

# Why the Lights Go Off



**MESSAGE  
FROM  
MANAGER  
JERRY D.  
WILLIAMS**

**A**s a child, it was kind of fun when the lights would go off. Living in a four-room house in the mountains of Southeastern Oklahoma, this meant we would usually get to eat grits cooked in a large iron pot hanging in the fireplace. The kerosene, and later propane, cook stove would work fine without electricity, but for some reason Mother seemed to prefer a simple meal rather than doing a lot of cooking for all six of us using the light of a lamp. But why did the lights go off? This question never seemed to bother me because most activities went forward with or without electricity. Now I make it my business to know why the lights go off.

Some people get upset if the lights flicker off a few times in the middle of a rain and lightning storm, but that is exactly what we plan for and expect. (Not the upset people!) Many times when the lights momentarily go off and back on, it means everything is working as it should.

In North Texas, we get an abundance of lightning. Lightning is nothing more than the buildup of a massive amount of electrons in a cloud that accumulates until the electrons find a pathway to the ground. Often, the tallest tree or building provides the shortest path to the ground. Many times, the electric lines running up and down the roads about 30 feet in the air make a good lightning target.

We have breakers located at various points on the main electric lines that

look sort of like a transformer, but serve a different purpose. When lightning strikes the main electric line, the breaker will sense the increased current on the line and momentarily turn the electricity off, similar to a breaker in your breaker box at home. The big difference is that after these breakers allow the lightning to make its way to the ground, they automatically turn the electricity back on. The plan is for the lightning to discharge in the ground and not continue down the line to your house.

Because of these breakers and state-of-the-art lightning arrestors located at every transformer, very seldom will lightning get into your house through the main electric lines. Of course lightning could strike the wires between your transformer and your house or directly strike the roof. Even a tree hit by lightning nearby will usually have enough discharge to affect some items in the house.

The breaker will usually operate (turn off and on) three times before it trips completely and has to be reset manually. This is the reason a tree limb can fall onto the electric line and fall to the ground without you having a long electric outage. If the tree limb has cleared the line by the time the breaker turns everything back on for the third time, your electricity will stay on. If the limb or a tree falls onto the line and stays, you can pretty well count on three short blinks and then off, until a lineman arrives.

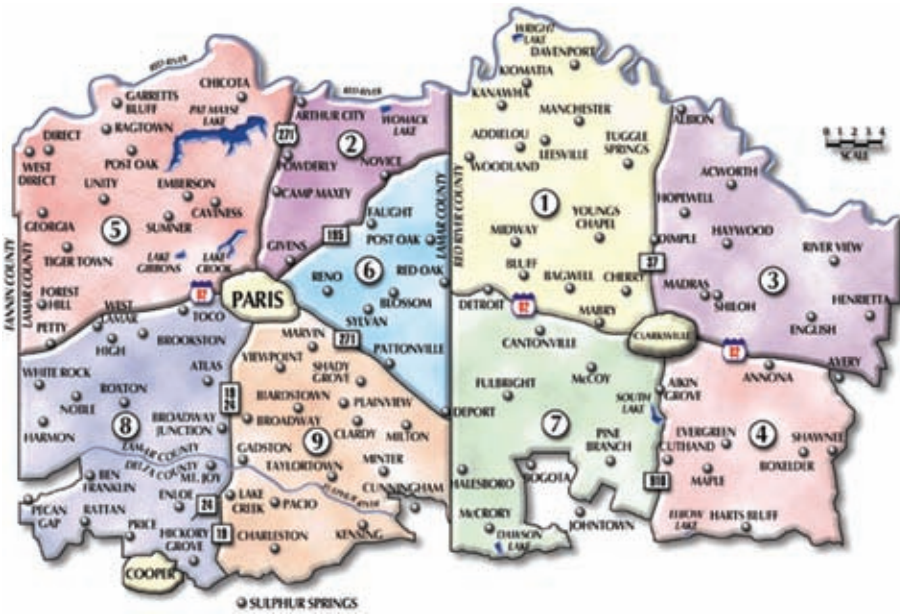
And, yes, I have heard the story about a dog urinating on the pole causing an outage, but wouldn't that have to be some big dog! This area is blessed with an abundance of trees. We are making some major changes to our approach to keeping the trees and limbs from hitting the electric lines. Watch this column for more information about our new approach to right-of-way clearing.



