



MESSAGE FROM
CEO/GENERAL
MANAGER
TREY TEAFF

Plan for a Safe and Happy Fourth

JULY HAS ALWAYS been a favorite month of mine. It's the middle of summer, the kids are out of school and we celebrate Independence Day. Typically on the Fourth, we celebrate our nation's independence with burgers and hot dogs, homemade ice cream and other sweet treats, and, of course, fireworks. It's a time for fellowship with family and friends, but at Wood County Electric Cooperative, we also want to make sure our members focus on safety.

To ensure you have the best Fourth of July possible, we remind you of a few important safety tips from the American Red Cross.

It wouldn't be Independence Day without a spectacular fireworks display. The safest way to enjoy this part of the holiday is to head to a local fireworks show. **But if you want to put on your own show at home, be sure to follow these safety tips:**

- ▶ First check to see if your area has an active burn ban. If so, fireworks are prohibited due to high fire danger, and you should not set off any.
- ▶ Always follow the instructions on fireworks packaging and never give fireworks to small children.
- ▶ Keep a supply of water close by as a precaution.
- ▶ Make sure to wear protective eyewear when lighting fireworks.
- ▶ Light only one firework at a time and never attempt to relight a dud.
- ▶ Store fireworks in a cool, dry place away from children and pets.

- ▶ Never throw or point fireworks toward people, animals, vehicles, structures or flammable materials.

Cookouts are a great way to bring folks together on the Fourth. Whether you are grilling in your backyard or at a community park, make sure your feast includes a generous portion of fun and a side helping of safety.

We recommend the following safety tips:

- ▶ Supervise your grill at all times.
- ▶ Use the proper tools for cooking on a grill.
- ▶ Never add charcoal starter fluid when the coals have already been ignited.
- ▶ Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when using grills.

Fireworks and cookouts wouldn't be complete without a sunny day. **Here's hoping we have good weather, and, if we do, make sure you enjoy the sun safely:**

- ▶ Use a broad spectrum SPF sunscreen and reapply often, especially if you'll be swimming.
- ▶ Protect your eyes with sunglasses.
- ▶ Drink plenty of water.
- ▶ Be on the lookout for signs of heatstroke: hot red skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid, shallow breathing.

Wood County EC wishes you a safe and special Independence Day. ■



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Beware of Co-op Equipment

AS YOU SPEND TIME OUTSIDE this summer, Wood County Electric Cooperative reminds you to use caution near electrical equipment. Often we are surrounded by electric infrastructure without even realizing it, so look up and around to make sure you know the location of poles, power lines, transformers and other co-op property in your surroundings.

Never climb trees near power lines. If you touch a tree that is touching a power line, your body could become the path of electricity from the line to the ground. If you encounter an animal trapped in a tree near power lines or inside a substation, do not attempt to rescue it. Call your co-op for assistance instead.

Don't fly drones near electrical equipment. Remote control toys should never be flown near power lines, substations or other electrical equipment. If contact is accidentally made with a power line or a transformer inside a substation, many members of your community could be left without electricity. To avoid accidents, keep the remote control toy in sight at all times and avoid flying in windy conditions that might make you lose control.

Keep kites away from power lines. Kites can cause power outages if they come into contact with power lines, so it's best to fly them only in wide-open areas. If the wind pushes your kite near a power line, let go of it and don't try to retrieve it without help from your co-op. Never attach anything metal to a kite or fly it when it's wet.

Leave balloons inside and away from power lines. Keep them tethered at all times and attached to weights. Never use metallic ribbon on balloons. Be especially careful with Mylar balloons, whose metallic coatings conduct electricity and can cause short circuits or power surges if they come into contact with power lines. Properly dispose of balloons by puncturing them to release the helium that could cause them to float away.

Here at Wood County EC, your safety is important to us. Share this message of electrical safety so that you and others can enjoy plenty of summer days filled with fun. ■

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DOWNLOAD THE APP

Search for MY WCEC

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ABOUT WOOD COUNTY EC

Founded in 1938, WCEC owns and maintains more than 5,140 miles of line to provide electric service to over 38,000 meters in parts of nine counties: Camp, Franklin, Hopkins, Rains, Smith, Titus, Upshur, Van Zandt and Wood counties.

