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Holiday Energy Savings

The holiday season is generally a big time for energy use, but that doesn't mean it has to be that way. Here are ways to save energy (and money) during the holidays.

USE FIBER OPTIC DECORATIONS. Fiber optic trees and decorations are the ultimate in energy efficiency. In most cases, they use a single lightbulb located in the base of the unit to light the entire decoration—that's both energy-smart and budget-smart!

LIMIT THE TIME THE LIGHTS ARE ON. Wait until dark to turn on your Christmas lights; then, turn them off before you go to bed. Six hours or less of daily use is a good goal. Do you have trouble remembering to turn your lights off? Then set a timer and forget about it.

TURN OFF ROOM LIGHTS WHEN TREE IS LIT. The lights on your Christmas tree should provide more than enough lighting to navigate around a room.

TURN THE THERMOSTAT DOWN WHEN YOU HAVE GUESTS. Extra bodies in the house mean extra warmth at no cost to you.

INVEST IN RECHARGEABLE BATTERIES AND A CHARGER. If you buy or receive gifts that require batteries, consider purchasing rechargeable batteries and a charger. Recent advancements have made rechargeable batteries better than ever.

BUY ENERGY STAR ELECTRONICS. Energy Star-certified electronics—TVs, DVD and Blu-Ray players, refrigerators, computers, etc.—use up to 60 percent less electricity than their noncertified counterparts.

TAKE A WALK TO SEE THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS. Leave the car in the driveway this year when you go out to look at Christmas lights. A walking tour of your neighborhood could be just as fun, and you won't use any gas.

BAKE SEVERAL DISHES AT A TIME. The holiday season is a big time for baking. Make the most of your oven and the energy that goes into heating it by cooking several dishes at once. Remember: It takes about the same amount of energy to operate a full oven as it does a nearly empty one.

USE THE SMALLEST APPLIANCE TO GET THE JOB DONE. Use your microwave and toaster oven for small holiday cooking tasks, and save the oven for the big ones.

KEEP LIDS ON POTS. Foods cook faster (meaning less energy use) when the lid is on.

UNPLUG PHANTOM ENERGY USERS BEFORE YOU GO ON VACATION. TVs, DVD players, computers, printers and many other electronics use energy even when they aren't turned on. Unplug them before you go on vacation to enjoy the energy savings.

STAY SAFE— Read the Labels

Statistics show that sales of electrical products increase during the winter months.

Unfortunately, this brings out counterfeiters who use inferior materials and avoid key manufacturing steps to reduce the cost of their products, allowing them to be sold at prices no genuine manufacturer can match. Counterfeit materials also can pose other significant safety hazards that, if left undetected, can cause deaths, injuries and substantial property loss.

How do you stay safe? It just takes a little light reading—and a little common sense.

- ▶ Look for the CSA, UL or ETL-SEMKO certification marks. If you have concerns about the labels, contact the certifier.

- ▶ Beware of bargains that seem too good to be true—they probably are.

- ▶ Use established vendors who purchase their goods from legitimate distributors and genuine manufacturers.

- ▶ Check the warning label. It should be free of grammatical errors and not conflict with information elsewhere on the package.

- ▶ Look for the name and contact information of the manufacturer. If this information is missing, consider purchasing electrical products elsewhere.

- ▶ Detection based on appearance can be difficult, so be sure to read every label on every purchase. Known counterfeited products include control relays for industrial equipment, lamps, smoke detectors, fuses, circuit breakers, ground-fault circuit interrupters, conduit fittings, power strips, surge protectors, extension cords and electrical connectors.

Features on a real UL label:
 1. UL trademark;
 2. "LISTED" in capital letters;
 3. Product identity (optional for molded marks);
 4. Control or issue number.





Wood County Electric Cooperative wishes you and yours a richly blessed Christmas and New Year.



Wood County Electric Cooperative

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These Farmers Grow Memories and Traditions

When Kama and Chuck Bozeman decided to leave the hustle and bustle of Dallas for a slower pace of life, they targeted East Texas as their destination. In looking for property they concentrated on Canton, because Kama said it's about the first spot east of the DFW Metroplex that is considered East Texas.



Kama Bozeman and her son, Brock

In 1994, they bought 32 acres just outside Canton, right on Interstate 20. While remaining in their home near Plano, they planned weekend and vacation getaways to clear and maintain the land while they finalized their plans for how to use the property.