## It's Not Too Late To Claim Your Retired Capital Credits

Thousands of dollars in capital credits refunds that had previously been unclaimed have been reissued to previous members or their heirs for the years of electric service from 1965-69. Only a few months remain to claim your refund before the money must be turned over to the state.

If you had electric service with Lamar Electric Cooperative from 1965 through 1969, you may be due a refund. Log on to [www.lamarelectric.coop](http://www.lamarelectric.coop) for a complete list of unclaimed checks and information on how to make a claim or call Laura Williams at (903) 783-4907.



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P.O. Box 580 • Paris, TX 75461  
Phone (903) 784-4303

For general information and outages after hours, call (903) 784-4303 local or 1-800-782-9010 toll-free

Operating in Lamar, Red River, Delta and Fannin counties

Find us on the web at [www.lamarelectric.coop](http://www.lamarelectric.coop)

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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, MasterCard and American Express accepted

# Co-op Annual Meeting Set for April 17

Lamar Electric Cooperative will hold its annual meeting at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 17, at the Paris High School Auditorium at 2400 Jefferson Road in Paris. There will be additional information in this magazine regarding the meeting over the next two months.

Three positions on the board of directors are up for election each year. This year, Districts 2, 3 and 4 will be voting at the annual meeting. Members residing in Districts 2, 3 and 4 who wish to be a candidate for one of the three board positions must file an application not less than 60 days (February 15) or more than 90 days (January 17) before the annual meeting date.

The qualifications to be a board member are:

## Co-op Bylaws Excerpts, Article IV

**SECTION 3. QUALIFICATIONS.** No person shall be eligible to become or remain a board member of the Cooperative who:

- (a) Is not a member and bona fide resident of the board district for which elected or to be elected; or
- (b) Is in any way employed or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative;
- (c) Is an employee of this Cooperative or has been terminated from the Cooperative for less than five years; or
- (d) Is a close relative of an employee or an employee's spouse ("close relative" being defined as wife, husband, grandparent, parent, child, brother, sister, step-parent, step-child, step-brother, step-sister, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, and/or sister-in-law).
- (e) Has been convicted, plead guilty, or pled "no contest" to a felony; or
- (f) Is an incumbent of, or candidate for, an elective public office for which a salary is paid.

Upon establishment of the fact that a board member is holding office in violation of any of the foregoing provisions, the board shall remove such board member.

Nothing contained in this section shall affect in any manner whatsoever the validity of any action taken at any meeting of the board or at any special or annual meeting of the members.

# Win a Free Trip to Washington, D.C., This June

Lamar Electric Cooperative is again sponsoring two students from the Lamar Electric service area for an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., June 10-18 on the Government-in-Action Youth Tour.

For more than 40 years, electric cooperatives have sponsored high school students from across America to visit the nation's capital and meet their members of Congress. You



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bers, the Supreme Court and the Library of Congress and will have photo sessions on Capitol Hill and in front of the White House. The group will also see the wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns, see Kennedy's gravesite and tour Arlington Cemetery. Other historic sites to be visited include the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the World War II Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, Mount Vernon, the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial, Old Town Alexandria, Ford's Theatre and Petersen House, the Smithsonian Museums of American Art, National History, American History and the National Museum of the American Indian and the Air and Space Museum. The students also will visit Union Station and the Old Post Office Pavilion. In addition, they will visit the National Zoo, the Pentagon City Mall and Hard Rock Café and will experience the Washington at Night Driving Tour and see the Sunset Parade at Iwo Jima. On the last night in Washington, Youth Tour groups from all states will come together for a dinner and dance.

### To be eligible for this year's contest, applicants must:

- Be 17 to 19 years of age.
- Their parents or legal guardians must be residing members of Lamar Electric Cooperative, or applicants must attend one of the three high schools serviced by Lamar Electric Cooperative: Detroit, Prairiland and Roxton.

Applications are available from your school counselor, at the Lamar Electric Cooperative office or online at [www.lamarelectric.coop](http://www.lamarelectric.coop).

