

‘Wascally’ Customer Charge



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

IF YOU EXAMINE YOUR ELECTRIC BILL, you might notice a line that details a “Customer Charge.” This charge, unlike the other portions of your bill, stays the same whether you use zero electricity or hundreds of kilowatt-hours (kWh).

For most accounts this Customer Charge is \$12.50, whereas a large industrial customer with three transformers instead of one, the charge is \$50. Lots of folks have asked me “What is this fee?” This is the fee you pay to have electricity available. Some call it the Service Availability Charge.

In reality, it is just part of our rate and helps generate the revenue we need to operate. If there were no customer charge, we would have to add the same amount to something else on your bill. It helps pay for the basic infrastructure needed to deliver electricity—from the wires that carry power to your house, to the salaries of the employees who make our co-op run. There are also taxes, insurance and other costs to consider.

The Customer Charge is applied equally to everyone who receives electric service because even if you use zero kWh in a month, it still costs the co-op the same amount to maintain lines, read meters, and calculate and mail bills. You may not realize it, but the transformer at your house uses a lot of electricity just sitting there humming, even though your meter never turns.

Take the example of Elmer Fudd. Mr. Fudd has a cabin he uses only when he’s hunting wabbits during the three months of wabbit season. The hunting cabin is on the same distribution line as another member, Bugs Bunny, who is a year-round resident of the area. They each pay the same monthly Customer Service fee, even though Mr. Fudd doesn’t use electricity for nine of those months.

After a storm hits, the distribution line is damaged. Mr. Bunny and Mr. Fudd both need that line to deliver electricity to their doorstep, and both help pay in the form of the Customer Charge fee for its repair.

Mr. Bunny and Mr. Fudd use the line equally, and both pay equally for its upkeep. That way, when either needs electricity, it is there, just waiting for the flip of a switch.

We think applying this charge equally to all members is the fairest way to ensure everyone pays a share for building and maintaining our electric system—even during the months when no electricity goes thru the meter.

Some have asked me if we could lower the Customer

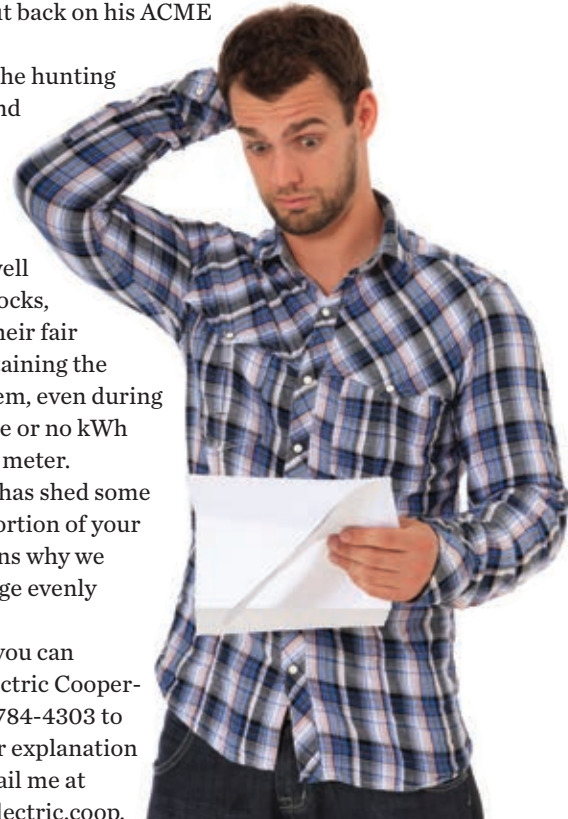
Charge to around \$6. The answer is “we could.” But, in order to get enough money to maintain the electric lines and equipment, we would have to increase the kWh energy charge to make up for the reduction in the Customer Charge.

