

Will Flickering Damage My Appliances?



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

THE SHORT ANSWER IS; flickers are usually harmless. Everything you have that runs on electricity is designed to be turned off and on at some time. The other night, at one of our community meetings, a lady asked this question. As I pondered the question, it came to me that a lot of folks don't understand why electricity may go off and back on and how this may affect different electrical devices.

Believe it or not, under normal conditions, the power will flicker more in rural North Texas, than in down town Dallas. Tall buildings will absorb lightning strikes and there are more trees within striking distance of our high voltage power lines on only one substation, than there are in the entire city of Dallas. I guess that is part of the price we pay for living in such a blessed natural environment.

The two most common reasons the electricity may flicker in our area is tree limbs and lightning. Other significant causes include vehicle accidents and small animals on transformers (especially in the fall of the year). A tree limb will almost always create an electrical short when it touches a high voltage wire. The high voltage wires sit on top a glass or porcelain insulator that is connected to the wooden pole. They are not covered with any rubber or other type of insulation.

Even with an aggressive right-of-way program, wind will sometimes blow a limb into the power line. Generally the leaves touch first and quickly disintegrate, but they provide a good enough path for the electricity to momentarily short to the ground through the tree trunk. We have breakers at designated locations that sense the short and turn the power off, similar to the breakers in your breaker box at home. These breakers usually shut off power for only a few seconds and then reset. By shutting off power for a few seconds we have prevented a full outage. Occasionally a really bad fault will cause a breaker to operate further up the power line, before the breaker closest to the problem isolates the problem area. You may see your lights flicker, but there is no danger involved.

Lightening has a tendency to favor tall trees and electrical conductors held 30 feet in the air. Those same breakers sense lightening on the power line and momentarily turn the power off, allowing the lightening to go to the ground. Almost every utility pole has a ground wire that extends up the pole to help dissipate lightening. This process helps keep a lot of lightening from entering your home.

If you are experiencing a severe lightning or wind storm that results in a lot of blinks, it may be a good idea to turn off your air conditioner and computer equipment. Air conditioners have a compressor that builds up pressure as it compresses the Freon. When the power goes off and back on, the compressor may have a hard time starting under a high pressure load. A lot of AC units will have a high pressure switch that will turn the compressor off to prevent damage. Turning your AC system off for about ten minutes will allow the pressure to drop and bring everything back to normal.

Computers and similar sensitive equipment are typically manufactured with close tolerances that make them susceptible to any voltage spike or disturbance. These issues can be from lightning or simply a tree limb. The effects of these devices cycling on and off inside your home may not be as immediate but they accumulate over time, until one day your computer stops working or the TV goes out. We recommend these devices be protected with whole-house surge suppressors and/or plug in surge suppressors. You should consider purchasing UPS (Uninterrupted Power Supply) devices for very sensitive electronics. A UPS device has a battery that keeps the computer or device running even when the power goes off and usually cost about \$150. A whole-house surge suppressor can usually be purchased for less than \$75 and is installed at the top of your breaker box near the main breaker.

Whole-house suppressors are hardwired into your breaker box and block surges by transferring excess voltage to the ground wire where it dissipates. The better ones respond in under a nanosecond. These devices are particularly helpful if there is a nearby lightning strike that travels into your home through the secondary electric wires. Of course, nothing will block the full effects if the lightning strike is close enough. The whole-house device will also not stop any surge that may occur within your home when an appliance cycles on and off.

Of course, flickering or dimming lights in only part of your home is another issue and can be a warning of a serious overload or loose connection. A loose connection could heat up and cause a fire, so don't ignore these warning signs. If the flicker source is the Coop lines, the entire house will be affected, and most likely your neighbors will experience the same flicker.

Notice of 2015 Capital Credits Allocations

LAMAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE RECENTLY allocated 2015 capital credits to each member's account. As a nonprofit organization, after the end of each fiscal year, the cooperative must determine what margins were made during the year and allocate these margins to the members' equity accounts. The margin is the revenue received in excess of all operating costs.

These margins will be returned to members as approved by the board in the future and when doing so will not weaken the financial condition of the cooperative. At this time, all margins from 1938 through 1969 have been returned to the members. Eventually all margins will be paid to each member. In the meantime, the funds are used to construct new lines or make other capital improvements to the electrical system, even though the amount is credited to each member's equity account. For this reason, we often refer to these margins as "capital credits." Capital credits cannot be used to pay your electric bill.

