

Scam or Not?



**MESSAGE
FROM
MANAGER
JERRY D.
WILLIAMS**

When electric usage and bills go up in the hot summertime, there seems to be a fresh group of folks trying to sell products to reduce your bill. Many of us want to skip the rainstorm and go directly to the rainbow. A lot of energy scams work because we want a quick, easy fix.

Most of us have received an invitation to a free meal. We get locked into the room. We eat well and are sort of feeling guilty, which leads us to accept things that we would not normally accept. That tactic is not always bad (ask my insurance agent) but is popular with folks hawking \$400 to \$500 power-factor correction devices that will supposedly cut electric bills by 10 to 30 percent or more. In addition, the device is supposed to increase the life of your electric motors through heat reduction and provide surge protection for the entire home.

These devices are even supposed to help us save the planet. You may hear: "Electric utilities will be able to supply more power to more customers without the need to build more generators, and thus reduce all kinds of pollution. Existing utility infrastructure could be used more efficiently."

Before I attempt to give you more of a technical explanation, let me give you the summary. These devices won't save electricity in your home. Don't waste your money on them.

The salespeople will tell you that electric utilities are already using these types of devices with their big commercial customers. This is true. Big commercial customers do install capacitors to correct poor power factor. The problem is that none of this applies to residential customers.

The device is nothing more than a power-factor correction device that connects to your breaker box and improves power factor and is supposed to improve the "apparent power" measured at the utility meter. But, the electric bill for your house is based on "real power" rather than "apparent power."

Without getting too technical, sometimes more power goes into a device than you'd expect, because of a special kind of inefficiency. The actual "real power" used by your device is measured in kilowatts, and that is what you are charged for. If your device uses only 80 percent of the power going into it, the power factor is 80 percent. For example, an incandescent lightbulb would have a power factor of 100 percent, whereas a clothes washing machine motor may have a power factor of 80 percent. Power factor is the "real power" (the amount your device actually uses) divided by the "apparent power" (the total going into it). Just remember, residential customers are charged only for the "real power," not the "apparent power."

Even if homes were being charged for a bad power factor, modern appliances already have this kind of power correction built in. For these appliances, there's nothing left to correct.

Most likely the demonstration is pretty simple. The salesman will have an amp meter connected to an ordinary electric motor. He will show you

the amps the motor normally draws, and then he will turn on his device and show you the motor is drawing fewer amps. He will indicate the device can do the same thing for all the motors in your house. He will also indicate motors in your house will draw fewer amps and result in your electric meter registering less electricity used. So why doesn't it work that way? Because your electric meter is recording "real power," not "apparent power."

The salesman or your brother-in-law will tell you about Ohm's Law and how watts equal volts divided by amps. Change the amps to a lower number (by using his device), and the formula forces a different outcome. In Ohm's Law, watts and volt amps are often considered interchangeable and equivalent units to measure power, but this is not true in a practical scenario.

The bottom line is we measure electricity used by industrial customers differently than we do at your house. If you really want to stump your brother-in-law, ask him to explain the difference between "apparent power" and "real power."

These devices really appeal to folks because we are looking for a quick fix—a device you can buy, plug in and don't actually have to make any effort to conserve energy. Sort of like the weight-loss pill I am still looking for that makes me slim and trim while I sleep. (But that is another story.) Saving electricity really isn't that hard. Use CFLs and turn off lights and the A/C when you are not home. Turn a fan on and enjoy the breeze with the A/C set a little warmer. Change those filters, and keep the freezer full. And, unplug that large-screen TV when you are gone for a few days—the off switch only turns off the screen.



**PAY YOUR BILL ONLINE AT
WWW.LAMARELECTRIC.COOP**



Lamar EC shows off bucket trucks and lineman's gear to Justiss Elementary students on Big Truck Day.

BIG TRUCK DAY

Lamar EC Pays Visit to Justiss Elementary

Lamar Electric Co-op participated in “Big Truck Day” at Justiss Elementary in Paris on May 18 for its third- and fourth-grade classes. This was an opportunity for children to learn about the various jobs that co-op employees do and an opportunity for Lamar Electric to teach safety around power lines.

The bucket truck, yellow extension pole and lineman’s safety gloves were a huge success. The children loved trying on the lineman’s safety gloves.

Thanks to Justiss Elementary for letting us share the jobs we do at Lamar Electric with the students.

METER TAMPERING

Dangerous and Expensive

In this life, we pay for what we use. When we run out of milk, we go out to buy another gallon. If there’s a hole in the sole of a favorite old shoe, we fork over a few bucks for a repair job. Seems fair.

And we pay for each kilowatt-hour of electricity we consume for lighting, air conditioning, hot water and other comforts.

At least most of us do.

Some people tamper with their electric meters, breaking them or altering the readings so they don’t have to pay for the electricity they use. That costs you and other honest consumers billions of dollars every year. You have to pay for what they steal.

Meter tampering is expensive and illegal. And it’s dangerous. People have been killed while tampering with their meters. Others have been injured, and still others have set their houses on fire.

And a meter that’s been tampered with poses the risk of electrocution to anyone who unknowingly touches the damaged device. That includes utility lineworkers and meter readers. It also includes your children.

All electric meters are sealed for a reason—the same reason you have locks on your doors. The seal keeps out people who have no business opening the meter. And nobody has any business opening it except employees of Lamar Electric Cooperative and electrical contractors with co-op permission.

If you learn that a neighbor or acquaintance is tampering with an electric meter, report it immediately to Lamar EC. You’ll help whittle that multi-billion-dollar price tag down to size, and you could save someone’s life.

Kids Safe SATURDAY

Lamar Electric Co-op set up an electric safety display at the 18th Annual Kids Safe Saturday at Love Civic Center in Paris. This is a community event for Lamar Electric to teach children about electric safety.

Lamar Electric gave away rainbow-colored spring toys, lightbulb pencil sharpeners, pencils, coloring books and Willie Wiredhand temporary tattoos. They were all a huge success.





**LAMAR
ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE**

1485 North Main St.
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

GENERAL MANAGER
Jerry D. Williams

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
CHAIRMAN**

Allen Branch Sumner

VICE CHAIRMAN

Charles Dooley Annona

SECRETARY-TREASURER

Billy Hines Clarksville

James Sam Cooper Roxton

Mark Jones Paris

Ron E. Tippit Clarksville

Mike Williams Detroit

George M. Wood Blossom

Lyle Yoder Pattonville

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
- E-Bill
- Visa and MasterCard accepted



**CELL PHONES
FOR SOLDIERS®**

Help Our Troops Call Home

Lamar Electric Cooperative is proud to be a drop-off point for Cell Phones for Soldiers. Each donated cell phone allows Cell Phones for Soldiers to fulfill the mission of providing servicemen and women the opportunity to communicate with loved ones for free.

Donated cell phones are sold to a company that recycles them. The money from the recycled cell phones is used to purchase calling cards that are then sent to troops in need.

In April, Lamar Electric collected and sent in 47 phones, which generated 2,820 minutes of calling time for troops.

To date, Cell Phones for Soldiers has raised more than \$7 million and provided more than 90 million minutes of free talk time.

Make a difference in a soldier's life. Drop off your used cell phones at Lamar Electric Co-op, 1485 N. Main St. in Paris. You can also go to www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com for more information.



**COUNTRY CORNER
EVENTS**

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.

August 4-6 Paris Rodeo—Lamar County Fairgrounds Rodeo Arena

August 5 Cruisin' The Plaza—Begins at 5 p.m. around the Plaza in downtown Paris

August 6 Paris Bridal Fair—Lamar County Fairgrounds, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.