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What YOU need to know!

Putting a price on carbon

Congress and the federal government are focused on prioritizing climate change policy. Given the long list of environmental impacts and expensive solutions, any action taken to address the issue certainly will increase the cost of electricity we use every day.

There is one climate change bill which imposes a cap-and-trade tax to limit carbon emissions. Cap-and-trade systems work by setting a specific limit on airborne pollutants from sources like power plants, factories and refineries, and require those sources to account for all emissions with issued allowances.

Cap-and-trade has worked well during the last 15 years to reduce emissions of acid rain-causing sulfur dioxide nationwide and over the last decade to curb smog-creating nitrogen oxides in the eastern half of the country. However, some cap-and-trade tax proposals for carbon dioxide contain a new twist: **PRICEY ALLOWANCES.**

Allowances would be auctioned off at undetermined prices, leading to huge cost burdens for any source of carbon dioxide emissions. In the case of power plants, those costs ultimately would be passed on to consumers using the power, in some cases **adding \$50 or more to electric bills each month.** Natural gas, propane, fuel oil, gasoline and diesel also will cost more. And, **the sky's the limit** because there's no ceiling on the tax.

This energy plan "is a giant economic dagger aimed at the nation's heartland..."

Detroit News editorial March 4, 2009

In late February, the Obama Administration pointed to such a system as a new, substantial source of revenue for the federal government — effectively muddying the initial environmental argument for regulating carbon dioxide.

About 90 percent of Ohio's electricity comes from coal-fired generation. **Consumers here will bear a greater burden** under cap-and-trade because coal-based power contributes about twice as much CO₂ as natural gas. And, Ohio's rural electric members will pay even more because their annual electric use far exceeds the statewide household average.

Your voice matters! As a member of an Ohio electric cooperative, your voice matters to our members of Congress. Register your concern about a Cap and Trade Tax by joining the **Our Energy, Our Future™** campaign. Urge Congress to work with electric cooperatives to meet both federal public policy goals and your need for affordable, reliable electricity.

Costs matter! Go to www.ourenergy.coop and make your voice heard, and urge others to do the same!



Meet the 2009 scholarship winners



David Bethel



Melinda Phillis



Patrick Ho



Jessica Poeppelman

Pioneer would like to congratulate the 2009 scholarship winners — **David Bethel, Melinda Phillis, Patrick Ho and Jessica Poeppelman**. This year's scholarship competition involved 53 students representing 20 area schools. Pioneer's annual competition requires a membership with Pioneer, submission of an application and then a short interview. We would like to commend and thank each student for participating — Pioneer experienced its largest group of student applicants in many years.

David Bethel and **Melinda Phillis** took first-place awards worth \$1,500 each. David is the son of James and Debbie Bethel. He will graduate from Mechanicsburg High School and plans to attend The Ohio State University to study pre-medicine this fall. A very active student, David is a three-year letterman for the football and track teams. He also is an FFA student advisor, member of the National Honor Society and has held a class officer role. Some of his other non-school-related activities include a volunteer at St. Michael's Church, Premier 4-H, as well as helping on his family's 750-acre grain farm with various jobs. According to one of David's teachers, "David will be successful at any higher education endeavors."

Melinda is the daughter of Ron and Sue Phillis. She will graduate from Troy High School and plans to attend Bluffton University. She has chosen Spanish as her major. Some of her school activities include National Honor Society, high school marching band, wind ensemble, KEY Club, musical pit orchestra and History Club. She also has received several awards, such as the Carson Award in 2008 for being an outstanding junior female at Troy High School, Rensselaer Award for outstanding academics in math and science in 2008, and in February 2009 she achieved the honor of National Merit Finalist. Involved in the Troy Christian Church Youth Group, she has traveled with her church on a mission trip to an American Indian reservation in South Dakota and plans to continue her missionary work in the future.

Patrick Ho and **Jessica Poeppelman** won second-place scholarships worth \$1,000 each. Patrick is the son of Lam and Le Ho. He plans to attend Kent State University and study pre-medicine upon graduating from Sidney High School this spring. A member of the National Honor Society, Student Government, Chess Club, varsity tennis, varsity Academia and junior varsity soccer, Patrick has had a very productive high school career. Some other personal achievements include being an Eagle Scout, recipient of the Honda-Ohio State Math Medal Award, as well as his school's ambassador to the Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Seminar and Buckeye Boys State.

