



THE TAOS NEWS

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My Turn

Kit Carson Electric is back!

John Plummer

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Five years ago Kit Carson Electric Co-op (KCEC) requested a substantial rate increase. Considerable alarm was raised about the amount of that increase, but I was more concerned about the form that increase was taking.

A large fee, called a "system charge," was to be charged everyone with a hookup. That was done, it was claimed, on the basis of fairness; everyone should pay his share. However, the result was just the opposite. Households with lower income would see a large rate increase, while the rate for the wealthiest households actually went down. Furthermore, no reward for conservation was provided; in fact those who did the best job of conserving energy were penalized the most. I testified to this effect to the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission. Whether a result of that testimony or not, KCEC was required to reduce the system charge, and to institute at least a modest progression of rates based on usage; more costs more.

KCEC does not give up easily. Last week I received a notice of a proposed change in rates, and they're back. The system charge is up more than 40 percent. The modest progression in kWhr charge has been eliminated. We are back to square one.

The fact is that it takes more energy to support a 5,000-square-foot house than it does to support a 900-squarefoot. casita or a double-wide. Higher income households use more electricity. A quick web search will produce several documents supporting this observation.

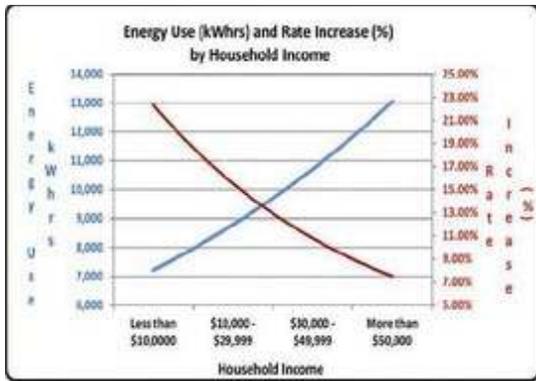
The attached graph illustrates the relationship between income level and energy use, and in turn the relationship between energy use and the impact of the rate change. It is all too clear that lower income households will bear the brunt of this change.

But, claims KCEC, Taos is City Different! Rich people here have installed solar systems, they aren't using KCEC power, and they aren't paying their fair share of the grid. A quick drive around Weimer or Upper Colonias will quickly discover that fallacy.

I asked if KCEC had any data to support their claim. They said that they thought they did. I asked if they would send me a copy. They said they would. They didn't. They don't have the data.

If this change goes through as proposed Taos will again be City Different!, but not in a good way.

John Plummer is a resident of Taos.



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