



MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER
AND CEO

JERRY D.
WILLIAMS

How Smart Should the Grid Be?

LAST MONTH, we discussed the grid of high-voltage electric wires across the state of Texas and the whole United States. We told you we would discuss how adding more intelligence to the electric wires may help you better control your electric bill. The subject of a smart electric grid continues to pop up in newspapers, articles on the web and keeps appearing in questions Lamar Electric receives from ERCOT and others. Of course, the definition of a smart grid will depend on who asked the question. It is sort of like “going green” has a lot of meanings. A bit of background will help you understand how you may participate in the future of smart electric grids.

The smart grid phrase seems to have originated with a description of electronic devices connected to the high-voltage transmission lines. A big push came as entrepreneurs (middle men) pushed to move electricity around, to market the power for more money in high load areas. Generally speaking, these devices will detect all sorts of problems and send a signal to trigger another device or a person that will take action to disconnect the wires or correct the problem.

The largest electric power outage in North America occurred on August 14, 2003. An overloaded transmission line got hot and drooped into a tree in Ohio. 50 million people lost power for up to two days. A device that was monitoring the load should have triggered a warning as the power line became overloaded, but it failed to work. Typically, a correction would be to reroute some of the electric flow or turn something off to reduce the load. What started as a fuse in the early days of electricity has advanced into sets of complicated electronic devices that do much more than a fuse.

Due to advances in electronics, many of these same pieces of electronic equipment (computers) are economical for use with the lower-voltage electrical distribution wires that distribute the electricity from the nearest substation to the transformer at your home.

Over the years, prior articles have discussed “breakers” that Lamar Electric has on the distribution electric lines. These breakers will turn your power off momentarily while a tree limb falls free, a squirrel with a frisky tail falls off the transformer, or a bolt of lightning finds a path to ground; the breaker then turns the power back on. In case a limb stays on the wire, the breaker will try to restore power three times before manually tripping off. These devices

have gotten a lot smarter over the years and the larger ones will give an indication of which wire had a momentary or continuing short. The breakers in the substations will even indicate how far away the short is located. In addition, Lamar Electric has hundreds of fault indicators hanging on electric wires throughout the system that turn on a LED strobe light if the fault is further downstream. Adding smart devices has helped us provide better service.

Over 25 years ago, Lamar Electric added electronic devices to the meters at your house that allowed us to read the meter through the electric wires. Every meter now has the new generation of these devices installed in all digital meters. About half the meters now have devices that will allow us to turn power off and on with a signal from the office. This intelligence has saved all of us money by reducing the time spent disconnecting and reconnecting the same account month after month.

Members that have downloaded the Lamar Electric SmartHub App can now track their daily usage on their smartphone or computer. This App can also be used to report an outage or determine if your account is already indicated in our outage system as an outage. Of course, this technology comes with a learning curve. Almost every big storm, we have members that leave their home to get a better cell signal and report an outage after the electricity has already been restored. In the past, a lineman was forced to drive to every house reporting an outage to verify their power was actually back on when the main line came on. Our dispatchers can now ping the meter and determine if there is power to the meter.

A few years ago, lots of folks got excited about the Nest Thermostat. The concept of remotely controlling a device through the electric line has moved over to controlling devices through the internet, using a Wi-Fi signal installed in your home. Some utilities have installed devices in their meter that will allow the electric meter to send a radio signal to devices in your home. At this point, Lamar Electric meters cannot transmit any signal to control anything. At some point in the future, economics may change and make sending signals to appliances in homes an everyday occurrence.

The concept is a signal being sent from your electric meter to control your A/C heating unit, refrigerator, water heater, clothes dryer and more. This signal could be used to reduce load when power

generation is short. The key is limited control. Many folks may sign up for their heating or cooling unit to be turned off for 30 minutes every two hours once or twice a week; if it resulted in a lower electric rate.

After February 2021, most Texans understand that when there is not enough generation of electricity, something has to happen to reduce load. Usually when generation gets tight, the price for available generation goes up to encourage more generators to come online. Sending signals to home appliances to reduce load is not the answer for avoiding rolling blackouts, but it could be a small piece of the very complex puzzle that makes electricity more affordable and reliable.

The problem is determining how many people will actually make or allow a change that affects their comfort or convenience based on the pricing of electricity. The fact is that investors build generators that must provide enough revenue to purchase fuel, provide maintenance and return the investment. In Texas the simple fact is federal government subsidy for wind and solar allows these generators a lower operating expense, yet they are paid exactly the same price for power provided at a natural gas or coal fired power plant. Until this changes, there will be few investments in generation that can be operated at night when the wind quits blowing. ■



Have a Plan for Potential Power Outages

WINTER CAN BRING beautiful days for brisk walks and snow angels. Winter's fury can also produce icy roads, subfreezing wind chills and power outages.

