

Principles + Values = Cooperatives



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

MOST COOPERATIVE BUSINESSES around the world operate in accordance with the Seven Cooperative Principles:

1. **Voluntary and Open Membership**
2. **Democratic Member Control**
3. **Members' Economic Participation**
4. **Autonomy and Independence**
5. **Education, Training and Information**
6. **Cooperation Among Cooperatives**
7. **Concern for Community**

Rural Electric Cooperatives have also adopted a set of values that helps put these principles into practice.

Co-ops are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-op leaders believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Let's take a closer look at these values and the effects they have on us at Lamar Electric Cooperative.

Lamar Electric's founders created it to serve the members who use the electricity we provide, and we continue to do that today. This was done over 75 years ago because the big power companies refused to serve the rural areas of North Texas. Their message was: If you want electricity, you should move to town. Forming our own Cooperative embodies the values of self-help: recognizing a need, taking action and doing what needs to be done for the betterment of our own service, our members' lives and our community. We also know we must embrace the value of self-responsibility, holding ourselves accountable to you, the cooperative's members, for the services we offer and the impact we make.

In cooperative business proceedings, each member gets one vote, no matter how much electricity you use. This ensures that democracy is practiced the way it is intended—with equality for all members. This is a key difference between co-ops and investor-owned companies, where the number of votes you have depends on the number of shares you own. With co-ops, your elected representatives are also members just like you and live in your area.

For co-op members, equity has two meanings. On one hand, it means that we strive to treat all of our members fairly. On the other hand, equity also means that, as a member, you have an ownership stake in the co-op. Each year you purchase electricity, you add to your equity account.

Although each co-op is autonomous, we do act in solidarity with other co-ops and our community. We know that we can do more for you by partnering with other co-ops and like-minded organizations, and we gladly join with other groups during festivals, fundraisers, emergencies, disasters and more—anytime help is needed.

Relying on each other is the cooperative way, and by doing so, we can restore power to members more quickly when severe weather emergencies occur. This type of assistance is known as a mutual-aid agreement, and it works both ways. Wherever the need is for assistance—whether in our service area, a neighboring co-op's, or sometimes even in another region entirely—the crews head there to pitch in.

Co-op electric lines and systems are designed and built to the same standards across the United States. When we call on sister co-ops (like we did during the 2013 December ice storm), they answered the call and no training was necessary. They show up ready to get the job done.

As a co-op owner, you have the right to expect us to act with openness and in a transparent manner. We welcome your active participation in our co-op.

Cooperatives have been long and correctly identified as the original socially responsible business model, meaning that we care about the impact we have on the community while ensuring that we are economically viable.

We try to demonstrate our concern for the community by caring for others every single day, via our participation in safety demonstrations at schools, community fundraisers, installing lights at ball fields and donating to many youth organizations. We help encourage our local youth with scholarships, trips to Washington D.C., livestock sales, etc.

By using these values in support of cooperative principles since our founding, we have been able to serve you faithfully for the past 77 YEARS, and will do so long into the future.

“A people that values its privileges above its principles soon loses both.” —Dwight D. Eisenhower



Water and electricity don't mix, but an electric pressure washer does not have to be dangerous, if used safely.

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Electrical Safety With Pressure Washers

WATER AND ELECTRICITY ARE A DANGEROUS MIX, but an electric-powered pressure washer does not have to be, as long as it is used safely. The most important factor is plugging into a functional, tested ground-fault circuit interrupter receptacle.

A GFCI monitors the flow of electricity in a circuit. If there is an irregularity of electrical flow, the power is cut off, preventing an electric shock. GFCIs are recommended anywhere water and electricity may meet—so every outdoor receptacle should be equipped with a GFCI.

GFCIs come in several varieties. One type is a circuit breaker with a built-in GFCI, which a qualified electrician can install in a home's panel box. Others come in the form of a receptacle that fits into a standard outlet box. If your outdoor receptacles do not have GFCI protection, purchase portable ones.

Also, make sure you are using a grounded cord, approved for outdoor use and in good condition without any nicks or cuts, and with an intact grounding prong.

The Center for Disease Control notes that electric shock can occur if a pressure washer's safety instructions are not followed, and it offers these additional precautions:

- ▶ Never use a gasoline-powered washer in an enclosed space.
- ▶ Always test the GFCI before plugging in and using a pressure washer.
- ▶ Always plug a properly grounded pressure washer into a properly grounded receptacle.
- ▶ If an extension cord must be used, keep the pressure washer's power cord connection out of any standing water, and use a heavy-duty extension cord with components rated for outdoor use.
- ▶ Keep both the power and extension cords as far away as possible from the item being washed and away from any water runoff.
- ▶ Always have a qualified electrician check the pressure washer for electrical problems after it has tripped a circuit breaker.

There are different kinds of pressure washers, some powered with electricity and others powered by gas. No matter what kind you plan to use, know how to use it safely. Read and follow all safety instructions in the owner's manual that comes with the device.



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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.

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Residential Generators

A buyer's guide

LET'S FACE IT: ROUGH WEATHER HAPPENS. At Lamar Electric Cooperative, our goal is to restore power as quickly and safely as possible. But when a major storm hits, power may be out for an extended period of time. Anyone who has experienced an extended power outage has likely mulled over the idea of buying a generator. Before you do, make sure you have all the facts.

