

History Repeats Itself



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

Mark Twain once said that “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it does rhyme.” He wasn’t talking about electric energy but his comment sure applies to the EPA’s latest proposed prohibition on the construction of coal-fired power plants.

In 1978, Congress passed the ill-conceived Power Plant and Industrial Fuel Use Act. Policymakers were concerned the U.S. would soon run out of natural gas. At that time natural gas was the primary energy source for heating and cooking in many parts of our country. Given the abundant supply of natural gas now, it’s hard to imagine a time when natural-gas shortages were common. Those shortages weren’t caused by a lack of gas resources. The shortages were caused by a pot load of federal regulations that hampered exploration and interstate markets for natural gas. Politicians were convinced there was a crisis and Coal was the solution. In Texas, almost all the electricity was being generated with natural gas and everyone was told the plants had to be shut down by a certain date.

In April 1977, President Jimmy Carter delivered a televised address to the nation about the “energy crisis” that was gripping the nation. Carter said the U.S., and the rest of the world was running out of oil and gas. He declared that not enough electric utilities “have switched to coal, our most abundant electric source.”

For nine years the government banned natural gas for power generation. Yes, natural gas—the fuel source being sold to the nation today as a cleaner fuel option. The law said we could use any fuel to generate electricity “but one.” With gas off the table, electric providers were forced to choose between building coal or nuclear plants. There were not any other alternatives.

Six months after Congress passed the 1978 law, the “accident” occurred at Three Mile Island Nuclear power plant which resulted in a briar thicket of ever changing regulations. The cost to construct a nuclear power plant went up ten times and effectively shut down future construction using nuclear power.

With no other alternative, everyone invested heavily in coal-based generation. Thanks to the Fuel Use Act, power costs soared, and with them, electric bills shot thru the roof. Realizing its mistake, Congress repealed the act in 1987. Even though the legislation was repealed, virtually every utility had become heavily invested in coal.

We are disappointed—but not surprised—that in September the Obama administration officially abandoned an “all-of-the-above” energy strategy for a new approach that effectively removes coal from the nation’s fuel mix in the future. It seems

that the administration is ready to let history repeat itself.

Here we go again; the EPA is pushing a pot load of new regulations on air quality, coal-ash disposal etc. and a policy that is attempting to shut down some of the very same coal-fired power plants that were built in the 1970s and 1980s as a direct result of the Congressional ban on natural-gas-fired electricity production.

The policy, proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency, sets stringent limits on carbon dioxide emissions from future coal plants. The trouble is that the new standards are impossible to meet with existing technology.

For several years, cooperatives have tested carbon capture and storage as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, the technology doesn’t make financial sense. It has never been used on a commercial scale at a power plant over a prolonged period to demonstrate its viability or cost. In



a 2012 Congressional Budget Office report, engineers estimated it would increase the cost of producing electricity from coal-based plants by 75 percent.

The administration’s revised energy approach would limit Americans’ access to a plentiful and affordable energy resource. I don’t think we should gamble with the economic well-being of future generations and our nation’s economy. Already worried about making ends meet,

many of Lamar Electric Cooperative’s members cannot afford the significant increases in electric bills that this policy will trigger.

Historically, the price of coal has remained affordable. The U.S. Energy Information Agency reports that the United States has more than 200 years worth of recoverable coal reserves, and coal generates 37 percent of the nation’s electricity—our biggest energy source by far.

Let’s not repeat past mistakes. Stand with us as we fight to keep electric bills affordable. The EPA is holding public sessions to talk about Coal Fired Power Plants. You can raise your voice through the Cooperative Action Network at www.action.coop. Tell the EPA we need an all-of-the-above energy strategy.



Don't Take the Merry Out of Christmas

BY SARA PETERSON

Before your family puts up a tree or hangs the stockings this holiday season, start a new tradition. Put safety at the top of your list. Too often the twinkling lights people see are on the top of a fire truck or ambulance—the result of holiday accidents that could have been prevented.

Trees and lights are danger-prone holiday decorations. Christmas trees start an average of 260 house fires each season, resulting in more than \$16 million in property damage, according to the United States Fire Administration. Another 150 house fires are sparked by holiday lights and decorative lighting, costing \$8.9 million in damage. Typically, all of these fires are more severe and damaging, resulting in twice the injuries and five times the fatalities per blaze compared to average winter home fires.

Unsafe practices while putting up decorations are to blame for even more injuries. Nearly 6,000 individuals visit emergency rooms each year for falls that occur. There are 4,000 more treated for injuries associated with extension cords.

But safety steps don't end with bright decorations. Gifts trigger injuries, too. Toys that are not used as intended or used without proper supervision can lead to avoidable accidents. Electrical shocks, burns or injuries from sharp, pointed or moving parts are to blame for many of these injuries, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

When it is time to deck your halls, take these precautions to ensure the safety of yourself, your family and holiday guests:

TREES

Real or artificial, short or tall, Christmas trees are often the culprits for danger. Incorporate these safety guidelines in your decorating routine:

- ▶ Make sure an artificial tree is labeled "fire resistant." Be aware that "fire resistant" does not mean "fireproof." Exercise caution when it comes to your tree.
- ▶ Make sure a live tree is fresh and green. Dry, brittle limbs and shedding needles are a breeding ground for sparks. Water a live tree regularly to prevent it from drying out.
- ▶ Place any type of tree away from heat sources such as fireplaces, vents and radiators.

