

Striking a Balance Between Beautiful Trees and Reliable Service



**MESSAGE
FROM
MANAGER
JERRY D.
WILLIAMS**

Sometimes it takes a crisis to remind us about priorities. People who receive an unexpected diagnosis of a serious illness, for example, might have a renewed appreciation for their family and friends. The loss of a job could be a catalyst for pursuing a life-long dream and finding success in unexpected places.

Today's faltering economy is

prompting a lot of belt-tightening and refocusing of personal goals, something that could be viewed as an opportunity for positive change. How many of you are more aware than ever of turning out the lights when you leave a room? Do you think twice before you turn on the television? Are you taking advantage of the Texas sunshine to dry clothes outdoors instead of using a clothes dryer?

It's likely the economy has affected your personal habits in some way.

Similarly, we at Lamar Electric Cooperative have been affected, and we're looking for efficiencies in every area of our operation. We look inside at our office policies and procedures, we look outside at our field crews and equipment, and we take a close look at

our infrastructure.

Believe it or not, you as a member can make a significant contribution to efficiencies in Lamar EC's infrastructure. We're not asking you to replace poles or refurbish transformers or string new wire. But we're asking you to do something just as important.

Your cooperation with right-of-way crews responsible for clearing tree limbs and brush around electrical lines can have a big impact on reducing storm-related outages and the subsequent infrastructure damage. That could translate into millions of dollars of savings for your co-op.

Clearly, all of us value trees. Trees create shade in the summer, help keep the air clean, provide homes for birds and other wildlife, and, of course, beautify our environment. But trees are also a constant threat to the delivery of reliable electric service. When a tree's branches get too close to power lines, a potentially hazardous situation is created.

The Public Utility Commission of Texas recently released a report stating that 96 percent of the damage to a certain investor-owned utility's infrastructure during Hurricane Ike was the result of high winds and broken trees. The report concluded that better vegetation management before the storm would have eliminated much of the flying debris that took down poles and wires. The resulting outages were well publicized and affected hundreds of thousands of people for several weeks.

Keeping Lamar Electric Cooperative's rights-of-way clear not only saves money, it's also one of the best ways to keep the electricity flowing without interruption.

So, now that you're in the habit of turning off the lights when you leave a room, remember what it takes to turn them back on.



Timely right-of-way clearing improves service reliability and reduces operating costs.



NORTHEAST TEXAS

CLASSIC CAR SHOW



FREE ADMISSION FOR SPECTATORS!

**CAR SHOW • SWAP MEET • CAR CORRAL • MOTORCYCLES
ARTS/CRAFTS • DOOR PRIZES • FOOD • FAMILY FUN**

This car show is hosted by the Red River Valley Honkers Region Car Club and will benefit the Red River Valley Veteran's Memorial soon to be built just south of the Love Civic Center in Paris. Honkers is pleased to have an opportunity to benefit the Veteran's Memorial and remember those who have given their all that we may enjoy the freedoms we have today. God Bless America.



TOYOTA OF PARIS
CORPORATE SPONSOR



LOVE CIVIC CENTER • 2025 S. Collegiate, Paris

June 13, 2009

(Rain date—June 14)

REGISTRATION: 8–11 a.m.

Judging ends at 2:30 p.m. • Awards presentations at 4 p.m.



EARLY REGISTRATION FEE

\$15 (outside)

\$25 (inside—arts and crafts)

After June 5, add \$5 for registration

Covered parking on concrete for first 30 arrivals!

HOSTED BY

Red River Valley Honkers Region of Antique Automobile Club of America

For more info call (903) 784-3279 or (903) 783-Meet (783-6338)

www.rrvhonkers.com



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ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE**

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P.O. Box 580 • Paris, TX 75461

Phone (903) 784-4303

For general information and outages after hours, call
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1-800-782-9010 toll-free

Operating in Lamar, Red River, Delta and Fannin counties

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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:

- Level billing
- Automated meter reading
- Free bank draft service
- Visa, Discover and MasterCard accepted

MAY IS NATIONAL ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

Protect Your Home and Family From Fires and Electrocution

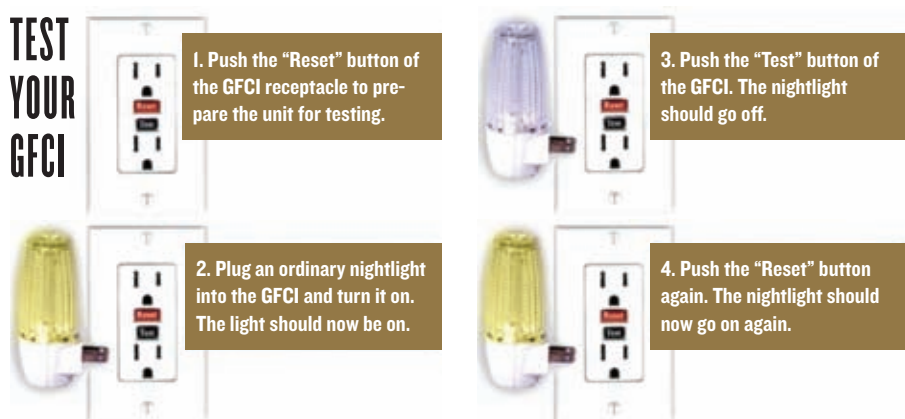
Electrical problems in older homes account for nearly 55,000 fires every year. These blazes cause more than 500 deaths, injure more than 1,400 and rack up \$1.4 billion in property damage.

