

business

A bright idea for Delta-Montrose Electric

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Delta-Montrose Electric Association is giving its members free compact fluorescent light bulbs, a move the co-op said could ultimately save up to \$4 million in power costs.

The utility's 25,000 Western Slope members will be given coupons good for up to six of the energy-efficient bulbs. It also will give the bulbs away at various events. The co-op does not expect all of its members to use the coupons, which are redeemable at Wal-Mart stores in Montrose and Delta, and is projecting that it will give away 100,000 bulbs.

"Our giving six free CFLs to all our residential members will help them manage rising energy costs," said Dan McClendon, Delta-Montrose's general manager. "This program is a sound investment for the co-op, too, as it will help Delta-Montrose reduce the amount of expensive peak power we need to purchase."

A 13-watt compact fluorescent puts out the same amount of light as a 60-watt incandescent bulb, but it uses 78 percent less power. Depending on the manufacturer, each compact fluorescent can last up to 10,000 hours, compared with 750 hours for an incandescent bulb. The giveaway began Friday at the utility's annual meeting in Montrose and will extend through the summer.

Delta-Montrose is paying about \$2 for each bulb, but the co-op will receive a \$1 rebate each from its wholesale power supplier, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association. Delta-Montrose estimates that if customers plug the CFLs into their most commonly-used light fixtures, peak electrical demand will be reduced by about 6 megawatts — the output of a small power plant.

First-year savings to Delta-Montrose in wholesale power purchases are projected to be \$322,000, more than offsetting the giveaway's costs. Total savings are estimated at \$4 million over the bulbs' lifetimes.

"Money saved on energy bills will most likely be spent on other goods and services in our local economy," McClendon said, "providing an important economic boost to our communities."

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