

Why Is My Electric Bill So High?



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

IF YOUR ELECTRIC BILL seems higher than it used to be, it's time to investigate.

First check your history. Verify that the bill truly is higher. You can call Lamar Electric during office hours and ask the Customer Service person to review your bills over the past year. This lady will have your monthly usage for the past several years on her computer screen. If you are looking at a bill for usage during June 2017, you may want to compare it to the exact same time frame in the prior year. Comparing your current monthly usage to the same month for the past few years will often give you a good idea if your current bill is for about the same usage or a lot more. Those of you that are computer savvy may consider going to www.LamarElectric.Coop and click on View My Bill Online. If this is your first time, you will need to enter your account number and set a password. Your usage is displayed for each day by selecting My Usage. The back arrows will allow you to back up to the same billing period last year. Under My Bills, you can even look or print copies of your past electric bills. Our rate has not changed since 2006 so the exact same usage will be billed the exact same amount, except for the monthly Power Cost Recovery Factor. The PCRf changes about every month based on the actual cost of wholesale power purchased for you by Lamar Electric. The PCRf factor is located about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way down on the left side of your bill, just below Billing Date.

Second, check the weather. Fluctuations in outdoor temperatures can lead your family to crank up the air conditioning on especially hot days. Most people with air conditioning use more electricity during the hottest summer months than at any other time of the year. Last summer was pretty mild in most of North Texas. Do not rely on your wall thermostat to tell you the temperature setting for your house. Even if the wall thermostat is accurate, it only tells the temperature at that one spot. Set a thermometer that contains mercury in the area of the house where you spend the most time. Change the wall thermostat setting till it gives you about 76 degrees in the living room or other room where the family congregates, and ignore the thermostat reading.

On our web site, you can select My Usage, and it will automatically display a graph of the Average temperature recorded each day at the closest National Weather Service reporting site. In most cases, that site is the Paris Airport. You have the option to click on Highest temperature and Lowest temperature. You might be surprised to see how much your usage fluctuates depending on the temperature.

Third, check what's plugged in. If you thought your bill would be lower during a month when your family was on vacation, you might be surprised to realize that your appliances still use substantial electricity when the house is empty. Your refrigerator, deepfreeze, hot water heaters, lights on timers, landscape sprinklers and well pump (if your sprinkle lawn), for instance, keep running while you're gone unless you have unplugged them. In fact, almost every appliance plugged into the wall uses electricity, whether or not anybody is home to use them. When I leave for more than a day, I turn the breaker off to both water heaters, unplug the large screen TV and unplug the power strip serving my internet dish, computer and printer. If you have battery backup, you will have to turn it off also. Most folks do not realize how much electricity is consumed by appliances that are turned off, but still plugged in. See if outside lights are being left on all night. Turning lights off when you go to bed will save electricity the same as turning off ceiling fans when you leave a room. There's no benefit to running a fan when nobody is around.

Fourth, check your equipment. As appliances such as refrigerators and water heaters age, they become less efficient. There are some simple things you can do to help them run as efficiently as possible. The same lint you find on ceiling fan blades will accumulate on the coils of your refrigerator and deep freeze. Clean the coils of your refrigerator and deep freeze at least each year. A shop vacuum with a paper towel roller on the end of the hose, works great to reach those hard to access spots. Water heaters will naturally accumulate flakes of lime/calcium in the bottom of the tank. These flakes come off the heating elements when the unit cycles. Connecting a garden hose to the small faucet at the bottom of the water heater tank will allow you to drain about 20 gallons of water and flakes from the bottom. Every manufacture recommends you do this every month, but if you do it once a year, you will be ahead of about 98 percent of the population. If your air-conditioning and heating system or another large appliance is more than 15 years old, consider replacing it with a more energy-efficient model.

Fifth, check your lifestyle. If your college-age child is home for the summer, your electric bill will be a bit higher than it was while he or she was away. If your grandkids are enjoying their vacation at your house, your bill could go up. If you've had houseguests, you've used more electricity. If you've added a major appliance, such as a pool with a pump, a hot tub or even an oversized TV, that has affected your electric bill, too.

