MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO

BRYAN STORY

Sticking to Our Mission

ONE MORNING, a co-op manager came to work to find a slightly burnt stick on her desk. She knew there had to be a story behind the stick.

The stick was about 18 inches long and no bigger than the diameter of your little finger. It wasn't big enough to be dangerous if it fell on you—it was barely big enough for a dog to chew on. Yet, as she found out from the lineworker who eventually showed up to tell its story, this little stick managed to knock out power to more than 100 electric meters.

The co-op manager heard the frustration in the lineworker's voice as he described how thoroughly he patrolled up and down 8 miles of line, trying to locate the source of the problem. He couldn't find it, but he wouldn't stop looking until he did.

LAMAR EC

He knew that lights were out and members needed electricity. Nobody, co-op employees included, enjoys being without power.

The lineworker was turning around to patrol the line yet another time when his eye caught something. It was the stick—this tiny stick wedged in equipment atop a pole—that had knocked out service for so many.

Once he'd found it, things moved quickly. Repairs were made, and power was restored.

Normally, that would be the end of the story—but that story made me think about all we do to serve the members of Lamar Electric Cooperative.

As I learned about this outage, I reflected on the work ethic and dedication of our own lineworkers, who work with diligence to restore electricity in their commitment to serving you, our members.

The story also made me want to share with our members the challenges of power restoration. The difficulty in finding this stick is an example of why, when you call our office, we don't always know how long restoration will take or what is causing an outage. We do our absolute best, but there are so many variables in nature that we cannot control.

Some would say I shouldn't share this anecdote because if members knew just a little stick could knock out power, they would be concerned about reliability.

I see the point: When you look at all the trees, birds and animals in our service area and consider all the various weather conditions we endure, it's clearly a daunting task for us to keep the lights on. Yet we do keep them on, most of the time. Day after day, week after week, our lineworkers and other staff ensure that our members have power.

Although some might worry about one small stick causing so many to lose electricity, I look at the millions of sticks we face daily and think: Isn't it great that we do keep the lights on so consistently?

I also think about what an amazing group of people our members have serving them. Thank you for letting us do what we do. We promise to keep picking up the sticks every day. ■

ONURDONGEL | ISTOCK.COM

Electricity Theft Is Dangerous, Costly for Co-op Members

THE THEFT OF ELECTRICITY and related materials is a problem all electric utilities face—and it's a problem for electricity consumers, too. Because Lamar Electric Cooperative is member-owned, electricity theft could end up costing you money because it drives up prices for everyone.

Electricity theft also puts your personal safety at risk. Tampering with an electric meter can make it unsafe and unstable. When people steal electricity, they put themselves, their neighbors, family and pets at risk for electric shocks, power surges, sparks and fire from exposed voltage. Stealing electrical equipment also can pose a significant risk to the culprit, resulting in injury or even death from exposure to live electricity.

Electricity theft isn't isolated to rural areas or big cities. It's a problem utilities encounter from agricultural operations to housing complexes to offices from coast to coast. Although electricity can easily be acquired through a utility, some people are still willing to risk physical damage or loss of life just for free kilowatts. Others may not realize the serious legal and potential safety problems.

Keeping power safe and affordable is a priority for Lamar EC. That's why we routinely inspect our meters and equipment to ensure we're doing our best to protect you from the risks of electricity theft. We take a proactive approach to this serious problem, reducing theft and its related costs.

You also can play a role in this process by immediately notifying us if you suspect someone is gaining access to our power supply without paying their fair share or by tampering with equipment. If you have information related to electricity or materials theft, please call us at (903) 784-4303. Rest assured, we'll keep your identity confidential.

Because you share in the ownership of your co-op, when people steal from the cooperative, they're stealing from you too. ■

Lamar Electric Cooperative

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Web lamarelectric.coop

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

EVERYTIME
YOU NEED US
WE
WILL BE THERE

As your electric cooperative and reliable energy partner, the power we deliver does more than just light your home—it connects the families, friends, and neighbors who form the heart of our community.

