



MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER
AND CEO
BRYAN STORY

Understanding Energy Demand and Purchasing

DO YOU EVER look at your electricity bill and wonder what it all means? If so, you might be interested in learning how energy demand and purchasing impact your utility bill.

To start, it's important to understand how electricity is made and how it's delivered to your home.

Before Lamar Electric Cooperative can send electricity to your home, it needs to be generated by a power supplier. It then travels over high-voltage transmission lines to substations, where the voltage is reduced to a safer level. Then it travels through distribution power lines and transformers on its way to your home.

You play a big part in determining how much electricity needs to be generated to satisfy our community's power needs. That's where the terms "demand" and "consumption" come in.

Demand is measured in kilowatts, and consumption is measured in kilowatt-hours. A light bulb consumes a certain number of watts, let's say 100 watts per hour. If that light bulb stays on for 10 hours, it uses 1,000 watts, or 1 kilowatt.

If you turn on 10 of those 100-watt bulbs for one hour, you're still consuming 1 kW. However, you're placing demand on Lamar EC to have that kilowatt available to you over the course of one hour, instead of 10 hours. This requires our power supplier to produce more power in less time to meet your demand.

Your co-op purchases kilowatt-hours based on the peak demand of our members. This is typically during the evening, when families return home from work or school, cook dinner, and use appliances the most. That's why using electricity during this peak demand period often costs more for your co-op and our members.

You can help lower that peak demand—and your electric bill—by shifting energy-consuming tasks to a time outside the peak, which is typically 5–9 p.m. Adjustments like setting the dishwasher to run just before you go to bed, cooking outside on the grill and not setting the thermostat quite so cool can make a difference.

Generating and distributing power can be a tricky and complicated business, but rest assured Lamar EC works diligently to plan for and meet the energy demands of our community. ■



VLAD ANTONOV | ISTOCK.COM

Chilled Asparagus With Mustard Herb Vinaigrette

2 pounds asparagus
2 tablespoons white wine or cider vinegar
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon chopped flat leaf parsley
½ teaspoon chopped tarragon leaves
Salt and ground black pepper, to taste
Dash onion powder
Dash garlic powder
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Meanwhile, trim the asparagus to remove the white, fibrous ends. Cut asparagus into 2-inch pieces on the diagonal.
2. Add asparagus to boiling water and cook until bright green and just tender, 4–5 minutes. Drain asparagus in a colander and rinse with cold water until cool.
3. In a bowl, whisk together vinegar, mustard, parsley, tarragon, salt, pepper, onion powder and garlic powder until blended. Add oil to vinegar mixture in a thin stream, whisking constantly. Season with additional salt and pepper.
4. Toss chilled asparagus with vinaigrette.

SERVES 8

TCP Find this and more delicious recipes online at [TexasCoopPower.com](https://www.texascoopower.com).

Make Your Home More Sustainable

ENERGY EFFICIENCY improvements are popular remodeling projects among homeowners. Here are a few to consider.

Replace your old incandescent light bulbs—in fixtures on ceilings and walls and in table lamps—with LEDs. If you replace the fixture, the bulbs are often integrated, so you may never have to replace a bulb again.

Install a programmable thermostat, and program it so it turns up the AC (or lowers the heat) when you leave for work or go to sleep, then moves the temperature back to normal when the family is awake and at home.

Choose new products that are low maintenance. You'll use less electricity, water, cleaning chemicals and time if surfaces like countertops, floors and patios are easy to sweep up or sponge off. You'll save paint and time if you choose composite products with a factory finish that never require painting.

Invest in energy efficiency. Wasting electricity isn't the right thing to do for the environment or your pocketbook. Energy-efficient kitchen appliances, double-pane windows, and high-efficiency heating and air conditioning equipment can make a big difference.

Buy Energy Star-certified appliances when it's time to replace your old ones. Besides using less energy and lowering your electric bill, these newer appliances often come with advanced features your old ones didn't have.

Save water. The Environmental Protection Agency has a WaterSense rating for plumbing fixtures, including faucets, showerheads and toilets, that indicates which ones use the least water. Water shortage is a concern worldwide; do your part to help. ■



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Caulk Up the Savings

THE GREATEST SOURCES of cooling and heating losses in your home are often invisible air leaks. So it makes sense that controlling air leaks is the best way to extend the life of your home, conserve energy, save money and increase comfort.

Bottom line? If you don't tighten up your home first, money spent on insulation may be wasted.

Fortunately, you can seal a lot of leaks around your home's exterior with less than \$100 of caulk. It's generally possible to seal openings up to a quarter-inch between window frames and siding or around door frames. For larger gaps, add a backing material before caulking, or use a spray foam sealant instead.

