



EDISON ELECTRIC INSTITUTE DIVISION DIARY

Customer Services and Marketing

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EEI, EPA Promote "Electric Backyard"

Mowing, grilling, leaf-blowing, and weed-whacking with electricity instead of gasoline will improve air quality, said leaders of the nation's electric utility industry and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at a press conference held May 24, 1994 in Washington, DC.

Under sunlit skies outside EEI's Pennsylvania Avenue headquarters, EEI President Thomas Kuhn announced a special promotion that will offer discounts on electric grills to customers of 18 electric utilities. The "Electric Backyard" program, being kicked off in time for the Memorial Day weekend, will enable customers of participating utilities to receive discounts of \$50 on a Thermos electric grill.

EPA Deputy Assistant Administrator for Policy Karl Hausker called the new program an important step toward cleaner air. EPA recently proposed the first national emissions standards for gas-powered lawnmowers and garden equipment, noting that about ten percent of the nation's air pollution is generated by off-road engines, including garden tools and equipment.

Hausker, who arrived at the event in an electric pick-up truck sponsored by Virginia Power, noted that a similar event was held at the same site two years ago, aimed at promoting use of cordless electric lawnmowers. At that time, Hausker said, a cordless electric lawnmower cost \$495, and there were less than 5,000 units on the market. "Today, there are more than 40,000 units on the market, and they will sell for around \$200," he said.

"This program proves that voluntary partnerships work, and we need more of these innovative programs," Hausker added. "EPA thanks utilities and manufacturers for helping their customers and employees improve the environment."

Under the Electric Backyard promotion, customers of participating utilities will be invited to turn in their old charcoal or propane grills at designated sites—which could be recycling centers, or at highly visible locations such as a state fair. The customer will receive a voucher for a \$50 discount on a new Thermos

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EEI President Thomas Kuhn demonstrates his barbecue skills on a Thermos electric grill during EEI's "Electric Backyard" promotion on May 24.

500 Attend Marketing Conference

Nearly 500 people—a record level of attendance—convened in Boston, MA May 18-20, 1994 for EEI's Annual Marketing Conference and Exposition, which featured more than 70 booths and displays with the latest products, services, programs and technologies related to electric utility marketing. Many participants also attended a blizzard of industry committee and board meetings that preceded the conference.

"The record attendance and trade ally participation in this year's Marketing Conference points out, once again, that marketing continues to play a critical role in electric utilities' potential success during this period of industry transition, and that the EEI Annual Marketing Conference is the year's best opportunity—bar none—for industry leaders to keep their edge!" said EEI Vice President Tom Morron.

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CPSC Issues Heat Tape Alert

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is asking electric utilities' cooperation in raising public awareness of the risk of injury and death associated with improperly installed heat tapes.

CPSC is urging homeowners, including residents of mobile homes, to replace uncertified heat tapes that are more than three years old with certified ones that meet recognized voluntary standards.

Electric heat tapes, which resemble electric cords, are used in winter to keep water pipes from freezing. They are usually installed in attics and crawl spaces, and are commonly used in mobile homes.

According to CPSC, electric heat tapes are involved in about 2,000 fires per year, resulting in about ten deaths and 100 injuries. CPSC urges consumers to reduce this risk by using only certified heat tapes, which have three-prong plugs; older uncertified ones have two-prong plugs. Three organizations, including Underwriters Laboratories Inc., are certifying heat tapes to meet recognized national voluntary standards.

CPSC also warns that even certified heat tapes must be installed and used properly in order to provide the highest level of safety. An article listing guidelines for selecting, inspecting, installing and replacing heat tapes is available from Elizabeth Haught at CPSC, 301/504-0788. ■

Customer Research Conference Scheduled

EEI and the University of Georgia are co-sponsoring a comprehensive week-long course on customer research for electric utilities, October 9-14, 1994 at the University of Georgia in Athens, GA. The course is designed for individuals who use and conduct customer research in electric utilities, or who need to learn more about customer research because of the importance it plays in their marketing or corporate communications responsibilities.

The course will cover marketing and communication principles; designing research projects; conducting qualitative research; sampling and measuring customer behavior; analysis of customer data; conducting communications research; customer research management; and strategic customer research. The all-inclusive fee includes tuition, materials, living accommodations, and most meals. For information, call Donna Wilson at the University of Georgia, 706/542-1964. ■

People

Charles Rayburn ("Ray") Sanders, Manager of Administrative Support Services for Alabama Power Company, died from leukemia on April 19, 1994. He was 56. He chaired EEI's Commercial/Industrial Marketing Committee during 1992-1993, and held other positions in the Committee prior to taking on the Chairmanship. Sanders worked for Alabama Power for 35 years. ■



Ian A. Forbes, Executive Vice President of Energy Research Group, Inc., died on May 21, 1994, apparently in a boating accident, while sailing in Maine. He was 49. Born in Belfast, Ireland, Forbes graduated cum laude from Memorial University of Newfoundland and earned a doctorate from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He co-founded Energy Research Group, Inc. of Waltham, MA as well as the Independent Energy Corporation of Hartford, CT. ■

Utilities Can Reduce Bad Debt Expense

While discussion of utility uncollectibles often focuses on residential customers, today's increased bankruptcy filings by nonresidential customers are causing increased bad debt expense for many utilities. Utilities can reduce this portion of their operating costs by implementing all prudent measures available, says Yardley, PA attorney Gilbert L. Hamberg, who represents a number of EEI member utilities.

In a paper available to EEI members, Hamberg explains statutes designed to protect utilities from nonresidential bad debt expense. One statute, for example, provides utilities "adequate assurance of payment" not provided to other creditors under a bankruptcy proceeding.

This statute, 11 U.S.C., Section 366(b), allows utilities to seek relief so that each nonresidential customer pays its bills in full. In addition to seeking relief under this statute, utilities should have security deposits from nonbankrupt nonresidential customers, and terminate such customers for nonpayment of bills upon the requisite notice under their state laws. For a copy of the paper, contact Gilbert L. Hamberg, Attorney at Law, 215/321-6909. ■