



POWER-GRAM

A Monthly Newsletter for Members of

**OTERO COUNTY ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

**January
2017**

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Predicting the Future of Nuclear Power

By: Paul Wesslund

If you want to take a big risk, try predicting the future of nuclear power.

Nuclear power generates about 20 percent of the electricity in the country. Currently in the U.S., 100 nuclear reactors operate at 60 plants in 30 states.

There are reasons to think that should grow dramatically—nuclear reactors run reliably 24-7 and produce none of the greenhouse gases that are linked to climate change. There are also reasons to be surprised it's allowed to produce as big a share of our electricity as it does—radioactivity and using nuclear fuel are complicated and dangerous, and the engineering and security needed to keep nuclear power safe and reliable can be expensive.

The U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration predicts nuclear power will be producing a slightly smaller share of electricity in the U.S. through the year 2040. In the rest of the world, nuclear capacity is expected to double.

On the other hand, a major financial analysis firm says that slight drop in U.S. nuclear power could change. Fitch Ratings said last year that federal climate change rules and support for new, more efficient technologies, "could slow the decline in nuclear power generation."

Dale Bradshaw, an expert on electric generation and distribution who works with electric co-ops, sees reasons to expect an increase in nuclear power. Bradshaw, CEO of Electrivation LLC and a consultant to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, says a main block to the growth of nuclear power is the current relatively low costs of natural gas, wind and solar. He notes that natural gas prices have started to rise and that renewable energy subsidies are set to expire in a few years. He also says research into advanced nuclear reactors will lead to large improvements in safety and efficiency.

One sign of that innovation came this year when the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) applied to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for permission to explore "small modular reactor units" that would be easier and less expensive to build and operate.

In June 2016, TVA connected a new nuclear unit to the power grid, making it the first new reactor to come online since 1996, and four additional new units are coming online over the next five years.

The future of nuclear energy will depend on a variety of factors. But today, nuclear energy remains reliable and affordable and an important component of our nation's fuel mix.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FORM OCEC

Are you a high school senior planning to attend college in the fall? Did you know OCEC offers a scholarship to area seniors? For further information on applying, please contact your local OCEC office or visit our website at www.ocec-inc.com.

Application deadline for the 2017-2018 school year will be
March 15, 2017.





5 DISTRACTED DRIVING STATS YOU SHOULD KNOW



3,179



Number of people killed each year in vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers

(Federal Communications Commission, 2014)



1 in 4

The probability that a vehicle crash involved a cellphone

(National Safety Council, 2014)

60%



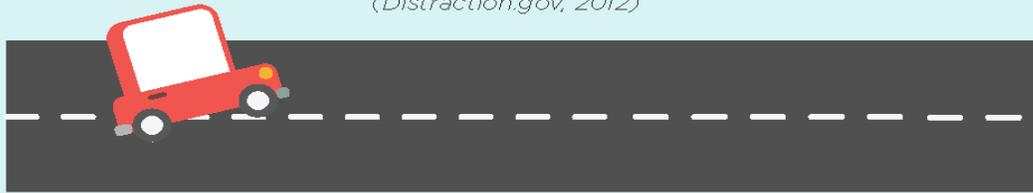
Percentage of people who use cellphones while driving

(Harris Poll, 2011)

21-24

 Age group most likely to send a text or email while driving

(Distraction.gov, 2012)



4X



How much using a cellphone increases your risk of crashing

(National Safety Council, 2014)

