

Great Combinations



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

RECENTLY A MEMBER ASKED ME ABOUT WHAT activities are going on at Lamar Electric.

Others may be interested in actions being taken to help provide safe, reliable power to our members at the least reasonable cost while encouraging smart usage. **Here are a few activities that you may not be familiar with:**

Pre Paid Electricity

Some of our members do not receive their income on a monthly basis while others travel a lot and are not always home to get their bills paid by the due date. We have several ways for members to pay their electric bills electronically, and even offer Level Billing but that was not enough for some of our members. We now offer Pre Paid Electricity that has No Due Dates, No Late Penalty, No Deposit, No Paper Bill and No Big Reconnect Fee. Plus you pay exactly the same rate as the regular residential rate. It is actually pretty simple. You start the meter by paying a connect fee (same as all other accounts) and buy a minimum of \$50 electricity. When the balance on your meter gets under \$20, we send you a text and an email reminding you that your balance is low. You can add to your balance by any of the electronic ways to pay, call our office or come by. When the balance gets to zero, the power will go off. Use your smart phone to add at least \$25 to the account, and the electricity will automatically come back on; without calling anyone or going anywhere. This is a great option for folks that have large deposits because of their past payment record. Often there will be a positive balance to start, after we apply the deposit to the account. No Penalties or Due Dates and the same price is a great combination.

Pole Inspection and Treatment

All wooden poles will rot. It is just a matter of time. Some will last 70 years and others may not last 7 years. Making sure the pole is well preserved and keeping it preserved is the difference between 70 and 7. Lamar Electric has about 50,000 wooden poles. Most have been treated with creosote and a few thousand have a combination creosote and CCA. CCA is the treatment that causes boards to look green. We spent 7 years catching up with our inspection and treatment program and starting last year we are now on a 10 year cycle of inspecting and re-treating every wood pole. As I write this, contract crews

are working on another 5,000 poles. We expect to find about 150 -200 poles that will need replaced. By identifying poles for replacement before they become a problem the replacement can be scheduled and done during regular work hours and without turning off power in most cases. This reduces the cost by at least half, and reduces outages. Less cost and more reliable service is a great combination.

Dead Tree Patrol

Droughts in North Texas in the past few years have resulted in millions of trees dying. Many of these dead trees are within striking distance of the high voltage wires you see along the roads. Leaning trees that are 50 or 60 feet from the wires can still do a lot of damage when they fall. These trees are outside of the regular 30 foot easement area we try to keep cut. A contract chain saw crew has cut down over 1,500 trees in the first couple of months. We did the same project in 2012 and cut 8,000 trees, but a lot have died since then. Instead of hunting for dead trees reported by members or linemen, the crew is patrolling all 2,400 miles of high voltage power lines in a pickup truck. All dead trees will eventually fall. They may fall in pieces or in one large piece, but they will fall to the ground. If the dead tree is a danger to the main lines we are simply making sure it falls away from the line and trying to get it on the ground at the least cost. Less cost and more reliable service is, again, a great combination.

Outage Reporting Made Easy

We work hard to make sure your power never goes off, but we live around millions of beautiful trees, animals, lightening strikes and a few bad drivers. If the power goes out there are many ways to let us know, that will never give you a busy signal. Our free SmartHub app will not only allow you to report any outage with a couple clicks, but will also show you if we already know your power is out so you don't even have to make a report. You can also report an outage by text. Downloading the app and signing up for texting outages is easy. Visit our web page lamarelectric.coop for details. If more people would use the App or Text, it would free up more phone lines for those without smart phones. No busy signals means less stress and happier members and that is also a great combination.



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BY KATIE MORRIS

Colder Than Usual Weather = Higher Than Usual Utility Bills

WHETHER YOU USE GAS, ELECTRICITY OR WOOD TO HEAT YOUR HOME, YOUR BILL WAS most likely higher-than-usual due to the cold snap in January. Some of our members had a bit of sticker shock upon opening up their electric bills for usage during the month of January. Record-breaking cold temperatures forced a spike in home heating. Electric heating makes up the largest portion of electricity usage in the average home.

Many warnings about space heaters and energy conservation during the winter have circulated on social media. We have discovered that many Lamar Electric customers are setting their electric heaters to temperatures above 70 degrees while simultaneously using space heaters or are using space heaters as a main source of heat. This type of behavior will greatly increase, even double, your electric usage. We want our members to understand that lowering the thermostat a few degrees and using blankets and warmer clothing in their homes can keep their electric usage down. We share many energy-conservation tips on our Facebook page and website and in this magazine. An archive of past issues of the local pages from *Texas Co-op Power* is available on our website.

Another great way to reduce energy usage is to know how much you are using each day. Our members can monitor their electric usage through the SmartHub smartphone app, which also offers online bill pay and outage reporting and is free to download for Apple and Android devices.

We offer level billing for our members who have higher bills at certain times of the year but want to pay the same amount each month. Monthly electric bills are calculated and printed each month as usual. The balance will show a credit amount if overpaid and an amount due if underpaid. The member pays only the level bill amount shown on the bill. The level bill amount is calculated using the average of the amounts billed over the past 12 months. Once a year, the level payment amount will be recalculated.

We also have a prepaid program that allows members to pay for electricity as they use it, with no deposits, late fees or due dates.