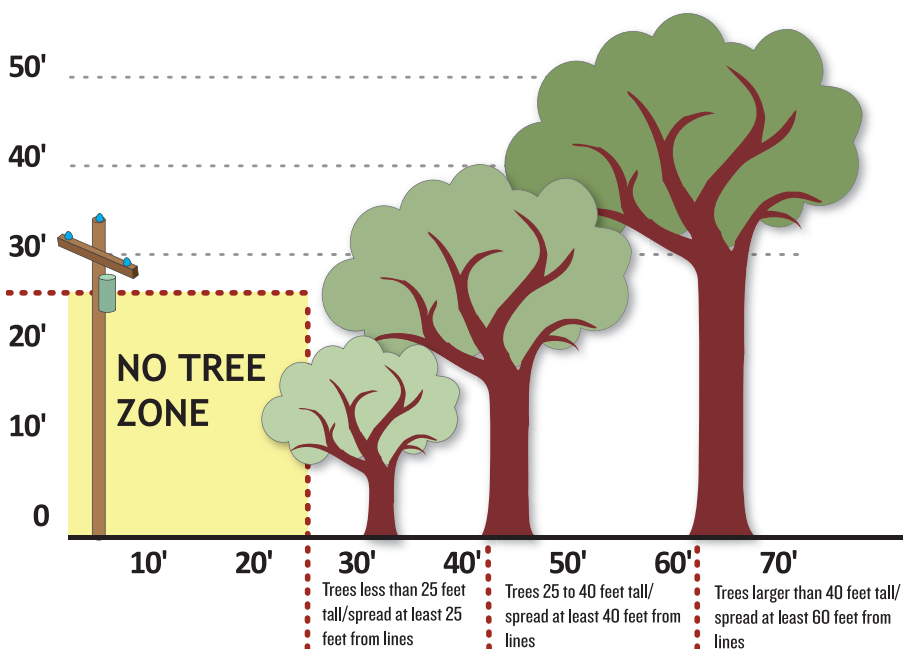
Reducing the Customer Charge from \$12.50 to \$6 for about 10,000 accounts would reduce revenue by \$780,000 per year. The offset would be to increase kWh energy by about 6/10 of a cent for these same people. Sure, Elmer and Bugs would both have a \$6 Customer Charge every month; but, Bugs Bunny would pay around \$12 more per month for electrical energy when he uses his air conditioner, and \$15 more when the wabbit hole gets dwafty in the winter and his electric heat kicks in. Elmer Fudd may be happy, but not so much for Bugs. Even with a \$6 customer charge the TOTAL amount of Bugs Bunny’s electric bill will now be around \$5.50 to \$8.50 more each month during several months of the year, and that can add up to a lot of carrots. Road Runner, who uses a lot of electricity, would discover he is now paying a lot more and would be forced to cut back on his ACME purchases.

As it is, all the hunting camps, weekend homes, summer cottages, guest houses, spare wabbit holes, barns, well pumps, boat docks, etc., will pay their fair share of maintaining the electrical system, even during months of little or no kWh usage on their meter.

I hope this has shed some light on this portion of your bill and explains why we apply the charge evenly to everyone.

As always, you can call Lamar Electric Cooperative at (903) 784-4303 to receive further explanation or you can email me at jerry@lamarelectric.coop.





Pick the Perfect Place To Plant

THE RIGHT TREE PLANTED in the right place can add natural beauty to any landscape, but a tree in the wrong place can become expensive to maintain and even dangerous. Arbor Day presents the perfect opportunity to learn more about the benefits of tree planting and selecting the perfect tree for the right place in your yard.

Arbor Day, first celebrated in Nebraska in 1872, was celebrated April 25 this year in many states, but in Texas, it's celebrated the first Friday in November—this year, November 6. Whichever day Arbor Day is celebrated in your neighborhood, trees are traditionally planted in observance.

When considering tree placement, select a planting location that does not interfere with utility lines either in the air or underground. Tree branches can interfere with overhead power lines, and roots can do the same with underground utilities.

Power outages or interruptions occur when trees and branches come into contact with overhead lines. Electrical arcing and sparking from a wire to a nearby branch can cause fires.

Tall-growing trees with a mature height of greater than 40 feet should be planted at least 50 feet away from lines to avoid the need for future pruning around electrical infrastructure. A mature height of less than 25 feet is recommended if planting nearer to lines. Keep in mind that trees should never be planted directly under—or closer than 20 feet on either side of—power lines, poles or electrical equipment.

Trees growing near power lines must be pruned to maintain a safe distance from the wires. If you have trees that are growing into power lines, contact your electric provider. Never try to prune them yourself.

Also, before any tree planting begins, make sure to call 811. The 811 “Call Before You Dig” service is free and locates and marks your public underground utilities so you can avoid buried lines when you dig.

Make sure to call a few workdays in advance of any digging project to give ample time for a professional to locate these utilities. Electrical, gas, water, cable and telephone lines can all be found beneath the ground.

For more information, visit arborday.com and call 811.com.



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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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www.lamarelectric.coop



Change Cooking Habits and Save

MOST COOKS ARE SURPRISED TO LEARN that cooking habits, not technology, represent the biggest potential for energy efficiency and savings in the kitchen.

Tests by the U.S. Bureau of Standards have shown that some people use 50 percent more energy than others to cook the same meal. Several strategies can help you save energy using your existing cooking equipment.

Use the oven only when cooking large dishes or batches. Conventional ovens or ranges are inherently inefficient because they must first heat up about 35 pounds of steel and a large amount of air to heat up food. Tests indicate that only about 6 percent of the energy output of a typical oven is actually absorbed by the food.

Think small. Opt for a smaller appliance, such as a toaster oven or microwave, whenever possible.

Turn off the oven or electric burners a few minutes before your food is ready. They will remain hot enough to finish cooking the food.

Don't preheat the oven unless you are baking, or a recipe requires it.

Bake with ceramic or glass pots and pans. This will allow you to lower the oven temperature by about 25 degrees.

If you have a self-cleaning oven, plan to clean it immediately after you've finished baking something, so that it won't have to heat up a second time.

Don't peek. Opening the oven door can lower the internal temperature as much as 25 percent. If your oven has a glass window, keep it clean and use the internal lightbulb instead.

