

# Bushel Basket Full of Electricity



MESSAGE FROM  
**GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS**

**THIS SUMMER HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE VERY** interesting when it comes to electricity. I am often asked if Lamar Electric has enough electricity, to which my reply is “we have bushel baskets full of it.” The fact is, Texas continues to grow and that means more electric load and Lamar Electric has no control over available power generation. The last peak demand for electricity in Texas was the afternoon of July 19, 2018 when temperatures reached 108 degrees at the DFW Airport. The combination of a very hot summer and record electric load could result in a lot of activity as the

from a specific electric generator are over and all we did was to use a third party broker to lock in the price we will pay for power. Shortages tend to cause price spikes that we want to avoid. See my January and February 2019 articles in *Texas Coop Power*, for information on how the Texas electric grid works. Every generating plant must sell their power to ERCOT and everyone that needs electric power for their customers must get that power from ERCOT.

On May 8th ERCOT released a report and press release that predicted a planning reserve margin (generation vs load) of 8.6%. That is a little over 1% better than their prediction a few months earlier but about half of their goal. “ERCOT is prepared to use the tools and procedures that are in place to maintain system reliability during tight conditions,” said ERCOT President and CEO Bill Magness. The press release identified the increased potential need for ERCOT to issue Energy Emergency Alerts (EEA) during the summer in order to maintain system reliability.

What does he mean by “tools and procedures”? They actually have a limited number of ways to increase generation. The biggest tools get used when an emergency alert (EEA) is issued. There are three alert levels that trigger actions ranging from encouraging everyone to conserve power to rotating outages. This means Lamar Electric can be prepared with large enough substation equipment, big wire and transformers but we are dependent on the power available on the grid, the same as everyone else in Texas. Regardless of all of

our preparations there will likely be pleas this summer for everyone to cut back on their electric usage. The level one EEA is primarily a request to conserve. That doesn’t mean Lamar failed to plan or did anything wrong. It just means the electric generators are having a hard time supplying enough electricity for the entire load.

Some large commercial and industrial loads have con-



In the ERCOT control room, employees carefully monitor peak loads.

grid operator; as the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) scrambles to make sure there is enough power on the grid for everyone.

Lamar Electric has already arranged to have all of our members electrical needs supplied for the entire year. You might say, we already have all of our bushel baskets full of electricity for our members. In reality, the days of buying power directly

tracted for “interruptible power.” This typically means they pay a lower rate for power in return for agreeing that with a short notice their power can be turned off. Some utilities will offer incentives in return for the ability to control residential hot water heaters, A/C units or even refrigerators. This allows the appliance to be turned off when power supply is low or when the utility wishes to reduce their transmission line cost by reducing their portion of peak demand on transmission lines. These reductions in load are instituted when alert level one is issued.

An EEA level two is pretty much the same as a level one alert, except it means the frequency on the electric grid is dropping below 60 Hz. Efforts are continued to activate any available power generators that can be brought on line and offers to generators can go as high as \$9 per kWh.

The ultimate tool available to ERCOT is to order an EEA level three. This is the alert that everyone wants to avoid. When this alert is issued, Lamar Electric and all other electric providers in Texas are required to initiate rotating outages. When this level is reached, Lamar Electric must locate linemen at several substations and begin turning off sections of our service area. The alert will inform us of the amount of load we must drop. Based on these calculations we determine which feeder breaker will affect the fewest people while still complying with the order. The outages will then rotate every 15 minutes and keep rotating until overall load is reduced or more generators are put on line. Lamar linemen have gone through simulated drills to be prepared. Based on the drills, it is unlikely that any one house would be turned off for 15 minutes more than once every hour or so.

Rotating outages is a last resort for balancing load with available generation. If it is needed and not implemented, the equipment in our substations connected to the grid will sense a reduction in electrical frequency and will automatically start disconnecting feeders up to 25% of the load. If this were not done, the entire electric grid in Texas would start disconnecting and cascade to a blackout.

We hope rotating outages do not become a reality this summer but we want our members to know ahead of time in case they do occur. This summer is projected to be the closest to rotating outages we have had in the past 18 years. In the event ERCOT issues an alert level 3, you can be sure there will be plenty of notice with conservation request and press releases being issued across the state.



## HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY

Lamar Electric will be closed July 4 in observance of the holiday.



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Jerry D. Williams

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### 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.

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# Hot Days Remind Us To Use Energy Wisely

**THE HOT DAYS OF SUMMER CAN BE TAMED A BIT WITH GOOD ENERGY HABITS THAT CAN make your home more comfortable.**

It's never too late to make a few changes to help keep things cool and lower your energy costs.

**Check for loose or leaky windowpanes.** If your home still has single-pane windows, consider replacing them or adding a window film. Single-pane windows allow cool air to easily escape your home during the summer and warm air to seep out in the winter. Replacing old, inefficient windows now is an investment that will pay for itself in energy savings year-round—and keep your home more comfortable.

**If you still use incandescent lightbulbs, it's time to make the switch to LEDs.** These bulbs are far more energy efficient than old-fashioned bulbs, which produce more heat than light. That heat works against your air conditioner during the summer.

**When air conditioner filters get dirty, they get clogged—and air can't flow freely through them.** That forces your AC unit to work harder. Replace air filters once a month during cooling season.

**Install a programmable thermostat, which automatically adjusts the temperature so you use less energy to cool your home when no one is there.** The device can save you up to \$100 a year on cooling and heating bills.

