

# Why Is My Electric Bill More Than My Neighbor's?



## MESSAGE FROM CEO AND GENERAL MANAGER RICK HAILE

**YOU HAVE A TV, VIDEO GAME SYSTEM,** microwave oven, electric range and cooktop, refrigerator/freezer, heat pump and personal computer. So does your next-door neighbor. So why is your electric bill almost twice as high every month?

Consider this: How well are your walls insulated, compared to your neighbor's? Do you take longer, hotter showers? Are you cooking gourmet meals and baking from scratch while your neighbor subsists on quick-heating TV dinners? Does the TV keep you company even when you're not watching it?

No two families live alike. So no two electric bills are the same. Comparing your monthly statement to anyone else's would be like comparing your weekly grocery tabs. Two families of four will never spend exactly the same amount on food because their tastes and habits are different.



Putting down the controllers and picking up the dice can help lower your energy bill.

Think about the conveniences you might be willing to pay for, even though your neighbor isn't. Are you more comfortable sleeping in an extra-cool house on hot summer nights? Maybe your neighbor's set-back thermostat ekes the temperature up a few degrees at bedtime.

Do members of your family entertain themselves in separate rooms after dinner—watching TV or playing video games—while the folks next door all gather in a family room to play a board game?

Another major factor in today's electric bills is vampire energy loss. Virtually anything that's plugged in is drawing some current—even when it's off. Experts estimate that standby energy drain accounts for 5–10 percent of an average home's annual power usage. A plasma TV, for instance, can use \$165 annually for electric power—when it's off.

Consider unplugging items when not in use or using a power strip to disconnect several items at once. There are also "smart" power strips available that automatically cut power to devices in standby mode.

The way to lower your electric costs is to use energy more efficiently before the bill comes. Contact Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative or visit our website at [hotec.coop](http://hotec.coop) for tips on how to save money by conserving energy around the house.



Closing blinds will keep your home cooler and prevent prying eyes from peeking in.

## Before You Go ...

**YOU CAN'T WAIT** for summer vacation. But is your house ready? Follow these suggestions before you hit the road for the long July Fourth weekend:

- ▶ **If you're not leaving any pets in the house, crank up your thermostat to about 85 degrees.** Don't worry about re-cooling your house when you get home; the energy you save while you're away will exceed the energy it takes to cool the place off when you get home. **A caution:** Don't turn the AC completely off. A home that gets too hot during the summer can invite mold and mildew.
- ▶ **Close all of the windows, for safety's sake.** Draw the curtains, shades and blinds. They will block sunlight and heat from getting into your rooms and making your empty house hotter.
- ▶ **Unplug the TV, computers, phone chargers and countertop appliances.** Even appliances that are turned off use energy if they're still plugged in.
- ▶ **Leave a few lights on for safety but turn off the rest.** Check ceiling fans, alarm clocks, coffee makers and other auto-on devices to make sure they're out of commission while you're away from home.

# Heart of Texas EC Awards Scholarships

*Congratulations to our winners!*



**CHRISTOPHER BRAVO**  
Rosebud-Lott  
High School



**COLE RHETT CAMPBELL**  
Rogers High School



**JOSEPH D. MCMAHAN**  
McGregor, Home-School



**EMILY TOMCHESSON**  
Crawford High School



**CAROLINE WILLS**  
Baylor University

**EACH YEAR, HEART OF TEXAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE AWARDS** five \$1,000 scholarships to local students. HOTECC is pleased to announce this year's winners.

Congratulations go to Christopher Bravo from Rosebud-Lott High School, Cole Rhett Campbell from Rogers High School, Joseph D. McMahan from McGregor (a home-schooled student), Emily Tomchesson from Crawford High School and Caroline Wills from Baylor University.

**Christopher Bravo** is the son of Henry and Mary Bravo of Rosebud. He plans to attend Texas State University and major in sports medicine.

**Cole Rhett Campbell** is the son of Derek and Kimberly Campbell of Burlington. He plans to pursue a degree in poultry science from Texas A&M University.

**Joseph D. McMahan** is the son of Paul and Mary McMahan of McGregor. He plans to attend either Baylor University or Texas A&M University and major in political science or

industrial distribution.

**Emily Tomchesson** is the daughter of Anthony and Robin Tomchesson of Valley Mills. She has been accepted to the Biomedical Science Department at Texas A&M University and plans to become a veterinarian.

**Caroline Wills** is the daughter of Patrice and Alan Wills of McGregor. She is attending Baylor University and pursuing a degree in international studies.

