

This May, Take Time To Plug Into Safety



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

THIS MONTH, I'D LIKE TO TAKE A MOMENT TO reflect on the importance of safety. May is Electrical Safety Month, and Lamar Electric Cooperative is dedicated to sharing safety tips and helping raise awareness about the dangers of electricity. We all depend on electricity to power our lives, but accidents can happen when power sources are improperly used.

Our Responsibility to You

Lamar Electric's concern for safety extends beyond our employees. We care deeply about the safety of our members, and this month, we encourage you to plug into safety. According to Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of Americans are critically injured or killed annually as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes.

To promote safety education in our local communities, we offer safety programs to area schools and community groups and regularly provide electrical safety content in these pages. We encourage you to contact us if you see a downed power line or any other dangerous electrical situation.

We strive to provide our communities with safe, reliable and affordable electricity and to serve as your trusted energy adviser, now and well into the future.

Our Responsibility to Employees

It is no accident that safety is a top priority among the employees of Lamar Electric. We are committed to a culture of safety that is integral to our daily operations.

Our linemen are required to wear personal protective equipment when on the job. This includes special fire-resistant clothing that will self-extinguish, limiting potential injuries from burns and sparks. Special rubber gloves are worn to protect from electrical shock.

Our employees—those in the field and in the office—regularly attend programs to enhance their safety awareness. Our linemen start each job with a tailgate meeting to discuss the project before them and how best to complete it safely.

As the CEO and General Manager of Lamar Electric, I believe it is my duty and responsibility to raise awareness about the importance of electrical safety. That's why I encourage you to take a moment to plug into safety.

COVID-19

I can't seem to end this message without a word about the COVID-19 virus. Concern for our community and our employ-

ees drive everything we do at Lamar Electric Cooperative. That's why we are continuing to take every precaution in the fight against COVID-19—to protect our consumer-members and employees, who are critical to keeping the lights on.

We are grateful for your understanding, patience and words of support since we made the difficult decision in March to close our lobby to in-person transactions and work everything through the drive thru lane. Unfortunately, under guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as I write this, our doors remain closed to the public for now.



But we're still here, and we're still ready to take your phone calls, emails and Facebook messages—to help however we can.

As always, you can pay your bill on our website www.lamarelectric.coop, our SmartHub App, by mail or by calling 903-784-4303 and select #1 for our automated payment system. You can also place the payment in our after hours drop box or just walk or drive thru our drive thru lane during normal business hours (8-5) Monday thru Friday. And if you're struggling to pay, please let us know and we will certainly do our best to work something out.

This public health crisis has taken a toll on all of us, but Lamar Electric is here just as we have been for more than 80 years. We continue to monitor the situation and work closely with local leaders to ensure the future of our communities remains bright.



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AND CEO**

Jerry D. Williams

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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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Winning Youth Tour Essays Selected

EMILY NEWMAN AND EMERSON PENNY WILL REPRESENT LAMAR ELECTRIC ON THE GOVERNMENT-IN-ACTION Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C., this June after their essays were chosen as winners in the co-op's annual contest.

Their winning entries are below.

What Would Life Be Like Without Electricity

By Emily Newman | Senior at Prairiland High School

Imagine this, you've been feeling a little nauseated and have already vomited once. You get a sudden sharp pain in your lower stomach. You decide to go to bed in hopes that you'll just sleep off whatever illness is trying to overcome you. Only instead of waking up healthy and refreshed, halfway through the night you wake up with pain so intense you're crying and sweating, living your last few hours in darkness and pain.

You had a sample case of appendicitis. Every year, over 300,000 Americans are treated for appendicitis. It's an easy fix now at any time of the day. Electricity has enhanced the lives of humans for over a hundred years; literally anything you could possibly think of, electricity has made a tremendous impact. Reimagining our modern human lives without electricity is next to impossible.

A life without electricity would require, for basic survival, rethinking how you preserve your food, reconsidering health care options, finding a new way to use the restroom, figuring out a new way to heat your home, and, perhaps most importantly, how to get clean running water. We live such an easy life with so many pleasures; to think people actually had to live like that once upon a time is so immensely difficult to wrap our heads around. We depend on electricity as we depend on air to breathe. Yet, in 2010, it was reported that around 17% of the global population was living without electricity. That's 1.2 billion people who don't have to imagine a world without electricity. That is their world. Americans are so privileged, we often take for granted some of the most common things we have. In America, it is normal for even the less fortunate to have electricity.

We watch television shows and Netflix series of people in the dark ages and think "how on Earth did those people survive?" We can't fathom the thought of people living without electricity because it has become one of the most dependable resources of our day-to-day lives. But that was a reality for people of that time, and most saddening, it

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still is a reality for some.

