

## Bills, Unfortunately, May Go Higher



**MESSAGE FROM MANAGER ALAN LESLEY**

**F**or the next couple of years, energy experts have warned, supplies of electricity and natural gas look tighter in Texas, and the state's consumers can expect to pay more for their power.

This news, from a November story in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, isn't surprising to those of us who work in the electric industry. Environmental concerns and stricter regulations have slowed the building of power plants. Extreme weather and a growing population have put more demand on plants that already exist.

The amount of wind and solar power produced in the state, while growing, still isn't enough to fill the supply gap. When demand grows and supply dwindles, basic economics tell us that prices will rise.

For customers of the state's for-profit electric companies, there is another component of price—the pressure on those companies' CEOs and boards of directors to grow revenue and create dividends so shareholders can be paid. Thus, a portion of the bills that their customers pay ends up in a stockholder's pocket.

That's a factor that the leaders of CECA don't have to consider. My mission, and that of the cooperative's

directors, who are all fellow co-op members, is to bring you a reliable supply of electricity at the best possible price. Period. You won't see a markup on your bill to create profit for shareholders, because the co-op operates on a not-for-profit basis. You, the members, are its owners.

If the price of natural gas rises, electricity generators that burn gas to run turbines will pass the increased cost of fuel along, which you will see reflected in the fuel component of your bill. The cost you see there is exactly the cost the generating entity charges us. We don't tack on any extra charges.

We do aim to run the co-op to bring in more money than is needed to simply pay the bills. The positive cash flow indicates a healthy business and is a necessary requirement for the bond and loan markets.

Some of that money is used to maintain and improve the system of wires and equipment that delivers electricity to you and to build lines for new members.

That income over expenses, which we call margins, goes back as an investment in the cooperative and, eventually, is returned to you as capital credits.

We want to charge you as little for electricity as we can and still run a strong business. But some price increases cannot be avoided.

We can always hope that the forecast for higher rates is wrong. But if it's not, and your energy bill becomes a problem for you, please call the cooperative at (325) 356-2533. We'll see what we can do to help.



## Happy New Year

**FROM CECA**



*We wish you and yours a happy, healthy and prosperous 2012.*

*Our offices will be closed Monday, January 2, in observance of the holiday.*

**WANT TO LOWER YOUR ELECTRIC BILL?**

Visit [www.ceca.coop](http://www.ceca.coop) for great energy conservation tips and to find out how to receive rebates through our ecoPOWR Rebate Program.



# Conservation MATTERS

THE LATEST NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT ENERGY CONSERVATION FROM YOUR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## Debunking Energy Myths

BY TODD CAMNITZ

Interested in saving energy to lower your electric bill but confused about new technology and information available to help you do so? Separate fact from fiction with the following energy-saving myths.

**MYTH #1:** *It takes less energy to have my thermostat maintain a comfortable temperature while I'm away than it does to have it heat up or cool down my house when I get home.* If you're going to be gone for more than a few hours, then it is more cost-effective to turn the heat or air conditioning off when you leave and back on once you return than it is to maintain a comfortable temperature while you're out.

Energy Star, a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Energy, recommends adjusting your thermostat up in the summer and down in the winter by 8 degrees while you're asleep or away from your house.

**MYTH #2:** *I can save money simply by installing a programmable thermostat.*

On their own, programmable thermostats do not make your heating or cooling system more efficient. Their money-saving value lies in their ability to, once properly programmed, automatically regulate the temperature inside your house to coincide with when you're there and when you're not. If you need help programming your thermostat, directions are usually available from the manufacturer's website.

**MYTH #3:** *When I turn off electronics (like my television, game console or computer) they stop drawing power from the outlet.*

Even when turned off, most modern electronics consume electricity if they're still plugged in. Chargers for mobile devices (such as cellphones) also consume electricity when plugged in, even when they are not actively charging the device.