MEMBER BENEFITS AND SERVICES

- Online account access and bill payment
- Paperless E-Bill services
- Free bill-paying app
- Visa, Mastercard and Discover accepted
- SmartPower prepay electric system
- Scholarships and youth programs
- Safety and energy conservation programs
- Operation Round-Up community grants

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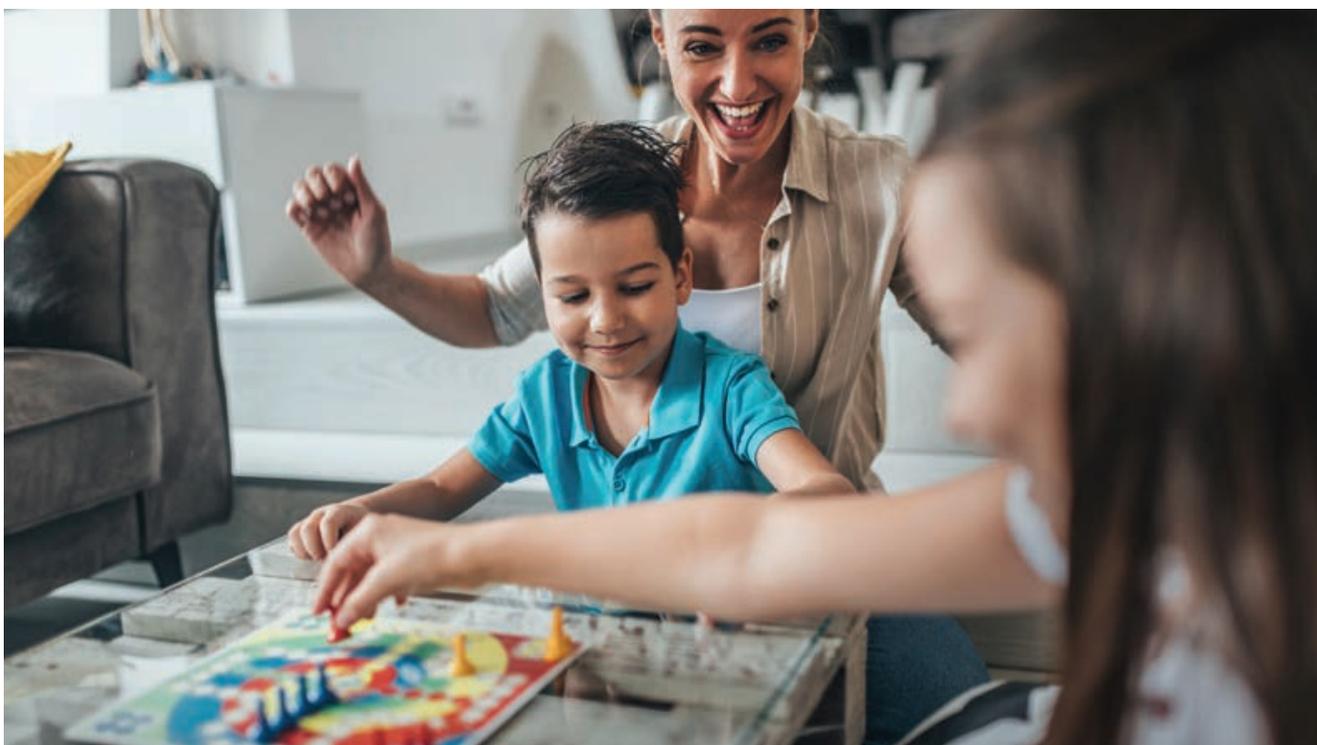
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Ways To Save Energy With Kids

GETTING KIDS INTERESTED in saving energy can seem tough at first, but it doesn't have to be. With warmer months upon us, saving energy will be crucial for keeping electricity bills low. Getting kiddos engaged now will help them form energy-saving habits for the future.

Before parents can teach their children how to save energy, they must first be prepared to answer, "What's in it for me?" As most parents can attest, convincing kids to care about energy efficiency is a hard sell. To counter this indifference, parents can explain why it's important to save energy and how it benefits the child and the world at large, to help kids understand the need to change their habits and motivate them to do so.

