

My Yard Light Is Out



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

OCCASIONALLY A MEMBER WILL TELL ME their Yard Light has gone out and want to know how to report it. Whether you call it a Yard Light, Security Light or Booger Light; we know what you are talking about. The simple answer is to call the office during normal business hours.

Unfortunately some folks have come up with what they think is an innovative and modern way of reporting their Yard Light being out. Last month in this article, I pointed out the many ways of reporting an outage at your house. We have lots of ways to report your electricity being off. These include a telephone call and talk to a real person (24x7), but you can also press 1 when you call and be connected to our automated (computer) outage reporting system, text the outage, log into your account on the web page or use our SmartHub App on your cell phone. Some folks have decided to use these electronic ways to report their Yard Light being out. No, that is not one of the options on any of the electronic programs. Most likely they found that if they call a live person and say their Yard Light is out the response will be; call the office during regular business hours. If they call during office hours the response is that a service man will work it into his schedule in the next day or so.

This behavior has resulted many times in our linemen being drug out of bed in the middle of the night, to find a members' Yard Light is not working. During the day our office personnel try to catch the problem by "pinging" the electric meter to see if there really is an outage, or calling the consumer to verify an outage exists. The afterhours folks taking phone calls and electronically reported outages are trained to deal with power outages and many times don't have a lot of time to check things out.

While a Yard Light is technically an "outage" of the light; it is not nearly as urgent as having your home without power. Our employees strive to give excellent service and try very hard to make your electric service as reliable as possible. Respond-

ing with two trucks prepared to tackle any outage thrown at them is not a very cost effective way of getting your Yard Light repaired.

The monthly prices charged for having a Yard Light are based on "maintenance being performed during normal working hours." Using an employees' time responding to a Yard Light being out, takes from his ability to respond to a member that has an urgent "real" outage. Some think we should start charging a fee every time a crew responds to a nonoutage. Our members already have enough fees charged by various companies and we really want avoid going the fee route.

At Lamar Electric, we want to provide the services our members need. We understand the need for Yard Lights in the dark rural areas. Rural areas certainly have more creepy crawly things that are hard to see in the dark. Many electric providers have stopped providing Yard Lights. A little cooperation from our members will help us keep the monthly cost down and even allow conversion to a more efficient way of lighting those dark areas. When the lineman is sent to an outage and finds the only thing out is a Yard Light, most likely he will move on to something else and turn in a note for the serviceman to repair the light during normal work. We need your cooperation as your Cooperative strives to give the best possible service and keep the cost down.

Currently we are studying how to replace current and future yard lights with LED lighting. There are many things to consider and we are still gathering the answers. In the future we fully intend to use LED Yard Lights but several things must be considered before we settle on a particular brand and model. Some simply do not deliver the amount of light expected. Some are very susceptible to lightening and will not do very well in North Texas. Some are simply too expensive. Several test sites have been installed and research is ongoing. Stay tuned to our efforts to give our members energy efficient, reliable Yard Lights that are reasonably priced.



Lamar Electric Hires New Director of Communications

LAMAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE KRISTEN BOLLMAN AS ITS NEW director of communications.

Bollman, a native of the Paris community, brings 15 years of experience to the cooperative as a professional in communications, public relations, development and marketing. She holds a bachelor's degree in communications and business from Abilene Christian University. She has been involved in her local community as a Lamar County chamber ambassador and Rotary Club board member and has been a part of the Lamar County Homeless Coalition.

Bollman will replace Katie Morris, who is moving back to her hometown of Wills Point to focus on raising her children. Bollman will be responsible for managing and directing the cooperative's internal and external communications, which includes social media, website management and member communications. She also will supervise public relations and media relations for the co-op.

"We work very hard to provide reliable electric service, and the members like to know what is happening at their co-op" said Jerry Williams, general manager. "We are proud to have Kristen Bollman on staff and looking forward to her sharing the work of Lamar Electric in the communities we serve."

Bollman's link to rural Texas was established long ago when her grandfather owned the Bollman Superette at Little Chicago, near Clarksville. "I am excited to connect with the rural communities and the members in our service area," she said.

Co-op members can find articles by Bollman in upcoming issues of *Texas Co-op Power*, where she will share the latest news from Lamar Electric.



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

GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO

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.

CONTACT US

CALL US
(903) 784-4303

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Time for a Fall Electrical Checkup

WITH THE WEATHER COOLING OFF, THE ITEMS WE USE IN OUR DAILY LIVES ARE STARTING to change. To stay safe this fall, check out these tips before you start turning off your fans and turning on the heat.

