

1-10-1996

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Mexico to Begin to Observe Daylight Savings Time this Year

by LADB Staff

Category/Department: Mexico

Published: 1996-01-10

In early January, the Energy Secretariat (SE) announced plans to implement daylight savings time in Mexico this year as a means to conserve energy. Starting on April 7, Mexicans in the country's three time zones will turn back their clocks one hour, matching the practice in the US and 72 other countries. As is the case in most of these countries, Mexico will revert to standard time on the last week of October. In a press conference announcing the change, Energy Secretary Jesus Reyes Heroles said the use of daylight savings time could result in savings equivalent to about 1% of the country's annual electricity usage. He said the savings would also represent the equivalent of the total annual usage in the state of Zacatecas, or 10% of the annual usage of the Mexico City metropolitan area.

Furthermore, Reyes Heroles noted that the reduction in electricity use would result in savings of US\$1.5 billion for the Mexican economy, and in the conservation of 2 million barrels of oil per year. In the press conference, Reyes Heroles emphasized that the decision to change to daylight savings time was not reached unilaterally, since the government held more than 1,400 hearings across the country. He said that daylight savings time would be enacted simultaneously in Mexico's three time zones.

One of these time zones is comprised entirely of the state of Baja California. A second time zone includes the Pacific Coast states of Baja California Sur, Sonora, Sinaloa, and Nayarit. The third time zone comprises the rest of Mexico. Reyes Heroles was joined in the press conference by federal electricity commission director Rogelio Gasca Neri and by Mateo Trevino Gaspari, the head of the government's special energy conservation agency (Fideicomiso de Apoyo al Programa de Ahorro de Energia del Sector Electrico).

Trevino said a change to daylight savings time could help improve productivity by giving businesses more flexibility in determining their work shifts and expanding hours of operation. According to Trevino, a change to daylight savings time in Japan in 1973 was one factor contributing to a surge in economic growth and an improvement in production efficiency. For his part, Gasca Neri suggested the change to daylight savings time could also have social benefits, such as a reduction in the crime rate and in the number of accidents that take place during hours of darkness. "In countries where the change of time is used, there has been a proven decline in crime, since many illicit activities occur during hours of darkness," said Gasca Neri. (Sources: La Jornada, 12/12/95; Reforma, Excelsior, 01/06/96)

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