

Idaho's electricity prices can remain among the lowest in the world

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by Richard Walje, president, Rocky Mountain Power

The women and men who work at Rocky Mountain Power are proud to provide electric service to Idaho. We've provided safe, reliable, reasonably priced electricity to our customers for nearly 100 years. That foundation of long experience helps us plan for the future needs of customers and advise Idaho on how developing energy policy is likely to affect electricity prices. A good understanding of our current energy situation—as well as what the future holds—will help all of us collectively shape our future.

For years, Idaho electricity prices have been among the lowest in the world, and Idaho's past energy decisions played a big role in that. However, even with the recession, customers are using more electricity than ever before. We're working hard to ensure electricity is available to support this increased use. We're expanding neighborhood electric systems and building new power plants for you. We're also building new transmission lines to move the electricity from where it's generated to your homes and businesses. And, we're improving the environmental performance of existing low-cost power plants, allowing them to continue to meet environmental regulations and supply some of the lowest-cost electricity in the nation.

The increasing demand for electricity and new environmental regulations unavoidably increase electricity prices. We've been straightforward in talking about the future of prices. Like the building phase in the 1970s to the mid-1980s—when new power plants and transmission lines were built to serve you—annual increases in electricity prices are likely for the next decade. We're not alone; utilities across the country are facing similar challenges. Even with these increases, Rocky Mountain Power is committed to retaining our position as a low-cost electricity provider. Customers can be assured that everything we do is for the benefit of our customers; and that our decisions are thoroughly reviewed by the Idaho Public Utilities Commission to ensure we act in your best interests. We also invite public input as we make these decisions on your behalf.

No one likes price increases; we get that. However, electricity is an increasingly important part of modern life and essential for the economy—for our homes and for businesses that mean jobs today and for our children. We work hard to control costs to keep electricity prices low. From 2006 to 2010, we cut our own operating costs 32 percent through improved efficiency. We continue to look for ways to become more efficient.

You can help keep electricity prices low, too. We offer award-winning programs to help you use less electricity and lower your energy bills. This helps individuals with their personal finances and helps keep electricity prices low for everyone because it delays the need to build costly new power plants. Cash incentives for efficient appliances, refrigerator recycling, better home insulation, irrigation curtailment and other programs are popular with customers and highly effective. Participation by customers in these programs saves electricity equivalent to the output of 120 wind turbines for a year.

As we continue the challenging work to ensure safe, reliable, reasonably priced electric service, we hope citizens will become involved in understanding and shaping our energy future. Our website, www.rockymountainpower.net, contains information customers can use to learn more about our business and steps they can take to use electricity more efficiently. Together, we can work to ensure Rocky Mountain Power prices remain a good value—today and well into the future.

