



MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER
AND CEO

JERRY D.
WILLIAMS

When Is a Good Time To Call?

A LOT OF FOLKS never call our office, unless the lights go out. Earlier this week, we had one of those rare thunderstorms that came roaring across much of the three county areas, with a lot of lightning mixed in with severe wind. It was a cold front moving into the area. Many areas with clear right-of-ways had large trees blown into the electric lines from outside the easement area. Lightning struck many power lines, blowing fuses and tripping breakers. This event even caused an Oncor transmission line that serves our Minter connection point with Oncor to go down. At one point, there were close to 2,000 people without power and most of them tried to call us at the same time. A lot of them got a busy signal and gave up on calling. Within about 8 hours, everyone had power restored.



DRAZEN ZIGIC | ISTOCK.COM

Many transformer fuses and tap fuses were replaced where an outage was never reported by one of our members. Our meter system will let us know if your power was not restored.

In the old days, you could distinguish the difference between a telephone “busy” signal from a “busy equipment” signal. If a person was talking, there would be a slow signal sound and a fast signal sound if telephone equipment is overloaded. That

distinction can no longer be made. There are many reasons you may have gotten a busy signal that may not have anything to do with Lamar Electric. For example; if you have a Blossom, Powderly or Clarksville phone number and many from your community tried to call a Paris number at the same time, you will likely have a “Trunking Issue”. There are a limited number of call paths out. Some will call this network congestion, but what you hear is a busy signal. It wouldn’t matter if you were calling Lamar Electric or calling to order a pizza. If you are using a cell phone, you may hear the recording that “all circuits are busy”. The cell phone towers can handle a lot more simultaneous calls, but sometimes even they get overloaded.

At Lamar Electric, we have 23 phone lines. Depending on the situation, some of those lines are reserved for inbound calls from linemen and some are reserved for emergency out-bound calls. All calls to our main number 903-784-4303 are automatically answered by our phone system (a computer server sitting in our computer room). The server will play a greeting and give you the opportunity to use our “automated system” to “make a payment or report an outage by pressing 1” or you can stay on the line for the next available person. If you don’t press any numbers, you will be connected to a real live person. In the event everyone is already talking to other members, your call will be placed in line for the next available person. When all the Coop phone lines are filled up, you will get a busy signal.

A lot of folks have told me they had trouble reporting their outage because they did not know their account number. After asking questions, it became apparent that many did not understand that pressing 1 is only for those that want to use the automated computer system. All they had to do was simply not press 1 and stay on the line to talk to a live person. For those that don’t mind talking to a computer, the automated system is actually quicker to report your outage and the information goes straight into our Outage Management computer, the same as if it was entered by a live person. Of course you can also report an outage by Text or our app SmartHub. See our web page for instructions on how to use these other methods.

Some have asked me, “Who actually answers the phone when the office is closed?” Lamar Electric employees answer the phone if we have a really big

outage, such as an ice storm. Generally the weekends and after 5 pm, the phone calls are transferred to one of our sister cooperatives. This particular cooperative is called Cooperative Response Center or CRC for short. CRC only answers phones for rural electric cooperatives. Their employees have a list of our members on their computer screens and can help you locate your specific account using your name, phone number, account number or address. After they enter your outage, an outage dispatcher in another room, will contact the Lamar Electric lineman on call and will maintain communication with our linemen till the outage is over. Our arrangement with them is to take outage calls, and virtually all other requests are told to call Lamar Electric during normal business hours.

We have a lot of younger members that are accustomed to 24 hour business call centers for their credit cards, technical support for computers or even some banks, airlines, internet providers, cable TV or rental car companies. Most of these call centers are staffed with individuals that type in your question, and then read you what the computer places on their screen. Credit card companies call centers will change addresses, phone numbers or send a replacement card. Apparently, quite a few of our younger members think that Lamar Electric has the same kind of arrangement. But, that is not how we are set up.