These five recipients were chosen from area schools to each receive a \$1,000 scholarship to be used at any two-year or four-year accredited college or technical school of their choice.

To qualify for a HOTECC scholarship, a student must have graduated high school within two years of the application deadline and reside in the household of a Heart of Texas EC member. Scholarship applications and qualification criteria are available online at [hotec.coop](http://hotec.coop).

Congratulations to our winners!

2016 HEART OF TEXAS  
BUILDERS ASSOCIATION

## Parade of Homes

**Sept. 10-11 and 17-18**

Saturdays 11 a.m.-5 p.m. | Sundays noon-5 p.m.

Tour the extraordinary collection of new homes designed for modern lifestyles, all complete with the latest and greatest in technology, energy-efficiency features, fabulous floor plans and luxurious finishes! For more information, visit [hotbawaco.com/hotba-2016-parade-of-homes](http://hotbawaco.com/hotba-2016-parade-of-homes).



# Summer Conservation Tips

**IN THE HEAT OF A TEXAS SUMMER**, we all want to keep cool in the air conditioning and grab a cold drink from the fridge. But remember that summer is the peak season of demand for electricity, and the appliances that help make summer bearable can also drive up your electric bill.

## Keep Your Refrigerator Cool

Summer especially puts pressure on your refrigerator. In the season's high temperatures, you're more likely to open the door frequently for cool drinks. Here are some tips to keep refrigerator energy use to a minimum:

- ▶ Locate the refrigerator away from heat sources—the oven, the dishwasher and direct sunlight.
- ▶ Keep at least a 1-inch space all around the outside to allow air circulation.
- ▶ Clean the condenser coils at least once a year.
- ▶ Check the tightness of the door seals.
- ▶ Keep the fridge's power on the energy-saving setting.
- ▶ Use a thermometer to set the inside temperatures: Set the fridge at 36–38 degrees and the freezer at 0–5 degrees.

## Make Friends With Your Freezer

- ▶ Keep the freezer as full as possible.
- ▶ Mark items for quicker identification to reduce door-opening time.
- ▶ Clean the condenser coils and check the seals.

## Allow Your AC To Work Optimally

Your air conditioner works hard all summer long. Follow these tips to keep it from heating up your electric bill:

- ▶ You save 3–5 percent for each degree you raise the thermostat. Try setting the thermostat at 78 degrees.
- ▶ Use ceiling fans in conjunction with the AC to increase your comfort level.
- ▶ Don't cool unused rooms in summer. If the kids are off at summer camp, close off the vents to their rooms until they return.
- ▶ When you set your system to bring in fresh, outside air, you use much more electricity. Unless you need to bring fresh air into your home, set your HVAC system to recirculate (already cooled) air within your home.
- ▶ Keep humidity levels as low as possible by always using an exhaust fan, if you have one, when taking a shower.
- ▶ Maintenance is important. Clean or change AC filters regularly, and have units professionally cleaned, inspected and tuned every season to keep them running at peak efficiency.

For more information and ideas on how to lower your summer electric bill, please contact us at Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative. We will be happy to provide you with more energy-saving tips that make the summer days even brighter.



**Check the tightness of your refrigerator's seals by closing a dollar bill in the door. If the bill slides out easily, you may need to replace the seals.**



