

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



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

YOU HAVE A TV, VIDEO GAME SYSTEM, microwave oven, electric range and cooktop, refrigerator/freezer, heat pump and personal computer. So does your next-door neighbor. So why is your electric bill almost twice as high every month?

Consider this: How well are your walls insulated compared to your neighbor's? Who has the most insulation in the attic? Do you take longer, hotter showers? Are both water heaters set to the exact same temperature? Are you cooking gourmet meals and baking from scratch while your neighbor subsists on quick-heating TV dinners? Does the TV keep you company even when you're not watching it?

No two families live alike. So no two electric bills are the same. Comparing your monthly statement to anyone else's would be like comparing your weekly grocery tabs. Two families of four will never spend exactly the same amount on food because their tastes and habits are different.

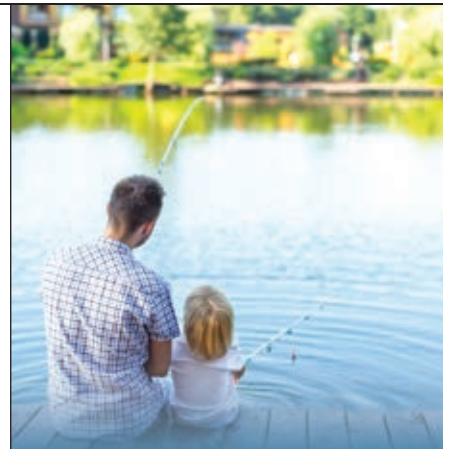
Think about the conveniences you might be willing to pay for, even though your neighbor isn't. Are you more comfortable sleeping in an extra-cool house on hot summer nights? Maybe your neighbor's set-back thermostat ekes the temperature up a few degrees at bedtime.

Do members of your family entertain themselves in separate rooms after dinner—watching TV or playing video games—while the folks next door all gather in a family room to play a board game?

Another major factor in today's electric bills is vampire energy loss. Virtually anything that's plugged in is drawing some current—even when it's off. Experts estimate that standby energy drain accounts for 5–10 percent of an average home's annual power usage. A plasma TV can use \$165 annually for electric power—when it's off.

Consider unplugging items when not in use or using a power strip to disconnect several items at once. There are also "smart" power strips available that automatically cut power to devices in standby mode.

The way to lower your electric costs is to use energy more efficiently before the bill comes. Contact Lamar Electric Cooperative or visit our website at www.lamarelectric.coop for tips on how to save money by conserving energy around the house.



HAPPY Labor Day

Lamar Electric will be closed Monday, September 5, in observance of Labor Day.

As always, crews will be on standby in the event of an outage.

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Power Tip

Consider insulating your water heater tank, which could reduce standby heat losses by 25–45 percent and save you about 4–9 percent in water heating costs. You can find pre-cut jackets or blankets available from around \$20.



You will use more electricity by leaving your air conditioner on all the time. Turn your thermostat to "OFF" when you leave for the day. Turn it to "COOL" when you return, leaving the thermostat set to 74 in the summer. Turning it down to 60 will not cool the house any quicker than a 74-degree setting.



When operating large machinery, use a spotter to avoid any nearby power lines.

Focus on Safety During Harvest

DURING HARVEST SEASON, many farmers reap the benefits of advancements in agricultural technology. With the help of GPS auto-steer devices, farmers are able to decrease driver error and maximize productivity. Yet despite these advances, safety risks remain.

One critical part of safety around electricity is awareness. It's important to remember that farm machinery is vulnerable to hitting power lines because of its large size, height and extensions. Being aware of the location of overhead power lines and planning a safe equipment route can help reduce accidents.

In equipment with auto-guidance systems, less focus is needed on steering, which could lead some drivers to think that they do not need to stay aware of navigation issues. However, even while using a GPS with auto-steering, farmworkers need to keep safety in mind and stay focused on their surroundings.

Varying pass-to-pass accuracy levels and potential issues such as power poles not being correctly plotted in the GPS system reinforce the need for drivers to stay focused on the location of farm equipment while in the field.

Regardless of the technology used on the farm, workers need to follow these electrical safety guidelines:

- ▶ Use a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines.
- ▶ Keep equipment at least 10 feet from power lines, at all times, in all directions.
- ▶ Look up and use care when moving any equipment, extending augers or raising truck beds around power lines.
- ▶ Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine clearance.
- ▶ Always set extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads. Grain augers should always be positioned horizontally before being moved.
- ▶ Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
- ▶ If a power line is sagging or low, contact Lamar Electric.