In the simplest and most transactional terms, less money spent on an electric bill can mean more money used for fun activities—that's something children can get behind. Less tangible but just as important, using less energy means running your home more efficiently, to help conserve natural resources and benefit the environment.

Once you've got the kids on board that conserving energy is important, here are fun ways to teach kids how to be energy efficient and get them excited about saving energy.

Turn the learning experience into a game. One example is to create an "energy treasure hunt" around the home, where the family searches for devices or appliances that use the most electricity. After finding these items, you can discuss with your kids a few ways for those devices to use less energy.

Another game to play with your kids is I Spy for any energy-saving technologies in stores while out running

errands. Encouraging your kids to find a wide variety of devices around stores can keep them even more engaged. Teach them about the Energy Star logo, which identifies the most energy-efficient devices and appliances.

Create a reward system. One simple method is a star chart. You can use the chart to keep track of stickers and reward your child for every 10 stickers that they earn for doing some activity that saves energy. Stickers could be earned every time your child remembers to turn off the light in a room when they exit, unplugs devices (like phone chargers) that they're not using or showers in less than five minutes. Rewards can be small things that get your child excited, like a piece of candy or a small toy, or getting to pick dinner or dessert.

Discuss lifestyle changes as a family or as an individual, but also make the changes fun. This could be getting the family together to play a board game instead of watching TV. You could also suggest reading a book together instead of using electronic devices. Encourage them to play outdoors with friends instead of playing video games indoors. Incorporating energy-saving practices into everyday life is the best way to ensure the habit has a lasting impact.

Teaching your kids to save energy can be easier when you make it fun. With a little creativity, each of these suggestions can be modified for your family. Each of us, including our kids, can do our part to save energy. ■

New Utility Scams Capitalize on COVID

A SPATE OF SCAMS is targeting utility customers, as fraudsters alter their strategies and seek to capitalize on vulnerabilities created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members of an electric cooperative in Wisconsin recently reported two unique tactics, according to a report from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

One involved a call from a bogus representative of an investor-owned utility claiming to have taken over the member's account and demanding immediate payment or disconnection. The member wasn't fooled and contacted the co-op to warn others.

This scam comes on the heels of an earlier trick in which a swindler claiming to be with the co-op told a member that she had overpaid her utility bill and that to get the refund she was due, she'd need to provide her financial information. The member didn't fall for the scam, hung up the phone and notified the co-op.

Members need to stay vigilant because scammers have adapted their tactics over the past two years to exploit consumer vulnerabilities and changes in habits created by the pandemic.

The increased use of technology paired with concerns about the economy have created a breeding ground for scams, according to Utilities United Against Scams.

Numbers from the Federal Trade Commission show that consumer fraud in general spiked during the past two years.

In 2021, about a quarter of all reported fraud losses stemmed from scams originating on social media. Those scams resulted in \$770 million in total losses, which is an 18-fold increase from 2017, according to the agency's latest Consumer Protection Data Spotlight report.

Somos, the entity that manages toll-free numbers in the U.S., tracks when those numbers are used fraudulently. They often work with UUAS to combat scams, and their collaboration has shut down more than 12,000 phone numbers since 2017.

If you receive a suspicious message—whether a phone call, text, social media message or email—regarding your electric cooperative account, please contact Wood County Electric Cooperative immediately. ■



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Internet-Connected Devices Can Help You Save Energy