ROSEMARIE GEARHART | ISTOCK.COM

## Recipe for Electrical Appliance Safety

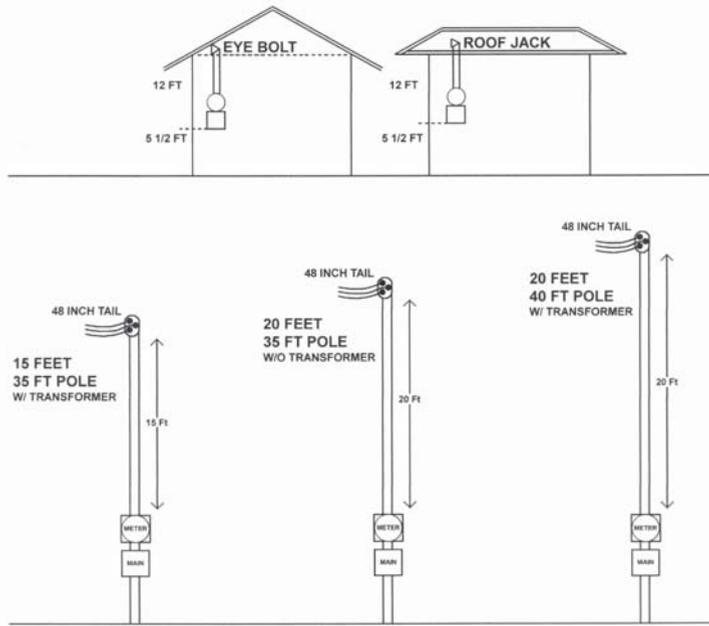
**Preparation Time:** 5 minutes

**Ingredients:** Cords, hair dryers, curling irons, plugs, radios, toasters, microwaves, fuses and circuit breakers

### Directions:

1. Check all power cords and plugs for cracks, breaks, exposed wires or damaged insulation.
2. Check plugs to be sure they are in good condition. Plugs that were made with a grounding pin (the "third prong" on a grounded plug) should still have the prong attached.
3. Keep all appliances such as toasters, microwaves, hair dryers, curling irons and radios away from sinks and water. Do not mix electricity and water!
4. If a circuit breaker keeps tripping or fuses keep blowing, first check to see if you have too many appliances on the circuit. Inspect cords and outlets for any signs of damage including bends or cracks, brown or burnt spots from overheating, or loose wires.
5. If you see overloaded plugs and power strips, redistribute the appliances plugged into them. If the problem persists, have the circuits inspected by a qualified electrician.
6. Mix ingredients together, follow the directions closely and cook up a recipe to save lives.

**Serves:** Everyone.



# Have You Inspected Your Meter Loop Lately?

**THE PURPOSE OF A METER LOOP** is to get electricity safely into your home. The meter loop attaches overhead wires coming from the utility pole to your weatherhead. The weatherhead sits at the top of the meter loop. It prevents rain and other weather-related elements from going down the inside of the meter loop. There is also a drip loop made with the ends of the wires to allow rain or condensation to drip off rather than go down the meter loop. Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative connects our overhead service wires to the wires coming from your meter loop, which is attached to your home or mounted on a pole.

HOTEC has specific requirements that your meter loop must meet before we will connect to it. We will not connect service until these standards are met. Also, if we see a safety hazard, we will disconnect the loop immediately and will not reconnect it until conditions are safe. We do not connect to member-owned poles. If you need a pole for a meter loop, HOTEC will set a pole.

Please inspect your loop and make sure it is safe. Check that overhead wires from the pole are no lower than 12 feet above the ground and not in contact with any tree branches or other obstacles. Make sure they are not reachable from nearby windows or other accessible areas. Make sure that the wires are securely attached to the house with insulated anchors and have drip loops where they enter the weatherhead. Wires should not be located over swimming pools, garages, sheds or other buildings. Make sure the conductor doesn't have any cracks or bare spots. Remember, the cooperative is responsible for all connections up to the weatherhead, and you are responsible for all connections beyond the weatherhead.

If you have any questions about your meter loop, please contact the office at 1-800-840-2957.

In the event of new service, you can either purchase a meter loop from HOTEC or provide your own. If you provide your own meter loop, it is up to you to make sure the meter loop is located correctly at your site and completely assembled according to our specifications before service is connected.



## Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative

Operating in Bell, Bosque, Coryell, Falls, Hamilton, McLennan and Milam counties

### CEO AND GENERAL MANAGER

Rick Haile

### DIRECTORS

- Garland Cook, District 1
- DeWayne Draeger, District 6
- Kermit Dreyer, District 7
- Paul Edge, District 2
- Dan Foster, District 9
- Kenneth Hollas, District 3
- Bobby Nawara, District 4
- Allen Shows, District 5
- Larry Stock, District 8



## Contact Us

### McGREGOR OFFICE

**(254) 840-2871** local

**1-800-840-2957** toll-free

1111 S. Johnson Drive • P.O. Box 357  
McGregor, TX 76657

### OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Drive-thru 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

### ROSEBUD OFFICE

**(254) 231-0444** local

**1-800-840-2957** toll-free

159 Loop 265 • P.O. Box 598  
Rosebud, TX 76570

### OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

### CREDIT/DEBIT CARD PAYMENTS

Online at [hotec.coop](http://hotec.coop)

By phone at 1-855-399-2688

### FIND US ON THE WEB

[hotec.coop](http://hotec.coop)



# Benefits of an Electric Water Heater

**AS EXPECTED, MOST PEOPLE** don't think much about water heaters. They take for granted that the appliances make it possible to enjoy hot showers, clean dishes and load upon load of freshly laundered linens. The lonely water heater, tucked away in the basement or a utility closet, is out of sight and out of mind.

There are times, however, when your attention turns to that most essential of appliances: when an existing water heater breaks ("Brrrr! That water is cold!") or when you're building or renovating a home.

