

Take Control of Your Summer Electric Bills



A NOTE FROM CEO/GENERAL MANAGER DEBBIE ROBINSON

MOST PEOPLE THINK OF FAMILY VACATIONS OR school being out when they think of summer.

That's not necessarily true of your co-op's employees. We tend to think of summer as high-bill complaint season.

When I say I feel your pain, I'm not just paying lip service. My own electric bills rise along with the heat index—just like yours and the folks I work with here at Wood County Electric Cooperative. Once those kilowatts have marched through the electric meter that records them, it's difficult to do anything about them, other than pay the bill.

most cost-effective measure you can take. If you install a programmable thermostat, it can do this for you.

- ▶ Have a qualified professional check out your air conditioner (and the heating system, too, while they're at it). Preventive maintenance can save you money as well as preclude temperature discomfort.

- ▶ Shade your outdoor air conditioning unit to up its energy efficiency.

- ▶ Change air conditioner filters monthly. Clogged filters force the AC unit to work harder and increase operating costs.

- ▶ Portable and ceiling fans can make you feel cooler; when you feel cooler, you can set the thermostat higher. But when you leave the room, turn off the fan.

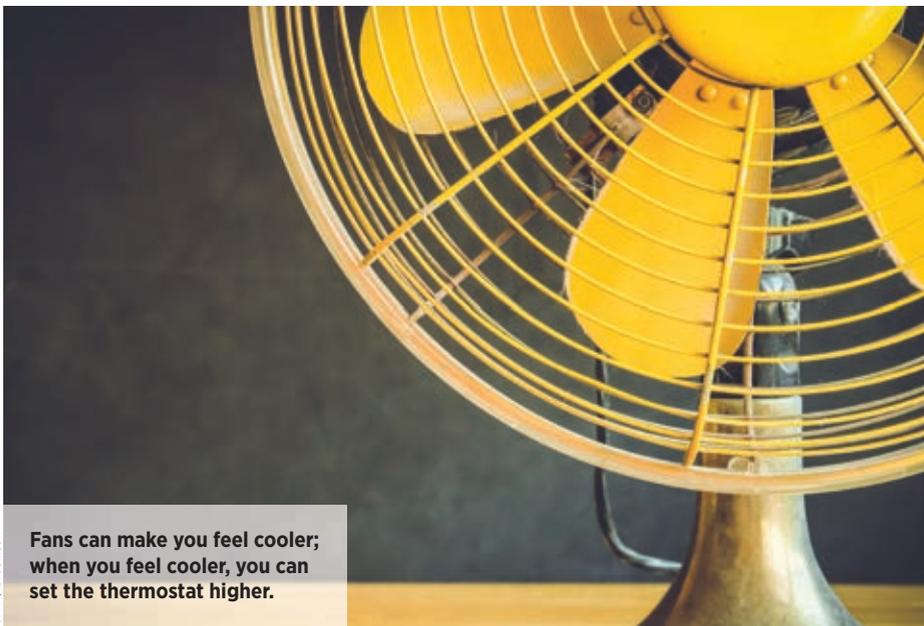
- ▶ Installing and using a whole-house fan can help reduce air conditioning costs. These fans draw outside air in through open windows and should be used only when the outside air temperature is lower than the desired inside temperature.

- ▶ Seal doors and windows with caulk and weatherstripping. And, if your windows are single-pane, consider replacing them. Double- and triple-pane windows are substantially more energy efficient.

- ▶ Shading and evaporative cooling from trees reduce the air temperature around your home. Plant trees, shrubs and vines with leaves that fall

off in the winter on the east, south and west sides of your home. They'll provide shade in the summer but allow sunshine in the winter. Position trees to shade windows now; when they mature, they'll also shade the walls and roof.

- ▶ It's well worth your investment to wrap any uninsulated ducts with at least 2 inches of fiberglass insulation. Sealing the duct system to prevent leaks is even more important if the ducts are located in an uncooled area, such as the attic. Most leaks will be found where the air duct attaches to the air conditioning unit and where ducts are joined together.



