

Junk Science Can Cost You



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

Coal plants currently generate about 45 percent of the nation's electricity, and we have enough coal for the next 100 years.

Natural gas is increasingly popular and now very abundant in the United States, and is currently used to produce 24 percent of our electric needs. Due to natural gas making a cleaner flame and currently a lower price, one would think the market would cause less coal generation and more natural gas-fired electric generators. With a normal market I would expect the use of natural gas generation would increase as the need for more electric power increases each year and new generating plants are constructed. The fact is the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) has recently released their projection of electricity demand to increase less than 1 percent (0.8 percent) a year from now through 2035.

This slow growth projection must have disappointed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) political-appointed bureaucrats, because they have started cranking out more and more anti-coal regulations. The agency tells us we need these regulations to protect us from global warming, but is that really true? All coal generating plants currently have installed numerous types of scrubbers and have really reduced chemicals being released into the atmosphere. But that doesn't seem to make the EPA happy with coal. Of course these are the same people that declared carbon monoxide that you and I exhale each time we breathe, and trees need to live, as a hazardous gas.

Is the EPA really trying to make our world a healthier place to live or is there another motivation? The EPA produced a "Fact Sheet" that states: "The science shows that mercury and toxic air pollution is a threat to public health and has real impact on people's lives."

I decided to take a look at the most recent issue of EPA's regulations to determine if the new rules are based on scientific evidence of actual bad health effects caused by coal generating plants.

The EPA recently issued the first-ever Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT) standard for the emissions of so called "hazardous air pollutants" from coal-fired power plants. To understand how the EPA developed its scientific justification for the rule means wading through dozens and dozens of highly technical reports. The Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) helped by sorting the information and publishing the analysis. The facts can be checked on their website and documents the EPA source for each item.

The release of mercury is always a hot topic, so let's examine the scientific logic used by the EPA to justify their new rules on mercury. The health effect studies by the EPA are

based on that portion of atmospheric mercury that lands in bodies of water and ends up in food (fish) taken from the water. The EPA and CDC established the "benchmark dose" of 58 ppb (parts per billion) as the mercury level associated with ANY health effects. The Center for Disease Control's epidemiological studies found the highest level in any woman mentioned in any of the studies was 21 ppb.

Based on this information, the EPA used a computer model that predicted that there are 24,000 children born each year to women in the United States who live in households that eat fish they caught themselves and therefore consume enough mercury from their fresh caught fish to impair the children's neurological development. As the editor of Power Magazine put it, "That sounds like a lot, but the mothers of those 24,000 children, who received doses of mercury sufficient to produce a benchmark dose (58 ppb), exist only in the EPA's computer model, not in real life."

In the 22 years since the Clean Air Act was passed and the EPA began to study the health risks of mercury, the agency has not identified a single child whose learning or other disabilities can be traced to prenatal mercury exposure caused by a coal-fired power plant.

The EPA is supposed to justify their rulemaking using specific health effects. Since the EPA had no examples to use in the United States, they turned to studies of people in New Zealand, the Faroe Islands (located between Iceland and Norway) and a 20-year study of children in the Seychelles (a small country that consist of 115 islands located in the Indian Ocean, where they eat 12 to 14 fish meals a week). After reviewing all those studies, the EPA documents can be summed up with: "none of those children was learning disabled, or cognitively abnormal in any way, despite having mercury exposures many times greater than those of most American children," and the effect on IQ was indeterminate.

Despite the results of these studies, the EPA determined, again through computer modeling, that the new rule will prevent the loss of 511 IQ points. This translates into 0.00209 IQ points for each of the estimated 24,000 prenatally exposed children in the computer model study group. This conclusion of two one thousands of one IQ point is really unbelievable when psychologists will tell you that the standard error of a typical IQ test is 3 points.

The EPA computers then translated that miniscule loss in IQ into the present value of lost lifetime earnings of from \$500,000 to \$6 million. To suggest that IQ can be calculated to five decimal places is ludicrous, but then to suggest that there is a direct relationship between IQ and lifetime earnings at

such small increments of IQ borders on the absurd.

There are many other discrepancies in the science used by the EPA to justify the new MACT Rule on coal-fired power plants. Another example is the EPA's estimate of the amount of mercury discharged into the environment from power plants, and used in the rulemaking. In 1990, they estimated that 46 tons was released into the environment and projected that amount to increase to 60 tons in 2010. Based on actual data, only 29 tons were discharged in 2011, which is nowhere near the EPA estimate. The EPA assumes the level of mercury in fish is increasing, while the facts are that mercury in fish has stayed the same or gone down over the past 100 years.

An attorney once told me, "If the facts are on your side; use the facts. If the facts are not on your side; confuse the subject."

