

The Unique Power of American Independence



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

THE FOURTH OF JULY is a festive day on which we celebrate our nation's independence with family and friends. Typically, it is not a day of quiet reflection; we spend a lot of energy having fun, and if we give any thought to our forebearers and their determined efforts to bring about our nation's independence, it's fleeting. A history buff may reflect on the events leading to our independence, especially when a gaggle of the young'uns make a lot of smoke and produce loud sounds, but most likely they will just reflect on time remaining till the firecracker supply is depleted.

An Independent Spirit Is a Part of Our DNA

However, it is worth reflecting that this uniquely American spirit of independence remains part of our collective DNA. More than 200 years after the United States was formed and the Declaration of Independence was crafted, this sense of independence has served us well.

For example, more than 70 years ago, an independent streak inspired groups of farmers across America's countryside decided to band together and improve their quality of life. One of those independent thinking groups lived in Lamar County Texas. Aside from President Franklin Roosevelt's promise of federal aid in the form of low-interest loans and engineering expertise, rural Americans had little help getting electricity to their homes. So, they did it themselves by pulling together and working cooperatively.

For the past 40-plus years, nearly every president since Richard Nixon has talked about the goal of U.S. energy independence—reducing our reliance on imported energy. Today, we still have a way to go, but we are closer to that goal than ever before. We are exporting more gas and importing less foreign fuel than at any other time in recent memory.

American ingenuity in the form of new technology and innovation is opening up more options and spurring greater efficiency across all forms of energy.

The Road to Energy Independence

The best news is this: Consumers have an important role to play on the road to energy independence. They don't have to

wait for Democrats and Republicans to agree, or environmentalists and fossil fuel advocates to reach consensus. Consumers can help by taking action in simple, practical ways—insulating and caulking around windows, doors and electrical outlets; washing clothes in cold water instead of hot; replacing air filters; reducing the water heater thermostat, turning the AC off when you leave the house; and using more energy-efficient appliances and home heating and cooling systems. Efficiency efforts cut utility bills for individual households, but the collective benefit to our country is even greater. The most energy efficient and environmental friendly power plant is the one that is not constructed due to consumers using energy wisely.

Every summer my phone rings with consumers questioning why their electric bill went up. These independent thinkers are somehow convinced their utility bill is the result of someone deciding that it is time to collect more money or an attempt to make up for a past ice storm. You never hear from them when the bill goes down. You would think the answer is obvious, because we hear from the same folks when the weather turns cold. All electric bills are based on how much electricity went through the meter. Use less and the bill goes down, use more and the bill goes up. The person with the best information about where the electricity went is the person living in the home.

The Lamar Electric base rate has been the same every month for the past nine years. The Power Cost Recovery Factor is different each month and only generates enough revenue to pay for Wholesale Power. We don't get to keep any of it. If your bill goes up, it is because your usage went up. Most times the usage this summer is about the same as last summer for the same residence.

You could place a thermometer in your living room and see how close you can get to the recommended setting of 78 degrees in the summer, 68 degrees in the winter, and OFF when you are not home. A lot of the numbers on the actual thermostat are not very accurate, so use a thermometer. There is nothing wrong with a setting of 72 degrees in the summer, but you should expect a 10 percent increase in your cooling bill for every degree below 78. Yes, 72 will cost you about 60 percent more for the cooling part of your electric bill.



By working together, Americans can increase energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption to become less reliant on imported energy.

A dirt clogged air filter or cooling coil will make the unit work twice as hard. Some folk still leave their electric water heater thermostat set to Hot. Turn it down to about 120 degrees and you will be amazed at how much you will save. Just cleaning the lint filter and making sure there are no kinks or obstructions in the discharge hose will make the clothes dryer use a lot less electricity. Not using the clothes dryer will save even more.

If we all work together to achieve increased energy efficiency and reduce our overall energy consumption, we can make even more progress on our road toward energy independence. At Lamar Electric Cooperative, we want to be a resource for you in this effort.

