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More than a mere 'Flip of a Switch': Charting the Course to Power Tomorrow

Flipping a light switch might seem mundane, but how many consider the extraordinary ingenuity behind it?

The simple act of lighting up a room involves a vast network of power generation, transmission, and distribution systems. Yet most of us, including me, overlook this marvel of engineering and human achievement.

What would life be like without that marvelous enabler of modernity? A recent news article raised the question, "What's more important: Keeping the lights on 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, or solving the climate crisis?" The article sparked debate on our willingness to accept blackout risks for the sake of doing our part to mitigate a climate catastrophe.

Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC) has no plans to turn off the power unless it's planned for an infrastructure repair or factors beyond our control dictate that outcome.

Instead, the challenges facing our member-owned Cooperative are generating enough electricity at an affordable price to meet increasing demand in the years to come. Industry experts estimate electric power demand could increase by well over 50 percent in the next 20 years, with additional consumption for electric vehicles, heat pumps, data centers, home devices, and other modern tools and conveniences.

So, where's this power surge coming from? And at what cost?

SSVEC is working aggressively on both questions and has taken steps toward assuring a bright – and well-lighted – future, and I think it is important to shine some light on our major initiatives:

- **Apache Generating Station:** Apache Generating Station: Collaborating with AEPSCO, we're planning to onboard four high-efficiency natural gas turbines. These units uphold our dedication to cleaner energy and are designed with future-ready capability, particularly the potential to utilize hydrogen. Moreover, these turbines form the backbone of our reliability, facilitating the addition of ambitious solar projects like:
- **McNeal Solar site:** An impressive 20-megawatt facility, integrated with a battery system, has been crafted by Silicon Ranch. This eco-powerhouse is expected to energize more than 3,000 homes seamlessly.

- **AEPSCO Solar:** AEPSCO's groundbreaking 200-megawatt solar initiative is on the horizon. SSVEC is set to harness a robust 40 megawatts from this project once it's operational.

Embarking on such a significant transition comes with its fair share of challenges. But at the heart of our strategy is a promise: We will safeguard against any hasty or premature action jeopardizing reliability or affordability. Transitioning to a cleaner future requires meticulous planning and execution, and we're determined to get it right. The incredible dedication, brilliance, and expertise of the employees at SSVEC and AEPSCO make this vision a reality. Their unwavering commitment ensures that as we move forward, we do so with caution and ambition, striking the right balance between innovation and reliability.

As we flip the switch toward a cleaner future, we remain committed to innovating to keep power affordable and reliable. The horizon looks bright for SSVEC, and we're thrilled to light the way. ■

