

WEEKLY DIGEST

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Gunfire Vandalism Risk Increasing at Co-ops

Gunfire vandalism could be a greater threat to reliability as more utilities add complex fiber optic communications lines to their systems, co-op officials warn.

"Shooting at electrical equipment is vandalism and could be deadly," said Bob Franklin, manager of electric operations for Choptank Electric Cooperative's Salisbury district. "If an insulator is broken or damaged, anyone coming in contact with the pole could be electrocuted."

The Denton, Md.-based co-op has recently mounted a public education campaign to inform its consumer-members of the risks birdshot and other ammunition fired at power lines pose to shooters, utility personnel, pets and people.

Co-ops have been coping with gunfire-related outages for decades. On Oct. 9, 1949, a broadcast of the fifth game of the World Series was interrupted by silence for some members of New Hampshire Electric Cooperative. Co-op officials described the use of insulators for target practice as "needlessly harmful."

In some states, separate laws have been passed to discourage damage to utility assets.

A Minnesota statute enacted in 2011 declares it a Class 1 felony subject to up to five years imprisonment and fines of up to \$10,000.

[▶ Complete Article](#)**Co-ops Cautioned on Rebate Policies**

People love to get a rebate on big ticket items such as heat pumps and refrigerators. What they won't like is the co-op running out of rebate money.

NRECA's Cooperative Research Network and its strategic partner E Source have some do's and don'ts for rebate programs.

"Rebates can get oversubscribed," cautioned Brian Sloboda, CRN senior program manager. "What sometimes happens is you spend all of your rebate money in the first few weeks," which is indicative of a rebate that was a bit too generous.

"You also are in the very, very bad position of having to tell people that come to you looking for a rebate that you're out of money," Sloboda said. "They're member-owners."

When setting up a rebate program, CRN urges co-ops to understand the market potential, and get a good estimate of the number of likely participants. Then state up front how much money is available.

"And it never hurts to low-ball the rebates at first. If you're planning to offer a \$100 rebate, start out with a \$50 rebate," and increase it later if possible, Sloboda said.

[▶ Complete Article](#)**Volunteers to Help Provide Electricity to Guatemala**

Nine years ago, Tracie Trent adopted a son from Guatemala. Now, following her lead, the co-ops in her state are adopting a country.

In one of the largest projects undertaken by the NRECA International Foundation, the Indiana Statewide Association of RECs has organized a

*Continued on next page***Big Names at NRECA Annual Meeting**

A real live astronaut, home-grown co-op videos, and a salute to the International Year of Cooperatives will all be part of the 70th NRECA Annual Meeting in San Diego.

The heart of the meeting—including general sessions and educational forums—runs March 5–7. But events begin March 1 with director education and continue through the March 9 conclusion of TechAdvantage.

"This year's meeting will be a celebration of the cooperative network, but we'll also be taking a hard look at what will ensure our success for the future—including the effort to breathe new life into the resolutions process," said Mary McLaury, NRECA vice president of education and training.

To mark the International Year of Cooperatives, NRECA is inviting member co-ops to submit a video greeting or tribute. Co-ops are being encouraged to have fun and be as creative as they like with the videos, which can include employees and consumer-members.

Convention speakers include NRECA CEO Glenn English, making his penultimate annual meeting appearance before his 2013 retirement. Retired astronaut Mark Kelly, who commanded the final voyage of the Space Shuttle Endeavour, will talk about his life and times. Kelly is the husband of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., who was shot Jan. 8, 2011.

Entertainment Night stars Motown legends The Temptations, known for the hits "My Girl" and "Ain't Too Proud to Beg." Registration is now open on cooperative.com. [▶ Complete Article](#)

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Guatemala *Continued*

volunteer team of 29 linemen and two co-op executives that will help expand access to electricity in Guatemala.

"This came out of my wish to give something back to the country that allowed us to adopt our son," said Trent, communications coordinator at the statewide association.

She pitched the idea to Bruce Graham, her CEO, and then to other co-op executives as a way to celebrate the 2012 International Year of Cooperatives.

Participants in "Hoosiers Power the World" will travel to Guatemala next September to expand access to electric service in the remote agricultural province of Huehuetenango.

"We will change lives forever—much like our rural electric pioneers did for families across the nation 75 years ago," Graham said.

"We can now [move] it forward for some very remote areas of Guatemala that have never experienced the wonder of electricity, which most now take for granted."

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Closed TVA Plant Profits as Scrapheap

Sure, you can toss an aluminum can or a cardboard box in a bin and call it recycling. But an entire power plant?

That's exactly what the Tennessee Valley Authority is doing with its long-shuttered Watts Bar fossil fuel plant.

Just before Christmas, TVA finished dismantling the facility near Spring City in east Tennessee. To defray deconstruction costs, it has either reused or sold to recycling companies about 90 percent of the building materials.

In particular, the nation's largest public power provider eyed the high prices for copper that have attracted thieves to many of its facilities, and decided to cash in legitimately on the demand for metals.

"By doing the deconstruction now, we are taking advantage of a strong market for scrap metals, which will help keep the cost of the project very low," said Robert Fisher, TVA senior vice president for fossil generation.

Watts Bar was TVA's first coal plant, and started operating in 1942. At its peak, its four units generated 260 megawatts of power. TVA removed the plant from service in the 1980s and used it as a training facility until 1992.

TVA officials estimate the deconstruction, put at about \$1.2 million, will pay for itself quickly—the authority currently shells out \$1 million in annual maintenance costs.

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A Grand Donation for Retired Great Apes

A Florida co-op's commitment to energy efficiency is extending beyond people to primates.

Peace River Electric Cooperative has made a major donation to help improve a retirement facility for great apes that spent their early lives as performers or exotic pets.

Mark Sellers, communications coordinator for the Wauchula-based co-op, said its charitable foundation's advisory board approved a matching grant of up to \$15,000 to the Center for Great Apes.

"The money will be used to help upgrade windows in a dozen ape houses, so this is an energy-efficiency project."

The houses are used primarily at night and provide shelter from cold winter air. They are also capable of withstanding hurricane-force winds that sometimes threaten the co-op's service territory.

PRECO serves the 100-acre center, which also is located in Wauchula. It is home to 13 orangutans and 31 chimpanzees.

Besides providing 14 spacious, secure enclosures, it also includes a mile of elevated chutes, enabling the apes to roam around the forested grounds. There is also a special needs facility for older primates.

Because of their human-like behavior many of the great apes would face years in research labs without the retirement facility.

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New California Copper Theft Law Takes Effect

The new year brought a new copper theft law to California.

Stealing copper worth more than \$950 is now categorized as grand theft in the Golden State. Conviction on felony charges can bring up to three years in prison and a maximum fine of \$10,000. If the suspect is charged with a misdemeanor, there can be a fine of up to \$2,500 and one year behind bars.

"Due to the increasing value of metal, more and more thieves are stealing copper wiring from construction sites, digging up underground telecommunication wires and cutting wires at utility stations," said Assemblywoman Wilmer Amina Carter, D-Rialto, the bill's sponsor.

The new law also requires those convicted to compensate their victims for damages and economic losses. "The resulting damages and related hardships are much more costly than the actual value of the wire," Carter said.

Carter's district is in San Bernardino County, where authorities said metal theft accounts for one-third of all property crimes. An August copper theft caused a blackout for 25,000 utility customers.

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