These capital credits remain even if the member is no longer receiving service from Lamar Electric. It is very important that departing members keep the cooperative informed of their current mailing addresses in the future so they can receive capital credits refunds when they are paid.

Capital credits for each member in 2015 were calculated by multiplying each member's bill by 0.0332402887. For example:

If your total billing for 2015 from the cooperative (consisting of energy billing and power cost adjustment) was \$2,000, simply multiply that amount by 0.0332402887. The product is \$66.48.

In calculating your total bill, include any security light charge, but do not include any tax, service or miscellaneous charges.

If you have any question concerning these calculations, please contact Lamar Electric.

(This article is intended to serve as an official notice of the capital credits allocation for 2015.)



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Member Benefits

- Level billing
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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.

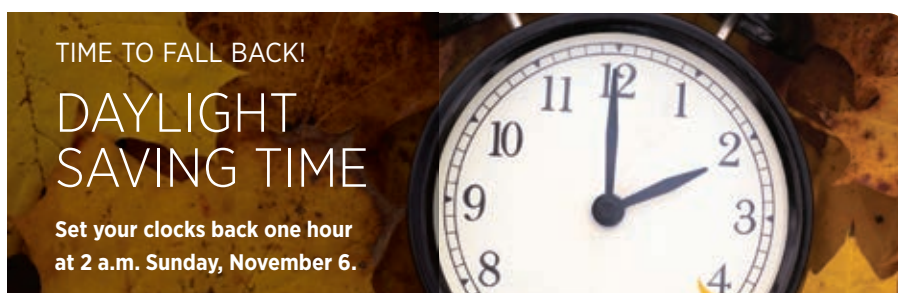
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10 Tips for Turkey-Day Energy Conservation

WITH THESE HELPFUL TIPS FROM LAMAR ELECTRIC, you can ensure that your electric bill will look as good as your Thanksgiving dinner. Instead of overcooking the turkey and your electric bill this Thanksgiving, check out these top 10 tips for an energy-efficient holiday.

1. You might be expecting quite a few visitors on Thanksgiving Day. Lower the thermostat a degree or two before the guests arrive. Because people generate heat, the space can become overheated quickly.
2. With several cooks in the kitchen, the refrigerator door will be opened and shut many times throughout the day. Check the refrigerator and freezer doors to make sure they seal tightly. This will keep the cold air in and the warm air out.
3. When boiling liquids, start by using the highest temperature settings to reach the boiling point. Then lower the heat control setting and allow the food to simmer until fully cooked.
4. Keep a lid on it. Make sure you always keep a lid on your stovetop items. This will speed up cooking time by keeping your food hotter and therefore use less electricity.
5. The microwave is a great tool. Microwave ovens draw less than half the power of conventional ovens, and they shorten cooking time significantly.
6. Save the peeking for the Christmas gifts! It can be tempting to open the oven door and sneak a peek at your meal items, but you should use the oven light instead. Opening the door can cause your oven to lose 25 percent of its heat.
7. Choose the right size burner for your pot. A small pot on a big burner will waste a large percentage of the heat produced.
8. Create a cooking schedule. Figure out what items will need to be cooked in your electric oven, and cook as much of your meal as possible in it at one time.
9. If there is one thing we can count on at Thanksgiving, it is leftovers! Allow your hot foods and liquids to cool before putting them in the refrigerator. Use a lid or plastic wrap to cover the food and place in the refrigerator after cooling. Uncovered, hot food and liquids give off vapors that make the refrigerator work harder.
10. You've done enough work for the day; use your dishwasher. A dishwasher not only saves energy, but it also conserves water. Wait until you've got a full load and let your dishes air-dry instead of using the heated dry cycle. Save the hand-washing for items that aren't dishwasher-safe.



Out of Power? Just Text Us!

WHEN A BIG WINDSTORM blows through or something else happens that causes a major electric outage, our telephones light up. When several hundred people all try calling at the same time, many will get a busy signal. To address this problem, we now have another way to report outages: Just text us.

Texting is a faster and easier way to report your power outage to Lamar Electric. If many folks report their outage by text, those calling in their outage will have a better chance of getting through the first time. We know there are many members who do not text. If we reduce the number of phone calls, then the non-texting folks will be able to communicate with us much more quickly, as well.

