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## Electric Co-ops Lead in Satisfaction

By Michael W. Kahn *Published: April 19, 2011 @ 11:32 am* In Top Story, Trends, Reports & Analyses

Electric cooperatives received the highest score for consumer satisfaction—surpassing investor-owned and municipal utilities—in a survey released April 19.



[1]

Together We Save is one of the ways Touchstone Energy is helping consumers, who are highly satisfied with their co-ops. (Image By: Touchstone Energy)

consumer advocacy organizations.”

Jim Bausell, Touchstone Energy COO, noted that ACSI’s utility study is no different than the other surveys it does. “It’s exactly the same methodology, the same satisfaction questions that are used on the surveys of other American corporations,” Bausell said. “We are higher than the highest-rated airline, Southwest,” whose most recent score was 79.

Looking at some of the specific areas, electric co-ops have the highest score in consumer expectations, 84, as compared to 78 and 77 for IOUs and munis, respectively. ACSI said this was “not surprising given the significantly higher level” of member satisfaction.

“For electric service, the most critical component of customer satisfaction is power reliability—the ability to provide power without brownouts or outages on a regular basis, coupled with the ability to restore service quickly when outages do occur,” said Claes Fornell, ACSI founder.

Co-ops also have the highest perceptions of value for money by consumers, scoring 79. IOUs trailed at 70, with munis at 66.

Not that any of this surprises Bausell. He said co-ops are “staying tuned in to the issues that really matter” to consumer-members, who, in turn, have given co-ops a “vote of confidence.”

“Our core theme is connecting with members on pocketbook issues,” Bausell said. “In [Together We Save](#),<sup>[3]</sup> we have the only national energy efficiency promotion campaign in the nation.”

There is also the [Co-op Connections Card](#),<sup>[4]</sup> now deployed by 354 co-ops. “That’s 29.6 million cards and key fobs out there,” Bausell noted. “Every time they bring out their Co-op

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) has, for the first time, included co-ops as a separate category. In the first quarter of 2011, [Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives](#)<sup>[2]</sup> not only topped that category with an ACSI score of 83, but that number was the highest among energy utilities. Non-Touchstone Energy co-ops had an ACSI score of 80, making the average score for the entire co-op sector an 82. The score is based on a random sampling of consumer-members.

By comparison, IOUs, as a group, received a score of 74. The highest-ranked IOU offering only electric service was FirstEnergy, scoring 78. Sempra Energy topped the list of IOUs offering both electric and gas service, with an 81.

“These scores validate the unique co-op business model,” said NRECA CEO Glenn English. “Owned by the people they serve, cooperatives put affordable electric bills above profits and dividends. At heart, electric co-ops are local

membership card it re-solidifies the fact that they're a member, they have a membership card, and it's bringing you value every time you use it."

"That attention to helping consumers deal with everyday pressures on their household budgets, I think that's paying off."

Overall, consumer satisfaction with energy utilities received a score of 74.7. That was up 0.8 percent from 2010, marking the fifth consecutive year of improvement. It is also the highest level since 2000.

ACSI is produced by the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business.

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[1] Image: <http://www.ect.coop/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/TWS-Logo.jpg>

[2] Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives :

<http://www.touchstoneenergy.com/Pages/default.aspx>

[3] Together We Save, : <http://www.togetherwesave.com/>

[4] Co-op Connections Card, : <http://www.connections.coop/>

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