

You Have Options



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

Recently, a member explained how nice it would be if we could draft her checking account each month shortly after she received her monthly check on the first of the month. We can and are now drafting her account each month. Perhaps there are more members that are not aware of the services we offer. Over the past several years, we have added many options to give better service to our members.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

IN PERSON OR DRIVE-THRU—(The drive-thru opens at 7:30 a.m. each business day for your convenience while on the way to work). You can pay with cash, money order, check, MasterCard, Visa, debit card or electronic check. The same options are available if you are paying an electric bill or applying for new service and paying a membership, connect or deposit.

NIGHT DEPOSIT—We also have a night deposit box at the drive-thru that can be used any time of the day or night to drop off payments using checks or money orders. You can leave cash, but I would advise against it.

AUTOMATIC PAYMENTS—We can automatically draft your checking or savings account each month or automatically pay your bill by charging your Visa, MasterCard or debit card. This will guarantee you will never be late or pay a late payment penalty. For the convenience of our members we are currently processing automatic payments on the 5th and 19th of each month. For those folks who get paid around the first of each month, we set up to automatically pay their account on the 5th. For those that get paid in the middle of the month or get paid twice monthly, we set their account up for payment on the 19th. Establishing a specific day, each member can know ahead of time exactly when the money will be taken from their account/ charged to their card. We still mail the paper bill to everyone on the automatic payment plan with the notation “Do not Pay—Your Account will be Bank Drafted”

BY TELEPHONE: DURING OFFICE

HOURS—Many members call our office employees each month to pay their bill with a credit or debit card. You can also give us the information from your check and we can do an electronic check. Electronic checks are very easy after we have your bank information in our files.

BY TELEPHONE: AUTOMATED—We are in the process of installing a new telephone system in the next few months. When the phone is answered you will have a new option. You will be asked to press (1) if you would like to pay a bill or report an outage using our automated system. If you don't press (1) the call will continue to the next available person. If you don't like dealing with a machine, then don't press (1) when prompted,—but the “hold” time for the next available person can get rather long if we have a big outage. By keying in your account information, you will be able to pay your bill using a credit card, debit card or electronic check any time of the day or night. We will change the greeting to include this option when this new system is ready to go.

INTERNET: COMPUTER/SMART PHONE/IPAD—Go to our website, www.lamarelectric.coop, and register your account number with your email address and a password you select. After you are registered, simply go to the website and click “Online Bill Pay” or save the site in your favorites for a shortcut. Once you log in with your password you can pay using MasterCard, Visa, debit card or electronic check. You can also view a couple years of your account history, print copies of your bills for the past two years, view graphs of your usage, cost, etc. In the future we will be

offering an app that will take you directly to the payment screen.

BILLING OPTIONS

PAPER OR E BILL—When you register for Online Bill Pay at www.lamarelectric.coop you will have the option of continuing to have a paper bill mailed each month or receiving an email bill. I still pay my electric bill in person, but I registered so I would get an email each month with the amount of my bill, before the mail delivered a paper copy. Also, by registering I can go online and look at my usage history and even print copies of old bills.

LEVEL BILLING—Also called Average Monthly Payment Plan. After you have paid your bill on time for 12 months, we can average your bills, and you pay the average. The monthly amount you pay each month is updated once each year. Your bill is calculated each month based upon how much electricity you actually used, the same as before, but the amount due is the same every month all year. The bill shows a balance forward each month to help you see if your actual usage is more or less than the average amount you have been paying. This is a very popular option to have with automatic payments. Not only would you know exactly when your electric bill will be automatically paid, but you will know the exact amount ahead of time and can write it into your check book.

As a member-owned cooperative, we are always looking for ways we can serve our members and keep the cost down. We will continue using the latest technology as it becomes affordable to provide the very best service.



Lamar Electric Cooperative

1485 N. Main St. • P.O. Box 580
Paris, TX 75461

*Operating in Lamar, Red River,
Delta and Fannin counties*

GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO

Jerry D. Williams

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Member Benefits

- Level billing
- Automated meter reading
- Free bank draft service
- E-Bill
- Visa and MasterCard accepted

Your "Local Pages"

This section of Texas Co-op Power 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.