Back-to-School Can Mean More Energy Use

WITH ALL THE NEW smartphones, computers, printers and desk lamps, back-to-school equipment uses more energy than it used to. Follow these tips to conserve more energy—and even save a few dollars along the way—as your kids head back to school.

Teach your children how to put the computer into sleep mode when they're finished using it, even if they plan on returning later. Electronics in sleep mode use about 80% less electricity.

In the market for new computer equipment this year? Computers with an Energy Star rating use up to 65% less electricity overall.

Desk lamps and other concentrated task lighting create a productive work environment without wasting excess light. Replace halogen or incandescent desk lamps with LED bulbs, which now fit a variety of fixtures. They produce less heat and use 90% less power.

If you live close, bicycling or walking to school can save gas and give kids much-needed exercise now that summer days of play are over. If the commute is too far, organize a carpool with parents in your area to earn yourself a couple mornings off.

Reduce waste by taking a thorough inventory of school supplies before heading to the store. Supplies often come in bulk packages that can't be used in just one school year.

Buy reusable sandwich bags and use lunch boxes instead of brown bags to save money and reduce everyday packaging waste. ■

HAZAL AK | ISTOCK.COM

JANICE RICHARD | ISTOCK.COM

It's a Good Time To Give Your AC a Checkup

MAINTAINING YOUR air conditioning equipment can prevent problems and unwanted costs. Keep your cooling and heating system at peak performance by having a contractor do annual checkups.

A typical maintenance checkup should include the following.

Check thermostat settings to ensure the system keeps you comfortable when you're home and saves energy while you're away.

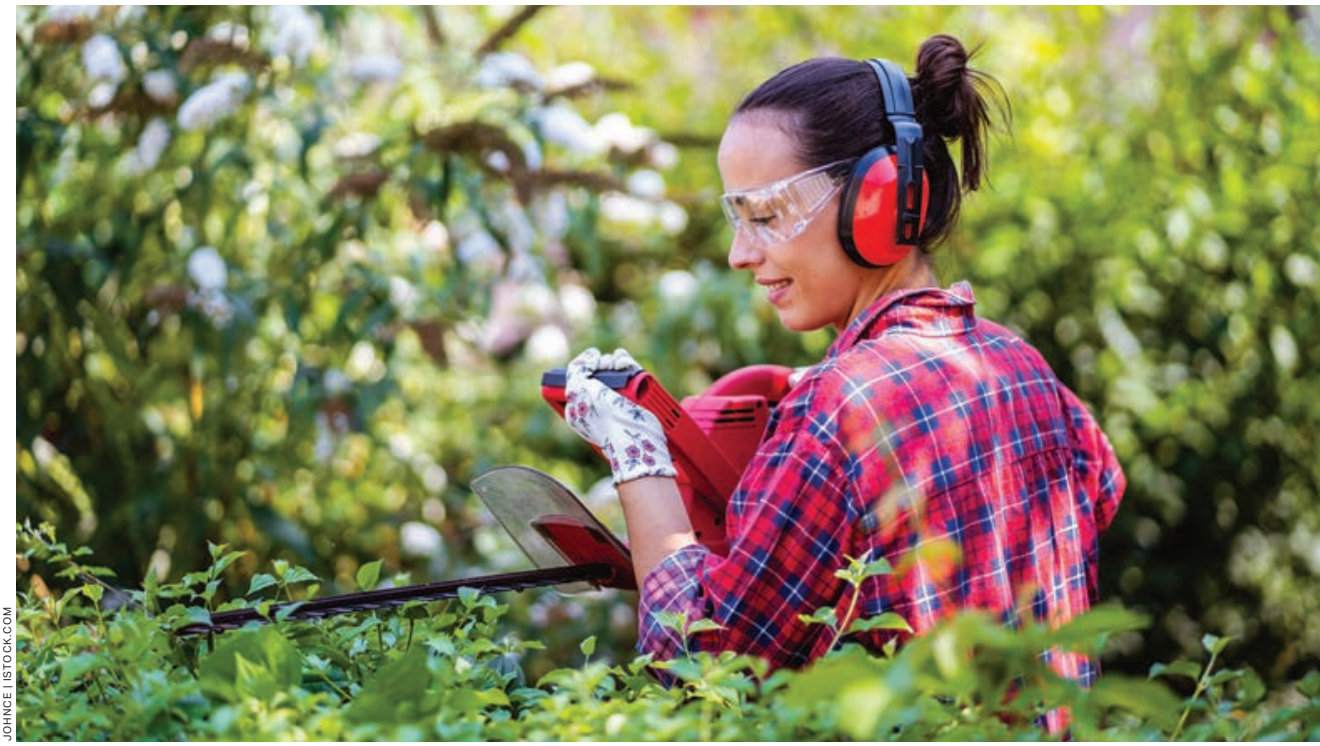
Tighten electrical connections and measure voltage and current on motors. Faulty electrical connections can cause unsafe operation.