This wasted energy, called "phantom load," accounts for as much as 10 percent of a home's total electric use, according to the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. The solution: Unplug your electronics when you've finished using them. Using a power strip can help you conveniently unplug multiple devices at once, while newer, "smart" power strips can automatically cut off phantom loads on their own.

niently unplug multiple devices at once, while newer, "smart" power strips can automatically cut off phantom loads on their own.

**MYTH #4:** *It is not worth my time or money to seal small air leaks around my windows and doors, or to make sure my home is adequately insulated.*

According to Energy Star, air leaks around cracks and gaps throughout your home become the equivalent of leaving a window open all year long. Typical homeowners can save up to 10 percent on their total annual energy spending by sealing and insulating their homes.

**MYTH #5:** *Compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) take forever to reach full brilliance, have inadequate light quality and make no difference on my utility bill.*

As with many products, CFLs vary in quality. Color and brightness differ across manufacturers, and some bulbs simply work better than others. Looking for the Energy Star symbol ensures that you're purchasing a high-quality product. Also, be sure to install CFLs in fixtures that remain on for long periods, or that you use often, to get the maximum energy savings out of your bulbs. In addition, specialty CFLs are available for applications such as spotlighting or bathroom vanity fixtures.

**MYTH #6:** *Mercury inside CFLs poses a serious risk to the environment.*

On the contrary, CFLs actually prevent the release of mercury into the environment by reducing the electricity needed from power plants. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, about half of electricity in the U.S. is generated from coal. The EPA estimates that coal combustion for power plants releases roughly 400 times the mercury into the environment than the cumulative mercury contribution from CFLs tossed into landfills, assuming that no CFLs are recycled. However, it is still important to dispose of burned-out bulbs and clean up broken bulbs properly. Learn how at [www.lamprecycle.org](http://www.lamprecycle.org).

*Todd Camnitz writes on energy-efficiency issues for E Source, a Colorado-based provider of energy business intelligence.*



About 100 students attended the CECA's 2011 Student Leadership Conference.

## Turning Vision to Reality BY SHIRLEY DUKES

One must never underestimate the power of a group of teenagers! That was made evident when approximately 100 high school students and their sponsors attended CECA's 2011 Student Leadership Conference at the Lake Brownwood 4-H Center. Attending the conference in November were students from Albany, Bangs, Breckenridge, Comanche, Cross Plains, Dublin, Early, Gorman, Mullin and Sidney, and one home-schooled student.

The CECA Student Leadership Conference is not your traditional classroom-style learning experience. Table assignments afforded each student the opportunity to meet students from other schools. Leadership in the real world rarely involves leading a group of people you already know. Instead, most often it is done in a setting with a few folks you know, and a lot you don't know. Thus was the case for this group of high school juniors as they met, learned something about, and introduced another individual they had not met before the conference. As the day progressed, each of the students had the opportunity to speak to the group about various topics concerning leadership.

The conference was led by Comanche Mayor Ronnie Clifton, who has 40 years of experience in education. He spent 33 years in coaching—14 of those as an athletic director. He also was a high school principal for seven years. Clifton has a unique rapport with young people, inspiring respect and trust among the youths of today.

"As a former school teacher and administrator, I went into the leadership conference knowing that capturing the attention of 16- and 17-year-old students about a subject such as leadership could have the potential to be very elusive," Clifton said. "However, with this particular group of students I was completely impressed with both their hunger for leadership as well as the outstanding foundations for leadership that they already possess. Any time that this happens for me, I have a complete celebration of spirit, because



KRBC-TV news anchor and meteorologist Randy Turner spoke to students about leadership.



Students attended the CECA conference to learn about leadership and network.

# COMANCHE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



Conference leader and Comanche Mayor Ronnie Clifton has fun with the students.



members of the next generation have so eagerly and enthusiastically stepped up to take on the challenges that face their young lives. I encountered a new generation of potentially outstanding leaders, and if they were affected as positively as I was, then this conference was a complete success.”

Guest speaker for the event was Randy Turner, news anchor and meteorologist with KRBC-TV in Abilene. Turner told students how to be a leader in any situation. What you do depends on your attitude, he told them, and you can do what you want and be what you want to be, with the right attitude and goals.