Unfortunately, heavy snow and accumulating ice can easily bring tree limbs down on power lines, cutting off power to homes and businesses.

Planning can make riding out a prolonged power outage much safer and a little more comfortable. How long it takes for your power to be restored depends on several factors: the extent of the storm's destruction, the number of outages in your area and when it becomes safe for co-op personnel to get to the affected areas.

Take steps to help keep your family safe and comfortable during a winter storm long before one is forecast. A good way to start is to put an emergency kit together. **Lamar Electric Cooperative suggests starting with these items.**

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5225 US Hwy. 82 E • P.O. Box 68
Blossom, TX 75416

Phone (903) 784-4303

Web lamarelectric.coop

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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.

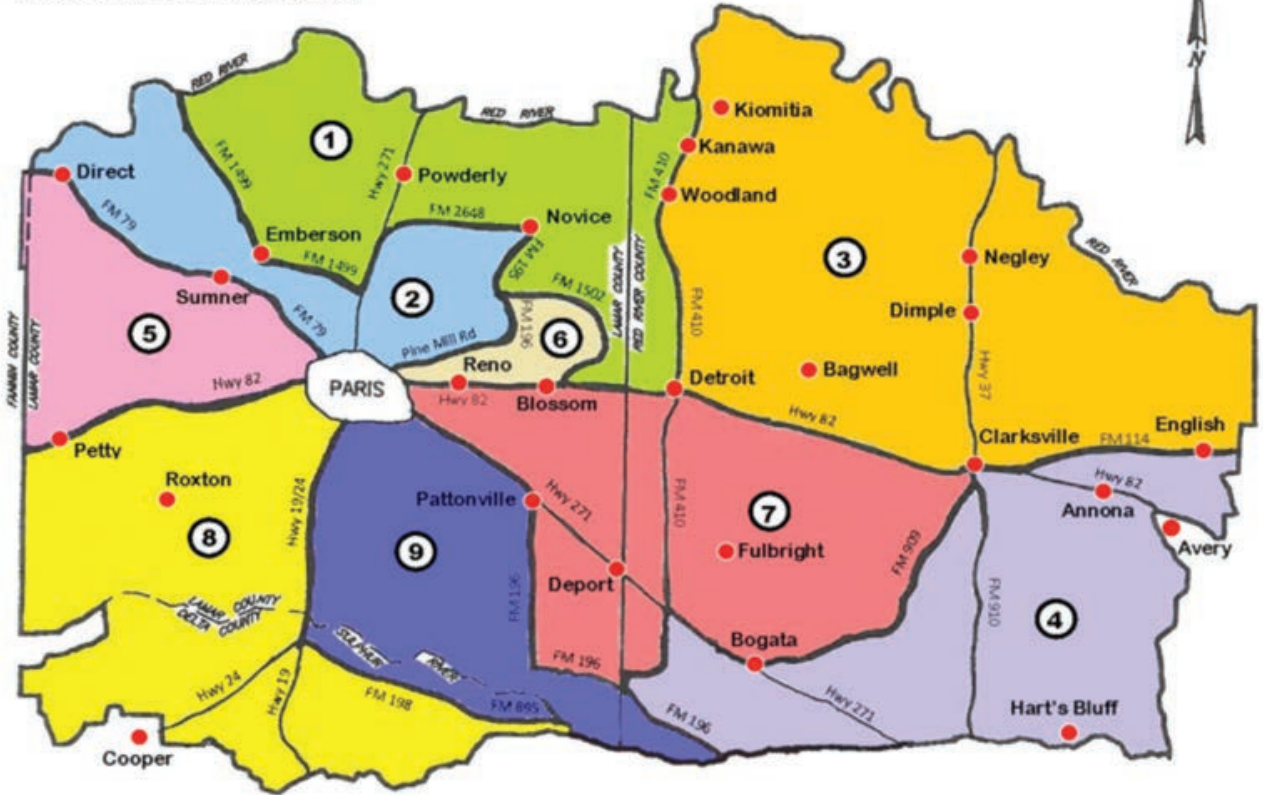
VISIT US ONLINE

lamarelectric.coop



Check us out at
TexasCoopPower.com/lamar

Circled Number represents Board District



Annual Meeting Set for April 23

THREE POSITIONS of the board of directors are up for election each year. This year, Districts 5, 6 and 7 will be voting at the annual meeting. Any member residing in Districts 5, 6 and 7 who wishes to be a candidate for one of the three available board positions must appear in person at the main office of the cooperative to fill out a nomination form not earlier than January 23 and no later than February 22, as outlined in the co-op's bylaws. If you are unsure of which district you live in, please refer to the district map above.

