

Broadband Internet Service



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

RECENTLY SEVERAL PEOPLE HAVE ASKED IF Lamar Electric plans on offering Broadband Internet service. The short answer is “not at this time.” In the past, many rural electric cooperatives have lost their focus by not concentrating on their key reason for existing. Our key purpose is to make sure the lights stay on and keep the rates as low as good business judgement will allow. Despite what some may tell you, Broadband Internet is not as vital today as electricity was in the rural areas in 1938 when Lamar Electric was formed.

When questions arise about our offering things like Broadband, propane, home security, hot water heaters, telephone or internet the basic criteria we use at Lamar Electric is: Is it wanted and needed by our members? Is it available thru another source? Is it available at a reasonable price? Only if the answer is yes to all three questions will we perform an analysis and invest serious time and money. At this time most of our members have access to internet service at a reasonable speed and price for their needs. This may change in the future and we will re-evaluate. Uses and needs for the internet are constantly changing, such as more people finding ways to work from home by using the internet. As a non-profit organization it is not our mission to compete with for profit companies that offer a service at a reasonable price. That doesn't mean Lamar Electric and other rural electric cooperatives have been sitting on our hands and have not been involved in helping the rural areas of the United States thrive and grow with access to the internet. The two biggest internet service providers in the United States are Hughes and Exede with over 300 million customers each. The rural electric cooperatives help launch WildBlue which is now known as Exede.

Before I move on, it seems appropriate to mention that Lamar Electric is keeping our eye on important issues and making some major progress in system reliability and rate reduction. At our April 2017 annual members meeting I announced that due to wholesale power contracts expiring we expected a one cent per kWh drop in rates around July 2018. We still expect that reduction and are working hard for even more. Over the past 7 years every wooden pole we own has been inspected and retreated. Our right-of-way clearing program was modified and a systematic process of cutting, side trimming and applying herbicide has resulted in fewer outages and will only get better. Modern technology has been added to our GPS maps, outage system, outage reporting, and meters. We have made a lot of progress but much more is to come.

With that said; back to the subject of Broadband.

In 1997 the FCC licensed KaStar, a small communications company headquartered in Denver Colorado, to provide fixed satellite internet services using the Ka-band frequency. They designed a network using a satellite specifically for internet communications. This was new technology. They later named the company WildBlue. The 9/11 attacks seemed to dash their hope of ever getting the project launched. In December 2002 the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (one of our national associations owned by cooperatives like Lamar) and three other organizations invested \$156 million to restart WildBlue. In July 2004 members of our national cooperative association was present when the Anik F2 satellite was successfully launched. When WildBlue started offering commercial service in June 2005, the rural electric cooperatives across the nation had the exclusive distribution rights to provide the internet service. Within a few weeks one of the first WildBlue dishes to be installed was at my home. The download speed was a lightning fast 1.5Mbps.

This speed was 30 times faster than dial-up service which was about the only other option in much of the rural areas. In case you don't remember what the internet was like in 2005: YouTube had just been created and there was no Twitter, Netflix-streaming or Hulu. Facebook was new and being used by a few college students.

WildBlue was state of the art. The “bent-pipe” technology developed by NASA was used to spot beam the satellite signal to geographic spots across the United States. It didn't take long before the spots of high density, such as North Texas (including Dallas) were sold out. Over the years other satellites were launched to resolve congestion in some areas and the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative sold their interest in WildBlue to allow the organization to grow worldwide and attract other investors. WildBlue is now known as Exede.

Some of our Members may not be familiar with the Broadband subject and some details may help reduce confusion. The term Broadband is a common reference to “high-speed” Internet access. How fast is high-speed? It is a bit like buying a car that goes at high speed. It depends on the use. My car goes plenty fast for my normal use but the speed may not be enough for Dale Earnhardt Jr. or Jeff Gordon. About two years ago the Federal Communications Commission changed their definition of Broadband from a download speed of 4Mbps to 25 Mbps. With one vote, my satellite home internet connection was no longer Broadband, but still faster than dial-up access.

Many young people have no idea that dial-up access to the internet was once considered a modern marvel. (Of course they probably also don't realize the internet is a fairly new item) Previous to the FCC changing the definition 6.3 percent of the US households did not have access to Broadband. Under the new definition the total went to 19.4 percent of households without access to Broadband. Of course a lot of improvements to internet service have been made in the past two years.