Co-ops Provide Renewable Energy Resources

Electric co-ops across the country have been actively engaged in promoting renewable energy resources such as wind, solar, hydropower and biomass. Today, nearly 95 percent of the nation's 900-plus electric co-ops provide electricity produced by renewable sources, all playing a key role in powering rural America while fostering our nation's energy independence.

Part of the power generated by water leaving Lake Texoma is delivered to Lamar Electric members, as well as a small amount of the wind power from West Texas. We even purchase all the excess power our members generate with their residential wind turbine or solar panels, and it flows to other Lamar Electric members.

Recent advances in technology are transforming how we make and move electricity. Over time, these changes will greatly improve not only the efficiency but also the reliability of electric power.

So this Independence Day, as you gaze up at the fireworks lighting up the night sky, reflect on the enduring spirit of independence that is integral to our American character, and remember the ways you can contribute to our nation's energy independence.



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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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How Do Transformers Work?

IF YOU WERE ASKED TO describe Lamar Electric Cooperative’s system, you might say, “Poles, wires and those round gray things or green box things.” Round gray things? Green box things? Those are often the descriptions given for transformers, the pieces of equipment crucial in converting electricity to a voltage that is safe for use in homes and businesses.

So, how do they work? They transform the voltage of the electricity that passes through them.

Electric System 101

Electricity loses voltage as it is transmitted because of the resistance in wires and other components. As a result, higher voltages are used to offset these “line losses,” as we call them. It all starts at the power plant. There, generators produce electricity at high voltages and use transformers to step up this voltage. Because the power plants are far away, these high voltages are necessary to survive the trip over the system to where the electricity is needed.



GREYSTONE POWER

Transmission lines connect to substations filled with transformers and control gear. This is where the transformers step down the voltage to

safer, more manageable levels. Depending upon the distance to the farthest member and the amount of load served, distribution voltages can range from 7,200 to 24,900 volts. After a couple more step-downs, the electricity arrives at your home at 440 volts.

Turning Highs Into Lows

Regardless of the shape and size of the transformer, they all work in the same manner. Transformers have two sides, a high-voltage side and a low-voltage side. In normal operation, electricity flows into the transformer on the high-voltage side, where it goes into a coil of wire that is usually wound around an iron core. As the electricity flows through this coil, it creates a magnetic field that “induces” a voltage in another coil.

Here is where the magic (aka physics) of transformation takes place: Each coil has a different number of turns. The greater the number of turns, the higher the voltage. The coil on the high side will have more turns than the one on the low side. As the charge travels from the high side to the low, the voltage induced on the low side is less. It leaves the transformer at a level suitable for distribution to homes and businesses.

Transformers at Home

Transformers can be found everywhere in our daily lives, even if they’re not so obvious as those on the co-op’s system. The best example is a cellphone charger. These small cousins of utility transformers basically perform the same function. Charging your cellphone with 120 volts would fry it instantly, so the charger converts the voltage to a more tolerable 5 volts or so. Take a moment to look around your home and see just how many of these miniature transformers you have. You might be surprised!

It also is important to note that transformers work in both directions. Electricity flowing in on the low side can be stepped up to the voltage of the high side. This is why Lamar EC educates members on proper connection of home generators. A generator feeding 220 volts into a residential transformer will produce whatever high voltage the transformer is rated for, creating a potentially deadly risk for line crews and your neighbors. So please, connect your generators according to the manufacturer’s recommendations. Or give us a call at (903) 784-4303 for advice. It’s always best to be safe.



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Beat the heat this summer by having your AC system inspected and maintained by a professional.

Will Your AC Hold Up for Another Year?

THE BEGINNING OF A TEXAS SUMMER

is a bad time for your air conditioning to fail. Is your AC unit in adequate shape to make it through another one?

That’s a good question for a trained, licensed HVAC professional.

Even if things went well the summer before, you should still have your central air-conditioning system or heat pump inspected and maintained by a knowledgeable technician at the beginning of every cooling season. The tech will be able to tell you if your AC is displaying any warning signs that could cause it to break down in the heat of the summer.

