

## We'll Never Leave You in the Lurch



**MESSAGE  
FROM  
MANAGER  
BILLY  
KULWICKI**

A sudden jump in the wholesale price of power on spot markets in May sent shock waves through the deregulated electricity market in Texas. Four electricity providers in the retail market had shut their doors by the second week in June, and other failures among undercapitalized companies were anticipated.

Almost 50,000 retail electric customers had to be temporarily shifted to “providers of last resort” (POLR) that have more expensive payment plans than average. Customers then have an opportunity to find more reasonable rates. Fortunately, the POLR default guarantees that customers will not have their electricity turned off

during the heat of summer.

Let me assure you: Your electric cooperative will never leave you in the lurch. Sure, cooperative customers are stung by the ever-increasing cost of natural gas to fuel electric generators, but our customers have not experienced disruptions as some Texans have who shop for their electricity. Unlike the failed enterprises, we have served local customers reliably for more than 70 years. Our finances are sound, and we can weather whatever storm comes our way.

This doesn't mean that our rates won't reflect worldwide rising costs, particularly of natural gas, but we have done all we can to soften the blow and to plan for the long term.

Lamar EC gets electricity from a variety of sources, not just natural gas. LEC uses coal, wind and hydro power to help offset the rising cost of natural gas.

Our business model allows us to operate very efficiently, and we go to great lengths to keep our other costs down. You're lucky to be a cooperative member in this time of uncertainty.



**As a member of Lamar EC, you never have to worry about opening up your morning paper and reading that your electric utility has gone out of business.**

## SAFETY TIPS FOR SUMMER CHORES

No matter the season, it seems there's an endless list of chores. Outdoor chores present some particular concerns.

For example, contacting power lines with ladders causes 9 percent of electrocution-related deaths each year. Landscaping, gardening and farming equipment cause another 7 percent.

To avoid electrical hazards, make sure you and your family follow these simple tips:

- Teach children to stay away from electric transformers and substations and explain what posted warning signs mean.
- Avoid damp conditions when using electricity. Keep all electrical devices and cords away from water.
- Place waterproof covers on all outdoor outlets.
- Install ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) in outlets where water may be present.
- Use only extension cords marked for outdoor use; match the power needs of an electric tool or appliance to the cord's label information.
- Dial 811, the national “Call Before You Dig” phone number, at least 72 hours before engaging in any type of excavation work. Local utilities will be notified to mark the approximate location of any underground lines on your property.
- Inspect power tools and appliances for frayed cords, broken plugs and cracked or broken housing, and repair or replace damaged items.
- Store power tools indoors.
- Unplug power tools when not in use.
- Do not carry power tools by the cord.
- Use only a fiberglass or wooden ladder if you must work near overhead wires.
- Never touch a person or object that has made contact with a power line.

# Hey, Gamers: Remember To Power Down

The electronic universe that your kids or grandkids (or perhaps even you) enjoy when they turn on a console gaming device could end up costing you plenty if you are not diligent about shutting your game system down after the last point has been scored.

The energy used annually by leaving the most power-hungry console, the Playstation 3, switched on is nearly enough to power five refrigerators and will cost you almost \$250, according to a study performed by the Australian consumer agency Choice. The Xbox 360 didn't fare much better, racking up usage of 25.6 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per week (about \$185 a year, assuming electricity costs 15 cents per kWh). Electricity consumption while using the systems was only slightly greater. In standby mode, where the console is switched off but the device is still drawing power, the Playstation 3 drew a mere 15.5 kWh (\$2.33) a year; the Xbox 360 clocked in at 21 kWh (\$3.16).

By contrast, the Nintendo Wii is a relative power sipper. It requires just more than 3 kWh a week for continuous, round-the-clock play (nearly \$25 a year) and only about a tenth of that in standby mode, the agency found.

Among other popular home electronics Choice tested, the plasma



When it's 'game over,' you can save electricity by unplugging your game system.

screen television ranked high on the list of power guzzlers. One 42-inch set the group tested, if left on 24/7, would use more than 1,500 kWh annually, racking up a bill of more than \$225 at 15 cents per kWh.

Besides costing you money, the electricity wasted by leaving appliances unnecessarily turned on increases your "carbon footprint" by causing more fuel to be burned at generation plants.

Remember to power down once you're done having fun. Even better, pull the plug when you're through playing to avoid using standby power—common in devices with instant-on features. Those tiny sips of electricity can seem insignificant by themselves, but added up, they can create a hefty total.