The risk of such fires is significant since half of all homes in the United States were constructed and wired prior to 1973, according to the U.S. Census Bureau—before the advent of garage-door openers or home computers. Even more telling, one-third of U.S. homes were built before hair dryers or electric

Over the past three decades, ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) have saved thousands of lives and prevented many more injuries.

A GFCI is a special type of outlet designed to trip before a deadly electrical shock can occur. GFCIs constantly monitor electricity flowing in a circuit. If the electricity flowing into the circuit differs by even a slight amount from the electricity returning, the GFCI will quickly shut off the current flowing through that circuit. The advantage of using GFCIs is that they can detect

TEST YOUR GFCI



The nightlight should go out when the "Test" button is pushed. If the light does not go out, the GFCI may have been improperly wired or damaged and does not offer shock protection.

can openers were even invented!

Owners of older homes can upgrade their electrical systems with newer fire prevention technology, such as arc-fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs). These advanced circuit breakers detect dangerous conditions in a home's wiring and cut off power before a fire starts.

Additionally, those living in older homes with children can install tamper-resistant receptacles. These devices look like normal electrical outlets, although they have a built-in shutter system that prevents children from inserting foreign objects into the slots. Use of tamper-resistant receptacles would prevent most of the 2,400 burns suffered by children each year.

even small variations in the amount of leakage current—leakage too small to trip a fuse or circuit breaker.

A GFCI should be used in any area where water may come in contact with electrical products.

- Put a GFCI between your electric power source and your electric product.
- Test your GFCI monthly and after every major electrical storm.
- If you have a home without GFCIs, consult a qualified, licensed electrician about adding this important protection; purchase plug-in units or a portable GFCI to provide individual receptacle or load protection.

For more information on National Electrical Safety Month and safety tips, visit www.electricalsafety.org.

NEW TAX CREDITS FOR ENERGY-EFFICIENT HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Even though money is tight, this might be a good time to make some home improvements.

You could qualify for up to \$1,500 in federal tax credits if you trade your old windows, furnace, roof or water heater for an energy-efficient model.

The tax credits are part of President Obama's economic stimulus bill and are good for energy-efficient improvements you make in 2009 and 2010.

You could get a tax credit for 30 percent of the cost of the improvements, up to \$1,500, on windows and doors, insulation, metal and asphalt roofs, heating and air-conditioning systems, nonsolar water heaters (but not tankless or electric storage water heaters) and biomass stoves. For these items, the credit does not include installation.

Another 30 percent is available—with no upper limit through 2016—for geothermal heat pumps, solar panels, solar water heaters, small wind energy systems and fuel cells. For these items, the credit includes installation. But make sure you talk with your cooperative before having any supplemental energy devices installed.

Do some research before you buy any of these products to ensure they qualify for the tax credit. To claim your credit, you will need a manufacturer's certification that the product qualifies. You usually can find that on the manufacturer's website.

You can claim the tax credit by filling out IRS Tax Form 5695 (2009 version) when you file your 2009 taxes next year.

For more information about the energy-efficiency tax credit, visit www.energystar.gov. Click on "tax credits for energy efficiency."

Co-op Connections

1st Choice Pest Control

OFFERING \$10 OFF INITIAL GENERAL PEST CONTROL SERVICE

■ Ricky Williams, state-licensed certified applicator. Call (903) 785-5679 to schedule an appointment.

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OFFERING \$10 OFF TAXIDERMY SERVICES

■ Benzy and Debbie Jo Hostetler, Owners. Call (903) 737-8604.

Checks to Cash

15 PERCENT DISCOUNT ON CHECK-CASHING FEES

■ 3185 Lamar Ave. in Paris. Call (903) 785-6666.

Gillie Insulation

10 PERCENT OFF WITH YOUR CO-OP CONNECTIONS® CARD

■ Lowell Gillie, Owner. Call (903) 982-6399.

Jackson-Hewitt

25 PERCENT OFF TAX PREPARATION FEES ONLY. DISCOUNT MUST BE DISCLOSED WHEN ASKED DURING INTERVIEW PROCESS.

■ 3185 Lamar Ave. in Paris. Call (903) 737-0811.

Papa Murphy's Pizza

OFFERING \$3 OFF FAMILY-SIZE PIZZA (LIMIT 3 PER ORDER)

■ 2705 Lamar Ave. in Paris. Call (903) 785-0036.