After much research and meetings with the Texas Fruit Growers Association and the Texas Christmas Tree Association, and advice from friends, the Bozemans decided to give Christmas tree farming a go. In January 1995, Kama and Chuck bought their first saplings, and together they planted them. It sounds simple, but essentially these were two “city slickers” learning to plow and plant and tend to all of the other chores that came with the farm.

After much sweat and many blisters, and some growing time for their trees, they were finally ready to open their choose-and-cut Canton Christmas Tree Farm in 1997. Sadly, however, before the season began, they suffered a major setback. A neighbor's construction trash fire jumped property lines and burned all but 300 of their trees. “It was so much hard work, hard lessons learned and personal finances that were gone in the blink of an eye,” Kama said.

Despite the setback, the next year the Bozemans decided to invest more in their country dream, sold their Plano home and moved to Canton. Chuck worked (and still does) in Rowlett as a firefighter, and his schedule of 24 hours on and 48 off was conducive to a commute. In Canton, Chuck and Kama raised their growing family, which includes daughter Jordan and son Brock. By 2000 they'd managed to recover from the fire and decided to try their first-ever Christmas tree sale.

Kama said the first year was not that smooth. They had a “big top” tent, a few portable restrooms, some generator power, a hayride and lots of imported, pre-cut trees. She's not very self-congratulatory about their inaugural year.

“It was a pretty rough start,” Kama said, “but amazingly, and in spite of it, we've had people coming to buy their trees here every year since.”

Since that opening, the Bozemans have made improvements every year. In 2001, they added a shaking shed, which removes excess needles from Christmas trees so consumers take home cleaner trees without loose needles, and a barrel train ride to enhance the family experience for tree gathering.

In 2001 the farm became a member of Wood County Electric Cooperative and received electricity. “That was a REALLY big thing!” Kama said.

The availability of electricity allowed much more growth, and that was the year they also added photo opportunities with Santa. In 2002 they built a gift shop and added a large blowup slide, and in 2003 they added two inflatable bounce houses and an inflatable obstacle course.

Those last two additions offered another “deflating” experience for the Bozemans, though, when thieves made off with the bounce houses and the obstacle course. For most, that might have been a barrier, but Kama says that it just hardened

their resolve to make the business a success. For Chuck, especially, it served as impetus for him to add some permanent attractions that would be more “thief-proof.”

From research on the Internet and word of mouth from friends, the Bozemans have now acquired 16 rides for what they call their “amazement park.” These include the Pirate’s Revenge ship ride, Ferris wheel, rock-climbing wall, swing ride, kiddie helicopter ride, barrel train, fire truck ride, space ball, double-bay inflatable slide, canoe ride, merry-go-round, Rattler ride, Yesterland Express train, army tank ride, Red Baron airplane ride and Santa’s Runaway Sleigh roller coaster.

They also added a concession stand, campfire pits and a zoo. If all of that is beginning to sound like it’s a large departure from a simple Christmas tree farm, that’s because it is. In 2011

In 2012, YesterLand Farm opened November 23 and will remain open until December 16. The hours on weekdays are from 1 p.m. to dark for tree purchases. On weekends, tree-gathering turns into a festive event. Admission is free, and visitors can take advantage of wagon-train rides, have rubber duck races and play in the miniature Western town for free.

All of the mechanical rides will also be in operation, and visitors can purchase unlimited rides or individual ride tickets. A corn maze with Christmas scenes throughout can be experienced for \$5. There are also pony rides and a gem and rock mining experience for a fee. And to go along with the carnival atmosphere, there’s loads of traditional fair food.

Tasty treats begin at the old-fashioned soda stand, where patrons can get fresh-squeezed lemonade or step way back in



The Santa’s Runaway Sleigh roller coaster is a popular attraction.

the now-former Canton Christmas Tree Farm was renamed YesterLand Farm, specializing in old-fashioned nostalgic fun.

“Our mission here at YesterLand Farm is all about family time spent together,” Kama said. “We encourage people to put away their cellphones, because when looking back on family memories, nobody is going to say, ‘I wish I’d been more productive.’ What you are probably going to remember are the fun times like going out and getting your Christmas tree and having cocoa together around a fire. We want to help create those lasting family memories.”

time for a strawberry crème, sarsaparilla, birch beer, crème soda, orange crème or root beer.

And given the smells wafting out of the food concession, it would be hard to resist fair standards like fresh roasted corn, sausage-on-a-stick, hand-dipped corn dogs, turkey legs and fried potato sticks. On the sweet side, there’s soft-serve ice cream, freshly made kettle corn, funnel cakes and even deep-fried marshmallows.