Apparently the EPA has taken a page from that savvy lawyer adage. It is sad when our own federal government agency uses junk science to justify the greater good (their perceived goal) of getting rid of the coal-fired power generators in the United States. Science is the first casualty of the EPA's war on coal, but all of us are its victims and will likely see our electric bills skyrocket and suffer through more blackouts as the EPA shuts down more and more electric power plants, in the name of science.

Dr. Robert Peltier, the editor-in-chief of Power Magazine, contributed to this article and gave me permission to use his information.

In case you think the answer is "clean and free wind or solar power," think again. The state of Texas has more wind generation than any other state in the United States. Last year ERCOT established an all time peak for electric usage in August. On that very hot day in August, 91 percent of the wind turbines were not operating. That is right; when we needed every electric generator operating; only 9 percent of the wind turbines in Texas were working. This article is going to press in July, so we will see what happens in August.

STOP, THIEF!

It seems like an "invisible" crime. Someone illegally hooks into a power supply, connects a line that has been disconnected or tampers with a meter to avoid recording electricity usage.

No big deal, right? Wrong.

Not only does that theft of electricity come with deadly risks, but also, as a member of Lamar EC, you ultimately pay for that stolen power.

Lamar EC has to pay for every kilowatt-hour of electricity used on our system. When we don't collect revenue for kWhs because they're being stolen, our operating costs go up, and our margins go down. Because you are a member-owner of your cooperative, the margins Lamar EC generates belong to you.

And the dangers aren't just limited to the thief who's stealing from you. Tampering with electrical equipment or attempting to steal electric power carries the potential to harm many people. The innocent consumers on the same line and personnel who work on those lines are all at risk when someone tampers with electricity or electrical equipment.

In situations such as a fire or power outage, power may need to be shut off to allow safe access. If lines have been interfered with illegally, the lines could remain energized, endangering the lives of emergency personnel and lineworkers.

Lamar EC encourages you to contact us or local law enforcement immediately if you suspect someone is stealing electricity.



You may not notice it immediately, but just like the pickpocket, meter tamperers are stealing from you.



Lamar Electric Cooperative

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*Operating in Lamar, Red River,
Delta and Fannin counties*

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Jerry D. Williams

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Member Benefits

- Level billing
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Your "Local Pages"

This section of Texas Co-op Power is produced by LEC each month to provide you with information about current events, safety, special programs and other activities of the cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact the local office.



CONTACT US

*For information during office hours
and outages after hours*

CALL US

(903) 784-4303 local or
1-800-782-9010 toll-free

FIND US ON THE WEB

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Youth Tour Winners Back From Washington

Cobyn Brakebill and Jamie Landers recently returned from their trip to Washington, D.C., where they participated in the 2012 Government-in-Action Youth Tour. Each June, Lamar Electric Cooperative sends two students to our nation's capital, where they see the sights and visit with elected representatives.



U.S. Capitol



Newseum



Smithsonian Institution



National Cathedral



U.S. Rep. Ralph Hall's office



Mount Vernon

Lamar Electric Kids



CADE COLLARD

North Lamar sixth-grade football—Panthers
Son of LEC employee Leslie Collard



JULIA MCFADDEN

YWCA girls fast-pitch softball—Astros
Daughter of LEC employee Delana McFadden



ZANE CHUMBLEY

Blossom Dixie League baseball—Red Sox
Son of LEC employee Marti Chumbley



KIRA MCFADDEN

YWCA girls fast-pitch softball—Rockets
Daughter of LEC employee Delana McFadden

Country Corner Events

September 1-2

N.E. Travelers 26th Annual Rod Run. Lamar County Fairgrounds. For more information, call Bill Clarke at (903) 782-3181 or Hugh Jeffus at (903) 652-2855.

September 8

Red River County Stew Cook-Off. Red River County Fairgrounds in Clarksville. Stew served at 5 p.m. Adults, \$5; children, \$3. For more information, call Lynn Golden at (903) 427-3867.

September 15

Hooked on Hope Bass Tournament. Benefit for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life. For more information, visit parishookedonhope.com.

September 19-22

Red River County Fair. Fairgrounds in Clarksville. For more information, call Lynn Golden at (903) 427-3867.

September 22

Paris/Lamar County Habitat for Humanity Redneck Golf Tournament. Pine Ridge Golf Course. For more information, call (903) 783-0599

September 25-29

Red River Valley Fair. Lamar County Fairgrounds. For information, call (903) 785-7971.

September 29

Roxton Saturday Night. Downtown Roxton from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Parade, craft booths and more.

If you have any events that you would like listed for Delta, Lamar or Red River counties, please contact Marci Thompson. Information must be submitted two months in advance. Email marci@lamar.electric.coop or call (903) 783-4911.



Happy LABOR DAY!

The offices of Lamar Electric Cooperative will be closed Monday, September 3, for Labor Day.

We wish you a happy and restful holiday.