



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER CODY LASATER

Understanding the Factors That Impact Your Energy Bills

THERE ARE A FEW key factors that affect electricity prices, and while most of those are out of our hands and yours, there are a few ways you can make a meaningful impact on home energy savings.

When you receive your bill from Hamilton County Electric Cooperative, you get a summary of how much electricity you used during the billing cycle. You can even see when your electricity use may have spiked, such as a particularly cold or hot day.

But you might be surprised to learn that beyond your monthly energy consumption, there are external factors that can impact the cost of electricity.

Fuel Prices

Hamilton County EC purchases electricity from our power generation partner at wholesale cost, then we deliver that power to our communities.

That wholesale cost accounts for a significant portion of the cost of providing electricity to homes and

fluctuate and the demand for electricity spikes, the price of power typically goes up.

Infrastructure and Equipment

To cover the costs associated with providing electricity, Hamilton County EC members pay a monthly charge. This flat fee ensures the costs of equipment, materials, labor and daily operations are covered for all members in our service territory, no matter how many kilowatts you use.

To ensure the reliable service you expect and deserve, we must maintain a complex grid of power lines, substations and other essential equipment.

You Have Control

While many of these external factors are out of our control, we all have the power to manage our energy use at home. The most effective way to lower use is thermostat management.

Since heating and cooling account for a major portion of home energy use, adjusting the thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting for heating and highest for cooling can help you save energy and money. Remember to have your heating and cooling system checked annually and replace dirty filters as needed.

You also can help reduce your co-op's energy costs by taking advantage of off-peak periods, when the demand for electricity is lower. Reserve energy-intensive chores for off-peak times—typically 8 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Be sure to seal air leaks around windows, doors and other areas where gaps are possible. This will help your heating and cooling system work less and improve the overall comfort of your home.

Hamilton County EC is your local energy partner, and we're here to help. As always, we will continue working diligently to provide you with reliable power at an affordable cost. ■



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businesses—and the cost of fuels used to generate that power fluctuate based on supply and demand.

While these fluctuations impact the cost of electricity, we work closely with our wholesale power provider to plan ahead and help stabilize electricity prices for our members.

Extreme Weather

While we can't control the weather, we can review weather patterns and forecasts to prepare for times of extreme cold or heat, when we know the demand for electricity will increase. When temperatures



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Hamilton County EC Offers Scholarships

WILL YOUR 2025 HIGH SCHOOL graduate need money for college? Hamilton County Electric Cooperative will award \$1,000 scholarships for the 2025–26 school year (\$500 per fall and spring semester).

Eligible recipients must:

- ▶ Be a senior attending a high school within the HCEC service area and graduating in May 2025.
- ▶ Be a dependent of an active HCEC member.
- ▶ Reside full time in the home of a parent or guardian who is a full-time resident in HCEC's service area.
- ▶ Have applied for admission as a full-time student in a technical school, college or university.

Winners must use the scholarship within one year of issuance.

Applications are now available and will be accepted until March 31.

Scholarship winners will be chosen by a committee independent of the cooperative.

For more information and an application, contact Keela McDonald at (254) 386-9428 or keela.mcdonald@hamiltonelectric.coop. ■

Hamilton County Electric Cooperative Association

CONTACT US

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Local (254) 386-3123

Web hamiltonelectric.coop

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Cody Lasater

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Dusty Duncan, Vice President, District 5

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Jack Caldwell, District 1

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24/7

Outage Hotline Numbers

For information and to report outages, please call us.

TOLL-FREE

1-855-955-3183

ABOUT HAMILTON COUNTY EC

HCEC owns and maintains more than 4,000 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 13,000 members in Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Mills and San Saba counties.

PAYMENT OPTIONS AND LOCATIONS

Online at hamiltonelectric.coop

Call 1-855-955-3183 to pay using our automated phone system (credit/debit card or check).

Bank draft can be set up or bill payments can be charged to a debit or credit card monthly.

Hamilton County EC Office

112 E. Gentry St., Hamilton

Fort Gates Water Corp.

103 Gateway Circle, Gatesville

Head Insurance

1006 Fourth St., Goldthwaite

Kempner Water Supply

11986 E. Highway 190, Kempner

Lometa City Hall

109 W. San Saba St., Lometa

VISIT US ONLINE

hamiltonelectric.coop



Check us out at

TexasCoopPower.com/hamilton

LARGE TREES

Height/spread of more than 40 feet, such as:

- Maple
- Birch
- Oak
- Sweetgum
- Spruce
- Linden
- Pine

MEDIUM TREES

Height/spread of 25 to 40 feet, such as:

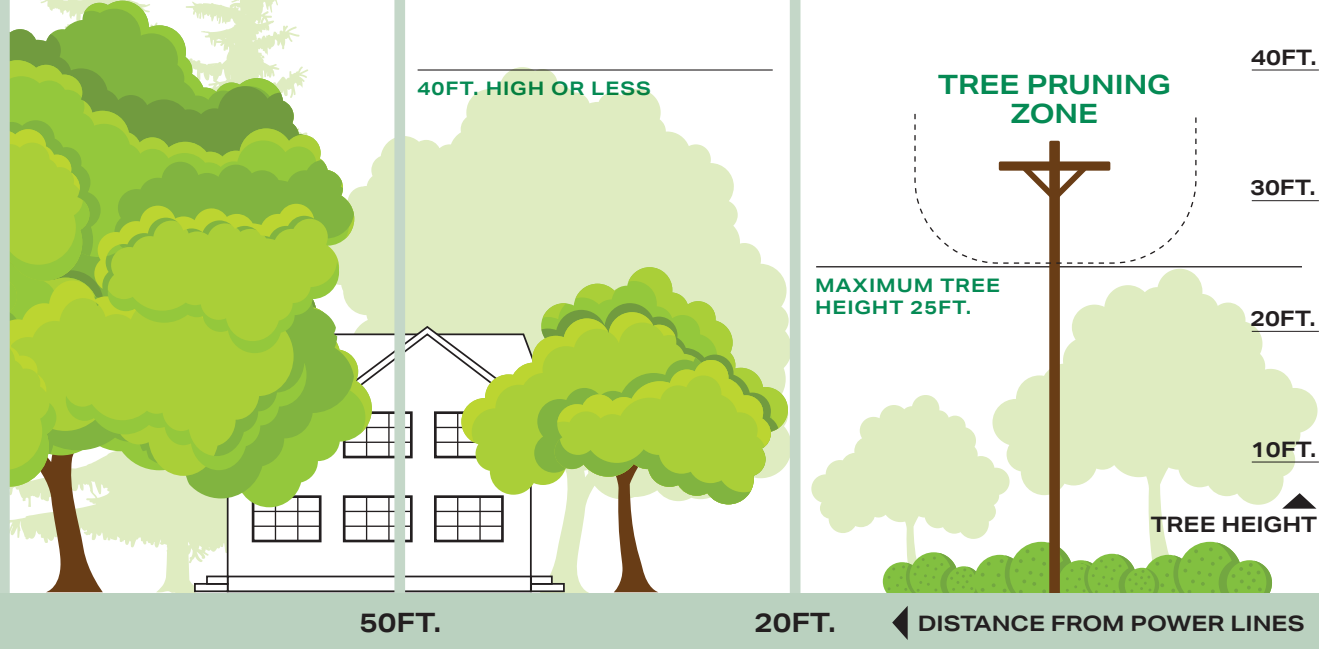
- Washington hawthorn
- Goldenrain tree
- Eastern redbud
- American arborvitae
- Dogwoods

SMALL TREES

Height/spread of no more than 25 feet such as:

- Star magnolia
- Crabapple
- Lilac

Avoid planting within 20 feet of power lines. When planting within 20 feet is unavoidable, use only shrubs and small trees.



LOOK UP (AND DOWN) BEFORE YOU PLANT

Spring is a great time to plant shade trees, which eventually will grow up and out and cast nice shade on your house, keeping it cooler during the summer.

But beware of where you plant. Tree branches can conduct electricity, creating a possible shock hazard for utility workers who need to service overhead power lines that are too close to towering trees.

Do some homework on the trees you've chosen before you plant them. Know how tall and wide each tree will grow. That way, you can plant it in a spot where, when it's fully grown, it'll still be at least 10 feet from utility poles and overhead wires.

HERE ARE A FEW OTHER SMART SPRINGTIME CAUTIONS:

- ▶ Don't climb a ladder that's within reach of a power line.
- ▶ Hire a professional to prune any tree branches that are near overhead wires. That's not a job for a do-it-yourselfer.
- ▶ Call your electric cooperative and 811 before you dig a hole to plant a tree to make sure you won't interfere with underground lines on your property. That's not only a safe practice—it's the law.



How To Clean Refrigerator Coils and Why You Should

YOUR REFRIGERATOR IS one of the largest, most-used appliances in your home. It requires only minimal maintenance—just simple cleaning of the condenser coils, which disperse heat. If the coils are covered with dust, gunk or pet hair, they can't diffuse heat properly, and the unit will not run efficiently.

A bigger problem can result if the compressor burns out from having to run constantly because of the grimy coating. This can be an expensive problem. But a minor time investment once a year can save you cold cash down the line.

Here's what to do:

1. Locate the refrigerator's coil, a grid-like structure, or fan that will likely have a covering or grate protecting it. The coil is usually concealed behind the front toe-kick or in the back. Some newer models have internal coils, so if you don't see them in the front or back, this may be the case with your fridge.

2. If the coil is in the back, slide the fridge out and away from the wall, removing the plug from the electrical outlet. You may also need to disconnect the line to the water dispenser or ice maker to allow enough room to work.

3. Gently vacuum and clean the coil. Using the brush or crevice attachment, carefully vacuum dust and dirt wherever you see it. If you have pulled the fridge out, vacuum and wipe down the sides and back of the fridge and the floor.

4. Once the floor is dry, plug the refrigerator back in, and rearrange the power cord and supply lines so they don't get kinked or stuck under the weight of the refrigerator or behind it. Slide the refrigerator back into place. Be sure to replace the toe-kick panel if it was removed. ■



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

International Women's Day
Saturday, March 8

Daylight Saving Time Begins
Sunday, March 9
Set clocks forward 1 hour.

St. Patrick's Day
Monday, March 17

National Ag Day
Tuesday, March 18



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Texas Rattlesnake Eggs

24 medium jalapeño peppers

8 mozzarella cheese sticks

2 cups buttermilk baking mix

1 pound hot pork breakfast sausage

1 pound cheddar cheese, grated

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 teaspoon garlic salt

1. Line a cookie sheet with parchment or aluminum foil.
2. Remove the stems and seeds of the jalapeños, keeping each whole.
3. Cut the cheese sticks into thirds and stuff a cheese piece into each pepper. Set aside.
4. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
5. Using a stand mixer, combine the baking mix, pork sausage, cheddar and spices; mix until it forms a stiff dough. Form dough into 24 rounded balls of equal size using a cookie scoop or heaping tablespoon. Take one piece of dough, flatten it and shape it around one stuffed jalapeño to completely seal it inside. Continue to form the dough pieces around each pepper until all are covered.
6. Place the "eggs" on the prepared baking sheet and bake 30–40 minutes or until lightly browned.

MAKES 24 APPETIZERS

TCP Find this and more delicious recipes online at [TexasCoopPower.com](https://www.texascoopower.com).

Community Calendar

The following community event information was gathered in late January. Please contact event sources directly to confirm event dates and details.

Comanche

Texas Independence Day Celebration, March 2, 11 a.m.–2 p.m., Comanche County Museum, 402 Moorman Road. Chili and Comanche stew lunch. For more information, call (325) 356-5115 or email comanchecountytxmuseum@gmail.com.