Once your family is full of treats and smiles, great photo opportunities await. All visitors are welcome to bring their

cameras to take family photos against festive decorations or backdrops for free. Or they can choose to have professional photos taken with Santa.

Photo packages start at \$17, and Santa is on location on weekends until December 16 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Visitors who take advantage of this opportunity walk away with a printed photo and/or CD of digital images to use in any way they wish.

With all of those activities, it's possible you might forget why your family went there in the first place, but it was probably for a tree.

Ahhh, yes. A Christmas tree. After all, this is where the dream first began. For the Bozemans' part, they've grown the trees, which are Leyland cypress and Virginia pine, and

a fresh-cut Christmas tree."

Realizing, though, that not all families are up to the physical task of cutting and hauling their own tree, the Bozemans also sell fresh-cut Fraser firs that have been shipped in on refrigerated trucks. These, Kama says, are the "Cadillac of trees" and start at about \$59.

There is also an option to have the tree flocked. The Bozemans also sell a tree stand that Kama calls "the last tree stand you'll ever need." It's a pin-style stand, so the tree needs to be drilled to fit it, which the farm does for free. But, Kama says, it's reusable and makes a very stable stand—and they'll always drill the tree for free.

In addition to trees, the farm also has a large selection of fresh wreaths and garlands that can be cut to any length. And if



Families enjoy a ride on the barrel train.

they provide the saws. Families grab a saw and head off across the acres of trees to find that special one. Then they do their own honors by cutting it down and hauling it back to the shaking shed, where it's measured and the price is calculated at \$7 a foot.

"The tradition of cutting a tree has been replaced by convenience," Kama said. "Now parents want their kids to have the same kind of fun they did when they were children. The whole experience is just about old-fashioned fun. And nothing smells better and gets you in the mood faster than

you need some big, beautiful bows, they sell those, too. Next, there might be a visit to the YesterLand gift shop, Dixie Mercantile—because what better way to top off a family tradition, than by selecting a new Christmas ornament to add to the family collection?

This little country store is chock-full of unique Christmas ornaments, running the gamut from traditional Santas and nutcrackers to the not-so-traditional sock monkey. In between, there are old-fashioned train cars, police and firefighter commemoratives, favorite sports teams and even orna-

ments that can be personalized.

If you are thinking that YesterLand Farm is much more than a Christmas tree farm, you'd be right. The farm has evolved to become a destination site for school field trips and a place for church and youth outings. At peak times, the farm employs around 85 people, but not just for the Christmas season. In the fall, they operate a pumpkin patch and corn maze. Also, after Christmas and before September, the carnival rides are available to "go on the road" for various community events and festivals, corporate events, school functions and the like.

Kama says that one of Chuck's focuses as a fire captain is on safety. Therefore, their rides are maintained with high standards and are run by trained individuals. And Kama ensures that all of her workers are clean-cut and attired appropriately as company representatives.

While much of Kama's time is spent on payroll and scheduling, she's also the chief public relations and marketing guru. As such, she maintains the farm's website,



The country store offers an array of interesting ornaments.

yesterlandfarm.com, places all of the advertisements and maintains a Facebook presence, as well as helping Lola May (their donkey) keep up her blog.

People who visit these sites might find moneysaving coupons, details about special events and contests, tips on keeping a fresh Christmas tree, and even holiday decorating and recipe ideas. Even if you don't go cut your own tree, the information may help you start a new family tradition. After all, that's the No. 1 goal of Chuck and Kama (and Lola May).

YesterLand Farm is a WCEC member and is located at 15410 I-20, Canton 75103. There's loads of detailed information at yesterlandfarm.com, and you can hear from the blogging donkey Lola May at yesterlandfarm.com/blog.



We've Got an App For That. And It's Free!

At WCEC, we believe in helping our members manage their lives in a way that is easiest for them. And we know that all members have different preferences for how they like to send and receive information. Therefore, we offer many ways for our members to communicate with us, pay their bills, and look up their account information.

More and more members are on the go, and our new mobile app, now available on both Apple and Android platforms, is designed to make life easier with a click of a button. So now any busy member can connect, anytime, from any compatible smartphone or tablet.

From the app, members can view their account information, including current bills and payment history. They can also make secure payments and set up and modify email or text alerts and reminders for bill due dates. This app also lets users email or phone us, and includes a handy map to our headquarters.

To get the free app, just search for "Wood County Electric Cooperative" in the iTunes App Store or in the Google Play Store and download it for free.

To read more about which platforms are supported and find the answers to other frequently asked questions, visit wcec.org/index.php?cid=330.