Frequently Asked Questions About REC’s Air Conditioning Load Management Program

What is load management?
Demand is how much electricity is needed at any given moment and varies by day of week and time of day. Load management, also called demand response, means reducing electrical loads when energy use is high, such as hot summer afternoons. For example, the demand for electricity is usually highest on weekday hot summer afternoons. Businesses and factories are operating; people are at home running air conditioning at the hottest time of the day. This is when electricity is least available and most expensive to buy. It is also when the electrical grid is most strained and can cause brown or black outs. On the other hand, the demand is lowest at night. That’s why it’s smart to run appliances then.

How does REC’s air conditioning load management/demand response work?
With your permission, a demand response unit is installed by a qualified HVAC technician near the compressor on your central air conditioning unit. During periods of high demand, REC will send a radio signal to the demand response unit to turn off the air conditioning for a few minutes out of each hour. A few minutes later it receives another signal to turn the air conditioning back on. Since the fan on your unit continues to circulate already cooled air, you probably won’t even notice.

How does REC manage (lower) the load?
By cycling off enough air conditioning units, REC can usually lower the peak demand so we avoid buying electricity when it is the most expensive. You can help lower the load on any hot summer day by following energy saving tips listed on our Web site www.myrec.coop.

Can I really make a difference by participating?
Yes. By participating you and others help reduce the strain on the electrical grid, thus averting potential blackouts and brownouts. Because less electricity is needed, REC does not have to buy as much, which in turn may help delay the need to build power plants, potentially reducing future greenhouse gasses. It all adds up to lower wholesale electric prices.

Is everyone eligible for the air conditioning program?
At this time only owner/occupied single family homes that have their own free standing HVAC units are eligible. A limited number of demand response units will be installed this year and participation is on a first come, first served basis.

Why is REC conducting this program?
REC is always looking for ways to keep electricity costs affordable for our members. Demand response programs like this are one way we do that.

Does it cost anything to participate?
There is no cost to participate in this program. Plus, you get the peace of mind of knowing that you are helping to reduce electricity costs and helping the environment.

Who installs the demand response unit?
Installations are performed by qualified HVAC technicians from our business partner Good Cents. GoodCents is an authorized independent contractor for The Electric Cooperatives of Virginia, Maryland and Delaware.

When should I expect to see the $25 credit on my REC bill?
The one time $25 bill credit should appear on your REC bill after the end of the summer cooling season (after Sept. 30th). One credit per household.

Do I have to be home to have the demand response unit installed?
No, the demand response unit is installed near your outdoor unit. If you have a locked gate or pets in the yard, we are happy to set an appointment that is convenient for you. Otherwise, the technician will leave a door hanger notifying you when the demand response unit has been installed.
What does the demand response unit look like and where will it be installed?
The demand response unit is a 9 x 8 inch plastic box mounted on the house or foundation.

Will the demand response unit damage my air conditioner?
Not at all. The load management demand response unit simply turns off the electricity to your equipment for a few minutes and then turns it on again. It will not damage the unit. Typically units are cycled only a few days each summer.

When will my AC unit be cycled?
Cycling events may only occur a few times a month from May through September. If the weather is mild, cycling may not happen at all. Control cycles typically occur Monday through Friday, usually during 2 PM to 7 PM and will be cycled over no more than a 4 hour period. Cycling is not usually conducted on weekends or holidays.

How do I know if my air conditioner is being cycled?
Locate the box located next to your AC unit. An amber light can be observed when cycling.

Will I be uncomfortable if you cycle off the air conditioning when it’s hot?
Not likely, since the fan will continue to circulate already cooled air. Most people do not even notice when the demand response unit has cycled the unit.

Will I see a reduction in my monthly bill by participating?
Typically your bill will stay the same since you are simply shifting your air conditioning use to a different time of the day just a few days a season. Everyone will save money by keeping the cost of electricity lower by reducing the need to purchase wholesale power when it is most expensive.

How does such a program help reduce greenhouse gases?
Such programs may delay the need for new power generation in the future.

What if I am having company and do not want my unit controlled?
No problem. Simply call 1-866-414-3807. They will be able to answer your questions and flag your account not to receive a radio signal those days if a session is scheduled.

If I don’t like the program, can I opt out?
Yes. If for whatever reason you are not happy, call 1-866-414-3807.

I own a business, can I participate?
Not at this time. Currently, REC is only accepting members in owner/occupied single family residences.

What do I do if I have a problem?
If you have any special circumstances such as an unexpected move, or a broken AC unit just call 866-414-3807. A representative will address your situation.