



ORCAS POWER & LIGHT COOPERATIVE

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OPALCO GOES ELECTRIC: DRIVING THE ZERO-EMISSION NISSAN LEAF

OPALCO's Nissan LEAF (**L**eading **E**nvironmentally-friendly **A**ffordable **F**amily car) has arrived on Orcas. OPALCO staff will drive the 100% battery-powered, zero-emission electric vehicle around the islands for co-op business. The LEAF can reach a top speed of 90 miles per hour and go up to 100 miles between charges.

The OPALCO Board supported the purchase of the 100% electric vehicle as an opportunity to embrace and learn from the new technology and to be able to share that information with our membership. Why the Nissan LEAF? Staff considered price, size (seats five) and range—in addition to the fact that the LEAF is made in the USA—in making the decision.

Bev Madan, OPALCO Executive Assistant, researched the purchase and drove the LEAF home from King Nissan Volvo in Bellingham. "It's so quiet!" Madan said. "With the push button start, you wouldn't even know it was running. It drives like any new car—and has plenty of power—I had to watch my speed on the highway." The LEAF comes with a cool tool called "Carwings" that allows drivers to connect to the LEAF via smart phone or computer to set a charge time, check the charge status, start the car remotely and warm it up and find charging stations. A solar panel on the roof powers the radio and accessories.

The LEAF showed a full charge when Madan left the lot in Bellingham and was nearly empty when she pulled into the OPALCO yard. "The range varies based on terrain," explained Madan. "It took about five hours to fully charge the LEAF again."

The LEAF will be charged at the Eastsound office and also at the three Chargepoint stations around the county (see www.opalco.com for locations). OPALCO's charging stations cost \$2.81 per hour to charge any electric vehicle. Anne Bertino, Assistant Energy Services Manager calculated a cost of about 2.5 cents per mile to operate the LEAF (based on OPALCO's residential rate), compared to about 16 cents per mile to drive her gas-powered car with island gas costs. The EPA has given the LEAF an equivalent 99MPG rating which equates to approximately 3.4 miles per kilowatt hour.

As an all-electric car the Nissan LEAF produces no tailpipe pollution or greenhouse gas emissions at the point of operation, and reduces dependence on petroleum. Among other awards and recognition, the Nissan Leaf won the 2010 Green Car Vision Award, the 2011 European Car of the Year award, and ranks as the most efficient EPA certified vehicle for all fuels ever (*U.S. DoE and U.S. EPA. "Most Efficient EPA Certified Vehicles." Fueleconomy.gov*).

To follow OPALCO's journey with the LEAF, see how it's working and lessons learned, members can subscribe to OPALCO's energy services blog, "Sharing the Load" at www.opalco.com. OPALCO staff will be posting updates regularly. And, when you see us in the clean, green, quiet machine on the road—please give us a wave.

OPALCO is a member-owned cooperative electrical utility serving more than 11,000 members on 20 islands in San Juan County. OPALCO provides electricity that is 95% greenhouse-gas free and is predominately generated by hydro-electric plants. OPALCO was founded in 1937 to bring electricity to rural islanders.

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