



A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

## Electricity use, not rates, sent electric bills soaring

Recent high electric bills reflect the reality experienced by electric consumers throughout the region, as cold weather drove up everyone's electricity use. We at Southern Pine Electric Power

Association are eager to help you understand what determines the amount of your electric bill and to suggest ways you can be more energy efficient.

There are only two elements, or components, that determine the amount of an electric bill—rates and the number of kilowatt-hours used:

- **Rates:** The rate schedule and associated fuel adjustments determine the cost for each kilowatt-hour that goes through an electric meter. For Southern Pine's members, these costs were recently reduced because of lower fuel prices. February kilowatt-hour costs are lower than those from January; January costs were lower than in December. Costs per kilowatt-hour are lower now than at this time last year.

- **Use:** Your electricity use is measured in the form of kilowatt-hours pulled through your meter to run heating and cooling systems and other appliances.

The reason your electric bill may be higher than in previous months is because you used more kilowatt-hours. (The exact number is displayed on your electric bill.) If your February 2010 electricity use had been the same as it was in February 2009, your bill would have been approximately 7 percent less, because of a reduction in wholesale power cost. Monthly bills are higher because of electricity use related to colder than normal temperatures.

This year's extremely cold weather caused our members' electricity use to soar—and even set a record in January. We know that many members' homes suffer from poor insulation and other energy-efficiency shortcomings that contribute to using high levels of electricity.

*If your February 2010 electricity use had been the same as it was in February 2009, your current bill would be approximately 7 percent less, because of a reduction in wholesale power cost.*

While Southern Pine cannot control the amount of electricity someone needs to stay warm or run other appliances, we have long tried to make recommendations regarding wise energy use. (Please read "We have answers to your energy questions" on page 11.)

For years, we have worked with members to help them pay their electric bills. We participate in the LIHEAP program and have accepted hundreds of pledges from agencies that will help these members pay their bill.

Be assured that we are willing to work with and allow members extra time to pay their bills. It has been our

policy and history to do this, and we encourage any member with a concern about their bill to contact us immediately.

This winter, we granted numerous payment extensions to members who could not fully pay their bill but promised to pay later.

We've helped members ensure that their electric meters are working properly. Since Dec. 1 our employees have performed more than 100 meter tests for

members whose bills were extremely high. The tests proved that all the meters were accurate and performing correctly.

Southern Pine employees have also conducted on-site home inspections for about 150 members since early December to help determine how they can weatherize their homes. We discovered many instances where improvements could make a real difference in their electricity use. We encourage our members to apply for part of the \$49 million in federal weatherization assistance available in Mississippi.

As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, we will continue to provide reliable service at the lowest cost possible. Members can help themselves and their cooperative conserving where possible and using electricity wisely.



By Don Jordan  
General Manager

## Staying warm in cold weather takes energy



site, [www.spepa.com](http://www.spepa.com).

It has been our practice for many years to work closely with our members to help them pay their bills. We participate in the LIHEAP program and accept hundreds of pledges each month.

If members have any questions or concerns, please call our office. As a not-for-profit electric power association, we're here to serve our members and to address any issues in a prompt, professional manner.

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# We have answers to your energy questions

Mississippi's winters have been relatively mild the past few years, so many folks may not remember the effect freezing temperatures have on their electricity use. This winter has been drastically different, however, leaving Southern Pine Electric Power Association members more concerned about their electric bills. Here are some commonly asked questions:

### Why was my bill so high in January and February this year?

South Mississippi winters are usually mild, but temperatures this December and January were much lower than average. There were several consecutive nights—and days—when temperatures barely climbed above freezing. Southern Pine customers saw higher electric bills. Some doubled or even tripled. Typically, heating and cooling the average home accounts for about half of the cost on consumers' electric bills. Heaters in most homes worked overtime for several weeks and that meant increased use, therefore, increased costs.

### Has Southern Pine increased the rates on my bill?

No. In fact, Southern Pine customers saw an approximate 7 percent decrease. Monthly bills are higher because of electricity use related to colder than normal temperatures.

### How did cold weather affect my energy use?

For the first 12 days of January, temperatures only rose above the 50 degree mark for two days. The remaining days were well below the 50-degree mark, with the lowest temperature recorded this year on Monday, Jan. 11, at 15 degrees. Again, this means heating systems have been working hard, increasing the amount of energy used.

The increase in energy use is linked to the amount of insulation in a home, the efficiency of that home's central heating and cooling system, the temperature setting of the thermostat, the temperature setting on the water heater and several other factors. Members who have mobile homes, homes built prior to 1965 or homes that use electric resistance strip heat and space heaters as the primary heat source saw even greater increases in kilowatt-hour use.



### What can I do to manage my use?

Obviously, it is impossible to control the weather, but there are several ways that electric customers can manage their use. From sealing windows to changing light bulbs, our Web site at [www.spepa.com](http://www.spepa.com) has lots of tips for members. Interactive features and calculators demonstrate savings customers can have if they make a commitment to energy efficiency.

Southern Pine marketing representatives also work with members to see what improvements can be made in their homes and daily routines to help modify and manage use. Call any of our offices for information on energy efficiency.

### What is kilowatt-hour use and where is it located on my bill?

Your kilowatt-hour use is the difference between last month's and this month's meter readings. It is located on your monthly billing statement in two places: It's in the center of your bill between the multiplier and the bill amount, and it's also in the historical data box located in the upper right section of the bill. Southern Pine implemented a new bill format in January to provide members a simple, easy-to-read monthly statement.

### How can I get help paying my electric bill?

Congress has greatly increased funds to help needy, qualified families in Mississippi with their utility bills through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). If you need help, and think you qualify, please speak with your local community action agency. This is a government service. There is no charge to find out if you qualify. Funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Energy assistance contact information by county:

Copiah County	(601) 894-4745
Covington County	(601) 765-4871
Forrest County	(601) 544-1394
Jasper County	(601) 787-4844
Jefferson Davis	(601) 792-5356
Lawrence County	(601) 587-4370
Newton County	(601) 683-2733
Rankin County	(601) 825-1309
Scott County	(601) 469-3061
Simpson County	(601) 847-4611
Smith County	(601) 782-9578

The American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, local churches and private community organizations also are available to help.

### If I need further help on my bill, what else can I do?

Timely communication with our office is key. Call our office for assistance and a customer service repre-

sentative will be happy to work with you and make payment arrangements.

### How do I know when my bill is due each month?

Your Southern Pine bill is due upon receipt. The "subject to disconnect" date is printed on the billing statement. The bill should be paid before this date to avoid disconnection.

### Statement of Nondiscrimination

Southern Pine Electric Power Association is the recipient of Federal financial assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the rules and regulations of the United States Department of Agriculture.

In accordance with Federal law and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is Donald L. Jordan, General Manager. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination, may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint with this organization.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (VOICE OR TDD).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

### Notice to members

Southern Pine Electric Power Association's dedicated employees take pride in providing quality service to members in a courteous and respectful manner.

However, we recognize that an employee could engage in behavior that we would neither authorize nor condone, and that may be objectionable to a member or other person.

Accordingly, if you ever believe a Southern Pine employee has treated you in an abusive, discourteous or disrespectful manner, subjected you to immoral or indecent conduct, or harassed you due to your gender, race, religion or national origin, you are encouraged to contact either Donald Jordan or Charlie Ware at (800) 231-5240 or (601) 785-6511.