

# Why Is My Electric Bill More Than My Neighbor's?



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

**Why is your electric bill more than your neighbor's? There is an answer. I often get a similar question after someone moves. This house is the same size as my old house; why is my electric bill more? Funny, I never hear about someone moving to a different house and the electric bill going down. It has to occur; I just don't hear about it.**

Let's take a look at what is happening. Most of us have one or more television sets and usually a DVD and/or VCR with each TV. I don't have one, but a lot of folks have a DVR. Add to this list a microwave oven, refrigerator/freezer, electric range, cooktop, one or two water heaters, personal computer, printer, an Internet modem and receiving dish. Sometimes there is a dish for Internet and a separate dish for TV programs. Sure, your neighbor has pretty much the same thing, so why is your electric bill twice as high?

The answer is this: You and your house are different. Your electric use is different. Some of the differences may seem minor, but they add up. How well are your walls insulated compared to your neighbor's? Do you have high ceilings that leave little room for insulation above the ceiling? Are you cooking or baking from scratch, while your neighbor opts to microwave? Does the TV keep you company even when you're not watching it?

Just as no two families live alike, no two electric bills are the same. Comparing your electric bill to anyone else's would be like comparing your weekly grocery tabs. Two families of four will most likely not spend exactly the same amount on food because their tastes and habits are different. Two families may each have a four-door vehicle that holds exactly the same number of passengers, but the miles

per gallon of gas may vary a great deal. The difference is not due to the vehicle, but is due to the way it is used.

Most likely there are conveniences for which you might be willing to pay, even though your neighbor isn't. Are you more comfortable sleeping in an extra-cool house on hot summer nights? Maybe your neighbor's thermostat setting is a few degrees warmer at bedtime.

Perhaps he changes his AC filters more often while your AC fan is clogged with dust, sort of like the ceiling fan blades. Once the AC fan is clogged, no amount of filtering will help till the fan blades are cleaned. You may be very good about changing filters, but the problem could be left over from the prior owner of the home.

The very same thermostat setting in one house may produce a totally different result in a different house. One thermostat may be located near a return air duct, while another thermostat may be on a hall wall, away from any air duct. One room may be warmer or cooler depending on the size and location of the duct work, relative to the location of your central AC unit. Very seldom will you ever hear of a residential air conditioning installer that actually measures the amount of cubic feet of air delivered to each vent.

You may sleep better with a ceiling fan running, be it summer or winter. Your neighbor may feel cold with the ceiling fan running in the winter. You may like your ice cream as solid as a brick at -2 degrees, while your neighbor is satisfied with a +8 degree freezer, and ice cream not quite as hard.

The way to lower your electric bill is to use energy more efficiently before the meter is read. Could it be the meter? Yes, but not very likely. Most of our electric

meters are digital and are pretty accurate. Modern circuit boards like those in your meter usually work really well or not at all—sort of like a standard lightbulb, which either lights up or is said to be burned out when the filament is no longer making contact. The digital electric meters certainly are subject to the effects of lightning, but most likely will work correctly or not at all.

If your neighbor's bill is lower than yours, here are some tips on how to conserve energy that you may not have thought of: Ceiling fans can make a room feel cooler and they use 90 percent less energy than an air conditioner. My ceiling fans blow air downward all year. I like the feel of air movement and the fan seems to stir the warmer air near the ceiling during the winter.

Use a freezer (preferably not a frost-free type) for food you wish to store for a very long time. Frost-free refrigerators and freezers remain frost-free, but use more electricity in the process. A refrigerator is basically a freezer compartment with a fan blowing cold air into the refrigerator compartment. There are coils in the freezer that get very cold and humidity collects on these coils, causing ice to form, sort of like the drops of water on the outside of a glass of cold beverage. Frost-free refrigerators have heating coils wrapped around the freezer coils. Every six hours or so, a timer turns on the heating coil and the heater melts the ice off the freezer coils. When all the ice is gone, a sensor senses the temperature above 32 degrees and turns off the heater. Heating the coils every six hours not only uses energy, it also cycles the food in the freezer through temperature changes. This is the reason most stand-alone freezers require manual defrosting. They use less



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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.

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energy and the food lasts longer because they are not subjected to such temperature cycles.

Change the setting on your water heater. Try a setting of 120 degrees, and flip the breaker to your water heater when you leave home for more than the day. Washing dishes in the sink can be done without adding cold water, but the newer automatic dishwashers use 35% less water than using the sink, and the washer will increase the water temperature as needed. Insulate, insulate, insulate—but no amount of insulation will

fix a habit of leaving the door open.

Think of that list of appliances above. When you turn off the TV, DVD and a lot of other electronic items, they don't really go off. Even when they are not being used, your TV, DVD, DVR, personal computer, satellite dish, internet modem and even your cellphone charger continues to use electricity. Plug these items into a power strip and then unplug the power strip.

My neighbor is not aware that I unplug things or turn breakers off, but he knows how my bill compares to his.