Before the close of the conference, students were reunited with their school group and assigned the task of identifying a need in their school or community. They then were asked to formulate a plan of action for leading their school or community in an effort to complete the task they had designed.

Of the students in attendance, the following community action plans were formulated for their schools:

**BANGS:** A winter coat drive for students and children without coats.

**BRECKENRIDGE:** Adopt two miles of highway for trash pickup.

**COMANCHE:** Resurface and improve the Comanche ISD tennis courts and open them to students and the public.

**CROSS PLAINS:** Repair the basketball courts at the Cross Plains Community Center.

**DUBLIN:** A winter coat drive for students and children without coats.

**EARLY:** Bring back the “Shattered Dreams” program to show the devastation of drinking and driving.

**GORMAN:** Create a better front area for the high school.

**SIDNEY:** Landscape an empty city lot with sidewalks, trees and flowers.

Warren G. Bennis, an American scholar, organizational consultant and author who is widely regarded as a pioneer of the contemporary field of leadership studies, was quoted as saying “Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.”

I look forward to seeing these young people translate their visions into reality. Be on the lookout in these communities for great things to be accomplished from this exceptional group of young people!



Students show off their work and explain their projects.



Students attending the leadership conference developed plans to assist their communities or schools.

# CECA TO AWARD FIVE \$1,000 SCHOLARSHIPS

One of the seven principles of a cooperative is Concern for Community. CECA strives to demonstrate this by supporting the academic endeavors of the students within our service territory through our scholarship program. For the 2012 school year, CECA is offering four \$1,000 Scholarships for Excellence and one



\$1,000 scholarship through the Operation Round Up program.

To qualify for these scholarships, high school students must be living at the residence of parents or legal guardians who are active CECA members residing within the cooperative's service area, and must have maintained a minimum 2.5 cumulative grade point average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale. A student currently enrolled in

post-secondary educational coursework must be an active member of CECA or still claimed as a dependent of parents or legal guardians who are active CECA members residing within the cooperative's service area, and must have maintained a minimum of 2.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Parents or legal guardians of students applying for the Operation Round Up program must also participate in Operation Round Up.

Deadline for applications is 4:30 p.m. March 16, 2012. Contact Shirley Dukes at 1-800-915-2533 or [sdukes@ceca.coop](mailto:sdukes@ceca.coop) for a complete set of guidelines or if you have any questions pertaining to the program.

## Statement of Nondiscrimination

Comanche Electric Cooperative is the recipient of federal financial assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which provide that no person in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability shall be excluded from participation in, admission or access to, denied the benefits of or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organization's programs or activities.

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is Rachel Ford, human resource administrator. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 1-800-795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal-opportunity provider and employer. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

**ATTENTION, STUDENTS!**

**TEXAS CO-OP POWER**

**CO-OP TEENS POWER TEXAS**

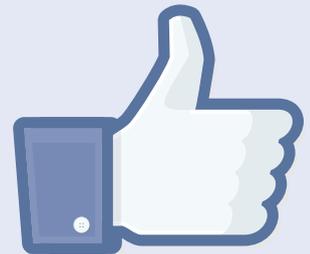
**One 30-second TV ad can win you \$1500!**



**STUDENTS, GRADES 6-12:** Make your own TV ad for your co-op and post it on YouTube. You could win a cash prize!

**TEACHERS:** You could win \$1000 for your school by sponsoring the grand prizewinner.

For full details, go to [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com)