CONTACT US

*For information during office hours
and outages after hours*

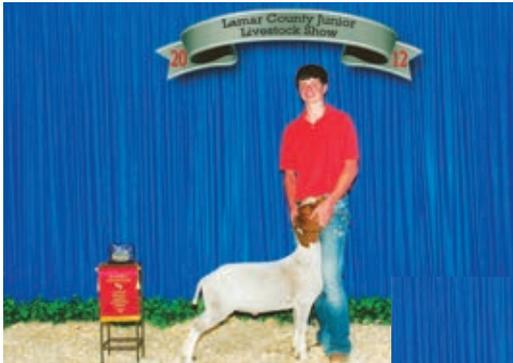
CALL US

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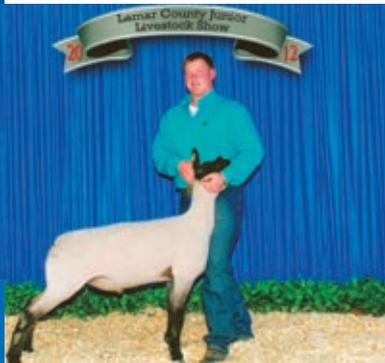
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www.lamarelectric.coop

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**Reserve Champion Goat
Trent Evans, Chisum FFA**



Brody Barnes, Roxton FFA

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Bailee Ballard, Prairiland FFA



**Reserve Champion Rabbit
Damien Lawson, Chisum FFA**

Lamar Electric Supports Local Youth

Lamar Electric Cooperative is a proud supporter of the Lamar County Junior Livestock Show. This year, there were lots of excited kids waiting their turn for a spin around the buyers' ring with their prize animals.

The co-op won the bid on the reserve champion goat. In addition, LEC bought a lamb and a steer. Lamar Electric also sponsored the reserve champion rabbit belt buckle.

The reserve champion goat was shown by Trent Evans of Chisum FFA. He is the son of LEC member James Evans of the Howland community. The lamb LEC bought was shown by Brody Barnes of Roxton FFA. He is the son of co-op members Mickey and Sharon Barnes of the Harmon community. The steer purchased was shown by Bailee Ballard of Prairiland FFA. She is the daughter of co-op members Jeff and Patti Ballard of Blossom. The reserve champion rabbit belt buckle was awarded to Damien Lawson of Chisum FFA. He is the son of Timmy and Stormey Lester of Paris.

We are very proud of these kids and all who participated. Our young people are our future. We must invest the time and effort to teach them about rural living.

The Beginning of Electrification in Rural Northwest Lamar County

BY J.C. HOWELL OF SUMNER

It was the last week of May in 1938. One evening just before dark, Mr. Rogers, the first manager of what was then called the REA (Rural Electric Administration) came out to see my dad about dragging the electric poles to begin installing electric service to our area. The right-of-way had already been cleared, and stakes with numbers on them driven where each pole was to be set. Mr. Rogers informed my dad that the poles would be dumped along the road, which is now FM 79 and FM 1500, the next day. He informed Dad that each pole would come predrilled for hardware, and a piece of paper would be rolled up and put in the top hole of each pole with a number on it. The pole was to be put by each stake with the corresponding number.

That spring was one of those times when it had rained every few days, and the ground was saturated. There was no way to use steel-wheeled tractors of those days

without getting stuck. Mr. Rogers knew we still had mules, even though we had started using a tractor to farm.

The next day, the poles were being delivered by what we called six-wheelers, which were single-axle Ford and Chevrolet trucks and single-axle trailers. The big 18-wheel Peterbilts and Kenworths were not used in this area at that time. We didn't have roads that would handle them.

School had just let out the previous week for the summer. I was free to work at whatever Dad had in store for me. I was 14 years old, and Dad always had something for me to do. There was never a free day except for Sunday. We were just starting to come out of the Great Depression, and kids had to work back in those days, and work hard.

We walked the area and made a sketch of each pole location and number. We would push out the paper with the number on it and mark on the sketch where each pole was going. We'd arrange them so we could drag two or sometimes three poles at a time with our mules, Old

Bell and Joe, my favorite team.

The poles were so saturated with black creosote that it killed the grass where they lay. Dad didn't tell me that creosote would blister my skin, and I found out the hard way. I wore a short-sleeved shirt the first day and did most of the wrapping of the chains around the poles to drag them. That was the worst blister I ever had. A sunburn was nothing in comparison to this.

We dragged poles for several days from Pine Creek and along what is now FM 1500, then diagonally northeast across our place over to Caviness Road, which is now CR 32500. I don't remember any mention of pay for dragging the poles, and I never received anything, except the most severe blister of my life. Everyone was so glad to be getting electricity. We didn't worry about getting paid.

Before we finished dragging poles, REA started digging the holes by hand. I think the holes were 5 feet deep. Everything was done by hand. I had never seen a bucket truck at that time. Laborers were plentiful. People were looking for anything they could do to put food on the table for their families.