Most types of outdoor caulk are sold in tubes that fit a caulking gun. In addition, some caulks come in aerosol cans—a good choice for filling gaps up to a half-inch wide around pipes and wires.

When shopping for caulk, there are myriad choices. Prices range from \$2 to more than \$10 per tube, so be sure to read the labels and choose a product that will adhere best to the materials you're sealing.

If your budget allows, spend a little more for a higher quality caulk. Inexpensive caulks may last only a few years, while premium-priced caulks are rated for 20 years or more.

Here are some tips to make sure your caulking investment pays off.

As a rule of thumb, you'll probably use half a cartridge per window or door and up to six cartridges for foundation work.

Most caulks pose no known health hazards after they're fully cured. However, some high-performance caulking compounds contain irritating or potentially toxic ingredients, so you should carefully read the manufacturer's instructions and take the appropriate precautions.

The best time to apply caulk is during dry weather when outdoor temperatures are above 45 degrees. With low humidity, cracks aren't swollen with moisture.

If the gap you're sealing is too wide, use a special filler made for the purpose. You'll find fillers in the caulking department of your local hardware store or home center. However, note that fillers are not designed for exposure to the elements, so you'll need to caulk or seal over them.

Before applying new caulk, remove the old caulk or paint residue with a putty knife, stiff brush or special solvent.

Make sure your work area is dry so you don't seal in moisture.

Hold the caulking gun at a consistent angle; 45 degrees is best.

Caulk in a straight, continuous stream, avoiding stops and starts, and make sure the caulk sticks to both sides of the crack or seam.

Start caulk at the bottom of an opening to avoid bubbles.

Release the trigger on the caulking gun before pulling it away from the crack to prevent applying too much caulk. A caulking gun with an automatic release makes this much easier.

Don't skimp. If the caulk shrinks, reapply it to form a smooth bead that completely seals the crack.

If caulk oozes out of a crack, use a putty knife to push it back in.

Once you've applied caulk, it takes time for it to dry, or cure. Curing time is described in two ways. The tack-free time tells you how quickly the fresh caulk's outer surface will dry or skin over. The total cure time indicates the time required for the caulk to become completely stable—or reach the point where no further drying or shrinking will occur.

Don't allow pets and small children to come into contact with fresh caulk. ■

Keep Your Energy Bill in Check While Kids Are Home

BY NOW, YOUR KIDS are probably on their summer break from school. When they're home, your energy use might go up—with more lights on, more electronics running and the air conditioner working harder.

Here's how to keep your energy use from skyrocketing while the kids are home for summer.

Set rules for electronics use. Limit screen time for TVs, gaming consoles and computers. Encourage outdoor activities or reading instead of running devices all day.

Adjust the thermostat. Set your air conditioner a few degrees higher and turn on ceiling fans when the kids are home. Closing blinds and curtains during the hottest part of the day can also keep the house cooler without extra AC use.

Unplug devices when not in use. Chargers, gaming consoles and small appliances draw power even when turned off. Plug them into a power strip and switch it off when not needed.

Be energy efficient with lighting. Remind children to turn off lights when they leave a room, and swap old bulbs for LEDs, which use less energy and last longer.

Plan meals wisely. Avoid using the oven. Opt instead for air fryers, microwaves or outdoor grills to reduce heat inside the home.

Remind kids not to leave the refrigerator or freezer door open while they look for a snack or drink. Opening the door and quickly selecting the items you need, then closing the door helps keep the cold air where it belongs—inside the fridge.

Don't leave the house doors open unnecessarily long when going in and out so that your conditioned air stays in the home instead of pouring into the outdoors. ■



POWER TIP

Take advantage of the warmer weather and reduce home energy use by using an outdoor grill or no-bake recipe instead of your oven.



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STEVE DEBENPORT | ISTOCK.COM

Keep Cool for Less

IF THE SUMMER HEAT is taking a toll on your pocketbook because of the electricity you're using to stay cool, here are some tips that can help.

If you have central air conditioning or a heat pump, make sure your filter has been recently changed or cleaned. The next step is to call an HVAC contractor for a tuneup and to complete an assessment of the system. A tuneup can improve the efficiency and extend the life of the unit and should include cleaning the condenser coil, checking the refrigerant levels, and taking a good look at the pump and electrical contacts.

If your AC system is older, talk to the contractor about its efficiency. It may be cost-effective to replace it with a newer, higher efficiency model, even if it's still functional.