# Lamar Electric Announces Youth Tour Winners

**Sierra Kruse and Dylan Ruthart are the winners of this year's Government-in-Action Youth Tour essay contest.**

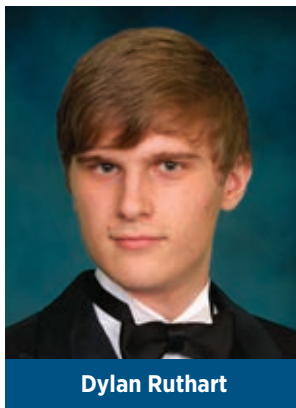
They are among about 100 students from other cooperatives in Texas who will make the trip to Washington, D.C., for a tour of its many historic sites from June 13-21.

Kruse is the daughter of Lamar Electric Cooperative members Brian and Debbie Kruse of the Post Oak community and attends Prairiland High School. Dylan is the son of Rick and Mitzi Ruthart of the Slabtown community and attends Paris High School.

The group will fly from Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport to Washington, D.C., where they will meet with approximately 1,200 other students from across the nation. Once in Washington, participants will see and tour many historic places such as Mount Vernon and the U.S. Capitol, where they will visit with their U.S.



**Sierra Kruse**



**Dylan Ruthart**

congressional representatives and tour the House and Senate chambers. A visit to the White House is scheduled (subject to policy at the time), and the day will conclude with an all-states dinner and dance.

Also included on the Youth Tour will be sights such as Kennedy's Gravesite; the wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier; Arlington Cemetery tour; Lincoln Memorial; Vietnam Memorial; World War II Memorial; Smithsonian museums of American Art, Natural History and American History, as well as the Air and Space Museum; Union Station and the Old Post Office Pavilion. In addition, the students will visit Pentagon City Mall and Hard Rock Café, experience the Washington at Night Driving Tour, and see the Sunset Parade at the Iwo Jima Memorial. Tour participants also will have an opportunity to win other trips while they are in Washington, D.C.

# Do You Know These People?

Lamar Electric is attempting to locate former members who have unclaimed checks that were issued in 2010-2012 but have not been cashed. The checks are final bill refunds, deposits and membership fees that were due to the members after their electricity was disconnected. A lot of folks did not give us a forwarding address, and their checks were returned by the post office.

If your name appears on the list, or if you are the legal heir to the estate of an account on the list, please contact our office at (903) 784-4303 to claim your refund. You only have until May 24, 2013, to claim your property. After that, we are required to send the money to the State of Texas, and you will be required to file a claim with the state.

A complete list of names is available at our office at 1485 N. Main St. in Paris, or at our website, lamarelectric.coop.

John T. Townes . . . . .	\$5.00	American Realty/Jackie Alsobrook . . . . .	\$25.00
Rosie Lee Earls . . . . .	5.00	John T. Reese . . . . .	25.00
Kelsey Graham . . . . .	6.00	Mike Cavin . . . . .	25.00
Ollie M. Brem . . . . .	9.22	Juan Dyck . . . . .	25.00
Charlie Battles . . . . .	9.92	H.W. Bass . . . . .	25.00
A.B. Patterson . . . . .	10.00	Margaretha Friesen . . . . .	25.00
Eric Sexton . . . . .	10.82	Mike D. Williams . . . . .	25.00
J.L. Hammond . . . . .	10.88	First Preston/Bank of America	
Corey D. Parks . . . . .	11.57	Denise Jarvis . . . . .	25.00
Willie A. Phelps . . . . .	12.13	Curtis D Elmore . . . . .	43.44
Trenton D. Couch . . . . .	12.26	Laura F. Langford . . . . .	50.93
Edward Offutt . . . . .	14.78	John W. Downs . . . . .	56.72
Matthew W. Lamonica . . . . .	19.70	Homer A. Robe . . . . .	58.69
Jami Comstock . . . . .	19.82	Gordon D. Tillery . . . . .	145.78
Jason L. Duerksen . . . . .	21.24	Jim T. France . . . . .	173.44
Kevin Winslow . . . . .	21.25	Noah Chaney . . . . .	245.24

# Country Corner Events

## May 4

**Uncle Jesse's 26th Annual Big Bass Classic Tournament, 6 a.m.-3 p.m., Sanders Cove at Pat Mayse Lake Loop C.** Registration at the Lamar County Chamber of Commerce until 5 p.m. May 3 and Brannan's Bass Shop until 7 p.m. May 3. For more information, call (903) 784-2501.

## May 11

**East Texas Medical Center Health Fair, 9 a.m.-noon, ETMC Clarksville.** For more information, call (903) 428-8500.

## May 11

**Paris Art Fair, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Paris Fairgrounds**

## May 18

**Red, White and Blue Golf Tournament, 7 a.m.-8 p.m., Paris Golf and Country Club.** The annual tournament benefits the Madison Hope Nation Scholarship Fund, DBA Maddie's Gift. For more information, call the country club at (903) 785-6512 or Randy Nation at (903) 517-2821.