Anyone that is considering offering Broadband Internet needs to understand a bit of the jargon just to have a feel for what some people really want. Internet speed is measured in bits per second. There are eight bits in a byte. A lower case "b" indicates bits, while an uppercase "B" means bytes. 1Mbps is one million bits per second. Typically internet providers list their plans by the Mbps speed you can download something. Uploading or sending something is usually much slower than downloading. For example; my personal satellite dish internet service is supposed to provide 10 Mbps down and 1 Mbps upload. The FCC now says the minimum to be called Broadband is 25Mbps download and 3Mbps upload speed. If I wanted, I could get the 25Mbps down and 3Mbps up speed, with the purchase of about \$450 in equipment.

Netflix users and gamers are always pushing for higher Broadband speed but speed is not all they want. A faster speed typically means more data is being sent within a shorter time span. This is why data caps have started being used. Limiting the total amount of data in a given month or day helps with network congestion. If there were no data limits, a few could hog the pipe and slow the system down. Putting a limit on data is a way for customers who use more data to pay extra for it. Common data caps are 10GB to 100GB. Many are familiar with MB of data from taking pictures. A good clear picture will often use one or two MB. One (MB) is made up of 1,024 kilobytes (KB). One gigabyte (GB) is made up of 1024MB. According to Netflix, their standard definition movie uses about 1GB per hour and 3GB per hour for a high definition movie. A 10GB data cap per month would be used up by watching a little over 3 hours of high definition movies. People addicted to Netflix or needing to transmit filmed events not only need a higher speed internet connection but also the ability to download as much as 1,000GB. Just having Broadband high speed internet may not satisfy this category of user unless the internet provider has invested big dollars in equipment to allow massive amounts of data to be streamed during a very short period of time. With current technology, data limits of 1,000GB pretty much narrows the options for Broadband to fiber to the home and some really expensive equipment. This magnitude of investment spread over a sparse rural area would generally mean almost every home would need to commit to a sizable monthly internet bill to make it economical. This is why Lamar Electric will be very careful to evaluate this subject in depth before making any decision to become involved.

Power Tip

Cooler temps are arriving! You can save money and increase your comfort by properly maintaining and upgrading your equipment. Contact a licensed professional to inspect your system before the winter chill arrives.



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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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Be Proactive This Fall



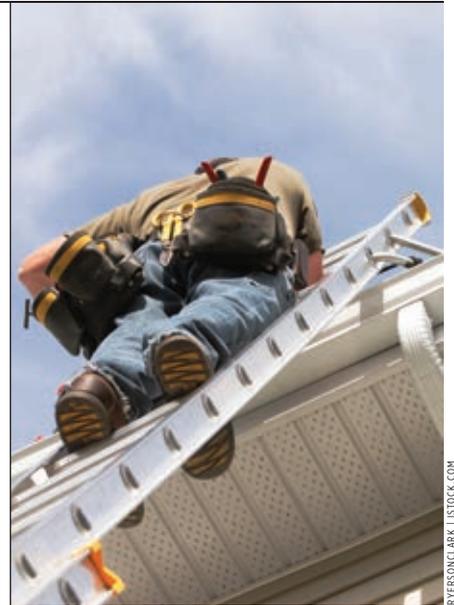
BY KATIE MORRIS

FALL. AUTUMN. PUMPKIN-SPICED EVERYTHING. 'TIS THE SEASON for cooler weather and trendy scarves. It is also a great season to take a look at your HVAC system and check your home for proper ventilation.

According to Energy Star's Guide to Efficient Heating and Cooling, "Dirt and neglect are the top causes of heating and cooling system inefficiency and failure." Routine maintenance measures such as replacing filters monthly and getting an HVAC tuneup biannually, are highly recommended to prevent

heating or cooling issues.

Another great practice during this season is to check your windows and doors for proper seals. The less heat that escapes, the less you waste—and the more comfortable your home will feel. Caulk cracks, holes and punctures wherever you see them. Be proactive before you get stuck with a higher-than-usual electric bill this winter.



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Look Up, Stay Safe

OBJECTS CAN ALMOST FADE FROM VIEW when we see them every day, but failure to notice high-voltage power lines can be a deadly oversight. Lamar Electric Cooperative wants to raise awareness about the dangers of overhead power lines and encourages you to follow these guidelines:

Look up and around you. Always be aware of the location of power lines, particularly when using long metal tools such as ladders, pool skimmers and pruning poles. Lower long equipment when you are moving it. Carry ladders and other long items horizontally whenever possible.