Check your smoke detectors. First things first, test each smoke detector in your home. Since the weather is cooling down, you're probably using more electrical devices to heat your house and to keep warm. It's important that your smoke detectors are working so you'll be aware if a fire breaks out in your home. If you notice they aren't working properly, they should be replaced.

Check your extension cords. Cooler weather and the holidays call for a lot of lights and a ton of decorations—most of which require electricity. Check your extension cords for damage and replace them as needed to make sure everything is working properly. For all of those outdoor lights, make sure you're using power strips with an internal breaker and weatherproof extension cords to keep them safe from the elements.

Sweep away leaves. Leaves are bound to end up in your yard as we head into fall. Keep sweeping away those leaves from your outdoor lighting, outlets and power cords because dry leaves can easily catch fire if a spark lands on them. Be sure to keep outdoor air conditioning units free of leaves, dirt and debris as well. This ensures that your unit is in top shape so you won't have to worry about damage later on.

Check your air filters. Dirty filters make your heating system work harder to keep the air comfortable. A dirty filter also allows more dust to accumulate inside your heating unit, similar to the accumulation on a ceiling fan. Change the filter every month. If you or a prior occupant did not regularly change filters, you should consider having a heating, ventilating and air conditioning technician clean the internal coils in your unit.

Insulate your water heater. If your water heater is in the garage, it's spending some of its energy trying to keep itself warm instead of devoting all its energy to heating water. Pick up an insulating jacket at a hardware or home improvement store and wrap it up.

Seal up your fireplace. Traditional wood-burning fireplaces suck heated air into the chimney and release it outdoors. Consider adding glass doors to keep more of the heat inside your home.



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RECIPE OF THE MONTH



PLATERESCA | ISTOCK.COM

Apple Skillet Cake

- 1½ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup buttermilk
- 2 apples, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 cup chopped pecans

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease a 9- or 10-inch cast-iron skillet.
2. In a large mixing bowl, sift together flour, salt and baking soda. Add remaining ingredients and mix just until incorporated. Pour into skillet and bake 40–50 minutes.
 - ▶ Serves 8–10.

COOK'S TIP Serve this cake warm from the oven with a scoop of vanilla ice cream, or enjoy it cooled with a cup of coffee.

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



Can You Hear Me Now?

Be proactive in protecting your hearing

OCTOBER ISN'T JUST NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH. IT ALSO MARKS NATIONAL Protect Your Hearing Month. Though perhaps not the most glamorous of topics, noise-induced hearing loss—and its prevention—are important public health concerns, especially since the condition's ill effects are permanent.

As many as 24% of U.S. adults younger than 70 may have hearing loss in one or both ears from exposure to loud noise. Because the damage is often cumulative, the gradual pace of hearing loss can cause it to go unnoticed until symptoms become pronounced. Sounds might become distorted or muffled, or it might be difficult to understand conversations in person or on TV. Here is a primer on the categories of risk to help you gauge the auditory safety of your surroundings.

Sounds of up to 70 decibels are typically considered safe for any duration. A quiet barn, for example, is about 50 decibels, while most conversation occurs at around 60 decibels. A chicken coop is typically around 70.

Prolonged exposure to any noise at or above 85 decibels is where the risk of gradual hearing loss begins. A tractor with an enclosed cab or a crowded school cafeteria are good benchmarks for that level. The noise from a lawn mower is usually around 90 decibels.

No more than 15 minutes of unprotected exposure to sounds at or above 100 decibels is recommended. A tractor without a cab falls in this category, as would the noise from a woodshop.

Finally, regular exposure of more than one minute at or above 110 decibels risks permanent hearing loss. A chain saw registers 110 decibels, and a shotgun firing could top 150.

The best way to protect your hearing is to move away from the noise or wear hearing protection, such as earplugs or earmuffs. Remember, the louder a sound is and the longer you listen to it, the more harmful it can be.

Slay Your Home's Energy Vampires

EVEN WHEN YOUR ELECTRONICS ARE turned off, they still use energy if they're plugged in. It's called "vampire energy," and it adds to your bill.

What better time to slay those vampires than Halloween? Here's how:

1. Unplug any appliance or electronic device whenever you're not using it, unless there's some reason to leave it plugged into the wall. It's not practical, for example, to unplug your cable box and wireless router. But you can unplug your TV, stereo, laptop, countertop kitchen appliances and cellphone chargers when they're not in use.

2. Use power strips. Plug the devices that can be turned off into power strips so all you have to do is turn one thing off instead of going around the room switching everything off one at a time.

3. Setting computers and video game consoles to sleep mode in case you forget to unplug them at the end of the day will save some energy.

4. Choose new appliances and electronics that use less standby power than your old ones. Any equipment marked with the Energy Star seal has that feature.