At those times, a homeowner will make a decision that has consequences that will persist for a decade or two, maybe longer. Your water-heating choice will have long-lasting implications for energy efficiency, cost of use, the environment, safety and reliability. As a trusted energy advisor, Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative can help you make the right decision.

As a member of the cooperative, you might already know about the advantages and benefits of electric water heaters. First, electric water heaters are safe. There is no threat of carbon monoxide poisoning, combustion or explosion. Electric water heaters are environmentally friendly and capable of using electricity generated from solar, wind, hydro and other renewable sources.

Electric water heaters are also easy to install, requiring no expensive gas lines, exhaust flues or on-site fuel tanks. Compared to other fuels, the cost of electricity is stable.

In addition, electric water heaters are emerging as a building block of the future electric grid. These formerly mundane devices are evolving into smart appliances and energy storage units that are helping the grid become more stable and more efficient. By heating water when demand for electricity is low and storing the thermal energy for later use, electric water heaters can save you money.

At Heart of Texas EC, we're here to be your trusted energy source. If you have questions about water heater options or other energy-efficiency needs, give us a call at 1-800-840-2957.



**GFCI outlets allow you to reset the outlet with the push of a button.**

RHONDA ROTH | ISTOCK.COM

## Dead Outlet?

*Check it out before calling an electrician*

**WHEN YOU PLUG A LAMP** or an appliance into a socket, you expect to be able to turn it on. Sometimes, though, you'll find that the outlet is "dead."

Before you call an electrician, check a few things out:

- 1.** If your "dead" outlet is a GFCI outlet, you might be able to solve the problem simply by pressing the "reset" button on the face of the outlet.
- 2.** Plug something different into the same outlet. It could be that the problem is with the device and not the outlet. If this one turns on, then that's the case.
- 3.** If more than one device is plugged into the same outlet—or if a power strip full of plugs is plugged in there, notice whether everything else is working. If not, try this: Unplug one device at a time until something turns on. It could be that you've overloaded the outlet.
- 4.** If nothing turns on at that outlet, check your circuit breaker. It's usually in the garage, basement, laundry room or a closet. Open the door and notice whether a single switch is turned off; if so, turn it back on. If you can't find the right circuit, turn off all of the breakers and then turn them back on one at a time.
- 5.** If you plug the lamp back into the outlet and the circuit trips again, it's time to call an electrician.



**Electric water heaters offer energy efficiency, savings, safety and reliability for years to come.**

BREZMAKER | ISTOCK.COM

# A Cybersecurity Plan From the Experts

*How electric co-ops guard against internet bad guys*

**COULD A COMPUTER HACKER** shut down the nation’s electric grid?

It’s a question asked in popular books and congressional hearings—and it’s even the main plot point in the 2007 Bruce Willis movie *Live Free or Die Hard*.

Most experts answer that question with, “Probably not.” Part of the reason for that answer is that there are a lot of people in government and the utility industry like Barry Lawson.

As the associate director of power delivery and reliability for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Lawson spends his time working with electric co-ops to try to protect them from digital hackers.

Lawson and several others at NRECA run cybersecurity training sessions, publish security safety materials and develop techniques and software to keep the nation’s electric supply reliable and secure, and protect sensitive member, employee and co-op data and information from identity theft.

Lawson says co-ops make a high priority out of protecting themselves from the constant variety of computer attacks by everyone from organized crime to hobbyist hackers, who are constantly launching attacks on every computer in the world.

“We’re all being hacked,” says Lawson. “As soon as you plug a new computer into the internet, it’s being hacked by software that looks for internet connections by the millions.”

Lawson says we can all use advice that’s the basis for how utilities protect themselves from cyberattacks: “Try to make it as difficult as possible, and put in as many layers of protection as possible.”

**Here are Lawson’s top tips for protecting your computer:**

1. Make sure you have antivirus software installed on your computer, and remember to keep it updated.
2. Don’t send emails containing personal information, like your date of birth or Social Security number, because that increases opportunities for bad guys to steal your identify. Be careful of typing a credit card number into a website—if you do, make sure that it’s a secure website. You can tell whether it’s secure by looking for the “s” at the beginning of the website address. Most begin with “http://” but a secure site will begin with “https://.”
3. Attachments or links in an email can contain malware that can infect your computer. Don’t open an email attachment or click a link unless you know the person sending it, and you were expecting them to send it to you. (Hackers can take over an account and make it look like it’s from a friend.)

A little vigilance can go a long way toward foiling cyberattacks.



