend-in with the colorful wrapping paper and bows. I would often move presents over and join her under

the tree. Laying on my back the hundreds of lights and ornaments hanging above me were like a Christmas night sky.

Christmas is just around the corner and its time to start (or finish) your decorating. Some of you will come across that annoying strand of lights that are knotted in a ball. You make the decision to plug-in the lights first to see if they work. Surprisingly they do, but only after the knot is painstakingly undone, only a third of the lights work. Time for new lights.

When you are headed to the store it is important to purchase LED Christmas lights to replace your old incandescent lights. LED Christmas lights boast of amazing statistics such as: emitting brighter light, using approximately 75% less energy, last years longer and do not emit heat. Cost savings in the long run and added safety bonuses such as no harmful chemicals, such as Mercury, and cool to touch bulbs keep curious little fingers from an unpleasant jolt of heat when touched. Although the initial cost is higher there is no denying the advancement in lighting and energy usage. It's in your power to be energy-efficient this holiday season.

Have yourself a Merry little Christmas and may your holidays be LED bright.

*Merry  
Christmas and  
best of wishes in  
the upcoming year.*

# You're Not Alone in the Dark

Electricity powers our lives. We depend on it for nearly everything we do. So we understand how frustrating it can be when you're left in the dark.

Power outages are never convenient. It takes a lot of hands to keep your power on, and even more hands to get it up and running when an outage occurs. Polk County Rural Public Power District works hard to restore your electric service when outages occur, but there are necessary steps to take to ensure that power is restored to the majority of customers as quickly, *and safely*, as possible.

After a major storm, Polk County RPPD line crew must identify which structures, poles and lines have incurred damage. Very rarely, but occasionally, in the case of a major storm such as a tornado or ice storm, transmission and distribution lines may be damaged. If that is the case, hundreds of customers could be affected. Repairing damage to transmission lines is a top priority when it comes to restoring power.

High voltage transmission sites feed power to Polk County RPPD's nine distribution substations. These substations serve several hundred customers. If there is not damage done to transmission systems, the distribution substations are checked first. If the issue is isolated and can be resolved at the substation level, great! That means hundreds of customers can get their power restored at once.

At times, the issue cannot be isolated to one of our distribution substations. If that is the case, Polk County RPPD crews inspect supply lines between the substations and the meters they serve. If the supply lines can be repaired, power can be restored to customers served by those lines, as long as there is not damage to the tap lines.

Tap lines carry power to the transformers. Polk County RPPD line crews identify which damaged lines to work on first based on which lines will restore power to the greatest number of customers.

Many times, the issue is resolved when the tap lines are repaired. But have you ever lost power only to look next door and see the lights still blazing from your neighbor's window? When this happens, it generally means that the service line between your home and the nearby transformer has been damaged. If this happens, call Polk County RPPD right away so we can send a crew to your home.

Power restoration can be a tricky business, so if you lose service in your home or neighborhood, please remember the following:

- Stay clear of downed power lines. Contact with these lines could be life threatening.
- Report the outage to Polk County RPPD as soon as possible at 402/764-4381.
- Stormy weather happens and that means power outages are sometimes unavoidable. Learn how we work hard to restore your power as safely and quickly as possible when outage occur.
- Power restoration involves more than the flip of a switch!



## DOWNED POWER LINES



**Can be dangerous. Keep your distance! Call the professionals ~ 402/764-4381.**

## Did You Know?

Space heaters are responsible for 32 percent of house fire, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Place your space heater on a level, nonflammable surface.

Make sure our space heater has an auto shutoff function. Never pair your space heater with an extension cord.

Never leave a space heater unattended when it is in use.



Purchase space heaters that remain cool to the touch and have the UL (Universal Laboratories) or ETL (Electric Testing Laboratory).



# Coal: Not Going Away Anytime Soon

By Carolyn Slaughter and Paul Zummo, American Public Power Association

America's electricity comes mostly from natural gas, coal, hydro and nuclear, which together make up approximately 93 percent of current generation.

America's Electricity Generation Capacity, a recent report published by the American Public Power Association, shows that natural gas is the predominant fuel in current and planned capacity. Wind and solar capacity continue to make inroads, while coal capacity is on the decline. Our resource mix is indeed changing, but not as rapidly as some people might think.

Wind, solar and other renewable resources will not replace coal, which will continue to be a significant portion of America's resource mix for some time, second only to natural gas.

Currently, coal constitutes nearly 28 percent of America's electricity generation capacity. By 2020, this is expected to drop to just over 24 percent.

Why is so much coal being retired? Coal-fired electric utility generators are having to contend with increasing environmental requirements such as mercury; regional haze; cross-state air pollution in 2017; once-through cooling; phase 2 National Ambient Air Quality Standards, with ozone in 2017, particulates in 2018, and SO<sub>2</sub> in 2020; and effluent limit guidelines, possibly in 2015.

April 16 was the deadline for coal-fired power plants to comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's Mercury and Air Toxics Standards rule, requiring the installation of Maximum Achievable Control Technology to reduce emissions of mercury and other toxic metals, acid gases and certain toxic organic compounds. Smaller and older coal-fired plants impacted by this rule are retiring because environmental control technol-

ogy is expensive to install and lower gas prices make it more economical to operate a natural-gas plant.

Then of course, there is the big one - EPA's Clean Power Plan. The Clean Power Plan, if implemented as proposed, would cut carbon emissions by 30 percent from 2005 to 2030. The proposed plan foreshadows unprece-



dent changes to America's energy sector, leaving owners and operators of coal-fired power plants to evaluate shifting to less carbon-intensive generation fuels.

States continue to ramp up renewable portfolio standards or have announced plans to increase their RPS mandates. California, for example, has an RPS of 33 percent by 2020, and Gov. Jerry Brown has announced his intention to increase it to 50 percent by 2030. Other states and utilities have also increased their mandates.

Economic considerations are also influencing America's changing generation capacity. The production and investment tax credits for wind helped spur wind development in the early part of this decade. From 2008 to 2014, nearly 57,000 megawatts of wind capacity was added to the grid, almost 5,000 megawatts of which was added in 2014. The federal ITC for

wind expired at the end of 2014 and has yet to be renewed, but the solar ITC remains in force until at least the end of 2016, at which point it will be dramatically reduced. Utility scale solar projects added a little less than 3,000 megawatts of new solar capacity to the grid in 2014. This does not include the 3,000-plus megawatts of

rooftop solar capacity that was also added in 2014.

Despite the expiration of the wind ITC and the potential expiration of the solar ITC, the number of proposed solar and wind projects, continues to increase. Though much of the proposed wind and solar capacity (cumulatively 96,000 megawatts) is merely speculative, generators clearly expect that environmental regulations and enhanced renewable portfolio standards are going to make renewable resources more economically viable even without the tax credits.

Natural gas will continue to be the leading resource in 2020. So, while the capacity mix in the United States will change in the next few years and beyond, it will do so at a gradual pace. The overall fuel mix five years from now will not be dramatically different from the current mix.