

Member Engagement Key to Load Management Success

Electric utilities are no different than other industries in that we use a lot of terms that make little or no sense to the rest of world. We talk about amps, kWhs and VARs, of OCRs, LMRs and CTs ... and we talk about Load Management.

Load Management is a broad term that can have several meanings. At St. Croix Electric Cooperative (SCEC), the Load Management Program is used to keep the amount of electricity consumed by our members in balance with the amount of electricity generated by our power supplier. When properly administered, load management will reduce the need for future power plants, so a member could accurately say load management is energy conservation at work.

The most popular load managed at SCEC is an electric water heater. Water heaters are ideal for load management because of their ability to store energy for long periods of time as hot water. During times when the electric current to a water tank is interrupted, there is still a large amount of stored hot water ready to use at the turn of the faucet. So, it's pretty much "business as usual" for those who take part in the water heater Load Management Program. Because this program is so important, St. Croix Electric applies a \$3 monthly credit to the electric bills of participating members.

Another significant load on St. Croix Electric's distribution system is central air conditioning. The greatest demand on our nation's electrical network happens during the hottest days of the year. When temperatures soar to 90° with high humidity, every business and residence has their air conditioner running. St. Croix Electric's Load Management Program allows the compressor portion of an air conditioner to be interrupted in 15 minute intervals. The compressor runs for 15 minutes, then shuts down for 15 minutes, until the load on the electric system is eased. During the control period, the distribution fan continues to run and circulate air.

Other electrical loads that cause high demand on St. Croix Electric's distribution system such as irrigation wells and, in some cases, complete dairy operations, can also be part of the Load Management Program. Irrigation wells, often requiring 100 + HP electric motors, are controlled weekdays from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. during the months of June, July and August. Standby generators on dairy farms are activated when the load on the electric system in western Wisconsin becomes critical.

Load Management is a "win/win" for everyone. It helps our power supplier (Dairyland Power Cooperative) more accurately make purchases of energy they may not be able to produce from their own generators. It keeps older, less efficient power generating plants from having to run, reducing the amount of pollutants released into the atmosphere. It reduces the demand charges SCEC has to pay, so we can continue to supply members with low-cost energy.

Members who participate in the Load Management Program can conveniently check if their qualifying equipment is being controlled by clicking on "Load Management" at the top of this page, then clicking the blue words "Residential Load Management Status." The matrix that appears will list the appliances that are currently under load management.

Members with questions or who are ready to enroll in the Load Management Program, may call SCEC at 715.796.7000. There is no cost for the control box or its installation.