Fans can make you feel cooler; when you feel cooler, you can set the thermostat higher.

But before you throw your hands up in exasperation, here's a little secret: You can do something about those higher summertime electric bills. The secret is you have to do something now—before you use the electricity.

Here's how to cut back on your electricity usage:

- ▶ You can save as much as 10 percent a year on your cooling (and heating) bills by simply turning your thermostat back 10 to 15 percent for eight hours a day. In the summer, raise the thermostat when you go to work or whenever you're away from home (from 76 degrees to 85, for example). That's the single



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Go Green With Upgrades

GOING GREEN MEANS LIVING IN A WAY THAT'S FRIENDLY TO THE PLANET. BUT IT ALSO means keeping a little more “green” in your pocket by living more efficiently.

Next time you need to replace an appliance or other home product, consider an eco-friendly choice. Here are some suggestions for going green at home:

- ▶ When replacing major appliances, it pays to buy those that are Energy Star-certified. These models are significantly more efficient than others, so they cost less to operate.

- ▶ Buy appliances with energy-saver options. New dishwashers and washing machines, for example, use less water than older models and let you customize load size and water temperature settings. Turn off your dishwasher's heated drying cycle and choose a clothes dryer that automatically shuts off when it senses clothes are dry.

- ▶ Place the dishwasher and refrigerator on opposite sides of the kitchen so heat from the dishwasher won't force the refrigerator to work harder.

- ▶ Resist the temptation to use your spare freezer or refrigerator in the garage, where extreme heat and cold will force it to work so hard it will send your energy bills soaring.

- ▶ When it's time to replace windows, go with double- or triple-pane glass. Those models cost more than single-pane windows, but they prevent your heated or cooled air from leaking outside, so you'll save money on your energy bills.

- ▶ Upgrade lighting fixtures to LED models or at least change out all your lightbulbs to LEDs. By replacing your home's five most frequently used light fixtures or bulbs with models that have earned an Energy Star-rating, you can save \$45 each year.

- ▶ Install and use a programmable thermostat for your heating, ventilating and air conditioning system. New smart thermostats learn your home's temperature patterns and automatically adjust accordingly. They can also be controlled remotely through a smartphone and other devices.

- ▶ If your HVAC system is more than 10 years old or you are making frequent repairs, be proactive and replace it. Replacing an old, inefficient system with an Energy Star-rated model can save you about \$200 per year on your utility bills plus make your house far more comfortable.



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**Farewell and
Happy Retirement**

JOB WELL DONE!

Use Caution Near Co-op Equipment

AS YOU FIND YOURSELF SPENDING MORE TIME OUTDOORS THIS SUMMER, EXERCISE caution near power lines and other electrical equipment maintained by Wood County Electric Cooperative.

Substations and power lines carry extremely high voltage, and if contact is accidentally made, the results can be dangerous—or even deadly.

Never climb trees near power lines. If you make contact with a tree that is touching a power line, your body could become a path for 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 remove it—no matter how furry and cute! Call Wood County EC for assistance.

If there are underground lines in your area, you'll notice big green boxes on the ground that hold our equipment. It's important that landscaping and other barriers be kept clear of these padmount transformers. Co-op technicians need at least 10 feet of clearance around the equipment to be able to safely access them when needed.

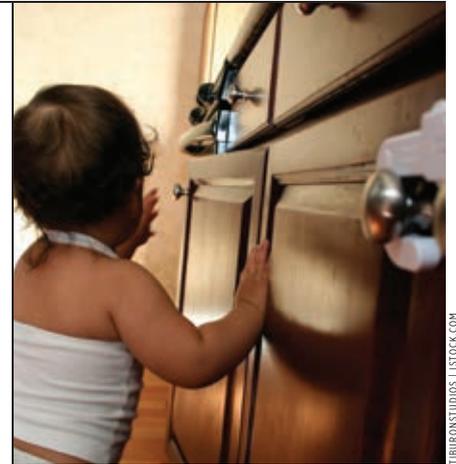
Padmount transformers are connected to primary high-voltage lines, and secondary lines can extend underground in several directions to distribute power to homes and businesses. That's why it's important to call 811 before planting shrubs or trees, setting fence posts, installing sprinkler systems or digging where it might damage underground lines.