## May 31-June 1

**Red River Valley Spring Fair and the 3rd Annual Best of Lamar County Barbecue Cook-Off, Paris Fairgrounds.** There will be arts and crafts and vendors in the Community Exhibit Center and Coliseum. The cook-off will be held June 1 in the area between the Coliseum and the Livestock Barn. The community is invited to sample the food for a \$12 donation starting at 11:30 a.m. For more information, call Rita Haynes at (903) 785-7971.

*If you have any events that you would like listed for Delta, Lamar or Red River counties, please contact Dena Beason. We need the information two months in advance for the magazine. Email dena@lamarelectric.coop or call (903) 783-4949.*



## Memorial Day

**Lamar EC's offices will be closed Monday, May 27, in observance of the holiday.**

*As always, crews will be standing by in the event of an outage. We wish you and yours a happy, safe and restful holiday.*

# Wicked Wiring Warnings

## What is your home telling you?

Our homes are a lot like us. They age just like we do. They begin to creak and moan. They begin to show their age. They, like us, have aging systems, some that can be seen and some that cannot. Just as we need to get checkups from time to time, our homes also need checkups. When it comes to the electrical system in our homes, it is important to schedule a house call in response to these warning signs. If you notice any of these issues, you should immediately call a licensed electrical contractor and have him or her give your home a checkup.

**YOU EXPERIENCE FREQUENT TRIPPED CIRCUIT BREAKERS OR BLOWN FUSES.** Breakers and fuses are rated in amperes and protect the wiring in our houses from overcurrent. Overcurrent may result from an overloaded or short circuit, or a ground fault.

**YOU FEEL A TINGLING SENSATION WHEN YOU TOUCH AN APPLIANCE OR METAL OBJECT.** Getting a shock from appliances in your house can indicate a more serious problem. You should immediately unplug the appliance and discontinue its use.

**YOU NOTICE THAT A RECEPTACLE OR WALL SWITCH BECOMES DISCOLORED OR IS ABNORMALLY WARM AND/OR SHOOTS SPARKS.** This could indicate arcing, smoldering or burning happening behind your outlets due to loose connections, damaged or improperly installed wiring in the outlet, or a problem with the receptacle itself. You should immediately avoid using the outlet or switch and contact a licensed electrical contractor as soon as possible to correct the problem.

**YOU DETECT A PERSISTENT BURNING SMELL FROM A LIGHT FIXTURE, APPLIANCE, ROOM OR AREA.** This may indicate that a light fixture may have the wrong size lamp. Use only the specified wattage

and trims indicated by the lighting fixture. It may also indicate that an appliance is overheating or malfunctioning. In this case, unplug the appliance or turn off the circuit breaker until further investigated.

**YOU SEE FLICKERING OR DIMMING LIGHTS.** This could indicate loose connections at electrical termination points on switches causing arcing and overheating. Left uncorrected, this poses a fire hazard. It could also indicate a short in the wiring system.

In summary, all these warning signs can be detected when your home is given its proper electrical checkup. A licensed electrical contractor may recommend the installation of lifesaving devices, such as ground-fault circuit interrupters, smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. He or she may also introduce you to arc-fault circuit interrupters, which have been required in new homes since 2000. These devices are intended to provide protection from the effects of arc faults and de-energize circuits before a fire can start. He or she might suggest that you get a total rewire of your electrical system. This is also recommended by the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the National Fire Protection Association and Underwriters Laboratories when a home is more than 40 years old. Know the warning signs, and if your electrical system is beginning to show its age, get your checkup to ensure the safe and proper operation of your electrical system.

Source: *Safe Electricity*

# Motherly Advice for Energy Savings

While honoring your mom this Mother's Day (Sunday, May 12), it's a good time to remember all the great advice she's given you. Woven into many of the classic motherly requests are some excellent tips for saving energy.

## Close the door

This was often followed by "You weren't raised in a barn." If your air-conditioning system is running—whether cooling or heating—keeping doors closed helps contain the air you're paying to "condition" and saves energy.

## Turn off the lights

If it uses electricity and you're not using it, shut it down. With video games, TVs and computers, the best way to handle that is a smart power strip. These items typically consume energy even when they're turned off, so you need to go one step further. By turning off the power strip you can maximize savings.

## Don't leave the water running

Whether it's while you're brushing your teeth, washing the car or taking a shower, letting the water run when it doesn't need to be is wasteful and expensive. If hot water is being wasted, it's even more expensive.

## Leave the thermostat alone

Set it and forget it. Frequently moving the temperature setting up or down based on your momentary comfort is inefficient. Picking a moderate setting—76 to 78 is recommended for the cooling season—allows the system to operate more efficiently.

Heeding Mom's advice can put a little extra cash in your pocket to buy her a great Mother's Day present. And, you'll have one more thing to thank her for.

ISTOCKPHOTO



Any discoloration around an electrical outlet requires immediate attention and repair.