**Protect your identity. Be careful not to include personal information in your emails.**

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH



ANNA MALOVERJAN | STOCK.ADOBE.COM

### Eggplant and Zucchini Bake

- 1 medium eggplant, chopped
- 6 medium zucchini, chopped
- 2 slices bacon, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ½ cup rosé wine
- ⅓ cup dry breadcrumbs
- ⅓ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ¼ teaspoon paprika

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Grease a 3-quart baking dish.
2. In a saucepan, boil eggplant and zucchini in salted water until tender-crisp, about 10 minutes. Drain and set aside.
3. In a skillet, fry bacon until lightly browned. Add onion and garlic and sauté 15 minutes. Put bacon mixture with vegetables in baking dish, and add salt and pepper.
4. Add wine, breadcrumbs, Parmesan and paprika, and mix well.
5. Bake 40 minutes. Serve warm.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at **TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM**



WEBPHOTOGRAPHER | ISTOCK.COM

# Plan for a Safe and Happy Fourth

**THE MONTH OF JULY IS MANY PEOPLE'S FAVORITE.** This is a time for fellowship with family and friends, but at Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative, we also want to make sure our members focus on safety.

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

## Fireworks With Forethought

The safest way to enjoy this part of the celebration is to head to a local fireworks show presented by professionals. But if you must put on your own amateur display, be sure to follow these safety tips:

- ▶ 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.

## Guarding the Grill

When grilling, 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 once the coals have already been ignited.
- ▶ Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when using a grill.

## Safe Sun Exposure

Make sure you are practicing sun safety:

- ▶ Use a broad-spectrum SPF sunscreen and reapply often.
- ▶ Protect your eyes by wearing sunglasses.
- ▶ Drink plenty of water.
- ▶ Be on the lookout for signs of heat stroke (hot, red skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; rapid, shallow breathing).

However you celebrate, Heart of Texas EC wishes you a safe and happy holiday!



INDEPENDENCE DAY

MONDAY, JULY 4

Heart of Texas EC will be closed in observance of the holiday.

ANDREW RICH | ISTOCK.COM



MARIA JEFFS | ISTOCK.COM

## Power Tip

**Use toaster ovens or convection ovens for small meals rather than your conventional stove or oven. A toaster or convection oven uses one-third to one-half as much energy as a full-sized oven.**

# Put Money Back in Your Pocket with HOTECC Rebates

**HEART OF TEXAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE** and its power supplier, Brazos Electric Power Cooperative, are proud to offer the Energy-Efficiency Rebate Program to our members. This program is designed to encourage cooperative members to select cost-effective, energy-efficient measures to reduce power costs in their home or business.

If you took advantage of the rebates in 2015, don't miss out in 2016. Members wanting to redeem rebates need to provide proof of service or repairs made after January 30, 2016.

Rebates are subject to change. Visit [hotec.coop](http://hotec.coop) for current rebate information.

The following rebates will be available to Heart of Texas EC members:

## LED Lightbulbs

Each HOTECC membership is entitled to two free light-emitting diode bulbs. These must be picked up at either the Rosebud or the McGregor office.

## Home Energy Audit - HVAC Tuneup

Up to \$75 rebate on a HVAC audit and tuneup  
Proof of both the audit and completed work is required.

## Ceiling Insulation Upgrade

\$275 rebate with upgrade from R0-R8 to R38+  
(AC and resistance heating)  
This rebate applies to existing homes only.

## Heat Pump Rebate

\$100 rebate for 15-SEER heat pump and  
\$200 rebate for 16-SEER heat pump  
This applies to all-electric new or existing homes.

## High-Efficiency Water Heater

\$75 rebate on the purchase of water heater with a .92 EF or greater  
Valid for installation in a residence or business on HOTECC services.

## Commercial Lighting

**Fixture Upgrade** - \$0.20 rebate per watt saved on fixture upgrade  
**T-8 Bulb Replacement** - 32-28 watts, \$1 rebate per bulb  
**T-8 Bulb Replacement** - 32-25 watts, \$1.50 rebate per bulb  
Maximum rebate on commercial lighting is \$2,500 per BOD.

## Solar Installation

\$0.10 rebate per watt on solar installation.  
Maximum reimbursement per member is \$1,000.



## Statement of Nondiscrimination

Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative is an equal-opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form found online at [ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call 1-866-632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form.

Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, by fax to (202) 690-7442 or by email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.



## Give friends and family the Best of Texas.

The Best of Typically Texas Cookbook features more than 700 best-loved recipes (with more than 300 desserts) from two of our most popular cookbooks.

Now available at Heart of Texas EC.  
Come by and purchase your copy today!