For more results of Choice's investigations, visit [www.choice.com.au](http://www.choice.com.au).



**LAMAR  
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**YOUR "LOCAL PAGES"**

This section of *Texas Co-op Power* magazine is produced by LEC each month to provide you with information about current events, safety, special programs and other activities of the cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact the local office.

**MEMBER BENEFITS:**

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## TAMPER-RESISTANT OUTLETS

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, approximately 2,400 children receive emergency-room treatment every year for injuries caused by inserting objects into electrical receptacles.

One way to prevent these tragedies involves installing tamper-resistant outlets that prevent foreign objects from touching electrically live components. A shutter mechanism prevents children from sticking things into receptacles, while a spring-loaded system lets electricity flow only when equal pressure is applied simultaneously to both shutters (such as from an electrical plug).



Special outlets can prevent shocks and burns.

## KEEP THE COOL WHERE IT BELONGS

Refrigerators use more power than any other appliance in the home and deserve special attention.

- Although rushing out to buy a new refrigerator may not be in your budget, it is important to know that new models are more efficient and use as little as half the electricity of older units.

- Full refrigerators run more efficiently than ones that are only partially full. So buy more food and save some energy.



- If you have two refrigerators, or an additional freezer, decide if the extra expense is really worth it. Cram as much as you can into your primary refrigerator or consider disposing of two older refrigerators and replacing them with one larger, newer and more efficient model.

Make sure the refrigerator door seals are tight. Test them by closing the door over a piece of paper or a dollar bill so it is half in and half out of the refrigerator. If you can pull the paper or bill out easily, the latch may need adjustment or the seal may need replacing.

- Place food and liquids in airtight containers. Uncovered foods release moisture and make the compressor work harder.

- Move the refrigerator away from the wall and vacuum its condenser coils yearly unless you have a no-clean condenser model. Refrigerators will run for shorter periods with clean coils.

- Maintain a consistent temperature in the refrigerator and freezer. Recommended temperatures are 37 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit for the fresh food compartment of the refrigerator and 5 degrees for the freezer section. If you have a separate freezer for long-term storage, it should be kept at 0 degrees.

## Keep Tabs on Electricity Use

Energy-saving practices—such as using compact fluorescent lightbulbs, changing air-conditioning filters and washing full loads of laundry—will collectively reduce your electric bills.

Still, it's not always easy to save energy, especially if you don't know how much you're using.

Do you want to know? Invest in an electricity-use monitor. It's a small tool that records the amount of energy each appliance or gadget uses. Some can even predict how much energy that appliance will burn in a day, month or year, based on what it already has used. Depending on the model you buy, you can learn how much energy a single appliance uses, or you can track your home's total energy use.

Try it on several large appliances.

Knowing how much energy your refrigerator consumes, for example, could encourage you to close the door quicker. Estimating your oven's energy use for a month could persuade you to keep the oven door closed or to use your microwave instead.

Here's a trick for teaching your kids to turn off the lights before they leave a room: Have them plug their bedroom lamps into a monitor that will show them how much energy they're wasting when the lights are on in an empty room. When they—and you—can quantify your energy use and realize how much you could be saving, you may find it is easier to save more.

If you ever really want to know which devices are the major contributors to your monthly power bill, then this is the device that can help you answer the question.

### Co-op Connections® Program

Lamar Electric Co-op is currently recruiting businesses to participate in the Co-op Connections Program.



This program gives local businesses the opportunity to offer our cooperative members valuable discounts. In exchange for your participation, we promote your business and discount to our members at no cost to you. The program is designed to benefit your business and our members.

**If your business is interested in participating, please call (903) 784-4303 for more information.**

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**BEST WESTERN HOTELS**—Special low rates available only to cooperative members.

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**CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY MUSEUM**—Victoria. Two for the price of one admission.

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**LATITUDES CRUISE & TRAVEL**—Midlothian. Onboard credit on cruises of \$25 for 4- or 5-day cruises, \$50 for 7-day cruises, \$100 credit for 10 or more day cruises; 10 percent discount on resorts.

**MATAGORDA COUNTY MUSEUM**—Bay City. \$1 off the admission price for each member of your party or group.

**MCNAMARA HOUSE MUSEUM**—Victoria. Half-price admission.

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Please note, some offers are available only online. For full details and more great discounts, visit [www.lamarelectric.coop](http://www.lamarelectric.coop).