

What They're Saying: EPA's Power Plant Rule

Key Findings

- On May 9, 2024, the Environmental Protection Agency published final rules to limit greenhouse gas emissions from existing coal and new natural gas power plants. Also on May 9, NRECA filed a lawsuit challenging the EPA's power plant rule.
- Electric cooperative leaders and the nation's grid operators have spoken out about their concerns with the EPA rule and how it will harm electricity reliability and affordability.

On May 9, 2024, the Environmental Protection Agency published [final rules to limit greenhouse gas emissions](#) from existing coal and new natural gas power plants. In general, starting in 2032, the rules require increasingly stringent carbon dioxide emissions controls at coal and natural gas power plants. Requirements would vary based on the type of unit, how frequently it operates, and how long it will operate.

These new rules will be devastating to many of America's electric cooperatives. That's why also on May 9, NRECA [filed a lawsuit](#) challenging the EPA over its unlawful power plant rule.

Here is what electric cooperative leaders and grid operators are saying about the EPA's rule:

Jim Matheson, CEO, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association: "EPA's power plant rule is unlawful, unreasonable and unachievable. It exceeds EPA's authority and poses an immediate threat to the American electric grid. Reliable electricity is the foundation of the American economy. EPA's rule recklessly undermines that foundation by forcing the premature closure of power plants that are critical to keeping the lights on – especially as America increasingly relies on electricity to power the economy." [LINK](#)

Tony Campbell, CEO, East Kentucky Power Cooperative: "If we go down a path to where reliability suffers, it will initially suffer in the hottest days of the summer, or the coldest days of the winter, and the end consumer is going to suffer from these rules if we don't supply the power. ... There are a lot of people that depend on power for health and wellbeing, and you could have a loss of life." [LINK](#)

Mac McLennan, President and CEO, Minnkota Power Cooperative: "We want to be part of the solution, but there needs to be an understanding that America's electric grid can't be completely transformed overnight. ... People use the phrase 'keeping the lights on,' but it's so much more than that. It's keeping families warm in the winter, helping American businesses stay competitive, ensuring hospitals and essential resources are available at all times and protecting our national security. These are things that depend on a reliable electric grid, and we should take that seriously." [LINK](#)

Shannon Mikula, Environmental Manager, Minnkota Power Cooperative: "Although Minnkota supports investment in carbon capture and storage technology, the proposed rule overstates the technology's current and future capabilities as well as the timeline in which CCS can feasibly be deployed. ... The math does not add up." [LINK](#)

D.W. Rickerson, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Electric Reliability Council of Texas, Inc.: “ERCOT is in the midst of an explosion of new electricity demand. ... If insufficient generation is available at any time, ERCOT must direct utilities to disconnect customers from the grid. This can have significant consequences for consumers who depend on electricity for critical, life-sustaining functions during periods of extreme weather.” [LINK](#)

Erin Dukart, Director of Environmental Services, Basin Electric Power Cooperative: “The regulation attempts to force utilities into a decision to either install unproven, extremely expensive technology on an unrealistic timeline that relies on infrastructure that is not yet available, or prematurely retire power generation facilities. Either option presents a threat to the affordable and reliable electric generation Basin Electric’s members enjoy.” [LINK](#)

Pat O’Loughlin, President and CEO, Buckeye Power: “EPA has again proposed an unrealistic and unachievable set of regulations on the production of electricity. EPA mandates the use of unproven technologies and sets unrealistic compliance limits on power plants. They have ignored warnings that these rules will increase cost and threaten the reliability of our national electric system at a time when we are experiencing growing demand and already increasing costs. Unfortunately, EPA rules will harm electricity consumers and our economy while promising dubious environmental benefit.” [LINK](#)

Caleb Jones, Executive Vice President and CEO, Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives: “The result for Missouri’s electric cooperatives, and in fact all electricity consumers, will be more expensive and less reliable electricity.” [LINK](#)

Lee Tafanelli, CEO, Kansas Electric Cooperatives: “The rules will force many coal-fired plants across the nation to shut down by 2032, exacerbating threats to reliability by reducing key generating resources that are always available – coal and gas — as opposed to solar and wind that are intermittent energy sources. And all of this at a time when demand for electricity is skyrocketing. We believe the EPA underestimates the rules’ costs significantly and is ignoring our nation’s ongoing reliability challenges. As power generation goes offline, higher energy costs for all consumers will be the result.” [LINK](#)

Mike Couick, CEO, Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina: “While we share the EPA’s goal of protecting the environment, we can’t support a plan that jeopardizes the reliability of South Carolina’s electric grid while driving up power bills. We need a realistic path forward.” [LINK](#)

Rob Hochstetler, CEO, Central Electric Power Cooperative: “South Carolina is one of the fastest-growing states in the nation. We urgently need more electricity, not less. These regulations make it harder for electric cooperatives to keep up, threatening our ability to keep the lights on for residents and businesses across our state.” [LINK](#)

Southwest Power Pool: “SPP sees no slowing in the growth of demand for electricity or in the growth of new load types such as data centers, cryptocurrency mines, and electric vehicles. SPP is concerned that the current pace of new generation development will be insufficient to offset current and projected resource retirement trends and demand increases.” [LINK](#)

PJM: “The future demand for electricity cannot be met simply through renewables given their intermittent nature. Yet in the very years when we are projecting significant increases in the demand for electricity, the (EPA’s power plant rule) may work to drive premature retirement of coal units that provide essential reliability services and dissuade new gas resources from coming online.” [LINK](#)