Ground wire was already stapled to the electric pole, and a pulley was bolted on the top of each pole with four ropes tied to the top of the pole. Two or three men would lift the pole as high as they could by hand, while another man would be ready to place a fitting on the top of the 30-foot pole to raise it higher. Two men with ropes would pull to finish the pole raising. The two men with ropes on the other side were only for safety, to keep the pole from going too far. While the pole was being raised, one person would be at the hole with a board, extending a few inches down into the hole, for the bottom end of the pole to rest against to make the pole fall into the hole once it was raised. One person would eyeball the pole while the other put the dirt or mud in the hole and pack it down.



While the poles were being set, other men would set up a spool of wire at one end of the pulley and unreel it by hand down to the end. Pole climbers with spikes would climb each pole and place what would become the hot wire on top of the pulley, and it would be pulled to the right tension. It had to have a certain amount of sway between poles to allow for temperature changes. The neutral wire was installed in a similar manner. The poles were placed twice as far apart as they are now.

I remember a few years after the original line was installed, another pole had to be installed between each original pole because of breakage from ice during the winter. I also remember the original ground wire stapled to the pole extended only two or three inches above the top of the pole, which made it really close to the hot wire. REA later climbed each pole and bent the ground wire down beside each pole.

While the right-of-way was still being cleared and surveyed, REA offered a free seminar to those members who were interested in learning how to wire their houses. Dad and I attended and wired several houses in the area. Again, everyone wanted this done as economically as possible. Most people only wanted a lamp cord dropped down from a rosette, a socket with a pull chain and a 25-watt bulb. By today's standards, that isn't much light, but it sure beat a kerosene lamp. Each house had to be inspected before the current could be turned on. I guess Dad and I were lucky; we never had a house rejected.

Many co-op members bought refrigerators for the first time. Ours was a Crosley, with a small freezing unit that would hold only two ice cube trays. Mother would sometimes make an ice cream mix and freeze it in the ice cube trays. It might not have been as good as today's Blue Bell, but for a country boy, we were in high cotton.

Each time I see a Lamar Electric Co-op vehicle, I get a lump in my throat thinking about all the hard work and sweat that went into getting our first electricity in rural Northwest Lamar County, and the small part that I played in making it possible.

Do's and Don'ts of Electrical Safety

Inside your home

- ▶ **DO** cover all electrical outlets and wall switches with cover plates, and replace any that are damaged.
- ▶ **DO** protect small children and pets by using plastic safety covers on all unused outlets and keeping cords out of sight and reach.
- ▶ **DO** make sure all electrical devices are in good repair.
- ▶ **DO** use extension cords only on a temporary basis.
- ▶ **DO** use a quality surge suppressor with enough sockets for every component.
- ▶ **DO** keep all electrical devices away from water sources.
- ▶ **DON'T** yank electrical cords from the wall—this can damage both the plug and the outlet. Unplug by grasping the plug itself.
- ▶ **DON'T** attach a cord to another surface with nails or staples—they can damage the cord's insulation.
- ▶ **DON'T** use damaged or brittle electrical cords, even if bare wires aren't visible.
- ▶ **DON'T** attempt to fix an electrical appliance or tool while the unit is plugged in.
- ▶ **DON'T** plug one extension cord into another.

Outside your home

- ▶ **DO** have ground-fault circuit interruptors and waterproof covers on outdoor outlets.
- ▶ **DO** look out for overhead power lines every time you use a ladder or pole. Stay at least 10 feet away from any electrical lines.
- ▶ **DO** call a professional for help trimming trees near power lines.
- ▶ **DO** keep electrical devices and cords away from water.
- ▶ **DO** keep children and pets away from pad-mount transformers. If the door is open or the lock is broken, call Lamar Electric Cooperative right away.
- ▶ **DO** teach kids to stay far away from substations and explain what the warning signs mean.
- ▶ **DON'T** assume the black coating on wires is insulation—it could be just plastic weatherproofing that provides no protection from contact injuries.
- ▶ **DON'T** let kids climb trees or fly kites near power lines.
- ▶ **DON'T** disguise transformers or meters with paint or bushes—a Lamar EC employee might need to work safely around it or find it quickly in an emergency.
- ▶ **DON'T** hang signs on utility poles. Nails, staples or tacks can pose a big danger to Lamar EC linemen who must climb the poles. Plus, the practice is illegal.
- ▶ **DON'T** tamper with an electric meter (it's dangerous and illegal).

Country Corner Events

No events were submitted for August.

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. Email marci@lamarelectric.coop or call (903) 783-4911.