LIGHTS

Festive lights give homes a magical glow both inside and out. When decorating this season, a few simple safety tips can keep your spirits bright.

- ▶ Do not overload electrical outlets. Most lights are designed to connect no more than three strands. Inspect the wires periodically to make sure they are intact and not warm to the touch.
- ▶ Never leave lights on overnight or when no one is home.
- ▶ Only use lights that have been approved by an independent testing laboratory.
- ▶ Replace any strands that show signs of damage, such as bare or frayed wires, broken bulbs or loose connections. Faulty lights can send an electrical charge through a tree and electrocute anyone who comes in contact with a branch.

Make sure safety ranks at the top of your "to do" list this holiday season. Like the old Christmas song says, there is no place like home for the holidays—especially when your family is safe and your home is filled with good cheer.



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1485 N. Main St. • P.O. Box 580
Paris, TX 75461

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Christmas in the Camp



Mary, played by Carter Brumley, left, and the angel Gabriel, played by Ashley White, act out a scene from the Bible.

BY DENA BEASON

As Christmas nears, it seems as if our lives become more hectic than ever. We are busy decorating, attending Christmas parties, shopping for presents, etc., trying to make Christmas day filled with great memories. Sometimes it seems that we get so caught up in the materialistic world that we forget the true meaning of Christmas, the birth of Jesus.

One of our members, The Cowboy Church of Paris, does a remarkable job reminding us of the true meaning of Christmas. It first came as a vision from Matt Guest. He wanted to re-create the Nativity story, and soon many people in the church were on board. This vision known as Christmas in the Camp has now become a popular annual December event.

The church re-enacts this remarkable story by narrating as you are pulled by a horse-drawn wagon into the night, and volunteers act out each scene in the woods depicting the birth of Jesus Christ. As you are riding into the darkness, you hear the music playing, you are able to see the stars twinkling in sky and the quietness of the woods sets the tone for what you are about to experience.

The first year the Cowboy Church re-enacted this story, they felt blessed but overwhelmed by the amount of visitors



Wise men stand around a fire, keeping warm during one of the scenes. From left are Taylor Wisdom, Damian Grunberry, Halie Chambless, Colton Whitney and Ben Hutchison.



Diane Rowell, left, stands as another group of angels is uncovered as part of a live Nativity production at Christmas in the Camp.

who came to the church. They were not prepared for the number of people and did not realize what it would take to make this re-enactment a success. The church wanted to continue the event but knew there needed to be changes.

“You don’t realize what all plays a part in this event unless you are helping—whether it be guiding the horses, adding people to the waiting list or changing out actors, giving people breaks, etc.,” said Beverly White, a church member. “People work all year making, creating, constructing new things for this event, and we are very thankful for everyone who has helped make this a success. Many are members of the church, and some are local people willing to help.”

When you leave the Cowboy Church after going through the Nativity scenes, you are reminded what Christmas is about. A bright star will remind you of heavenly sign of promises made long ago. God promised a savior for the world, and the star was the sign of fulfillment of his promise. A candle symbolizes Christ as the light of the world, as he displaces darkness. We are reminded God loved the world so much that he gave his only son. We all should give thanks to God for his gift.

More than 25,000 people have experienced Christmas in the Camp since 2006. The camp is about 2 miles north of Reno. If you are in the area, take the time to experience God’s word. This year, the dates are December 12-15.



Top row, from left: Drew Conder, Charlie Brazeal, Scott Sansom, Cory May, Dustin Dale, George Scroggins and Larry Bills. Bottom row, from left: Ryan Dean, Jay Henry, Rachael Whipkey, Ronnie Bridges, Laura Williams, Jose Recendez, Delana McFadden, Michael Sorensen, Gretta Ashford, Will Armstrong, Marci Thompson, Rayford Dodd, Dena Beason, Rick Crump, Mike Davidson, Leslie Collard, Danny Michael, Marti Chumbley, Casey Martin, Betty Wood, Barry Murchison, James Smith and Jerry Williams. Not pictured: Wade Niblett and Tessi McFadden.

Country Corner Events

December 5

Christmas in Roxton Tree Lighting, 7-8 p.m.

December 7

Clarksville Christmas Parade and lighting of the square, 4:30 p.m. The parade will begin at Industrial Boulevard.

Chili and Stew Supper, after parade. First Presbyterian Church, Clarksville

The Horse Flea—Antique, Vintage and Handmade Market, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Paris Horse and Tack Auction, 13959 U.S. Highway 82, Petty. For more information, call Kevin Cannon at (903) 348-3694.

Paris Annual Christmas Parade, 6-8 p.m. "A Rockin' Christmas." Parade begins in the courthouse parking lot. For more information, call (903) 784-2501.

December 12-15

8th annual Christmas in the Camp, 6-9 p.m., sponsored by the Cowboy Church of Paris. Directions to the event: 4½ miles off Loop 286 on FM 195, turn right on CR 42500 and follow to Red River Valley Bible Camp. The Cowboy Church welcomes everyone to share in this celebration of our savior's birth. For more information, call (903) 785-5595 or (903) 785-5654.

December 14

Carriage Rides in Historic Downtown Paris, 2-5 p.m.

December 17

Holiday In Paris Shop Local Drawing, 7-8 p.m. For more information, visit holidayinparistexas.com.

If you have any events that you would like listed for Delta, Lamar or Red River counties, please contact Dena Beason. We need the information two months in advance for the magazine. Email dena@lamarelectric.coop or call (903) 783-4949.