Be careful when working on the roof, installing antennas and satellite dishes, doing repair work or cleaning gutters. Never go up on the roof in bad weather.

Never trim trees near power lines—leave that to the professionals. Never use water or blower extensions to clean gutters near electric lines. Contact a professional maintenance contractor instead.

Never climb trees near power lines. Even if the power lines aren't touching the tree, they could touch when more weight is added to the branch.

If your projects include digging, such as building a deck or planting a tree, call a local underground utility locator before you begin. This service is free, prevents the inconvenience of having utilities interrupted and can help you avoid serious injury.

Plan Ahead for Youth Tour

THE SCHOOL YEAR HAS JUST STARTED, and summer might seem like a million years away, but it's not too early for students to start thinking about next year's Government-in-Action Youth Tour. In fact, you might have read recently about June 2017 participants in these very pages.

Adventure awaits when students apply for a spot on Youth Tour, an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., sponsored by your local electric cooperative and organized by Texas Electric Cooperatives.

Youth Tour is an action-packed tour of the U.S. capital with more than 140 students and chaperones from across Texas and more than a thousand from across the U.S. The trip features visits to the Washington National Cathedral, Arlington National Cemetery, Mount Vernon, Smithsonian Institution, memorials and more. Activities include meeting elected officials, learning about rural electrification, seeing a performance at the Kennedy Center and going on a boat cruise with dinner and dancing.

Students can be part of this legacy shared by nearly 4,000 past Texas students who have participated in Youth Tour since 1965.

Visit texasyouthtour.org for more information.



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October Country Corner Events



OCTOBER 6

Cruisin' on the Plaza

5–9 p.m. around the square in downtown Paris. Enjoy viewing and visiting with proud owners of antique, vintage and refurbished automobiles.

OCTOBER 7

Fall Bazaar

9 a.m.–4 p.m. on the streets around the Red River County Courthouse in Clarksville

Bogata City-Wide Yard Sale

Maps available at City Hall (128 N. Main St., Bogata) at 7 a.m. the day of the sale. Maps will not be available prior to that time.

OCTOBER 13-14

Reno Haunted Trail

Reno Rail Trail. Call City of Reno for more information at (903) 785-6581.

OCTOBER 14

Delta County Cotton Harvest Festival

8 a.m.–11 p.m. in downtown Cooper

OCTOBER 21

Mannequin Night

5:30–8:30 p.m. around the square in downtown Paris. See live mannequins in the storefronts around the square. There will be live entertainment and food vendors.

Officers Down 5K

In partnership with Lamar County Adopt-A-Cop. Check in and registration 8 a.m. at Paris High School. Visit runsignup.com/race/tx/paris/od5kparis to sign up.

Roxton Saturday Night

11 a.m.–10 p.m. in downtown Roxton. Roxton's annual festival. Vendors, music, bouncy houses and more

OCTOBER 21-22

Reno Fall Cleanup

7 a.m.–7 p.m. Reno residents may bring large items to dump at Reno City Yard. For a list of items that are not allowed to be dumped, please visit renotexas.us. Must bring water bill as proof of Reno residency.

OCTOBER 28

Festival of Pumpkins

9 a.m.–5 p.m. around the square in downtown Paris. Vendors, food, entertainment and activities for all ages

Delta County Chamber Trunk or Treat

On the square in Cooper. For details, please call the Delta County Chamber office at (903) 395-4314.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH



AGCREATIONS | ISTOCK.COM

Grandma's Gingerbread

½ cup sugar
2 tablespoons shortening
1 egg
½ teaspoon ginger
2 teaspoons cinnamon
½ cup molasses
1 heaping cup flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
¾ cup boiling water
Pinch salt

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Mix all ingredients together. Pour batter into in 8-by-8-inch or 9-by-9-inch pan.
3. Bake about 20 minutes. Insert toothpick in center to check for doneness.
4. Cool and cut into 12 slices. Serve with whipped cream, if desired.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at
TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM

For more information about future events taking place in your county, call your local chamber of commerce.

Delta County Chamber (903) 395-4314

Lamar County Chamber (903) 784-2501

Red River County Chamber (903) 427-2645