Ductwork is as important as the AC unit, so make sure the contractor you choose is capable and willing to provide an expert assessment. A real pro will know how to measure the airflow at each supply and return register. If you're not getting cool air to the rooms that need it, the contractor may be able to make modifications to the ductwork.

Leaky ductwork could be your problem. If the ducts are in unconditioned areas like a crawl space or attic, it's especially important to make sure they're sealed and insulated. It will also help to seal ducts that are in conditioned spaces.

Some HVAC contractors can do a duct-blaster test to measure duct leakage. Discuss whether you should ever close any

supply registers. Most experts recommend that supply registers stay open.

If you cool your home with window AC units, there are a few things you can do to maximize your cooling while keeping costs as low as possible.

Use window AC units in rooms that can be closed off with a door, to make the cooling as effective as possible.

Make sure you have the right-sized unit for the size of the room. A unit that's too big will cool the room before the humidity has been lowered, which will make it feel less cool, while a unit that's too small will have to work harder, causing a shorter life span—and it may not do the job.

Use a fan to help distribute the cold air throughout the area you're cooling.

Turn off the AC unit when no one is in the room.

If your window AC unit isn't cooling properly, it may need to be replaced. Look for an Energy Star-certified unit to make the most of your cooling dollars.

Of course, the simplest way to save money on your AC is to not use it. As much as possible, keep your activities limited to rooms that are easily cooled. Try to spend more time cooking and eating outside. ■

Beware of Summertime Scams

LAMAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE will never send anyone to your house to ask you if you need work done. And if someone does come for a legitimate reason, you'll see a uniform, a truck with the cooperative's logo and valid identification.

This summer, don't be surprised if you get phone calls, uninvited visitors looking for work and door hangers offering landscaping, roofing, painting and home-repair services.

Your best bet: Say no to all of them. If you need work done around your house, visit the website of the state agency responsible for licensing contractors or join a contractor referral network that recommends only contractors who are licensed, insured, bonded and experienced.

Here are a few other tips.

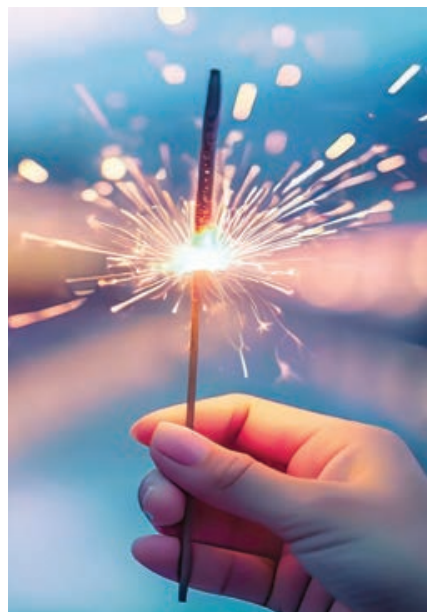
Be wary of contractors with out-of-state license plates or detachable, magnetic company signs on their trucks. These could be "travelers," who follow the warm weather from state to state and hire themselves out as home-improvement contractors. They're almost always unlicensed in your state, and if you discover a problem with their work later, they'll be long gone.

Do not pay in cash, and do not pay up front. Instead, work out a payment schedule that allows you to pay in increments as the work is completed.

Get bids from three reputable companies before you start. If you get one offer that's way lower than the other two, something is probably amiss.

Don't fall for these two lines: "I just finished a job at your neighbor's, and I'll give you a good price if you hire me today because I'm already in the neighborhood," or "I have leftover materials from a job I just did, and I'll sell/install them here for a deep discount because I don't need them."

Hiring contractors can be expensive. Don't waste your money on one who's not licensed and legitimate. ■



CALVIN CHAN WAI MENG / ISTOCK.COM

Keep the Power on and Fires Out

JULY IS A MONTH for camping trips and celebrating our nation's independence. What do the two have in common? Fire. Unsafe campfire practices and fireworks can lead to wildfires, and those wildfires can cause power outages—or worse.

Along with endless other safety concerns, fires can damage electrical lines and equipment, causing major power problems. Even smoke and ash can cause a high-voltage transmission line to trip, leaving sections of the grid without power.

Summer dryness increases the chance of wildfires, but so do unsafe practices. During Fourth of July celebrations, check for burn bans on the Texas A&M Forest Service website. Use only legal fireworks and sparklers, and use them on concrete or pavement away from grass or brush. Never let children handle fireworks.

When making a campfire, keep a bucket of water nearby to control a spreading fire. Make a firepit surrounded by rocks, not wood, and clear away leaves and other flammable materials that quickly spread flame. Never leave a campsite with a burning fire. Drench the fire with water to ensure the damp ashes cannot relight. ■



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