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Lamar Electric Recognized for Safety

LAMAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE has reached a milestone of eight years without a lost-time accident. Texas Electric Cooperatives Loss Control Specialist Scott Corley presented a framed certificate to Lamar Electric commemorating this achievement. Eight years is 2,920 days.

“A lineman’s job is one of the top 10 most dangerous jobs in the United States,” Corley said. “An entire organization like this one having a no-lost-time incident for eight years is an exceptional safety record.”

LEC Line Superintendent Scott Sansom and General Manager Jerry Williams accepted the award.

This record of no lost time is due to the commitment to safety from the co-op’s board of directors, CEO/general manager, managers, superintendents and employees.

“We have weekly safety meetings, and we review our safety manual continuously,” Sansom said. “We even go above and beyond the guidelines in our safety manual to ensure all employees get home safely to their families.”

Lamar Electric employee Will Armstrong also received an award for operating without a lost-time work injury for 30 years. Armstrong has been a Lamar Electric employee since 1979.

The employees of Lamar Electric truly are a cooperative family, looking out for each other at work and off the job to ensure that all arrive back home with their families each and every day. They work together to provide the co-op members with safe, affordable and reliable electrical service.

“Safety is more than a choice we make as employees,” Williams said. “It is a way of life.”

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Sixth, don’t rely on your neighbors. No two families use electricity the same way, so if you believe your bill is too high because your neighbor’s is lower, you’re not making an even comparison. The better comparison is between your use of electricity now compared with the same time last year.

If you still think your bill is higher than it should be, give us a call and we will try to help you figure it out.



1485 N. Main St. • P.O. Box 580
Paris, TX 75461

GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO

Jerry D. Williams

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Member Benefits

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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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Hot or Not?

Do tankless water heaters live up to the hype?



BY KATIE MORRIS

I WAS WATCHING TV RECENTLY and came across an advertisement for electric tankless water heaters. Many flashy words promised many dollars saved on electric bills. The phrase “unlimited hot water” was used, in addition to “space saving.”

I wondered if this could be true. If so, why are more people not converting to a tankless water heater? I had to do some research to find out for myself.

Electric tank water heaters and tankless water heaters are quite similar. They both have heating elements that take about the same amount of energy to heat water in both units. The only difference between the two units is that a tank water heater stores large volumes of water and keeps that water warm all day, whereas a tankless water heater heats water on demand.

Tankless water heaters are great for some applications. They are typically placed on a wall, only taking up about 24 inches or so of wall space, depending on the model. The heating element stays on as long as a faucet is open. At first glance, you might think that heating a small amount of water a few minutes a day would cost less than heating a large

amount of water all day long, but take a closer look.

A typical tankless uses between 8 and 28 kilowatt-hours of electricity per hour. Even the smallest ones, 8-kilowatt units, require a much larger electric wire and at least a 40-amp breaker. The standard breaker in your house is 20 amps. If you have a large family and want to go with the biggest, 28-kW tankless unit, you might be looking at rewiring your entire household and most likely your transformer. By comparison, most houses need only a 15-kW transformer to run the entire household. You would need a large enough electrical entrance to turn on a 28-kW load and allow the rest of your house to continue functioning (with appliances such as the refrigerator, air conditioner, television, etc.).

A tank water heater typically needs 4.5 kW and only kicks on a few times a day to keep water warm. A 30-amp breaker and 15-kW transformer can handle this load comfortably, along with your other household electrical demands. A 28-kW tankless water heater would require 120 amps—but most houses are constructed with an electric service entrance of 100–200 amps, maximum, for everything.

Although an unlimited supply of hot water sounds wonderful, even a larger tankless unit is unfit for simultaneous use. For example, such a unit may only be able to supply two showers simultaneously or perhaps just one shower, a dishwasher and a sink. If users demand too much water, temperatures will drop. As a result, a tankless system probably won't meet the needs of a large family. A tank water heater, however, keeps all of that water already heated and ready to go.