Don't cover oven racks with foil. This reduces heat flow and increases cooking time.

Make sure your pan covers the coil of your range. If you can see coil peeping out from the sides of your pan, you need a bigger pan (or a smaller burner).

Put a lid on it. Cover pans whenever possible while cooking to prevent heat loss.

Plan ahead. Defrosting food in a microwave may be convenient, but defrosting it in the refrigerator is more energy efficient.

Keeping these steps in mind is easy and comes at no extra cost. Making a habit out of them will save you energy in the kitchen and money on your electric bill.

—Energy Efficiency Resource Center



Let Kids Help in Kitchen

THANKSGIVING IS equal parts family time and cooking—but unfortunately, the two often compete.

This year, don't automatically shoo your kids out of the kitchen as you bake pies, roast a turkey and mash potatoes. Instead, get them involved in preparing the family meal.

Here are just a few of the benefits of cooking with your kids:

- ▶ As you give your children age-appropriate tasks, you'll teach them how to work safely around a hot stove and oven, and with knives and other kitchen tools. Although you'll want to give younger children jobs that don't involve cutting with sharp blades or touching hot pots or appliances, you can talk about and demonstrate their safe use.

- ▶ If you assign your young helpers the job of preparing salads and veggies to serve alongside the creamy gravy and rich desserts, they'll be more likely to want to eat those healthy selections.

- ▶ Cooking and baking are valuable skills that your children—both boys and girls—will rely on for the rest of their lives. Teach them how.

- ▶ You have the opportunity to teach your children energy-efficient ways to cook, plus demonstrate tips and shortcuts that result in energy savings.

Once the family sits down to eat the Turkey Day feast, take a moment to thank the young cooks for their contribution so the whole family can congratulate them.



Preparing a delicious stew in a slow cooker is a great way to save time and energy in the kitchen.

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Thanks for the Laughs

IF EVER WE NEED A GOOD LAUGH, it's around the holidays! To bring you some holiday cheer, here are stories about a few of the funniest calls received by the Butterball Turkey Talk-Line from would-be Thanksgiving chefs around the country.

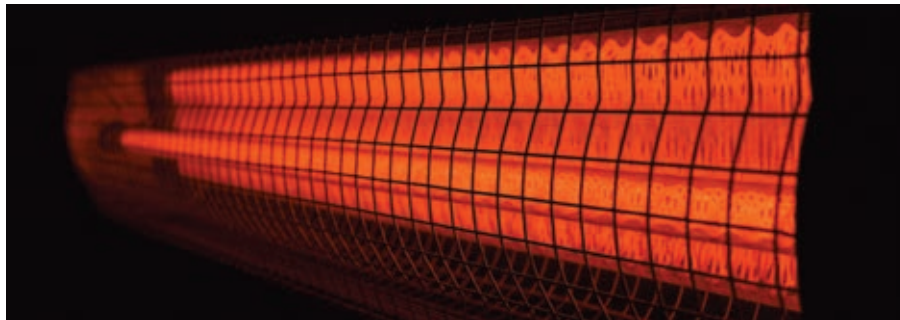
▶ A disappointed woman called wondering why her turkey had no breast meat. After a conversation with an operator, it became apparent that the woman's turkey was on the table upside down.

▶ A proud gentleman called to tell the Talk-Line staff how he had wrapped his turkey in a towel and stomped on it several times, breaking the bones so it would fit in his pan.

▶ When a Talk-Line staffer asked a caller what state her turkey was in (meaning how thawed was it), the caller responded with, "Florida."

▶ A man called to tell the operator that he cut his turkey in half with a chain saw and wanted to know if the oil from the chain would adversely affect the turkey.

▶ Some holiday chefs take extreme measures to please their guests. A caller who was entertaining guests from the Bahamas called to ask how she could create a "bikini look" for her "tropical turkey." The veteran operator suggested using aluminum foil as a way to make the turkey look like a sun goddess!



Be Cool With Electric Heaters

SPACE HEATERS ARE MEANT to provide supplemental heat, not to replace your home's heating system. In fact, if used incorrectly, space heaters can pose fire and burn risks.

Safety rules when using your portable electric heater:

- ▶ Read and follow the manufacturer's warnings and the use and care guidelines before using a space heater.
- ▶ Space heaters need space. Keep them at least 3 feet away from any combustible material such as bedding, clothing, draperies, furniture and rugs.
- ▶ Never use space heaters around unsupervised children and pets.
- ▶ Always turn the heater off and unplug it when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- ▶ Plug space heaters directly into an outlet; do not use an extension cord.
- ▶ Electric space heaters use a lot of electricity. Plug your heater into a circuit with as little else on it as possible.
- ▶ Space heaters should be used only for supplemental heat. Don't use them to dry clothing, cook food, thaw pipes, or warm bedding.



Happy Thanksgiving

from Lamar EC

Our offices will be closed Thursday and Friday, November 26-27, to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday.

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Veterans Day November 11

Lamar EC thanks all veterans for their service.

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