If your equipment does make contact with a power line, do not leave the cab. Immediately call 911, warn others to stay away and wait for the utility crew to cut the power.

The only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire, which is rare. If this does happen, jump off the equipment with feet together and avoid touching the ground and machinery at the same time. Then, still keeping both feet together, hop to safety.



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What Would the World Be Like Without Electricity?

Heidi Kornelsen, a junior at Faith Christian School, submitted this winning essay as her entry for the Youth Tour Essay Contest for Lamar Electric Cooperative. The essay is based on the question: "What would the world be like without electricity?"

IT WAS A SNOWY, BONE-CHILLING NIGHT in North-East Texas, and the Bennett family was about to head off to bed. Twelve-year-old Ashley should've gone to bed an hour ago, but she had been so excited about the snow she wouldn't have been able to sleep anyway. Her mom was getting on her case about it now though, and she couldn't convince her mother to let her stay up any longer. As she crept into her cozy bed, her mother came in to say goodnight. When she left, she turned on the hallway light. Ashley had always felt uncomfortable sleeping in complete darkness, so her mom always left the hallway light on for her.

As Ashley lay in bed, she wondered what it would be like to live in a world without heated houses to give you shelter and warmth on a bitterly cold night like this one and simple switches that you could flip one time and would give light to an entire room. Eventually, Ashley dozed off into a peaceful sleep and drifted into a dream in which she was in a different reality. Little did she know the adventures that this night would bring her.

She landed back in time to the year of 1866 onto the scene of a poor family struggling to make a living on the prairie. The Homestead Act had been passed four years ago, and the Mahone family had decided to come and make a better life for themselves. They never dreamed that it would be easy, but they weren't quite prepared for the struggles, either—especially the cold winters. Although their sod house didn't have indoor heat like we do, it was surprising how warm they stayed in the winter.

It didn't take Ashley long to realize that she was in complete darkness. Soon, realizing it was still night, she tried looking for a light switch but couldn't find one. Fear struck her; it was dark and she had no idea where she was, but she couldn't do anything about it. As she got used to her surroundings, she counted 10 children huddled close together sleeping on the floor, and saw that she was in a one-room house. As she stood and gazed in bewilderment, she shivered from the cold. After a while, she noticed that the mother was getting up to start a fire. The house needed to be warmed up, and plus, the fire had to be started early for the day's cooking duties. Ashley thought this was really weird because she was used to just having the heater on all night,



HEIDI KORNELSEN

and then when you need to cook something, just turn the oven on. Not that big of a deal, right? Starting a fire took so much more time! And what was that awful smell? It was worse than the heater starting up for the first time! The reason for this smell was because they used cow chips to start the fire. Wood wasn't really a reality for those living on the prairie, so they had to make do with what they had.

Mr. Mahone was also getting up to go feed the livestock and bring back fresh milk for breakfast. After a while, the children had to get up and go do their chores. This was not a favorite part of their day. It was so cold outside that they just wanted to stay by the fire. One of the chores required was to fetch fresh water. Ashley wasn't used to "fetching water" being a job. Another chore was to gather eggs for breakfast. They gathered fresh food very

often because they didn't have refrigerators to store their food in like we do. Once mother had everything she needed to make breakfast, she cooked the eggs over the fire. It took a lot of time to make meals because they didn't have the time-saving resources that we do today. Ashley thought this was very strange. She would often just grab cereal and some milk from the fridge, or heat something up in the microwave.

Soon after breakfast, three of the children started their three-mile walk to school. One of the girls was 16, and had been out of school for a few years already, one of the boys had to stay home to help his father, four others were still too young, and the other one was a five-year-old boy who was too sick to attend school. They didn't have a phone to call the doctor, so Mr. Mahone would have to go find the doctor, and bring him to their house. Ashley started to become very thankful for modern phones. She wondered what she would do if she didn't have a phone to call 911 in case of emergency. The first thing she could think of was to run to her neighbors for help. It was common for people in the 1800s to lean on their neighbors for help when it was needed, even though families were very independent.

When the children came home from school, it was just starting to snow, lightly at first, it eventually turned into a blizzard. The whole family was stuck in the house, just waiting and hoping that it wouldn't get too bad. The fire kept the house nice and cozy, and it was a good thing they had filled up all the crevices in the house, otherwise they'd have snow blowing in.