### Application Requirements:

- Submit the completed application.
- Submit two letters of recommendation from teachers, employers and/or church/civic leaders.
- Submit a two-page essay on the topic "What can be done to improve my community?"
- If you are chosen to represent LEC in Washington, D.C., you will be required to give a short presentation at LEC's July board meeting about your trip.

could be a part of this tremendous opportunity to learn about the political process and how your federal government works. More than 40,000 students from rural areas and small towns across America have participated in this unique program.

Lamar Electric winners will join approximately 100 students from across Texas—winners from other cooperatives—on this trip of a lifetime. Sponsorship includes airfare, transportation in Washington, hotel rooms, meals, entrance into many of the sites and Youth Tour T-shirts.

While in Washington, tour participants from Texas will visit their congressman, tour the House and Senate cham-

Mail your application to Lamar Electric Cooperative, Attn: Marci Thompson, P.O. Box 580, Paris, TX 75461, or deliver it to 1485 N. Main St. in Paris by 5 p.m. on Friday, February 26, 2010.

For more information, contact Marci Thompson at Lamar Electric Cooperative at (903) 784-4303.

# Wash Clothes Efficiently Without Getting Caught in the Spin Cycle

**W**ashing machines perform a fairly simple function: getting dirty clothes clean. Yet prospective buyers today can be overwhelmed with all of the different models and “bells and whistles” available: top-loading, front-loading, high-efficiency, water-saving, steaming and wrinkle removing, to name only a few.

Energy-efficient washing machines, easily identified by the Energy Star label, are a priority for any cost-conscious consumer’s list. About 93 percent of all American households have a clothes washer, adding up to 102 million of the machines across America. About 9 million washing machines are sold each year—efficient models account for slightly more than one-third of sales.

Energy Star-rated washing machines cost slightly more than their less-efficient counterparts, anywhere from \$400 to \$1,500, depending on other features selected. To get a handle on how much electricity a particular unit will draw, pay close attention to the yellow energy guide before making a purchase.



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An energy-efficient washing machine can save the typical homeowner around \$50 a year, or \$540 to \$600 over the life of the appliance. Efficient machines also save more than 5,000 gallons of water annually, and if you have a water well, that translates into more electric savings.

The energy and water efficiencies of clothes washers are measured according to their modified energy factor and water factor. These criteria generally limit Energy Star qualification to front-loading and advanced top-loading models.

Front-loading clothes washers use a horizontal or tumble-axis basket to lift and drop clothing into the water, instead of rubbing clothes around a central agitator in a full tub. These units use less energy than conventional clothes washers by reducing the amount of hot water needed to clean clothes. Front-loading models also squeeze more water out of clothes by using spin speeds that are two to three times faster than conventional washers, reducing drying time and thus cutting energy use further. They also help your clothes last longer by reducing wear and tear during a wash cycle.

Energy Star-qualified top-loading models typically use spray valves to rinse clothes, rather than a new tub of water. This method not only reduces the energy required for water heating, but also typically saves an average of 15 gallons of water per wash, compared with conventional clothes washers.

Qualified top-loading models also boast sensors to monitor and adjust incoming water temperature. This keeps water hot enough to dissolve the detergent and provide high-performance cleaning, but cool enough to save energy and minimize hot-water damage to fabrics. One limitation of efficient top-loading washers is that many models do not offer a high-temperature standard wash option.

By looking for the Energy Star logo and shopping at a store with knowledgeable staff, you should be able to leave with a washing machine that will, over time, pay for itself.

## COUNTRY CORNER EVENTS

### FEBRUARY

**4-7** Paris Community Theatre presents “The Music Man”

**13** The Children’s Advocacy Center of Paris’ “9th Annual Sweetheart Soiree”

**20** Paris Bluegrass Show—18 West Hearne St. (next to South Main Café), Paris. Matinee 4 to 5:30 p.m. and evening session 7 to 9 p.m.

*If you have any events that you would like listed for Delta, Lamar or Red River counties, please contact Marci Thompson. Information must be submitted two months in advance for the magazine. E-mail marci@lamarelectric.coop or call (903) 783-4911.*



SAVE ENERGY ■ SAVE MONEY

**A dirty light fixture cuts down on the amount of light emitted into a room. Clean it to make your home look brighter.**

**And, be sure to use the lowest wattage lightbulb appropriate for the fixture and function of the light.**