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Electricity Usage Drops Moderately in Mexico Due to Daylight-Saving Time

by LADB Staff

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In early August, the federal electricity commission (Comision Federal de Electricidad, CFE) reported that daylight-saving time has resulted in moderate energy savings during the four months the policy has been in place. CFE director Rogelio Gasca Neri said daylight-saving time will ultimately reduce Mexico's total energy usage this year by more than 500 megawatts, or the equivalent of 0.7% of the total energy usage expected for this year. Mexico only began using daylight-saving time this year to promote the conservation of electric energy. On April 7, Mexicans in the country's three time zones turned 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 Sunday of October (see SourceMex, 01/10/96).

Speaking to reporters on the 59th anniversary of the CFE, Gasca Neri said that the 0.7% savings in electrical usage is an important achievement for Mexico, even though the actual figure, at first glance, may appear insignificant. Gasca Neri emphasized that the reduction in demand for electricity between August and October is equivalent to all other energy-conservation programs in place in Mexico during the entire year. Furthermore, he said the savings during June and July will allow the government to reduce its budget for upgrades of the electrical system by about US\$4 billion pesos (US\$535 million) this year.

Gasca Neri said the Mexican government plans to spend about US\$11.3 billion for electricity-generating projects through the year 2006. According to the CFE director, President Ernesto Zedillo's administration has set a goal of providing electricity to all communities of 100 or more inhabitants within the next ten years. Additionally, Gasca Neri said roughly one-third of the amount allocated for expansion of Mexico's electrical capacity, about US\$3.5 billion, will be spent in communities near the US-Mexico border. Gasca Neri pointed out that eleven new power plants are due to come on-line between 1998 and the year 2005.

Indeed, a study conducted earlier this year by the economic analysis unit of Banamex-Accival predicted that Mexico could require as much as 13,000 megawatts of additional electricity generation to meet the country's growing residential and commercial demand by the beginning of the next century. To meet Mexico's growing energy needs, Gasca Neri said the Zedillo administration continues to promote expansion of existing plants and construction of new facilities, both by private and public firms. Recent expansions were completed at the Carbon II plant in Coahuila state and the Tuxpan plant in Veracruz state. In addition, he said the government has completed expansions at the hydroelectric facilities in Zimapan, Hidalgo state, and Temazcal, Oaxaca state, as well as in the Laguna Verde nuclear power plant in Veracruz state.

The Mexican government will also offer concessions to private companies to build and operate power plants that will sell electricity to the CFE. These projects include the Samalayuca II plant in

Chihuahua state and the Merida III thermoelectric plant in Yucatan state. Merida III is expected to add about 440 megawatts to Mexico's total electricity- generation capacity, while the Samalayuca plant will add another 173 megawatts. Both projects were suspended in 1995 because of questions of financing, partly a result of the economic crisis that followed the devaluation of the peso in late 1994 (see SourceMex, 05/22/96) [Note: Peso-dollar conversions in this article are based on the Interbank rate in effect on Aug. 20, reported at 7.47 pesos per US\$1.00] (Sources: El Financiero International, 07/29/96; 08/12/96; La Jornada, Excelsior, Novedades, 08/15/96)

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