Despite our recent rate reduction of 2 cents, bills have been higher because our members are using significantly more electricity than what is typical for their homes. Higher usage equals higher bills. The weather has been colder and electricity usage has been higher, but our rates are actually lower than they have been in several years.

For more information about our services, please call (903) 784-4303 or visit our website at lamarelectric.coop.



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

GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO

Jerry D. Williams

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ron E. Tippit, President, *Clarksville*

Lyle Yoder, Vice President,
Pattonville

Mike Williams, Secretary-Treasurer,
Detroit

Matthew Albus, *Roxton*

Allen Branch, *Sumner*

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Harry R. Moore, *Clarksville*

George M. Wood, *Blossom*

Member Benefits

- Level billing
- Automated meter reading
- Free bank draft service
- E-Bill
- Visa and MasterCard accepted

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.

CONTACT US

CALL US

(903) 784-4303 local or
1-800-782-9010 toll-free

FIND US ON THE WEB

www.lamarelectric.coop



Time Is Running Out for Scholarship Applications

LAMAR ELECTRIC WILL AWARD SIX \$1,000 ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDENTS who plan to pursue an academic degree or certification from an accredited university, college, junior college, technical school or other post-secondary educational institution. Scholarship payment will be made directly to the college, university or school in one lump sum. Scholarships must be used within two years of the award date. Funds may be used for tuition, books, and room and board.

Eligibility Requirements for an Academic Scholarship

To be considered for a Lamar Electric Cooperative scholarship, the student must:

- ▶ Live full time in a residence served by Lamar Electric.
- ▶ Be a graduating senior attending a high school or an accredited Home Extended Studies program within the counties served by Lamar Electric Cooperative.

Six scholarships will be given away at the Lamar Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting on April 21 in a random drawing of qualified students. The winners need not be present.

Entry deadline is April 6. The application can be found on our website: lamarelectric.coop. Once the application is completed, simply click on the email button and send to scholarship@lamarelectric.coop.

Or fill out the application below and mail to:

Lamar Electric Cooperative
Attn: Katie Morris
P.O. Box 580
Paris, TX 75461

LAMAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE 2018 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Deadline: April 6

Name _____

Address _____

Name of High School _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Name(s) _____

Lamar Electric Account Number _____

Phone Number _____



Annual Meeting Approaching

THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING OF Lamar Electric Cooperative will be Saturday, April 21, at Paris Junior High School, 2400 Jefferson Road in Paris. Registration opens at 9 a.m. The business session begins at 10 a.m. and includes any necessary reports of officers, board members and committees, as well as the election of directors in districts 5, 6 and 7, each for a three-year term.

You do not have to be present at the meeting to vote in the director election. Before the meeting, ballots will be mailed to members who reside in those districts. If you reside in one of the districts holding an election, you may vote either by mail or in person at the meeting. Each member in attendance at the meeting will receive a registration gift, and drawings for other prizes will be held. You must be present at the time of the drawing to be eligible to win a prize.

Six \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded at the meeting. Applications must be received at the cooperative office by 5 p.m., April 6. To be eligible for a scholarship, a candidate must:

- ▶ Live full time in a residence served by Lamar Electric.
- ▶ Be a graduating senior attending a high school or home-school program within the counties served by Lamar Electric.

Watch for additional details in the next issue of *Texas Co-op Power*.

CALENDAR: TAPHOUSE_STUDIOS | © ISTOCK.COM



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HAPPY EASTER! APRIL 1

The offices of Lamar Electric
will be closed March 30 in
observance of Good Friday.

Warning Signs of an Electrical Malfunction

WHEN ELECTRIC SERVICE WORKS PROPERLY, WE NEVER NOTICE IT. MOST OF THE TIME, we flip a switch, the lights go on and all is right with the world. It's only when things go wrong that we start paying attention. Here are five warning signs that can indicate an electrical malfunction.

1. Flickering lights. If an electrical circuit in your house is overloaded, it could cause the lights to dim or flicker. This usually happens when you have too many energy-intensive appliances or fixtures wired to the same circuit. For example, your lights may flicker when your washing machine is running if the two are on the same circuit. The solution: Ask a licensed electrician to move the lights to a different circuit or install a dedicated line for the washing machine.

2. Suspicious odors. It's not unusual for a new appliance to smell a little bit bad the first time or two you use it. But if outlets, the breaker box or other appliances emit a foul odor, that could signal a problem with the wiring. Switch off and unplug anything that doesn't smell right, and call an electrician.

3. Sparks. An appliance that sends off a spark could be damaged. Sparks from a breaker panel or fuse box could signal something more serious and should be inspected by a qualified electrician as soon as possible.

4. Tripped breakers. A breaker tripping more often than occasionally isn't normal, and it's probably not safe. Circuit breakers that trip signal an overloaded circuit.

If the same appliance, such as a hair dryer or vacuum cleaner, trips the circuit every time, chances are that the appliance is the culprit. But if the same outlet trips the circuit no matter what you plug into it, it's likely an overload on the system. This is a job for a professional.

5. A buzz. Electric appliances should not buzz. They shouldn't make any sounds. If they do, you might have a problem with an outlet or some wiring. An electrician can fix this.



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DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

begins at 2 a.m., Sunday, March 11.
Remember to "spring forward" by
setting all clocks an hour ahead.