Jessica is the daughter of Michael and Kathy Poeppelman and will graduate from Fort Loramie High School. She will be attending Ball State University to study accounting. During high school, Jessica has been involved in activities such as National Honor Society, History Club, Envirothon, District XI Honors Band and JETS & TEAMS. She also is a very active member of St. Michael's Catholic Church volunteering as a lector, Eucharistic minister and Vacation Bible School aide. Jessica works at her family farm and at a local Dairy King. "Jessica has proven herself to be a determined student who uses her natural academic ability to the fullest," added one of her teachers.

Everyone at Pioneer expresses our sincere congratulations to each of the winners, and best wishes for the future to each student who participated in the 2009 program.

Shocking? May is National Electrical Safety Month

Electrical problems in older homes account for nearly 55,000 fires every year. These blazes cause more than 500 deaths, injure more than 1,400 and rack up \$1.4 billion in property damage.

The risk of such fires is significant, since half of all homes in the United States were constructed and wired prior to 1973, according to the U.S. Census Bureau — before the advent of garage door openers or home computers. Even more telling, one-third of U.S. homes were built even before hair dryers or electric can openers were invented!

Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) has created a checklist that lets consumers identify electrical dangers commonly found in each room of their home. Owners of older homes can upgrade their electric systems with newer fire prevention technology, such as arc-fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs). These advanced electronic circuit breakers detect dangerous conditions in a home's wiring and cut off power before a fire develops.

Additionally, those living in older homes with children can install tamper-resistant receptacles. These devices look like normal electrical outlets, although they have a built-in shutter system that prevents children from inserting foreign objects into the slots. Use of tamper-resistant receptacles would prevent most of the 2,400 burns suffered by children each year from outlets.

More information and resources relating to National Electrical Safety Month can be found at www.electricalsafety.org.

Call before you dig — 811

Whether you are planning to do it yourself or hire a professional, smart digging means calling 811 before each job. Homeowners often make risky assumptions about whether or not they should get their utility lines marked, *but every digging job requires a call* — putting in a sprinkler system or a swimming pool, even small projects like putting in a new basketball pole or planting trees and shrubs.



If you hit an underground utility line while digging, you can harm yourself or those around you, disrupt service to an entire neighborhood and potentially be responsible for fines and repair costs.

For more information, visit the Web site

www.call811.com

*To observe Memorial Day
both Pioneer offices will be closed on Monday, May 25.*

The offices will reopen on Tuesday, May 26, at 8 a.m.

*Emergency service always is available by calling
1-800-762-0997.*



To your TREES' health!

by *DANNY BAGWELL, Vegetation Manager*

I believe it's safe to assume most trees are healthy. We can enjoy their beauty and appreciate their ability to recycle carbon dioxide, as well as bask in the shade most trees provide. As a forester and arborist, and through my experience as vegetation manager at Pioneer Electric, I have seen many healthy trees, but I think it's important to realize some trees might not be as healthy as you think.

During the windstorm in September 2008, Pioneer's service area experienced a bit of a surprise with unpredicted extremely high winds. The experts' prediction included winds around 30 mph. Winds soared to more than 70 mph gusts that sustained for a number of hours before letting up. Consequently, trees and power lines came down and the darkness fell before anyone could really get a good idea of what we would discover the next morning. Trees were torn down, split, uprooted and turned into a pile of brush within a matter of hours — trees that appeared healthy. Ironically, after the storm we noticed the tall dead trees we have seen looming along the wood-lines and fields didn't fall; they were still there.

Was this just the weather to blame? I mean this is the Midwest and we don't get this kind of weather in Ohio. The closest we come to this is a tornado. We're not in a coastal part of the country, so the most we see of a hurricane is a good amount of rain. Nor are we located in the Plains where tornadoes are such a common event that it barely makes the news.

Or was it something more? So, what's on the horizon?

Your trees should be inspected to ensure their stability and health. Just as you would consult with a specialized doctor, trees should be inspected by a certified arborist or consulting forester. These folks can quickly see things that most overlook. Consultation is rather inexpensive and can give you a big picture of what needs to be done on your property. With the wind and ice events over the last few years, trees may be growing into a path of failure awaiting the next weather hiccup. Just because they survived Mother Nature the last time, doesn't make them super trees, maybe just lucky. If your trees are near the house or public areas, special attention should be followed to avoid a catastrophe later on.

Now, I'd like to reference again those tall dead trees still standing. It takes years of training and experience to learn how trees fall, fail and break down — even then you can get a rude-awakening. It was said the trees that failed were a long time coming, a "thinning of the herd." This is not to suggest that the tree community is now strong and vital to sustain another. As we transition from cold to warmer seasons, be careful out there!



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