Lamar Electric will hold its annual meeting at 10 a.m., Saturday, April 23 at the cooperative's headquarters, 5225 US Highway 82 E in Blossom. If you have any questions, please call Laura Williams at (903) 783-4907. Qualifications for board members are specified in our bylaws. The qualification portion of the bylaws was published last month in this magazine. A copy of the bylaws is available at the Lamar Electric office and on our website, www.lamarelectric.coop. ■

To Sleep or Not To Sleep?

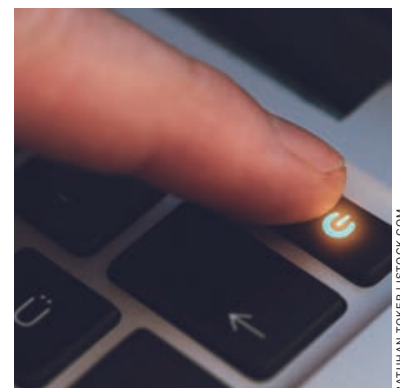
EVER WONDER when you should turn off your personal computer for energy savings?

Let your device "go to sleep" after a period of inactivity. This is the most effective means of saving energy with a computer. Though there is a small surge in energy when a computer starts up, this small amount of energy is still less than the energy used when a computer is running for long periods of time. Spending a large portion of time in low-power mode not only saves energy but also helps equipment run cooler and last longer.

One misconception, carried over from the days of older computers, is that equipment lasts longer if it is never turned off. For energy savings and convenience, consider the following guidelines:

Enable the sleep mode on your monitor if you aren't going to use it for more than 20 minutes.

Switch off both the computer and monitor if they will be idle for more than two hours. ■





Lamar Electric To Award \$6,000 in Scholarships

LAMAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE will award six \$1,000 scholarships to students who plan to pursue an academic degree or certification from an accredited university, college, junior college, technical school or other postsecondary educational institution. Scholarship payment will be made directly to the institution in one lump sum and must be used within two years of the award date. Funds may be used for tuition, books, and room and board.

Eligibility Requirements

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

- ▶ Live full time in a residence served by Lamar Electric Cooperative.
- ▶ Be a graduating senior attending a high school or an accredited home school program within the counties served by the cooperative.
- ▶ Apply by April 11.

The application can be found on our website, www.lamarelectric.coop. Submit by email to scholarship@lamarelectric.coop or fill out the application below and mail it to Lamar Electric Cooperative, Attn: Scholarships, P.O. Box 68, Blossom, TX 75416. Winners will be chosen in a random drawing to be held at our Annual Membership Meeting on April 23, 2022. You do not need to be present to win. ■

Lamar Electric Cooperative 2022 Scholarship Application

DEADLINE: APRIL 11

Name _____

Address _____

Name of High School _____

Parents/Guardians Names _____

Lamar Electric Account Number _____

Phone _____

Water: Stock up on bottled water for consumption. The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends storing at least 1 gallon per person per day.

Food: Have enough food, including nonperishable packaged or canned foods, juices, special foods for infants or the elderly, and snack foods, for three to seven days.

Utensils: Be sure you have a manual can opener, paper plates and plastic utensils.

Layers and added warmth: Gather blankets, pillows and warm clothing.

Medicine and other items: Include a first-aid kit, common over-the-counter drugs, prescriptions and any essential medical equipment.

A phone charger: Keep a fully charged power pack on hand.

Also gather:

- ▶ Toiletries, hygiene items and moist towelettes.
- ▶ A flashlight and extra batteries.
- ▶ A battery-operated radio or a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio.
- ▶ A list of emergency phone numbers.
- ▶ Toys, books and games.
- ▶ Pet food and other pet-care items.
- ▶ Supplies for alternate heating methods, such as a fireplace or wood-burning stove.

Make sure your heating system is in proper working order and observe these safety tips:

- ▶ Never use a portable generator indoors, in a garage, or anywhere near windows or doors because they emit deadly carbon monoxide.
- ▶ Never plug a portable generator into a wall outlet. Doing so can create deadly backfeeding, which occurs when electricity travels from the generator back through the power lines.
- ▶ Monitor the temperature in your home. Infants and older people are more susceptible to the cold.
- ▶ Avoid going outside. Downed power lines could be hidden in snow and ice, making them difficult to identify. Assume all downed and hanging lines are energized and deadly. ■