The purchase and installation of a generator is an important and serious decision. Properly done, you gain peace of mind knowing your family can ride out any outage with some degree of safety and comfort. An incorrectly implemented generator can become deadly to you, your family, your neighbors and your electric cooperative's employees.

So let's look at the decisions you'll need to make when it comes to purchasing a residential generator. First, do you want to back up your entire home or just portions of it? The biggest drawback to a permanently installed, whole-house generator is the cost, despite significant advantages.

The next decision is sizing the generator to your particular situation. Online tools abound, so if you like to research, just type "generator sizing guide" into your browser, and off you go. Or contact Lamar EC to help you determine the correct size. All this being said, a reasonable size for a portable generator is at least 6,500 watts, with a startup capacity of about 8,000 watts. (The difference in those numbers is because of this: When motor loads start, they draw more power than they use when running. This "inrush" of power gets them spinning, then their demand for electricity decreases.)

The third consideration is how to integrate the generator with your home. Permanent models have dedicated switching devices that handle this chore, but portable models can require

you to remove them from storage, set them up, connect them and start them up.

This is where the danger mentioned above comes into play: Improperly connected generators can easily backfeed into Lamar EC's grid. As electricity flows back into the lines, the transformers boost the voltage to lethal levels, endangering

line crews working to restore power, or anyone who might come into contact with a downed line. Be sure to closely follow connection instructions, and contact us if you have any questions regarding connecting your generator safely.

Use of the generator can be as simple as plugging appliances directly into it—but this is cumbersome and limiting. It's better to have a transfer switch installed by a qualified electrician. This device connects to the circuits you want to power. You connect your generator to the dedicated plug, follow the disconnect procedure and fire it up—and you've got power for your home that's safe for all.

Next, a word about quality: With generators, you definitely get what you pay for. Cheap models are just that. They may last a couple of years, but after that, parts can be impossible to get.

Few things are worse than your generator failing to operate when the lights are out. Go for engines with recognizable brand names. They may cost more, but will certainly be worth the extra cost.

Also, it's important to exercise your portable generator regularly. Don't worry, you don't need to walk your generator—it's not that type of exercise. "Exercising" means connecting load to the generator and turning it on to be sure it will run.

And while you're at it, why not let your co-op know you have a generator? We can provide safety and connection tips if needed, and our knowing will enhance our line crews' safety.



Anyone who has experienced an outage has likely thought of buying a generator—but before you do, know all the facts.



Take Control of Summer Energy Bills

HERE ARE FIVE EASY WAYS to minimize your energy use during the hot months:

Sun block. Half of all of the heat that enters your home comes in through the windows. Invest in a thick shade or window film to block out the summer sun. Save up to 15 percent on your cooling bill by shading west-facing windows, which absorb the most afternoon sun. For the hottest parts of your house, consider installing an awning or planting trees in front of windows to shade the house.

Quick change. A filter for your air-conditioning system costs only a few dollars (about \$5 for a high-quality, pleated model) but can save you much more if you change it every month during the summer. Dirty air-conditioning filters prevent airflow and make the system work harder. That means a higher bill.

One degree. For every degree warmer that you turn up your thermostat during air-conditioning season, you'll save up to 2 percent on your cooling costs. Try setting your thermostat at 78 degrees, and turn on a ceiling fan to help circulate the air.

Wind chill. Fans don't cool the air, but they make the air feel cooler by moving it around the room and against your skin, which creates a sort of wind chill effect. When the fan is running, you can move your thermostat 3 to 4 degrees higher without noticing a difference in your comfort level.

Cool touch. Replace every incandescent lightbulb in your house with a compact fluorescent lightbulb or a light-emitting diode. The replacements cost more to buy than incandescents, but CFLs use 75 percent less energy, and LEDs use less than one-tenth. Both of these energy-efficient versions pay for themselves and then some over their lifetimes. Plus, they emit far less heat than incandescent bulbs, so they don't add heat to your home's air or make the air conditioner work harder.

Keep Outdoor Playtime Safe

BEFORE YOU SEND YOUR KIDS outside to have some summer fun, make sure they are aware of electrical dangers that could put a frightening halt to playtime.

Teach children to look up and look out for power lines, and to keep themselves and any play items away from power lines or anything in contact with lines.

Children also must avoid climbing trees near power lines. A tree branch tangled in a power line can energize the whole tree with electricity, leading to electric shock or death for anyone climbing or touching it.

Ensure that your kids are protected from the electrical service connection to your home. Be aware of these lines around pools. Pool skimmers can be long enough to reach service connection lines.



Children must avoid climbing trees near power lines.

Teach your children never to play around pad-mounted transformers—the green metal boxes that contain the aboveground portion of an underground electrical installation. They carry high voltages and are safe when locked but can be deadly if someone reaches inside. If you see one in your neighborhood that is open, call your co-op immediately.

Also, teach children never to enter an electrical substation for any reason. If a ball or other toy crosses the fence surrounding the substation, call your utility for help. Substations hold deadly amounts of electricity and should be entered only by professionals.