Lubricate all moving parts. Friction can consume extra electricity.

Check the condensate drain. A clogged drain can cause water damage in your house and affect indoor humidity levels.

Inspect controls of the system to ensure proper and safe operation. Check the starting cycle to be sure the system starts, operates and shuts off properly.

Inspect and clean or change air filters regularly. A dirty filter can increase energy costs and damage your equipment, leading to early failure. ■



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Think Outside the Box

HELP PREVENT COMMON outdoor electrical hazards by remembering these safety guidelines as the seasons change from summer to fall.

Power Lines

Always keep yourself and any tools and equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines. Electricity can jump to nearby objects.

Before planting trees near a power line, do some research or speak with a professional to ensure there's enough space for them to grow. If you suspect a tree is too close to power lines, report it to Lamar Electric Cooperative.

Power lines are also underground. Call 811 before you dig to have a technician identify where your underground utilities are located. That way you can avoid them when you plant trees, build fences or do any digging.

Outdoor Outlets

Equip outdoor outlets with ground-fault circuit interrupters, which automatically cut power when a powered appliance comes into contact with water or "leaks" electricity. You can also buy portable GFCIs for use with traditional outlets.

Install weatherproof electrical boxes or covers on outdoor outlets.

Warn children—and remind yourself—to avoid outdoor outlets when they're wet or when it's raining.

Generators

Between 2012 and 2022, carbon monoxide released by generators killed 749 people in the U.S.; 79% of those deaths were associated with generators used inside a building that was not properly ventilated.

Make sure your home is properly equipped with CO alarms and test them monthly.

Position the generator outside the home and well away from doors, windows and vents.

Do not plug a generator directly into a home outlet without a transfer switch installed to prevent backfeed, which could harm utility lineworkers making repairs or anyone who might come into contact with a downed power line.

Make sure your generator is properly grounded and rated to handle the load of appliances you want it to power.

Extension Cords

Extension cords are meant to provide a temporary solution and should not be used long term or permanently.

Never use an indoor extension cord outdoors. Outdoor cords will be labeled "For outdoor use" and are often orange.

Never attempt to extend the length of an extension cord by connecting it with another extension cord.

Be sure the extension cord is appropriately rated for the amount of electricity needed by the devices it will power.

Only use extension cords that have been approved and tested by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as UL Solutions or CSA Group. The laboratory's mark should appear on a tag near the cord's plug. ■

Water Heater Woes

IT'S HARD TO SAY how long a water heater will last. Certified home inspectors estimate the life span to be about 10 years; some manufacturers suggest 12–13 years. It's wise to replace a water heater before it fails because sometimes failure includes a ruptured tank or a massive leak that can cause a lot of damage.

The lifespan of a conventional water heater (one with a tank) depends on factors such as the volume of water cycled through it, the hardness (mineral content) of the water and the tank's interior coating.

