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Lower electricity rate for new or expanding industries announced by electric cooperatives and Santee Cooper

(Columbia, S.C.) – Utilities whose systems make up the largest electric power system in South Carolina today announced a new, lower electric rate designed to attract jobs and industrial expansion to the state.

Twenty independent, member-owned electric cooperatives and state-owned electric and water utility Santee Cooper together provide power in all 46 counties in the state.

The economic development rate is for new or expanding industries and could result in savings of as much as 20 percent on electricity costs to an industry, depending on the size and characteristics of the electric load. For example, a plant operating on three work shifts (24 hours) would benefit more than a plant operating only one shift.

“Even in the face of increasing power-production fuel prices for coal and natural gas, we must look for ways to grow the state’s economy,” said Ron Calcaterra, CEO of Central Electric Power Cooperative, electricity supplier to the electric cooperatives.

An emphasis on industrial growth by the cooperatives and Santee Cooper is particularly important because they provide power to much of the areas where expansion is likely to take place — rural and suburban areas.

“One of our goals is to promote economic growth in South Carolina by attracting capital investment and business expansion,” said Lonnie Carter, president and CEO of Santee Cooper. “By partnering with Central and the electric cooperatives in the development of this new rate, we’ve produced another key incentive for recruiters to bring additional jobs to our state.”

Santee Cooper sells more electricity to Central than to any other customer, and Central purchases much of its power needs from Santee Cooper. Together, they serve more consumers than any other electric utility in the state. The new economic development rate is available to any industrial customer that is served by the co-ops or Santee Cooper.

Central and Santee Cooper also promote growth through their jointly funded South Carolina Power Team, the only statewide non-governmental economic development organization.

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“The rural areas of South Carolina are becoming increasingly attractive to new industry,” said Ralph Thomas, president of the S.C. Power Team. “Economic development incentive rates will be a tremendous asset in bringing new businesses and jobs to those areas.”

The new economic development rate reduces the demand charge over the first four years after a qualifying industry begins operation. Typically, the demand charge could represent as much as 40 percent of an industry’s total power bill. The rate offers a discount off of the “firm” industrial rate, has an eight-year commitment, workforce and capital investment requirements, and a four-year discount period.

The new rate will be offered to the 20 electric cooperatives in the Central Electric system effective February 1. The final rate for the cooperatives may not be completed for several weeks, but any current projects considering a cooperative-served site will have access to the new rate. The rate is available until Dec. 31, 2014.

While industrial rates are typically private contractual information, the boards of Central and Santee Cooper have approved the more aggressive pricing approach.

“Governor Nikki Haley has emphasized employment growth, new jobs, as being key to a healthy state economy,” said Mike Couick, CEO of the state association of electric cooperatives. “And I’ve told the governor’s staff that there’s nothing that would help the 1.5 million South Carolinians we serve more than an improved economy. So, we’re pleased to be working toward the same goal. We’re glad to do our part.”

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The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, Inc. is the state association of independent, member-owned electric cooperatives. More than 1.5 million South Carolinians in all 46 counties use power provided by electric cooperatives. Together, the co-ops operate the state’s largest electric power system with more than 70,000 miles of power lines across 70 percent of the state. More information is available at www.ecsc.org.

Central Electric Power Cooperative provides wholesale electric service to 20 electric distribution cooperatives in South Carolina. Its transmission system was designed to serve the coordinated and integrated Central-Santee Cooper system. Central purchases most of its power from Santee Cooper, though significant future power purchases will come from Duke Energy through an agreement that begins to phase in next year. www.cepci.org.

Santee Cooper is South Carolina’s state-owned electric and water utility, and the state’s largest power producer. The ultimate source of electricity for 2 million South Carolinians, Santee Cooper is dedicated to being the state’s leading resource for improving the quality of life for the people of South Carolina. For more information, visit www.santeecooper.com.

The South Carolina Power Team represents the electric cooperatives and Santee Cooper in their industry recruitment efforts for South Carolina. The South Carolina Power Team provides professional, cost-free site location counseling to help new industrial and distribution facilities find a home and existing ones expand. Further information is available at www.SCpowerteam.com.