Here is how it works: You will need to complete a short registration process to comply with the laws governing texting. Your cellphone number must also be on file with Lamar Electric for the registration process to be completed successfully. If you have not provided your cellphone number to Lamar Electric in the past, please contact us at (903) 784-4303 to do so.

The registration process for texting outage reports to Lamar Electric is easy. Note, however, that your cellphone plan's standard text messaging and data rates apply. To sign up, all you need is a computer and a cellphone, and to follow a few steps.

To opt in to outage texting, visit our website at lamarelectric.coop and click on Outage Texting at the top menu for step-by-step directions.



Beware of Emergency Heat



BY KATIE MORRIS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

BEFORE THE WEATHER STARTS TURNING COLD enough to crank up the temperature in your home, there are a few things you need to know about emergency electric heat.

Emergency heat, or auxiliary heat, is the most expensive way to heat your home. Unfortunately, you might not even realize you are using your emergency heat setting until it is too late. You might see the letters “EM,” “E” or “AUX” show up on your thermostat, or maybe a red or blue light comes on when you turn the heat up significantly. These letters and/or lights signify that your emergency heat has been engaged.

How does emergency heat work, and why is it so expensive to heat your home this way? Emergency heat uses an electric heat strip to heat your home. An electric heat strip gets red-hot (similar to red coils in a toaster oven) and uses a large amount of energy to continuously run.

Instead of using emergency heat, allow your heat pump to get the job done. A heat pump moves the heat available outside of your home and pumps it into your house. A heat pump is more efficient because it takes existing heat in the air and simply moves it.

Transferring heat is a lot more energy efficient than creat-

ing heat. It is not uncommon to get 300 percent more heat from the air than it takes to move the heat. Electric heat strips use a large amount of electricity to create heat. A heat pump is simply “an air conditioner that works backward in the wintertime.”

The colder it is outside, the longer the heat pump will take to warm your home. If you come home from a weekend away and your home is a chilly 50 degrees, try increasing the temperature 5 degrees at a time, so the emergency heat will not kick on. If you set your thermostat to 75 immediately, the emergency heat will automatically kick on to heat your home faster. Unfortunately, this will cost you. If you slowly increase the temperature over time, the heat pump will be able to adequately keep up and will not engage the emergency heat. However, you should always keep an eye on the thermostat and make sure the emergency heat does not kick on without your knowing it.

As the name implies, you should only use emergency heat in emergency situations. For example, if your heat pump has malfunctioned, you should turn on your emergency heat and immediately call a professional to fix the heat pump as soon as possible. Even running emergency heat for a day or two can increase your electric bill more than you would expect.

Post-Thanksgiving Christmas Light Shopping

AFTER THE TURKEY, FOOTBALL, NAP, then more turkey, you will begin thinking about the Christmas holiday. The day after Thanksgiving is the year’s biggest shopping day. You might have quite a few items on your list, including Christmas decorations. As you are searching for the perfect string of Christmas lights, make sure you look for light-emitting diodes to do your holiday decorating. LED holiday lights are better for your home and your electric bill.

LEDs last longer than traditional lights. They have an operational life span of about 20,000 hours, enough to last for 40 holiday seasons. The lights don’t have glass or filaments, which makes them durable and resistant to breaking. Also, an individual bulb’s outage generally doesn’t darken the whole strand.

LEDs use less energy, which means less strain on your winter electric bill. Running LEDs on one 6-ft. Christmas tree for

12 hours per day for 40 days can save 90 percent or more when compared to traditional incandescent lights.

Because they use less energy, LEDs make it safer to connect multiple strands end-to-end without overloading the wall outlet. Also, they are cooler to the touch, reducing the risk of fire.

Many of you have purchased strings of miniature incandescent lights because they are economical and hardly use any electricity. That is a myth: 600 miniature incandescent lights, used 12 hours per day for 40 days, will use \$13.82 in electricity. If those same 600 lights were LEDs, they would use \$2.37 for 40 days. That is a savings of \$11.45 every year. Consider this \$11.45 per year savings when you’re shopping for lights and finding that LEDs cost a little more to purchase.

It is safe to say that LEDs are the way to go this year. With a much lower fire risk and an opportunity for great energy savings, LEDs make the most sense for your holiday decorating needs.