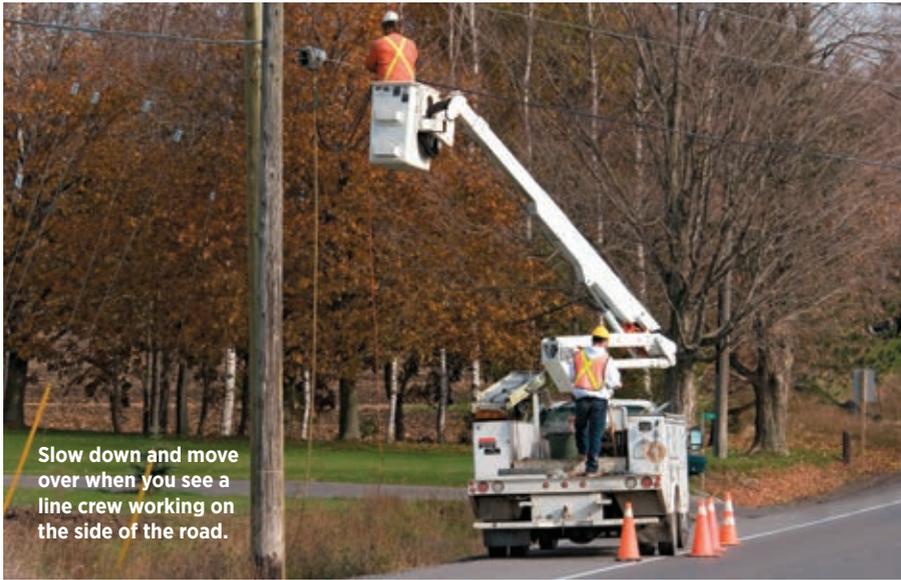
Why are more people not converting to tankless water heaters? Because a switch is usually unnecessary, considering the costs associated with conversion, plus the possibility that the volume of water usage for a typical household may often exceed the water heater's capacity to heat. Although you may save a few square inches of floor space, you'll spend more than you'll save, considering installation costs.

As stated before, a tankless water heater is great for some applications. It is great if you are only planning on using a small amount of hot water per day and the faucet is not already in close proximity to a tank heater, such as in a shop, barn or detached garage.

If you are running out of hot water in the middle of a shower, most likely your tank water heater has a burned-out element that needs replacing. Instead of spending a lot of money to switch to a tankless heater, call a plumber to fix your existing water heater. Water-heating elements can be replaced by a handyman and cost about \$15.



BANKSPHOTOS | ISTOCK.COM



Slow down and move over when you see a line crew working on the side of the road.

KONDRACHOV VLADIMIR | SHUTTERSTOCK

Make Room for Roadside Crews

WHEN THE POWER GOES OUT, so do Lamar Electric Cooperative's restoration crews.

Lineworkers are the first to respond after an outage occurs, and they work tirelessly to restore power to the communities we serve. If you see one of our line crews on the side of the road, we kindly ask that you move over if it is safe to give them a little extra space to work.

If you approach a crew on a road with multiple lanes, and if safety and traffic conditions allow, move over into the far lane. If moving over is not an option, we ask that you slow down when approaching roadside crews. We care deeply about everyone's safety, and this extra precaution helps ensure just that.

Also, emergency responders, such as police officers, firefighters and EMTs, often find themselves working near busy roadways. Texas law requires drivers to either vacate the lane closest to a stopped emergency vehicle or slow down to 20 mph below the speed limit. If the speed limit is below 25 mph, the driver must slow down to 5 mph.

There's plenty of room on the road for everyone. Let's work together to keep our local roadways safe.

Happy Independence Day

Lamar Electric will be closed Tuesday, July 4.



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RECIPE OF THE MONTH



ERICKSON PHOTOGRAPHY | ISTOCK.COM

Melon Boats

- 1 large cantaloupe or honeydew melon
- 2 packages (3 ounces each) flavored gelatin of your choice
- 1 cup boiling water
- ½ cup applesauce
- 1 cup sliced fresh fruit of your choice

1. Cut melon in half lengthwise and scoop out seeds. Cut a thin slice off the bottom of the melon so the half will sit level.
2. In a bowl, dissolve gelatin in boiling water, then stir in applesauce and fresh fruit. Pour gelatin mixture into the scooped-out centers of the melon halves.
3. Cover melons with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. Just before serving, slice each melon half into three wedges.

This recipe was a winner in the August 2009 recipe contest. Submit your best holiday recipes to *Texas Co-op Power* by July 10 for a chance to win our 2017 Holiday Recipe Contest. Visit texascooppower.com/contests for rules and details.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at **TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM**