

Electricity Remains a Good Value



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER LEROY T. SKLOSS

In today's world, you won't find many items that cost less than \$5. You can purchase a gallon of milk, a gallon of gas or a hamburger meal from a fast-food chain for about that much.

But did you know that an average day's worth of electricity costs less than \$5?

Even in our country's shifting energy climate, electricity remains a good value. In fact, electricity has the lowest cost per day of any of the items listed above. And not all of those items are necessary for daily life.

As general manager of Karnes EC, I urge you to think about your daily necessities (electricity and gasoline, to name a couple) and then think about the cost of the special treats we allow ourselves to purchase on a weekly basis (maybe even daily). We don't often question the cost of a fast-food meal—even though it costs about \$1 more to buy a fast-food meal than it does to purchase a day's worth of power. And yet, we frequently become upset if our electricity rates rise.

It makes sense; we have become increasingly reliant upon electricity. Electricity has, for most of us, gone from a luxury commodity to a necessity and an expectation. We expect the lights to come on when we flip the switch, and we expect our power to stay on during the best and worst conditions. How else would we keep our food fresh and our homes cool in the summer or warm in the winter? It is easy to cut a hamburger out of your spending routine here and there to save a few dollars, but we cannot simply cut electricity out of our budgets if times get tough or we decide that we want to scale back our spending to save.

Perhaps that is why it is so upsetting to us when our rates increase, even if only in small increments. It is nearly impossible for us to think about what our lives would be like if we did not have electricity. If at times it doesn't seem that electricity is affordable, remember this: Even as the demand for electricity grows, your annual electricity cost increases still remain low, especially when compared to other consumer goods such as medical care, education, gasoline and, yes, even hamburgers.

Electricity is still a great bargain. And also remember that I am committed to making sure that you and your family always have safe, reliable and affordable electric service in your home.

So the next time you crave a burger, remember your electric bill—and think about what a great deal you're getting for your dollar!



An average day's worth of electricity costs about the same as a fast-food hamburger meal.



Check HVAC Before You Switch

Though most of us can't quite feel it yet, before long the Texas heat will begin to let up and we'll be switching our ventilation systems from air conditioning to heating. Make sure your home's ventilation system is in good repair to keep you comfortable when the seasons change.

A long, hard summer of keeping you cool can put stress on an air-conditioning system, and if that equipment will also be expected to keep you warm in the winter, it needs to be checked by a professional HVAC contractor before you make the switch.

For the most efficient HVAC operation, make sure that you also have addressed the big air leaks in your house and duct system. Sometimes, these are the real sources of problems rather than your HVAC equipment.

Additionally, if your HVAC is more than 10 years old or not keeping your house comfortable at any time, you should have it looked at. If it is not performing efficiently or needs upgrading, consider replacing it with a unit that has earned the Energy Star label, meaning that it operates at a high level of energy efficiency. Installed correctly, these high-efficiency heating and cooling units can save up to 20 percent on heating and cooling costs.

For more ways of keeping your home comfortable in any weather, visit energystar.gov.

Source: Energy Star

Disaster Warning Apps

A main advantage of digital technology is its ability to provide up-to-the-minute information almost anywhere, almost anytime. Disaster-related digital applications on smartphones or tablets can be helpful when dangerous situations require emergency planning or response. Stay prepared and safe with these disaster-warning apps:

Red Cross

The American Red Cross offers several natural disaster apps including for flood, hurricane, tornado and wildfire. The apps alert users to the warning signs or immediate presence of dangerous weather, list suggested emergency kit items, locate nearby shelter options and more. All are free and available at redcross.org/prepare/mobile-apps.

Red Panic Button

This app can be activated with the touch of a big, red button. Using global positioning technology, the app sends information on the user's current location and time of activation to cellphone numbers and emails on a predesignated list. Find free download options and more information at redpanicbutton.com.



FEMA

Developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, this app contains preparedness information, an interactive checklist for emergency kits, planning for emergency meeting locations, post-disaster safety and recovery information and a map with FEMA Disaster Recovery Center locations and shelters. They're available for free at fema.gov/smartphone-app.

NWS Wireless Emergency Alerts

Additionally, the National Weather Service offers a free subscription service (no app required) that sends specialized text alerts immediately to a cellphone when an extreme weather or other emergency threatens the user's immediate area. Local emergencies requiring evacuation or immediate action, Amber alerts and presidential alerts during a national emergency are also included in the service. For more information, visit nws.noaa.gov.

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Leroy T. Skloss

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Pay your bill, submit meter readings and view your account summary at karnesec.org.



Contact Us

For information and outages during office hours

(830) 780-3952 Karnes City
(830) 569-5538 Pleasanton
1-888-807-3952 Toll-free

To report a power outage after 5 p.m. and on weekends and holidays

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Call 811 Before You Dig

If you're planning to get a jump on fall planting, building or other outdoor home improvements, make sure you keep yourself and your neighborhood safe by calling to locate underground utility lines, pipes and cables before you start digging.

Homeowners often make risky assumptions about whether they need to get their utility lines marked, but every digging job requires a call—even small projects like planting trees and shrubs. The depth of utility lines varies, and there may be multiple utility structures buried in a common area.

Why Should I Call?

Digging without calling can result in damage to utility structures—whether gas, water, electric, cable or other utilities. Even a little damage can bring a lot of unintended, and costly, consequences: disruption of service to an entire area, injury to you or those around you, and potential fines and repair costs for you to pay.

Calling 811 before every digging job gets your underground utility lines marked for free and helps prevent undesired consequences. These marked lines show you the approximate location of underground lines, so you'll know what's below—and where NOT to dig.

How Does It Work?

Call 811 a few days before digging, and your call will be routed to your local One Call center. Tell the operator where you're planning to dig and what type of work you will be doing, and they will notify the affected local utilities of your location and your intent to dig. Within a few days, a locator will come by to mark the approximate location of your underground lines, pipes and cables. Then you can proceed with your project, knowing you're in the clear.

Remember: Always call 811 before you start any digging project. You'll avoid injury, expense, embarrassment—and some very inconvenient time in the dark.

Whom Do I Call?

For more information, or to make an online request for utilities to be marked, contact either of the following agencies.

- ▶ **Texas811:** Call 811 or 1-800-545-6005, or visit texas811.org.
- ▶ **Lone Star 811:** Call 811 or 1-800-669-8344, or visit lonestar811.com.

Keep Your Fridge Humming

The refrigerator is one of the home's biggest energy hogs. But you can help it run more efficiently by:

KEEPING IT LEVEL. A fridge on an uneven floor can lean forward enough to prevent the door gasket from sealing tightly when the door is closed.

CHECKING GASKETS. A refrigerator's door gasket can wear out over time. If your door isn't closing tightly, replace the gasket.

FILLING IT UP. A full refrigerator and freezer work more efficiently than a half-empty one. If you don't have enough food and beverages in the refrigerator, fill it with jugs of water until about two-thirds of the empty space is taken. Same goes for the freezer: Pack bags full of ice and scatter them around in the freezer so it's at least three-quarters full.

COOLING FOOD BEFORE REFRIGERATING IT. Putting hot food into a refrigerator or freezer forces the unit to adjust temperature to compensate for the heat.

COVERING FOOD BEFORE STORING IT IN THE FRIDGE.

Uncovered food and liquids release moisture and force the compressor to work harder.

MOVING IT OUT OF SUNLIGHT AND AWAY FROM THE OVEN. A fridge has to work harder to keep everything cool when the outside of it is exposed to heat.

LEAVING IT SOME BREATHING ROOM. So it can properly ventilate, the top and sides of a refrigerator need clearance between walls and cabinets around them.

CLEANING IT. Regularly wipe dust, dirt and cobwebs from the coils behind or under it.



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Heed Household Hazard Warnings

Household appliances and consumer products injure an estimated 33.1 million Americans every year as a result of both accidents and manufacturing errors, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

APPLIANCES: Small, portable appliances and large, stationary appliances both can pose risks to consumers and are often recalled by manufacturers for faulty wiring or shock hazards. Countertop appliances should always be unplugged when not in use to avoid overheating, as fires and electrical shocks have been reported from faulty wiring in appliances such as toasters, microwaves and mixers. Larger appliances such as refrigerators or ranges are often recalled for wiring problems. Heating appliances such as space heaters should never be left unattended or used while sleeping. Rechargeable batteries can sometimes overheat in laptop computers or other rechargeable items.

BATHROOM: Caution should be used to keep potentially harmful items out of the reach of children. All prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbs, cosmetics and cleaning agents should be kept out of sight and reach, and childproof or child-resistant packaging should be chosen if possible. Keep all chemicals and products in their original packaging to ensure accurate identification of items. The Poison Prevention Packaging Act requires that child-resistant packaging be used on all medications unless the product label includes a notice that the product is intended for homes without children.

WINDOW TREATMENTS: Windows and window treatments can pose falling or strangulation hazards. Window screens should not be expected to keep children or adults from falling out of windows, and window guards should be installed if children have access to a window. Window blind cords should be kept out of the reach of children, and there should never be a loop in the cord, as strangulation could result. Window blinds often get recalled due to strangulation incidents.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY: Households should be inspected for potential fire hazards and electrical dangers. Fire safety and fire prevention steps should be taken to ensure that appliances, extension cords and surge protectors meet all federal electrical standards. Ground-fault circuit interrupters should be used on all electrical outlets, and electrical cords should never be used if they are frayed or cracked. Outlets should never be overloaded, feel hot to the touch or give off an electrical shock. Plug protectors should be used on all unused electrical outlets to keep fingers and objects out of sockets. Lamps can pose fire hazards if they are placed near drapes or

bedspreads, and appliance extension cords can cause problems if they are left plugged in for long periods of time when the appliance is not in use.

FIRE PREVENTION: To keep your family safe from fire, install smoke alarms on every level of the house and near sleeping areas. Test the smoke alarms often and remember to change the batteries regularly. Fire extinguishers should be placed in kitchens and other accessible locations in the house.



Windows and blinds can pose risks for children.

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Fire prevention steps can prevent the majority of accidental home fires.

TOXINS AND CHEMICALS: Many dangers in the home may be invisible to the eye, such as carbon monoxide poisoning, dry-wall fumes or lead paint hazards. Air quality can be monitored by CO₂ detectors and other devices, but dangerous air quality is often hard to identify. Chemicals such as pesticides, drain cleaners and paint should always be kept in their original containers and out of the reach of children.

COMMON HAZARDS IN THE HOME: The top five household hazards identified by the CPSC include magnets, recalled products, furniture tip-overs, windows and window coverings, and pool and spa drains. To keep homes safe follow these safety tips:

- ▶ Keep loose magnets, magnetic pieces and other small objects away from children.
- ▶ Stay informed about product recalls.
- ▶ Check that furniture (TVs, bookcases, desks, chests, etc.) is stable or anchored to a wall.
- ▶ Don't rely on window screens to prevent falls from windows.
- ▶ Use cordless window blinds or keep cords permanently out of the reach of children.
- ▶ Inspect pools and spas for entrapment hazards and use drain covers.



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School Safety ABCs

The school buses are rolling, and excited children are on their way to and from classes. It's time to start thinking about back-to-school safety!

Walking

- ▶ Look left, right, then left again before crossing the street.
- ▶ Take directions from crossing guards.
- ▶ Cross in front of the bus only after the driver signals it's OK to do so.

Riding the School Bus

- ▶ Wait for the bus in a safe place, away from traffic and the street.
- ▶ Stay away from the bus until it comes to a complete stop and the driver signals that it's safe to enter.
- ▶ When getting dropped off, exit the bus and walk 10 giant steps away from it. Be aware of the street traffic in the area.

Riding a Bike

- ▶ Mind traffic signals and the crossing guard.
- ▶ Always wear a bike helmet and light-colored or reflective material.
- ▶ Walk the bike through intersections and ride with a buddy.

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Happy Labor Day!

The offices of Karnes Electric will be closed Monday, September 1, in observance of the holiday.

Home Energy Yardstick

The Environmental Protection Agency's Home Energy Yardstick provides a simple assessment of your home's annual energy use compared to similar homes.

The Home Energy Yardstick is a basic, performance-based home assessment that looks at the actual energy use of your home (based on your last 12 months of utility bills) compared to that of similar homes.

By going to energystar.gov and answering a few basic questions about your home, you can get:

- ▶ Your home's Home Energy Yardstick score (on a scale of 1 to 10)
- ▶ Insights into how much of your home's energy use is related to heating and cooling versus other everyday uses like appliances, lighting and hot water
- ▶ Links to guidance from Energy Star on how to improve your home's score, increase comfort and lower utility bills
- ▶ An estimate of your home's annual carbon emissions

To ensure that homes across the country can be properly compared, the Yardstick uses a statistical algorithm to take into account the effects of local weather, home size and number of occupants on your home's energy use.

A home that scores a 10 on the Yardstick scale used less energy over the past 12 months and performed well compared to its peers, while a home that scores a 1 used more energy and performed poorly compared to its peers.

You can increase your Yardstick score by improving the energy efficiency of the features and/or equipment in your home, or by making changes in the way you operate your home to use less energy. You can revisit the Yardstick each month (when your bills arrive) to see the effects of the energy-efficiency improvements you make to your home or changes in the way you operate it.

The Home Energy Yardstick is not meant to replace a home energy audit conducted by a professional. The best way to assess the root causes of high energy bills or uncomfortable spaces is to have a home energy professional assess your home.

The Yardstick score is based on data obtained from the U.S. Department of Energy's Residential Energy Consumption Survey. Because only single-family detached homes, mobile homes, townhouses, row houses and duplexes are used in the Yardstick analysis, entering apartment energy-use data may not result in a valid comparison.

Getting Started

To calculate your Yardstick score, you will need some basic information about your home:

- ▶ Your ZIP code
- ▶ Your home's square footage
- ▶ Number of full-time home occupants
- ▶ A list of all the different fuels used in your home (e.g., electricity, natural gas, fuel oil); and
- ▶ Your home's past 12 months of utility totals (usually found in the 12-month summary provided on your bill)

To test your home, go to energystar.gov and click on the Home Energy Yardstick box.



Sleep Soundly in a Safe Bedroom

The average adult sleeps almost eight hours per night, spending at least one-third of every day in the bedroom. Unfortunately, we are often at our most vulnerable while asleep. Among Americans killed annually in home fires, 36 percent never even wake up. Take steps to make sure your bedroom is safe.

Safety Tips

- ▶ Before installing a portable air conditioner, make sure that the circuit and outlet are able to handle the load.
- ▶ If ceiling fans are wobbling, fix them by turning off power to the fan and tightening the screws.
- ▶ Replace any lamp with damaged or cracked cords.
- ▶ Use correct bulb wattage in fixtures to reduce fire risks.
- ▶ Always turn lamps off when you leave the room for an extended period.
- ▶ If you have a rechargeable battery, be sure to use the proper battery charger.
- ▶ Unplug battery chargers or power adapters when equipment is fully charged or when you disconnect it from the charger.

Safety Spotlight: Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms should be installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. For the best protection, smoke alarms should be interconnected, so that if one sounds, they all sound. Battery-operated alarms can now be connected by wireless technology.

Test smoke alarms monthly by pushing the TEST button. Change smoke alarm batteries at least once a year. If an alarm chirps or beeps to indicate low batteries, change them right away.