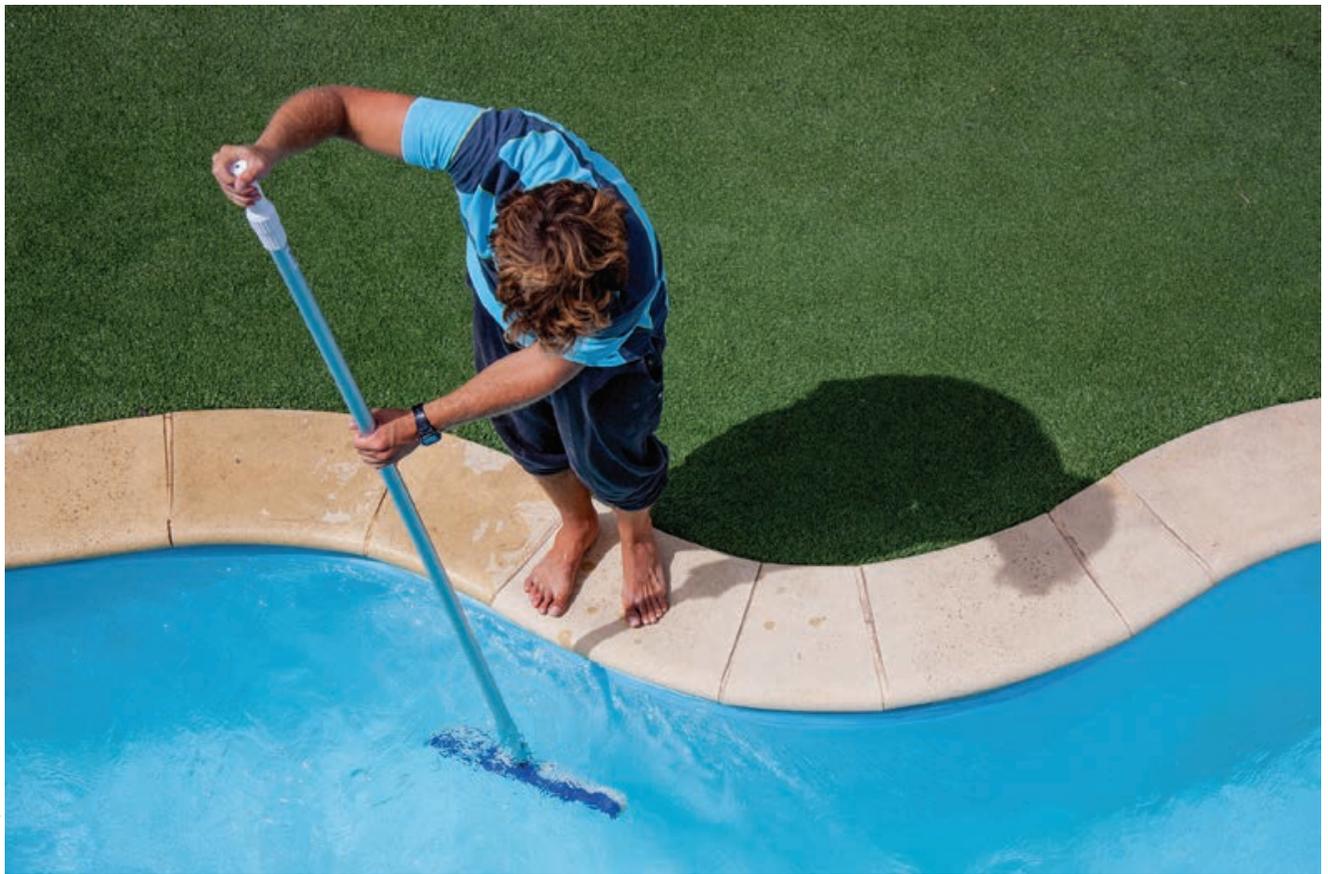
INTERNET-CONNECTED DEVICES—often called the Internet of Things—are simply gadgets and appliances outfitted with hardware that allows them to transmit data over the web. That data can be accessed by a user to monitor a device's performance and even control it with a smartphone or computer. Such control allows homeowners to manage appliance use to save energy, identify problems or defer use to off-peak times.

Here are some of the many home items that can be turned into smart devices:

- ▶ Baby monitor
- ▶ Wi-Fi booster
- ▶ Dog tracker and monitor
- ▶ Bed
- ▶ Voice assistant
- ▶ Lighting
- ▶ Smoke alarm
- ▶ Sprinklers
- ▶ Air quality monitor
- ▶ Security monitor
- ▶ Coffee maker
- ▶ Refrigerator
- ▶ Dishwasher
- ▶ Wi-Fi router
- ▶ TV
- ▶ Washer/dryer
- ▶ Oven/stove
- ▶ Slow cooker
- ▶ Thermostat
- ▶ Speakers
- ▶ Remote control
- ▶ Garage door opener
- ▶ Lock
- ▶ Car charger
- ▶ Doorbell
- ▶ Vent
- ▶ Remote control
- ▶ Exterior lighting
- ▶ Electric vehicle
- ▶ Yard lighting
- ▶ Leak detector



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Is Your Home Full of Energy Hogs?

