

Your Cooperative Encourages Energy Efficiency



A NOTE FROM CEO/GENERAL MANAGER DEBBIE ROBINSON

AS A MEMBER OF WOOD COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, you are in a unique position to take advantage of energy-efficiency programs offered by the co-op. You may wonder, “Why would my electric co-op encourage me to use less energy?” The answer is simple: We are committed to enhancing the quality of life for our members. This means helping you use and purchase only the amount of electricity that you need.

That’s in addition to providing safe, reliable power at the most affordable price for our members.

How does practicing efficiency habits save you money? It’s common sense that if you use less electricity, your bill will be lower, but there’s more to it than that. WCEC

purchases electricity from several local generation and transmission cooperatives. When electric use is high, we pay peak demand charges for the electricity we purchase. By incorporating energy efficiency into your daily routine, you are helping reduce the demand for electricity, thus lowering peak demand and the overall cost. As a co-op, we pass these savings directly on to you! Let’s take a look at some of the ways you can save.

Basic energy-efficiency practices, such as caulking around windows and doors, turning off lights when you leave the

room and using a programmable thermostat, are great ways to start saving.

When you use electricity is just as important as *how much* you use. Typically, most households use larger amounts of electricity in the mornings and in the evenings, when most people are either getting ready for their day or returning home. Remember that peak demand charge? This can be avoided by lowering energy use during on-peak hours, when electricity is in high demand.

WCEC offers 19 different energy-efficiency rebates to help members lower their own demand, but these also positively impact members’ budgets by earning them bill credits and long-term energy savings on future bills. Members can take advantage by completing energy-efficiency projects such as having an HVAC tuneup, insulating, installing LED lights and purchasing Energy Star-qualified appliances. For each item enacted, members earn valuable bill credits up to \$2,000 annually while the program lasts. For example, by installing an approved thermostat or having an HVAC tuneup, a member can earn a \$50 bill credit.

We are proud to offer this program for you, our members. There are many ways to save, and we want to be your trusted energy information resource. To find out more about saving on energy with the Great Rebates program, visit wcec.org and select Great Rebates under the Member Services tab.

GRACA VICTORIA | DREAMSTIME.COM



Washing and drying only full loads saves energy and money.

Did You Know

May is National Electrical Safety Month, a perfect time to pay extra attention to electrical hazards that can lead to fires, damage, injuries and deaths. Electrical Safety Foundation International annually dedicates the month to promoting electrical safety in the home, school and workplace.



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Power Tip

Avoid placing lamps or TV sets near your air-conditioning thermostat. The thermostat senses heat from these appliances, which can cause the air conditioner to run longer than necessary.



A Key to Economic Health

BY PAIGE EATON

WHAT ISN'T IN TOMMY BROWN'S JOB DESCRIPTION? Like most cooperative employees, not much. Brown has worked in various roles for Wood County Electric Cooperative for almost 22 years, and he brings that experience, as well as his business management degree from Stephen F. Austin University, into play as WCEC's key accounts manager. The main thrust of Brown's job is to help WCEC meet the needs of commercial members and other members who have high kilowatt-hour use, called "key accounts." Brown is a problem-solver and a member advocate.

KAs are any businesses or entities that use at least 500,000 kWh annually. They can run the gamut to include large farms, manufacturing facilities, schools, restaurants, churches, hospitals and oil fields. The amount of energy, along with how and when they use it, is as varied as their business focus.

For example, churches use large loads to heat and cool, but mostly on Sundays and special occasions. The rest of the time, demand is intermittent. Manufacturing facilities might run steady high loads 24/7 to fulfill orders, or they could operate just one high-peaking shift. But in all cases, the facilities and equipment must still be in place when demand peaks. Helping to ensure that is part of Brown's job.

Brown advises new and existing KA members regarding reliability, rates, energy efficiency, switchovers, and planned expansion or new construction. Planning for added or new loads is especially critical because when large energy users increase their demand, it has the potential to negatively affect all nearby users. Brown also acts as an energy adviser to KAs and works to help them increase energy efficiency and manage their load factors, which can also help them achieve savings. Brown also ensures that the KAs are in the right rate structure for their load.

The main idea behind having a key accounts program is for

these large businesses to have a single contact person at WCEC who is familiar with their operations and objectives. Once Brown truly understands each KA's objectives, he can devise ways to help.

Another way Brown assists KAs is by reaching out during planned or large-scale outages. For schools and manufacturing KAs with many employees and/or students, it's especially critical to let them know details about outages and possible restoration times because so many people are affected.

Promoting energy efficiency, Brown has worked with several KA schools and businesses, offering advice about lighting and equipment selection to save them thousands of dollars.

On any given day, Brown might review a member's billing history to discover why a bill is out of the ordinary or meet at another business to see if there is anything the cooperative can improve.

"I love my job. There is something different to do every day," Brown says. "I also love meeting people and helping them."

In addition to managing key accounts, Brown also administers the cooperative's Great Rebates energy-efficiency program. Since the program's inception in 2014, Brown has helped hundreds of members implement energy-efficiency actions to earn almost \$130,000 in bill credits. Although the credits earned are significant, Brown takes the most pride in knowing he has helped members save on their energy bills for a lifetime through their energy-efficiency actions.

Brown works in the engineering department alongside the engineers, field service representatives and power-quality

TOP: Tommy Brown, left, listens to Sam Hass, the director of facilities at Sky Ranch, as he describes the latest construction project near a recently built water slide.