LIKE US ON  
**FACEBOOK**

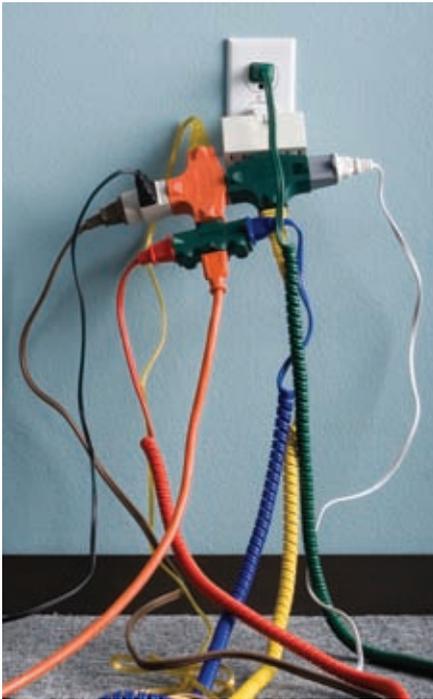
AT  
[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/CECA.COOP](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/CECA.COOP)

# Put Electrical Safety at Top of Resolutions List

**P**rotecting your family from electrical shocks, tripping hazards and house fires is easier to do than losing 20 pounds or quitting smoking. So make it New Year's resolution No. 1.

Here are 10 simple ways to keep that resolution:

**1. INSPECT YOUR OUTLETS.** Loose-fitting plugs can surprise someone



Look familiar? If so, it's time to call an electrician to have additional outlets installed.

with a shock or start a fire. If your wall plate is broken, replace it so wires won't be exposed. And insert plastic safety caps into unused outlets if your family includes young children.

**2. MAKE PEACE WITH PLUGS.** If a plug doesn't comfortably fit into an outlet, don't force it. Try a different outlet. And never remove the grounding pin (third prong) so a three-prong plug will fit into a two-prong outlet.

**3. BE CAREFUL WITH CORDS.** They're not designed to last forever. Toss frayed or cracked cords. And never run them under carpets or rugs, where

they would have to endure constant pounding that could rip them or wear them out—exposing you to fire from overheated wires.

**4. PACK UP EXTENSION CORDS.**

They're fine for connecting strands of holiday lights together and helping decorations reach plugs during December. But come January 1, pack them up and store them. Extension cords are designed for temporary use.

**5. WATCH YOUR WATTAGE.** The light-bulbs in your lamps and overhead fixtures should match the specifications on those fixtures. A bulb with wattage that is too high can overheat.

**6. FIND NO FAULT.** Ground-fault circuit interrupters, or GFCIs, are a must in every outlet in the kitchen, bathrooms, laundry, garage and outdoors. If water could touch electricity, you need GFCIs on every outlet in the room.

**7. FUSS WITH YOUR FUSES.** If you don't know whether your fuses are the right size for the circuit they're protecting, call an electrician, who can clue you in.

**8. ADJUST APPLIANCES.** If a circuit trips every time you plug in your hair dryer, or if your coffeemaker has ever shocked you when you plugged it in, you either have faulty appliances or an overloaded circuit. An electrician can identify and solve your problem.

**9. WATCH THE WIRING.** Faulty electrical wires start many house fires. If you hear popping or sizzling sounds behind the walls or if light switches feel hot, do not use those fixtures or switches until a licensed electrician has replaced them.

**10. GET WHAT YOU NEED.** Unless you live in a brand-new house, you probably are using more electricity than the builder ever dreamed you would. Call an electrician to determine whether your home needs more electrical capacity.

*Source: Energy Education Council*



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**HEADQUARTERS**

201 W. Wrights Ave.  
Comanche, TX 76442  
(325) 356-2533  
1-800-915-2533

**EASTLAND OFFICE**

1311 W. Main St.  
Eastland, TX 76448

**EARLY OFFICE**

1801 CR 338  
Early, TX 76801

**OFFICE HOURS**

7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Monday through Friday  
Eastland closed from noon to 1 p.m.  
Early closed from 1 to 2 p.m.

FIND US ON THE WEB  
AT [WWW.CECA.COOP](http://WWW.CECA.COOP)



**YOUR "LOCAL PAGES"**

This section of Texas Co-op Power is produced by CECA each month to provide you with information about current events, special programs and other activities of the cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact Shirley at the Comanche office or at [sdukes@ceca.coop](mailto:sdukes@ceca.coop).