There are a few warning signs that your water heater tank or heating element may be failing:

- Water leaking from the tank or pooling on the floor underneath it
- Rust, corrosion or mineral deposits around fittings or release valves
- Dropping water temperature from your faucets

Here are a few simple steps you can take to increase the efficiency of your water heater.

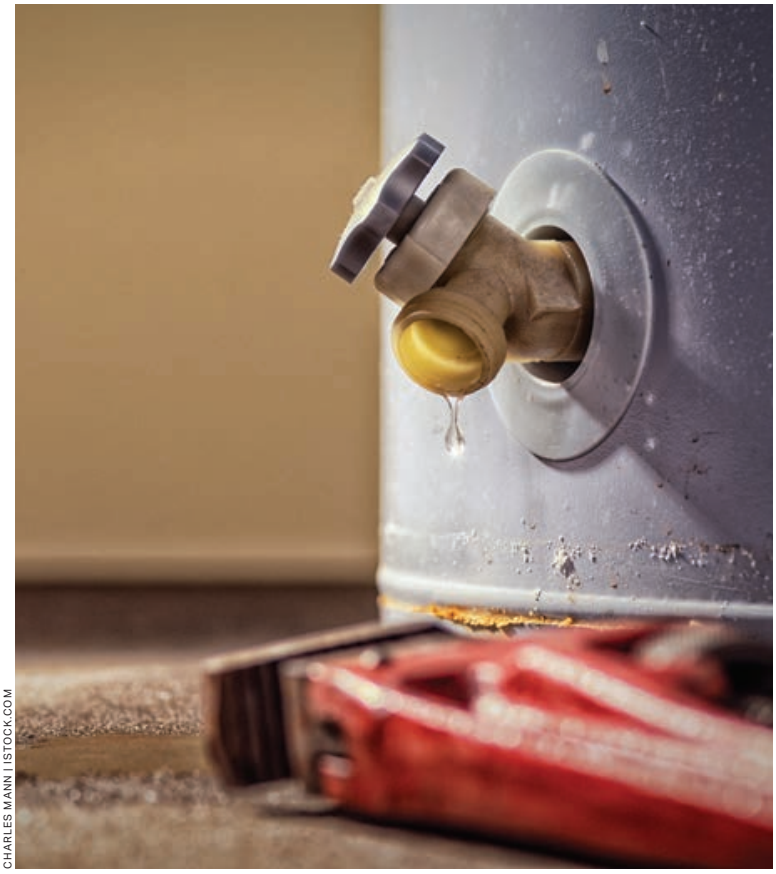
Insulate the hot water line where it exits the tank.

Insulate the water heater with a blanket designed for that purpose. But first, check the owner's manual to make sure doing so won't void the warranty. If you have a gas or propane water heater, be sure the blanket doesn't block the unit's air supply.

Keep your water temperature at 120 degrees or less.

Drain your water heater every year or two to remove sediment that reduces efficiency.

When it's time to purchase a new water heater, be sure to do your homework and buy one that best suits your needs while saving energy. ■



CHARLES MANN | ISTOCK.COM

BACKGROUND: MARCIN JUCHA | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM.
DIP: IRINA ROSTOKINA | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Vidalia Onion Dip

2 large Vidalia or 1015 sweet onions, finely chopped
1½ cups grated Parmesan cheese, divided use
1 cup mayonnaise
1 cup sour cream
¼ cup fresh dill, lightly chopped (or 2½ teaspoons dried dill), divided use
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
1 tablespoon prepared horseradish
Pinch red pepper flakes
Kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

2. Place onions, 1 cup Parmesan, mayonnaise, sour cream, 3 tablespoons dill (or 2 teaspoons dried), parsley, horseradish and red pepper in a mixing bowl and use a spatula to combine. Season to taste with salt and black pepper, then transfer the mixture to a deep-dish 10-inch pie dish. Sprinkle the top evenly with the remaining ½ cup of Parmesan and remaining dill.

3. Bake 40–45 minutes, until lightly browned. Serve with chips or crackers.

SERVES 4–6

TCP Find this and more delicious recipes online at TexasCoopPower.com.