ENERGY COSTS BETWEEN two homes of similar age and size can vary greatly, depending on the residents' habits and possessions. If you compare your home's electricity bill with your neighbor and find that yours is higher, you may have hidden energy hogs causing you to use more energy.

Perhaps one of the common energy hogs below is increasing your energy use.

An old fridge or freezer in the garage. That second fridge or freezer may be costing more than you think. If the model was produced prior to 1990, it's likely using twice as much energy (or more) than a newer, Energy Star-certified model. If it's located in the garage, it may run constantly in the summer, which adds to electric bills.

Thermostat settings. Using fans and wearing lighter clothing in the summer rather than lowering the thermostat can make a big difference in energy consumption. A smart thermostat can increase savings by automatically adjusting your home's temperature based on your household's schedule, raising the temperature when you're not home and lowering it shortly before you return.

Cooling or heating an uninsulated area. Uninsulated workshops and garages can be expensive to keep cool. Pet owners have been known to heat and cool uninsulated areas to keep pets comfortable, not realizing that this might be costing more

than heating or cooling their actual home.

Water heaters. If your electric water heater's thermostat is set higher than 120 degrees and the tank isn't wrapped in an insulating blanket, you're spending more money than you need to for hot water.

Pumps. If you live on acreage or a farm or ranch, you probably have several pumps, including for irrigation, a well, septic and sump. If you're like most of us, you use those pumps until they break. Consider replacing the oldest and most-used pumps over time with new, more efficient ones that are sized correctly for their task.

Hot tubs. The average hot tub costs \$250 per year to operate. But that amount may be higher if your hot tub is an older, less efficient model or if you live in a colder climate. A smaller hot tub with better insulation, a cover and a pump that runs on a lower voltage will use much less energy than other models.

Swimming pool. If you have a pool, consider installing a smaller, more efficient pump and reducing how often it runs. You can also look at installing a larger filter and maximizing the flow of water through the pipes by making them larger and reducing how sharply the corners turn. These measures could cut your electric use for the pool pump by as much as 75%. ■



Use landscaping to direct water away from your home's foundation.

Control Humidity To Boost Comfort, Lower Cost

A HOUSE WITH TOO MUCH humid air inside can feel warmer than it is, causing the homeowner to crank up the air conditioner—and therefore energy costs.

Luckily there are simple steps to reduce the amount of moisture in your home, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

Check your clothes dryer. An improperly vented clothes dryer can send some or all that moisture from your wet clothes into the air. Make sure your venting system is sealed all the way from the back of your dryer to the exhaust port on your home's exterior.

Vent your stove and bathroom fans outside. Exhaust fans from cooking surfaces or the bathroom that are vented into your attic only redistribute humidity within your home. All such fans should be vented to the outside, with the system checked for leakage.

Seal air leaks. Finding the places where outside air is leaking in and conditioned air is leaking out and sealing those leaks is a cost-effective way to improve comfort and cut energy costs.

Insulate water pipes. Condensation can occur when there is a difference between the temperature of your water pipes and the humid air in your home. Insulating cold water pipes prevents condensation from forming and contributing to humidity in the home. Insulating hot water pipes eliminates heat loss between the water heater and the tap, which means heating and using less water over time. Both will help keep your energy bill in line.

Monitor drainage around your home. Rainwater and runoff from gutters and downspouts can easily flow toward your foundation and leak or leach into the structure. Directing the water away with landscaping and sealing your foundation can have a big impact.

Use a dehumidifier. It's the most surefire way to reduce indoor humidity.

Bring charcoal inside. Charcoal briquettes aren't just for barbecuing. They actually make a pretty good dehumidification tool. Take a few briquettes and place them in a can or basket. Charcoal is very absorbent and will suck moisture out of the air in your home. Just make sure not to use match-light charcoal, and replace the briquettes every two to three months. It sounds weird, but it works. Charcoal removes odors, too. ■



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Independence Day
Monday, July 4

**Give Something
Away Day**
Friday, July 15

**International Day
of Friendship**
Saturday, July 30