**Move appliances and lamps away from your thermostat.** Because they emit heat, they can trick your thermostat into thinking that the house is warmer than it really is—and to work harder than it should.

**Keep drapes and blinds closed during the hottest part of the day to minimize the amount of heat from the sun that enters your home.** Consider installing solar screens or shutters to block the heat before it can get in.

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH



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### Peach Salsa

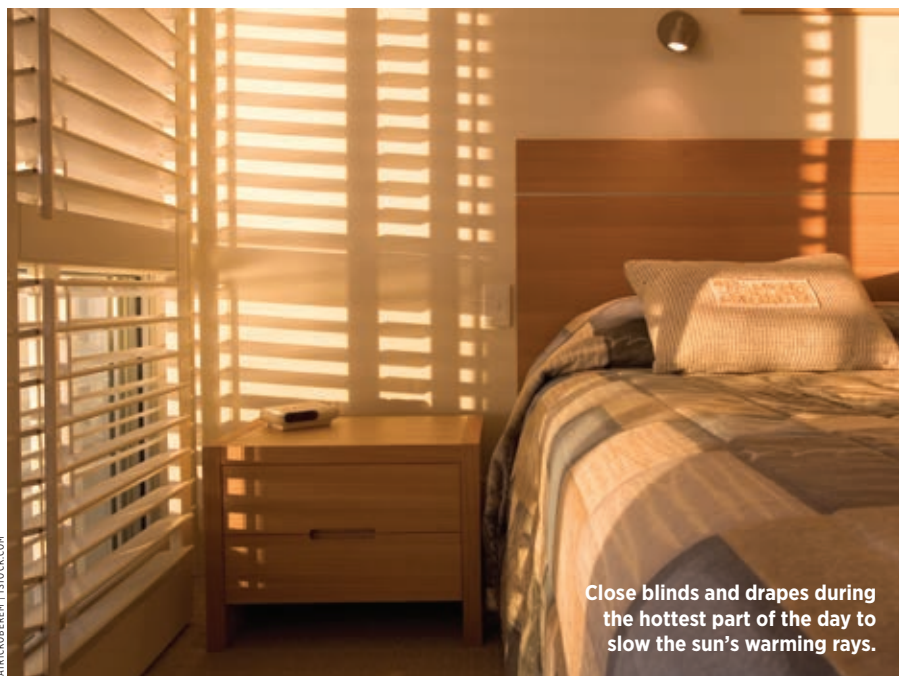
- ½ cup white vinegar
- 6 cups peeled, pitted and chopped peaches
- ¼ cups chopped red onion
- 4–5 jalapeño peppers, stemmed, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded and finely chopped
- ½ cup finely chopped cilantro, loosely packed
- 2 tablespoons honey
- ½ teaspoon minced garlic
- 1½ teaspoons ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper

**1.** Combine all ingredients in a large, stainless steel saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring mixture to a boil, stirring constantly, then reduce heat and simmer gently, stirring frequently, until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat.

**2.** Refrigerate salsa until cold. Keeps up to 1 week in refrigerator.

**3.** Serve with tortilla chips or as a condiment for fish or chicken tacos.

► Makes about 6 pints.



Close blinds and drapes during the hottest part of the day to slow the sun's warming rays.

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

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# World's Most Expensive Dirt

*Dust dollars off your energy bill by regularly changing air filters*

**THE MOST EXPENSIVE DIRT IN THE WORLD MAY LURK IN YOUR HOME'S HEATING AND cooling system.** If neglected, dust collecting in the equipment's air filter could increase your energy bills by hundreds of dollars every year and result in expensive repair or replacement costs.

Dirty filters force a system to work harder and break down faster. That's because unfiltered dust and grime work into critical parts, creating friction that causes unnecessary wear and, eventually, failure.

As you move around your home, you drive dust into the air from carpets, drapes and furniture. Pets generate dust particles by shedding, grooming and tracking in dirt from outside.

**Regardless of where it comes from, dust trapped in heating and cooling system air filters leads to several problems, including:**

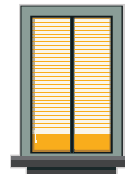
- ▶ Reduced airflow in the home and up to 15% higher operating costs.
- ▶ Costly duct cleaning or replacement.
- ▶ Decreased system efficiency.

Every time a system with a dirty filter kicks on, the day of reckoning—total replacement—draws closer. To avoid this expense, change filters monthly when a system is in regular use, like this summer. Discuss cleaning the unit and ductwork with your heating and cooling service professional.

Filters are available in a variety of types and efficiencies, rated by a minimum efficiency reporting value. The higher the MERV, the more effective the filter will be at keeping dust out of your system.

## Summer Energy-Saving Tips

Costs associated with cooling your home can make up a large portion of your summer electric bills. Stay cool and save money with these energy efficiency tips!



### NO-COST TIPS

Close blinds and drapes during the day to keep heat out.



Set your thermostat to 78 degrees when you are home. Set it to a higher temperature when you're away.

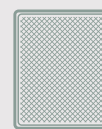


Turn off lights and ceiling fans when you leave a room.



### LOW-COST TIPS

Plant trees and shrubs to shade the exterior of your home.



Replace disposable air filters (or clean permanent filters) once a month to maximize efficiency.



Use solar lighting to brighten up your outdoor space. Solar lights are easy to install and low maintenance and provide free electricity.