The CRC cooperative employees that answer Lamar Electric phone calls after hours are set up to handle only OUTAGES or 911 calls due to house fires or automobile accidents, with one very small exception. That exception is: They can take a payment and get a meter turned back on for an account that was disconnected earlier that day for non-payment. They do not take other payments, accept address changes, change your phone number on file, report a yard light out, report a yard light going off and on, report a pole leaning, make payment arrangements, take request to trim a tree, discuss high bills, accept disconnect or connect request, tell current bill amount, give out account numbers, make changes to your account, give estimates of how long till the lights come back on or give energy conservation tips. Yes, all of these requests have been made to our afterhours answering people. They simply do not have the capability to handle those other requests. They are set up to help locate your specific account and report an outage—that is pretty much it. If you are not reporting an outage, you should call the Lamar Electric office during normal business hours, and we have local folks that will help you with your question or request. Remember, you can call 903-784-4303 any time, 24 X 7, and use our automated system (press 1) to report an outage or make a payment. If you have any of these other requests or concerns, the best time to let us know is during regular office hours (8-5) M-F, or you can email us at info@lamarelectric.coop.

The CRC employees answering Lamar Electric afterhours calls, have three locations in case of storms in their area or excessive calls coming at one time. Most of the calls from Lamar Electric members are answered by a person that is actually sitting in a building near Abilene, Texas. In case several cooperatives have calls coming in, their system will automatically roll over to an office located in Tennessee or one in Minnesota.

Having this arrangement allows us to make sure your phone call is answered by a real cooperative employee 24 X 7. Since all the afterhours phone calls are transferred thru the Lamar Electric phone system, the CRC employees already know you are a Lamar Electric member calling to report an outage. Remember, Lamar Electric has a maximum of 23 phone lines, so you may get a busy signal even if the CRC location is quiet.

The employees at Lamar Electric want to hear from you and help answer your questions, but the best time to call is during office hours. ■



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Contact Us

For information and to report outages, please call us.

(903) 784-4303

MEMBER BENEFITS

- Level billing
- Automated meter reading
- Free bank draft service
- E-Bill
- Visa and Mastercard accepted
- Prepaid metering

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

Lamar Electric provides *Texas Co-op Power* and TexasCoopPower.com to give you information about events, safety, special programs and other activities of your cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact the co-op office.

VISIT US ONLINE

lamarelectric.coop





Apply for Youth Tour Today

EACH YEAR, LAMAR Electric Cooperative selects two high school students to attend the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., where participants tour the U.S. Capitol, meet members of Congress, and visit many monuments and museums.

To be eligible, students must be in 10th, 11th or 12th grade and live full time in a residence served by Lamar Electric or attend one of the three high schools served by the co-op: Prairiland, Detroit and Faith Christian. Home-schooled students served by Lamar Electric are also eligible. Applications must be complete, with a three-page typed essay. This year's essay topic is, "Should electric linemen be considered first responders? Why or why not?" The essay must be submitted to Lamar Electric no later than 5 p.m. Friday, February 5, 2021.

Applications are available at lamarelectric.coop or you can use the one below. Submit by email to dctrip@lamarelectric.coop or in person at 1485 N. Main St. in Paris. It's that easy! Learn more about Youth Tour at lamarelectric.coop by clicking on Government-in-Action Youth Tour under the Youth tab on the homepage. ■

LAMAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE 2021 YOUTH TOUR APPLICATION

DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 5

NAME _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S) NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

NAME OF HIGH SCHOOL _____

LAMAR ELECTRIC ACCOUNT NO. _____

Applicants hereby acknowledge that the application essay becomes the property of Lamar Electric Cooperative and may be published.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____



**Happy
Thanksgiving**
Thursday,
November 26

Our offices will be closed Thursday–Friday, November 26–27, in observance of the holiday.

THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME



GOVERNMENT-IN-ACTION

YOUTH TOUR

JUNE 13-22, 2021



Are you a Texas high school student? Would you like to travel, experience a big city and visit historic landmarks—all without spending a dime of your own money? Perhaps you'd like to meet your congressional representative, or maybe you're looking for an inspirational experience in the company of other Texas teens. If that sounds like you, then the **Government-in-Action Youth Tour** trip to Washington, D.C., is your tour.



Start your adventure at TexasYouthTour.com
Visit Facebook.com/TexasYouthTourAlumni