Dr. Ray Perryman, president and CEO of The Perryman Group, an economic research and analysis firm based in Waco, offered his assessment of the economic health of WCEC's service territory.

technicians, on whom he relies extensively to help troubleshoot and problem-solve. He routinely calls on Power Quality Expert Larry Sandifer for advice. He says that he also counts heavily on the field service representatives, J.A. Newton, John Pruden and Joe Brady, to inform him of a potential new KA when they are out staking properties for new line construction.

While Brown serves existing KAs and develops new ones, he's in a unique position to view pockets of growth in our region. And he's seen quite a bit lately. He's come across several businesses that are in the process of new construction to help with their own expanding work load. "Mainly the growth is in the southern sector of our system," Brown says, "but that is where most of our industrial members are." He then points to Ben Wheeler, Van, Grand Saline and Golden as some of those areas.

Over the years, many existing and new businesses and residences in Ben Wheeler have been able to switch over to WCEC, with line extensions invested in by preservationist and developer Brooks Gremmels. Since then, WCEC has added 50 meters to serve all of downtown Ben Wheeler, First Baptist Church of Ben Wheeler and about 18 homes. Another business in Ben Wheeler, Door Controls USA, has seen enormous growth over the past several years and now employs more than 250 in Ben Wheeler and across the United States. Door Controls USA builds all types of automatic and manual door systems, manufactures and supplies parts, and services the

systems. To meet demand for their growing customer base, they are adding a 150-by-250-foot building.

Also in Van Zandt County, growth can be seen in Grand Saline at Plaskolite, a production facility of an Ohio headquartered company, that makes thermoplastic sheeting. The company has asked for more electric load capability for existing production facilities, and it is in the initial stages of discussing an expansion. Also, near Canton, there's a new Dodge dealership planned for the intersection of Interstate 20 and Highway 17. In Van, Brown said, "Sky Ranch is always adding things out there on a regular basis."

The small community of Golden is also seeing growth with new construction and some switchovers. Last year, WCEC built a line along State Highway 779 to serve a new member. That line has already allowed others to attach at a reasonable cost, and it will soon serve a 22-house subdivision being developed near there.

Near Quitman, ProTec Laboratory, a manufacturer of nutritional supplements, is adding a 150-by-250-foot building; the company is also constructing an 80-by-100-foot building that is designed for easy expansion to double its size. In Mount Vernon, in the northern section of WCEC's territory, there is a large temporary project developing. Wood County EC will electrify an asphalt plant near Interstate 30 that will be used for highway construction work.

Perceiving a positive growth trend in WCEC's service territory, the co-op asked Dr. M. Ray Perryman, president and CEO of The Perryman Group, for his thoughts. His firm is renowned for economic research and analysis and provides economic forecasts to corporations and government agencies. The group, as it does each year, has developed a detailed Texas economic forecast, broken down by region.

He says the state, overall, is set to fare well in the near term, even in light of the declining oil industry. That's because since the 1980s, the economy of Texas has diversified among many sectors, reducing reliance on oil as an industry. Although the state will perform admirably, the more metropolitan areas of upper East Texas (including Tyler, Longview and Texarkana) are set to outperform much the rest of the state, with a compound annual growth rate of 4.14 percent.

When the co-op asked Perryman if that same projection could be used as an indicator for the more rural areas in our service territory, he said, "I took our upper East Texas Region forecast and backed out the metropolitan areas. The resulting area does not exactly match your service area but comes close and is representative. The growth rates over the next five years are projected to be 3.9 percent in output and almost 1.7 percent in employment. This pace is below that in the urban segments of the region, but it is nonetheless a healthy pace. I would anticipate that some of it would be concentrated pockets of activity, as that is typical of less densely settled areas."

At Wood County EC, we know that there is an important relationship between our cooperative and the economic health of our service territory—affordable and reliable electricity is essential. But another element is a friendly business climate,



Tommy Brown, key accounts manager at WCEC, has worked at the cooperative since 1994 in various capacities, and he applies all of those skill sets, as well as his key accounts certification, when working with members.

and Brown says he tries to offer that. “I look at what I do from the customers’ side. I do have the co-op in mind, but I look at it from the customers’ side. I ask, what can the co-op do for you? And then, if that is within reason and within our bylaws, I’ll see if I can work to make it happen.”

To make it happen, Brown has the support of cooperative employees from the top down. General Manger and CEO Debbie Robinson says, “We place a lot of importance on building relationships with key accounts because they are not only the economic engines of our communities, but also many serve as the heart and soul. They’re employers, houses of worship, institutes of learning, and places to purchase goods and services. They are what make East Texas viable and sustainable. If we can help them in any way, we are serving all of our members and the community at large.”

In essence, the key accounts program at WCEC is about forging strategic alliances with community businesses, industries, schools and hospitals—and is a key to adding value for all.

Safety Tip

The No. 1 safety rule for everyone to remember is this: Don’t touch a power line or anything that’s touching a power line. No one can tell simply by looking at a line whether it is energized, and contact with a power line can be deadly. Remember, electricity always seeks the easiest path to reach the ground, and, unfortunately, human beings are good conductors of electricity. Look up and live!



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MOBILE CONVENIENCE CENTER

Monday, First Methodist Church, *Van*
Tuesday, Rutherford and Highway 37, *Mount Vernon*

Wednesday, City National Bank, *Hawkins*

Thursday, Brookshire’s, *Winnboro*

Friday, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*