Have you considered how hard it would be at night when you need to use the restroom? Not only would it be dark, but you'd more than likely have to go to an outhouse outside. Walking outside in the middle of the night with no light just to use the restroom does not sound pleasant at all.

What about all of the health care options we couldn't live without? Literally. In life before electricity, it was so common for people to die of things that wouldn't even faze people today. Everyday examinations, simple procedures, and especially life-saving operations cannot be performed without adequate light. Even the most natural childbirths put patients at higher risk without proper lighting. Vaccines protect against some of the most harmful, even deadly, viruses. However, without a proper, chilled environment, vaccines lose their ability to do what they were made to do. Getting a flu shot can prevent the flu or just lessen the severity of the virus, but not getting vaccinated can be deadly. The accessibility of ambulances wouldn't be possible, because there would be no way to communicate with people to get it to the place of emergency. Without efficient communication services, there would be no first responders. Without first responders, fatalities from car accidents, fires, and home accidents would be immensely greater than they are. Without electricity there would be no ultrasound technology, X-ray machines, or incubators. More than likely, every woman from the 21st century that has had a baby, has had an ultrasound. Along with X-rays, ultrasounds can also be diagnostic. Without the electricity enhanced health care we so greatly love, death would be limitless and more prevalent; the population would decrease by immense amounts.

How nice is it to walk into the grocery store any time of the day, go to the refrigerated aisle, buy a meat product, and then take it back home to put in your refrigerator and not have to worry about it going bad anytime soon? The way we've grown so accustomed to preparing and preserving our food wouldn't even be an option without electricity. Cooking styles would be taken back to the original gas- or wood-heated stoves. There would be no microwaves, so your quick, easy meals that take less than 3 minutes to cook would no longer be an option. Microwavable food has made so much of an impact that there is an entire freezer section in the grocery store dedicated to microwaveable meals. More than likely if you have been alive since the 1950s, you have eaten a microwave-produced meal.

Electricity has become such a necessity in people's day-to-day life that various militaries around the world have created a weapon to strip people of that convenience. Taking away the world's electricity would be momentarily taking away the people's ability to function. The EMP, or electromagnetic pulse, is a weapon that sends electromagnetic pulses that damage, or even destroy, electronic devices by giving off a wrecking current

or voltage shortages. It's clear that electricity is highly valued for the world's lifestyle, considering the military has created something to deprive people of it.

A world without electricity would be a world deprived of one of the greatest gifts it has ever received. We depend on electricity to carry out our day-to-day responsibilities. It comes to no surprise that electricity has become the center of our lives and dictates the way we live it. Without electricity, our lives would be bland and our lifestyles wouldn't be near as advanced as they are.

A Spark

By Emerson Penny | Sophomore at Prairiland High School

In a single moment, a spark changed history as we know it. If we could stand in Edison's laboratory at Menlo Park as he first realized that he could create and contain sustainable electricity, I wonder what we would have witnessed. Before he made his first public demonstration, before he made that first call, when he was just grasping at experiments, I wonder if he envisioned life with electricity. As a teenager, living in a world that only knows the benefits of a life with electricity, it is as hard for me to imagine a life without electricity as it would be for Thomas Edison to imagine how far society would leap forward with that one technology.

Let me put my cellphone down. Let me unplug my laptop. Let me empty my cup of filtered water full of ice. Let me imagine a simplified world.

The first thing to realize is that we could survive without all our gadgets. The world is old, far older than the 140 years that we have had electricity. The people who managed to live full lives without electricity in the past accomplished feats that were the foundations of societies. Even so, there are still places in the world that do not consume electricity in the normal, everyday way of life that I have only ever known. According to ourworldindata.org, 2015 was the first year that the number of people without access to electricity fell below one billion. While electricity is important, life exists beyond the use of it.

Let's not throw away our charging cords just yet! While life can exist beyond the need for electricity, the quality of life would be far lower without electricity. The areas in the world that are currently without electricity are areas that live in a world where life-threatening ailments could be solved with simple access to electricity. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that limited or zero access to electricity "leads to vaccine spoilage, interruptions in the use of essential medical and diagnostic services, and lack of even the most basic lighting and communications for maternal delivery and emergency procedures." In our modern age, it is mortifying to consider these types of conditions. It is mortifying to know that there are children sick and dying because they do not have the means to keep the needed vaccines refrigerated. When I get sick, I don't even think about all of the electricity involved just for a trip to the doctor's office.

Reflecting on this helps me understand a little more about our past. In history classes, we were told about the high mortality rates, the moms who had many babies, but few of which survived to adulthood, and where plagues and sicknesses wiped out entire cities. I do realize that multiple factors played into these scenarios, but modern medicine could have helped curb the high death tolls. Past and present, it is clear that where there is no electricity, death takes more lives than necessary.