Quality Craft Picture Frames

OFFERING 20 PERCENT OFF CUSTOM FRAMING INCLUDING FRAME, MAT AND GLASS

■ 2030 Clarksville St. in Paris. Call (903) 785-2760.

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\$17,463.63 Saved

On prescriptions by members using their Co-op Connections® Card

In December, 245 prescriptions were filled and members saved \$2,829.52, averaging 26 percent off the retail price.

This valuable member benefit is absolutely free!

Want to do some price checking on your prescriptions? Visit www.rxpricequotes.com to see the discounted price from our local pharmacies.



Even if you have medical coverage, compare your coverage to the discounts. Sometimes the Co-op Connections discount is better than your medical insurance!

The pharmacy will need the group and member numbers on the back of the card to process the discount.

KEEP ELECTRICITY FROM GOING DOWN THE DRAIN

Water use and electricity go hand in hand. Heating water can account for 14 to 25 percent of the total energy consumed in a typical home. What's more, systems used to clean public water supplies and deliver it to homes require large amounts of electricity. If your home receives water from a well or spring, the pump also draws power. So when we use water, hot or cold, we're also using energy.

Techniques for reducing water use in your home are surprisingly simple. For one, you can significantly reduce hot water consumption by simply repairing leaks in pipes or fixtures, such as faucets and showerheads. A leak of one drip per second can cost \$1 per month.

You can also reduce water heating costs in a matter of seconds by lowering the thermostat setting on your water heater. For each 10 degrees of reduction in temperature, you can save between 3 and 5 percent in energy



costs. Reducing the setting also slows mineral buildup and corrosion in your water heater and pipes.

Although some manufacturers set water heater thermostats at 140 degrees, most households usually only require them to be set at 120. However, if you have a dishwasher without a booster heater, you may require a water temperature within a range of 130 to 140 degrees for optimum cleaning.

Adding insulation to your water heater can save 4 to 9 percent in costs. To determine whether you need to insulate your water heater, touch it. A tank that's warm to the touch needs additional insulation.

Insulating your water heater tank is fairly simple and inexpensive and will pay for itself in about a year. You can find pre-cut jackets or blankets available from around \$10 to \$20. Choose one with an insulating value of at least R-8. In addition, don't set the thermostat above 130 degrees on an electric water heater with an insulating jacket or blanket—the wiring may overheat.

Installing insulation on gas- and oil-fired water heaters is more difficult. For these appliances, it's best to have a qualified plumbing and heating contractor perform the work.

For more tips on trimming water use in your home, including pipe and water heater insulation techniques, visit www.energysavers.gov.

Safety First Under the Sun

Sunshiny spring days are an invitation to head outdoors—sometimes for fun, sometimes for chores. Either way, Lamar Electric Cooperative offers these tips to keep you safe:

Products like tillers, lawnmowers, mulchers, hedge trimmers, leaf blowers and chainsaws can cut, burn and even blind when directions are not followed. Study each product's manual for safe operation rules and always follow them.

Outdoor electrical appliances and power tools should ALWAYS BE:

- Plugged in and turned on only when in use.
- Stored indoors (with a few exceptions such as electric barbecue grills, which can be covered to remain outdoors) and away from water and

excessive heat.

- Used only when all safety guards are in place. Sharp blades and rapidly moving parts can cut off a finger or a toe.

Outdoor electrical appliances and power tools should NEVER BE:

- Left unattended, even when you leave temporarily. If there is a key, remove it. Put the product where no curious child or unqualified adult can misuse it.
- Plugged in while the switch is in the "on" position or while being carried or moved.
- Carried by their cords.
- Used while wet or close to water.
- Used near sharp edges or in conditions that can damage the product, its cord or its plug. Loose and broken wires are both shock and fire hazards.



- Repaired by anyone who is not a licensed electrician, authorized by the manufacturer or trained to repair the particular product.

DON'T FUEL THE FIRE!

Wildfires

Prevention:

- Take care with flammables.
- Mow grass short. Rake leaves. Clear away refuse.
- Keep hay bales and firewood away from structures, electric lines and rights-of-way.
- Allow your co-op to keep power lines and rights-of-way free of trees and shrubs.
- Trim dead or dormant shrubbery close to houses and barns.
- Make a family evacuation plan. Have an inventory of home valuables in a fireproof box.

If Fire Is Reported Near Your Community:

- Place photos, vital records and small items of value in your car. Park your car facing the direction of escape.
- Clear a fire break around buildings.
- Shut gas off at the meter. (Only a qualified professional can safely turn the gas back on.)
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Leave the electricity on, especially if it powers a well.
- Turn on sprinklers. Wet down shrubs close to structures.
- Wet down roof and above-ground fuel tanks.
- If advised to evacuate, do so immediately. Choose a route away from the fire hazard, and be alert to changes in the speed and direction of fire and smoke.



This public service message is brought to you by Lamar Electric Cooperative.