These days, we are seeing more remote-controlled devices, like drones and other aircraft, which can be a great way to have fun outdoors. But these gadgets also bring new safety concerns. Never fly them near power lines, substations or other electrical equipment.

Remember these safety tips when flying a drone:

- ▶ Keep a safe distance from electrical equipment when you fly. 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.
- ▶ Keep the drone in your sight at all times.
- ▶ Avoid flying if weather conditions are unfavorable. High winds could cause you to lose control of the drone.

Your safety is important to us. We hope you will share the message of electrical safety so that you and others can enjoy plenty of summer days filled with fun!



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May Is Electrical Safety Month

EVERY MAY, NATIONAL ELECTRICAL Safety Month reminds us to sweep our homes of hazards that could lead to accidents and fires. **This year, resolve to:**

Install ground-fault circuit interrupters. These devices can protect your family from electrocution. In fact, the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that GFCIs could prevent half of all home electrocutions. Install them in any room that could get wet, including bathrooms, garages, kitchens and laundry rooms, and on outdoor receptacles and any outlet that's within 6 feet of a faucet.

Prevent fires with arc-fault protection. When electrical wiring or devices get damaged or overheated, an arc fault can occur. An arc fault is a discharge of electricity that turns into heat and can break down a wire's insulation. That can cause a fire. In fact, the National Fire Protection Association estimates that 47,000 home fires every year involve some sort of electrical malfunction, and half of those fires could be prevented by arc-fault circuit interrupters.

Childproof your home. Your 2- to 4-year-old child can remove plastic outlet caps within 10 seconds, according to research by Temple University. Foil your little one's attempts by installing tamper-resistant receptacles, which are designed with toddlers in mind. Every room of your house needs childproof outlets so your child can't insert anything into them, which would otherwise cause a shock.



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Mark Your Calendar for Savings

Take advantage of the Memorial Day weekend tax-free holiday



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IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO MAKE SOME ENERGY-EFFICIENT OR WATER-CONSCIOUS UPGRADES to your home, this is a great month to take the plunge. Texas holds its co-occurring Energy Star and water-efficient products sales tax holidays annually over Memorial Day weekend. This year, the sales tax reprieve will be in effect from Saturday, May 25, through midnight Monday, May 27. There's no limit on the number of qualifying items you can buy, and no exemption certificate is required to buy items tax-free.

Any product that displays a WaterSense label is eligible to be purchased free of sales tax, whether its planned use is for personal or business purposes. Labeled items include faucets, showerheads and toilets. Certain other water-conserving products are also tax-free during the holiday weekend but only when bought for use at your residential property. These items include soaker and drip-irrigation hoses, moisture controls for sprinkler and irrigation systems, mulch, rain barrels, plants, soil and compost.

The Energy Star-labeled products that qualify for tax exemption include air conditioners (priced \$6,000 or less), refrigerators (priced \$2,000 or less), ceiling fans, lightbulbs, clothes washers, dishwashers and dehumidifiers.

Bear in mind that some Energy Star-labeled products do not qualify and are still taxable during the holiday, including water heaters, clothes dryers, freezers and stoves. Also, be aware that air conditioners and refrigerators purchased for prices higher than the allowable amounts will be taxed in full. The same caveat applies to delivery charges that increase an item's total price beyond the cap. For example, if an Energy Star refrigerator costs \$1,995 but has a \$50 delivery charge, tax will be due on the total \$2,045 amount.

For more information on how to take advantage of this year's tax holiday, visit comptroller.texas.gov.



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Monday, First Methodist Church, *Van*
Tuesday, Family Dollar, *Mount Vernon*
Wednesday, City National Bank, *Hawkins*
Thursday, Brookshire's, *Winnboro*
Friday, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*



CELEBRATING 75 YEARS