They couldn't do anything outside, so the whole family had to find something to do inside. Ashley didn't know what they could find to do with 12 people in this little sod house. They had

no TV, no internet, no radio, and no ice cream to grab from the freezer for a snack. Soon she saw mother grab her writing materials. She was going to write a letter to her family back home. Ashley hardly ever wrote letters. She was so used to texting already. She couldn't imagine having to wait so long for a reply from someone. And whenever she really missed her older sister who was in Africa, she would just FaceTime her. Father decided to take a nap. He worked so hard, he could use a little extra sleep. Their 16-year-old daughter—Elsie was her name—decided to read one of the few books they had in their collection. The oldest boys played with their marbles, and the other five found little toys to entertain themselves with. Five-year-old Josiah, on the other hand, was not getting better, and he lay in bed most of the day. The doctor hadn't given much hope but to wait and see what would happen. Ashley thought about the fact that if we didn't have electricity in the modern age, our health care would decrease. One factor being, we wouldn't have all the medical equipment we have now.

It was evening now, and the snow had finally let up. Father went to go check on things outside. After he opened the door, he let out a sigh of relief. It wasn't too bad. It was completely dark when he went to go check on the animals, but with the little bit of light he did have, he could make out that the animals were fine. This was a huge relief for him because losing just one animal would already make a difference.

Suddenly it was four months later. The long hard winter was finally over, but Josiah had, sadly, not made it through. They just knew of no way to help him. Ashley had ached to help him, but there was no way. Now it was springtime, and that brought a ray of hope to the Mahone family. They were ready to start a new year. The flowers were blooming, Mr. Mahone and his oldest sons were continuing to plant their crop of corn, and the women were planting their yearly garden. In order to water their precious plants, they had to haul bucketfuls of water there and back. They ate a lot more fruits and vegetables in the spring and summer than in the winter, so they were looking forward to having fresh produce again. Ashley felt sorry for them because she could eat basically anything she wanted all year long. Many advances have been made in preserving food over the years.

It was Saturday, and the Mahone family was very excited for a picnic later that afternoon with the few neighbors that they had. After the women were done planting the garden, they started getting ready for the picnic. They would do laundry on Monday, but this was not the "sort and throw it in the washer" type of laundry. They had to do it all by hand.

Later that afternoon, the Mahone family headed to the picnic. Everyone was excited to get out and have some fun, and Elsie was especially glad. She had recently entered a relationship, and they didn't get to talk to each other every day like we do now. Electricity was not a part of their relationship. Nowadays, teenagers would hardly know what to do on weekends without electricity. When everyone got to the site of the picnic, the games began. They children had lots of fun playing hide-and-go-seek. After a while the adults got out their instruments and started the dancing. This was a highlight for everyone.

Once the Mahone family reached their beloved abode once again, they heated up the water for their weekly bath. No, they didn't have a hot shower. They had to heat up bucketsful of water, pour it into a bathtub, and then everyone had to take turns washing themselves in the same water. The water was so dirty by the time the babies had their baths, the saying came about, "don't throw the baby out with the bathwater."

The next day was Sunday, and they didn't have a church close by that they could go to, but they gathered with their neighbors to read from the Bible and sing hymns. Ashley was used to indoor heating, lots of light, a big sound system, and projectors, but she liked the way these people stuck together, and didn't give up, even though things were a lot harder and more time-consuming without electricity.

When Ashley woke up from her long, peaceful and adventurous night, she was excited to tell her family everything she had learned. And as she went throughout her day, she noticed that in basically everything she did, electricity had some part in it.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH



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Pecan Praline Crunch

- 1 box (12 ounces) cereal squares of your choice
- 2 cups pecan pieces
- ½ cup light corn syrup
- ½ cup light brown sugar
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon baking soda

1. Heat oven to 250 degrees. Mix cereal and nuts and set aside.
2. Mix syrup, sugar and butter in microwavable bowl and microwave for 1 ½ minutes. Stir and microwave another 30 seconds to 1 minute or until boiling.
3. Add vanilla and baking soda, and stir to combine.
4. Pour syrup mixture over cereal mixture until well coated. Spread on large cookie sheet. Bake 1 hour, stirring every 20 minutes.
5. When done, pour onto waxed paper and allow to cool. Store in resealable containers.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at
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