

Ergs, Joules & Such

Notes On Energy Savings for the Rural Water Community and Maybe Others



Continuing with our look at water operational practices or related issues that may influence energy use, I thought we should review the national Cap and Trade topic because it could dramatically influence power bills. Cap and Trade (CT) is just a popular catch phrase to denote greenhouse gas (GHG) control. So, what is it and where is it?

- ❖ First of all, CT really became well known and popular as a pollution management technique in the acid rain issue of a few years ago. In this scenario, sulfur dioxide emissions (the principal cause of acid rain) were controlled by:
 - Setting limits on sulfur dioxide emissions – “Caps”
 - Describing these limits in terms of permit units or credits – usually tons of sulfur dioxide
 - Allowing industries and others to meet these limits by purchasing credits from other industries with excess credits, and
 - Establishing an organized system for “Trading” these credits on the open market.
- ❖ Representatives Waxman and Markey attempted to pass a Climate Bill that would have made Cap and Trade for greenhouse gas emissions national law, but it now appears this bill is dead.
- ❖ However, EPA and presumably the Administration have taken the approach of trying to control greenhouse gases through existing regulatory authority by:
 - Declaring greenhouse gases and specifically carbon dioxide a danger to public health and thus regulated under the Clean Air Act.
 - Setting limits for GHG pollutants.
 - Issuing permits to large potential contributors such as power plants.

- Permitting of large contributors was set to begin in January of 2011.
- ❖ What’s all this going to cost? Estimates vary, of course, but it will be expensive and surely will result in higher electric bills. Here are some estimates:
 - The GAO estimates electricity costs could increase thirty to eighty percent.
 - Oregon Public Utilities Commission says customer bills could go up \$400 per year
 - Center for Budget Priorities (liberal think tank) says bills could increase by \$750/year
- ❖ Is there any positive news in all this? Probably depends on your point of view, but.....
 - As recently as this month, New Hampshire is poised to withdraw from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a ten-state compact in the northeast, citing economic concerns.
 - Texas and sixteen other states are battling EPA on regulation of greenhouse gases.
- ❖ **Or maybe you like this.....Gassy cows contribute sixty billion liters of methane a year to the US atmosphere!!! Why worry about power plants?**

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