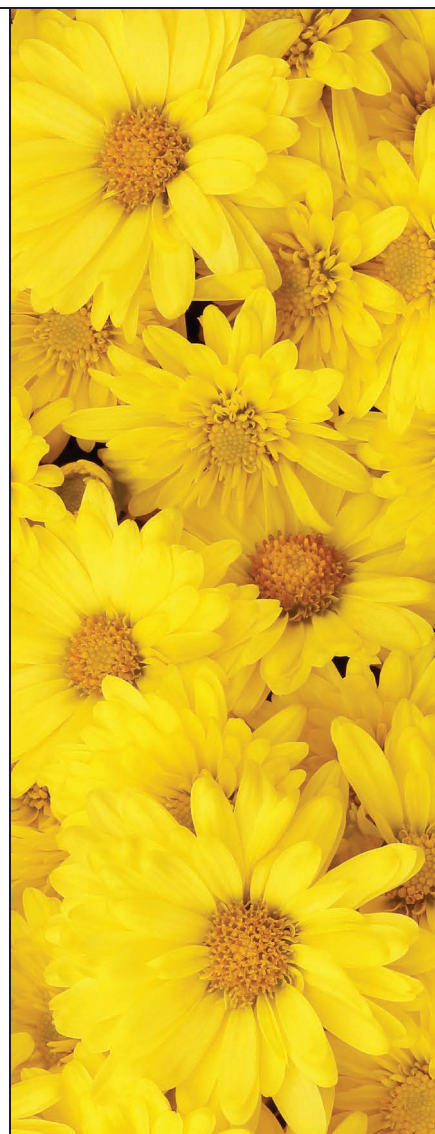
As easily as I could share a cute cat meme, I can share a statistic and crucial fact about washing your hands to help keep the flu at bay. Life without electricity would not just impact the health of our society, but it would also drastically impact communication. I'm not just talking about the online social communication that my generation sees as a basic means of communication, I'm also talking about the way we use electricity to communicate and educate people. Electricity allows for rapid exchanges of information. Take away electricity and communication would still happen, but it would slow down to a snail's pace. A slower pace of life would be nice. Just because we can go at the speed of light, it doesn't mean that we always should.

Electricity goes away, communication slows down, and what are we left with? I think we would see some improvements in the way we talk and listen to people. I think we would appreciate the beautiful subtleties of our vernacular a bit more. I did have to look up that word, but if we didn't have electricity, it is highly possible I wouldn't have had to. Perhaps the language of my generation wouldn't be reduced and limited to 140 characters, "LOL," "OMG," and memes. With an improvement in our social communication skills, I would hope that our critical thinking skills would increase. According to the various adults in my life, common sense and logical thinking seem to be disappearing as we rely on Google to store the everyday information instead of our brains.

Is that a good enough reason for me to shut down my Instagram account? It was through social media communications that I heard about the fires in Australia. While there was nothing I could do about the fires, other than donating money through an online crowdfund, there were others who were able to move to act. As the news flooded social media with the devastating news of the fires Down Under, many fire-fighters from the U.S. organized, got on flights and volunteered their time to help fight the fires. Knitting groups on Facebook crocheted and sewed pouches to help the millions of traumatized animals, and the Wiggles reunited to do tours to raise money. What would happen during natural disasters without the electricity to spread the news for aid? We are stronger together. The cost of isolation would be a world with a much higher mortality rate.

Isolation. Isolation sums up life without electricity. The people who did live in a time with candles for light, horses for transportation, and cured meats for food probably thought of their lives as fulfilled. But once you KNOW something, you can't "unknow" it. There is an Assyrian proverb that says, "There is no shame in not knowing; the shame lies in not finding out." There was a time when life without electricity was all that was known, and the people did the best they could. I can't imagine a life without electricity, but I don't think I can imagine a humanity where curiosity doesn't always lead us to electricity. We were destined to find a way to bring electricity to humanity.

There was a moment when Edison's spark began changing the course of the world. We didn't have to be there because we see the evidence in every aspect of our lives. There will be numerous inventions in our future that will spark changes for an even better future. Electricity makes this possible. As people continue to find better, easier, cheaper, cleaner ways of using electricity, we will continue to reap the benefits of those sparks. Life is possible without electricity, but society has already tasted what it is like. We couldn't go back now. No. We can only go forward to where the stars beckon, new worlds and new technologies await, and our minds explore new horizons with every spark. New sparks, new moments will continue.



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MAY HOLIDAYS

Cinco de Mayo

Tuesday, May 5

Mother's Day

Sunday, May 10

Memorial Day

Monday, May 25

Our offices will be closed in observance of Memorial Day.