You also can increase your chances of having a cool, comfortable house all summer by:

- ▶ Regularly cleaning around your outdoor unit so it’s clear of debris, leaves, dirt and twigs.
- ▶ Keeping the grass around that unit trimmed.
- ▶ Caulking or weatherstripping around doors, windows and any gaps between walls and floors, ceilings or fixtures.
- ▶ Changing indoor air filters once a month during the cooling season. If your filters are not disposable, clean them each month. If your home has room air conditioners, change their filters every month, too.

Pump Up Pool Efficiency

AFTER A LOW-IMPACT WORKOUT IN THE BACKYARD, a swimming pool provides the perfect summer retreat. But who wants it to be a wallet drain? Soak up this pool efficiency knowledge to save money while maintaining your personal, pristine oasis.

Each pool is equipped with an energy guzzler: the pump. The bigger the pump, the higher the power bill. Make sure your pool uses the smallest pump possible for its volume. New products like variable-speed pumps offer a good way to save. A knowledgeable pool supply or service firm can help choose a proper pump for your pool, taking into consideration its size, filter and piping.

Greater savings can come from decreasing pump operation time, no matter the pump size. Keep drains clear of debris, or your pump will work harder than necessary to circulate water. Also, find a proper balance for backwashing the filter—the process of filtering and disposing of dirty water. Too much backwashing wastes water, while too little strains the pump.

Here are some common myths that lead to extra pump time (and wasted energy):

MYTH: I need to run my pump to keep chemicals mixed.

Circulate while adding chemicals, and they will stay mixed. There is no need to recirculate the water each day to “remix” the chemicals.

MYTH: My pool will be dirty if I don’t run my pump to constantly clean debris.

Try running your pump for six hours or less a day, as suggested by the U.S. Department of Energy’s web-

site, energysavers.gov. If the cleanliness is not to your liking, increase filtration time by 30-minute increments until you are satisfied. If six hours works well, try decreasing filtration time to find a balance with energy efficiency.

To keep debris down without running your pump overtime, use a skimmer to manually clean the water.



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Also, try using a timer to run your filter for several short periods during the day rather than allowing debris to pile up after one long continuous filtration.

MYTH: I need my pump to run continuously to keep algae at bay.

Keeping a proper chemical balance and regularly brushing down the pool walls are the best algae fighters.

You can make sure your pool isn’t draining energy dollars needlessly by adjusting its pump time and investing a little legwork. You’ll have a prime poolside spot to relax in afterward, and the relief you’ll see on your power bill will be well worth the effort.



Country Corner Events

July 3

Annual Fireworks Show and Paris Municipal Band Concert, 8-10 p.m., Noyse Stadium, Paris. Paris Municipal Band plays patriotic music before the fireworks show. If you would like to be a sponsor, contact Gina Crawford at (903) 784-2501 or gina@paristexas.com.

July 4

Celebrate America Parade, 10 a.m.–noon. Parade begins in the parking lot behind the Lamar County Courthouse at 10 a.m. It will go down First Street NW and turn at the south side of the plaza onto Clarksville Street, continue to 12th Street SE and turn north back to Lamar Avenue, continuing west back to the County Courthouse parking lot. You can watch the parade from the comfort of your car or lawn chair along this parade route.

July 17

Paris Municipal Band and Crowning of the Crape Myrtle Queen, 8:30-10 p.m., Paris Junior High Weger Auditorium, 2400 Jefferson Road, Paris. This is the final concert of the season. If you have not had an opportunity to hear the band, now is your chance before the season is over.

July 18

31st Anniversary Tour de Paris. Enjoy a juicy, homemade hamburger with all the trimmings and fruit smoothie after your ride on our 31st Anniversary Tour de Paris Bicycle Rally. There are lots of friendly rest stops to keep you hydrated along the way. Visit tourdeparis.org for information and to register.



Lamar EC will be closed Friday, July 3, in observance of Independence Day.