

# Climate Change

Look in the mirror. You're the face, and it's no honorary title — you have a job to do.

Sitting on the sidelines while others debate the fate of you and the planet isn't cutting it.

I mean, imagine you're in the back seat of a runaway truck going 80. You can't ignore the problem. You can't reach the brakes or shift lever to stop. You can't jump out. Buckle your seatbelt? Okey-dokey, it's an option, but is that the best you can do?

No, you'd grab the steering wheel and try to keep to a safe course. Wouldn't you?

Exactly. That's why you should get involved in the climate change discussion, at least to the extent that you keep informed. After all, you're the one who's going to have to pay for any solution to the problem.

Let's be frank. If you don't speak up, other people will speak for you. Even if you decide you don't want to pay the freight, other people will take the money right out of your pocket and make you pay for climate change.

We know from our reader survey that many people say they are tired of the global warming debate. A few because they hate reading what I have to say. But the majority are weary of being prodded by fear. But that doesn't mean you can simply buckle up and ride out the runaway debate.

Tomorrow's energy picture does give rise for legitimate concern, even without climate change.

For instance your cooperative is always looking to the future, projecting needs and costs that will arise when existing power contracts expire. The federal government projects an increase in power demand, a 40 percent increase in the next 25 years, in fact. That increase will put upward pressure on costs.

Meanwhile, developing countries are building power plants and transmission systems at a furious pace. They're consuming raw materials and energy technology relentlessly. Remember last month's story on the growing incidents in copper theft? There's a reason: copper is being used like crazy in China and India, driving up the price globally and making it worth the risk of electrocution to steal from your cooperative.

Meanwhile, the ongoing drought in the West affects the supply of hydroelectric power. And everywhere coal-fired plants see looming constraints on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

So your electric co-op needs you to be informed about the realities of the energy you consume and the consequences of coming climate change legislation.

Nationally, electric cooperatives are on board with a comprehensive approach to addressing the same concerns as Congress and the Montana Legislature. It envisions reducing CO<sub>2</sub> while solidifying our future energy supply, refurbishing the transmission capacity of America, conserving, building clean generation and using renewable sources of power like wind and solar power.

It's a simple plan to lay out, but it will take a national

spirit of cooperation to achieve.

That's why we need your help. With this issue of *RM*, we're embarking on a long-term series to inform you, our electric co-op membership, about the future of energy. We want to get you involved in the process of crafting sound climate change legislation, so our government officials will get climate change right. We know that you have an interest in helping us keep the lights on for you without sending rates out of sight.

Sooner or later political candidates will be asking you your opinion about climate change issues. Or else they will be telling you their opinion and asking for your vote. We're not afraid, either of your opinion or of your vote. And, when the time comes, we won't presume to tell you *how* to vote. We're simply going to do everything that we can to keep you informed.

After all, if you're going to pay for it, you might as well vote for it; if you're going to vote for it, you might as well be informed.

Clearly, this month we are putting the cost of climate change legislation on the table. We'll be talking dollars and cents. And we'll be addressing other, less obvious costs, beyond the bottom line on your electricity bill.

In the past, we've met some criticism from readers who say we're only interested in cost. Some people say

we are out of line even to discuss the price tag.

Sorry, that line of reasoning doesn't wash. You wouldn't buy a car without looking at the sticker price, even if it were a hybrid that got 99 miles to the gallon of gas and 80 hours of driving on a single overnight charge of the batteries.

We're the first to say that cost isn't the only factor in the climate change equation. But it is one important factor in that broad, diverse approach we'll be discussing in 2008.

Whatever the course our legislators set, we'll be asking the sticker price on your behalf.

We're in an enviable position when it comes to putting cost on the table. We represent our member-owners instead of stockholders, so we can set aside the profit motive. We don't even talk profits. Co-ops are different.

Our charter is to keep the lights on at the best rates possible. Your lights. Your rates.

It's your co-op. Let us keep you informed on the proposed fixes to global warming. When it comes time to get involved, you'll know. Then you can act based on knowledge, not fear.

Meanwhile, all together now, here's our cooperative anthem in the coming year:

***Climate Change . . .  
Let's get it right!***