Sippin' in the Sunshine Festival, April 5, Comanche Square. There will be a mix of different wineries and breweries paired with area chefs. Live music and various vendors will also be on-site.

Frontier Day at the Museum, April 12, 1–4 p.m., Comanche County Museum, 402 Moorman Road. We will have returning guests: David Woolam with his chuckwagon, Deborah Nowlin Keith with her mules, John and Ingrid Nabers, the Spinners & Weavers, the SCV 1904, the local Boy Scouts, and Kevin Wilson and Cris Bloyd with other displays. Refreshments will be available.

For more information about Comanche County events, contact the Comanche

Chamber of Commerce at (325) 356-3233 or comanchechamberinfo@gmail.com.

Copperas Cove

Fishing in the Park, March 1, Copperas Cove City Park, 1206 W. Avenue B. Enjoy a relaxing day of fishing with family and friends at the City Park Pond. Sponsored by the City of Copperas Cove Parks and Recreation. For information, contact Ashley Wilson at awilson@copperascovetx.gov or (254) 542-2719.

Spring Festival, March 22, City Park, 1206 W. Avenue B. Celebrate spring with food, music, beer tents, and more! Sponsored by the City of Copperas Cove Parks and Recreation. For information, contact Ashley Wilson at awilson@copperascovetx.gov or (254) 542-2719.

Easter Egg Round Up, April 19, City Park, 1206 W. Avenue B. Egg hunting and free pictures with the Easter Bunny. Sponsored by the City of Copperas Cove Parks and Recreation. For information, contact Ashley Wilson at awilson@copperascovetx.gov or (254) 542-2719.

For information on Copperas Cove events, call (254) 547-7571 or email chamber@copperascove.com.

Gatesville

Cotton Belt Depot Foundation \$10K Give-away, March 1, 5 p.m., Gatesville Civic Center, 301 Veterans Memorial Loop. Workers needed.

Market Days, March 8, 9 a.m.–1 p.m., Cotton Belt Depot parking lot.

Micro Wrestling, March 8, Gatesville Civic Center, 301 Veterans Memorial Loop. For more information, contact Morgan Smart at msmart@gatesvilletx.com or (254) 499-0102.

Golf Tournament, March 15, Gatesville Country Club, 1308 Golf Course Road.

Men's Conference, March 21–22, Gatesville Civic Center, 301 Veterans Memorial Loop. For information, contact Morgan Smart at (254) 499-0102 or msmart@gatesvilletx.com.

Spring Fest, March 22, 10 a.m., Texas Station Event Center, 4604 State Highway 36.

For information about Gatesville events, see visitgatesvilletx.com or email gatesvillecoc@gmail.com.

Goldthwaite

Mills County Historical Museum, Monday–Friday, 10 a.m.–2 p.m., 1119 Fisher St. Free.

Goldthwaite Theatre, 1206 Fisher St. For information on upcoming events, call (325) 451-1811 or visit goldthwaitetheatre.org.



Diamondback Jubilee and Rodeo
March 28–29
LOMETA

State Championship BBQ and Goat Cook-Off, April 25–26, City Park, U.S. Highway 183. Enjoy a Lions Club fish fry, live music, crafts, cornhole and delicious food.

For more information about Goldthwaite events, visit goldthwaiteareachamber.com, call the Goldthwaite Area Chamber of Commerce at (325) 648-3619 or email gcc@centex.net.

Hamilton

Circle T Arena, 4007 W. Highway 36. For information on upcoming events, visit circuitarena.net/events or call (254) 386-3559.

Chamber Banquet, March 19, 6–8 p.m.

Market in the Park, April 12, 9 a.m.–noon, J.L. Hamilton Plaza (located across from the Wenzel Lonestar Meat Co.). Vendor spots are free and are on a first-come, first-served basis. To sign up, contact Kayla Schraub at (254) 784-5610 or mainstreet@hamiltontx.com.

For more information about Hamilton events, visit Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center at hamiltontexaschamberofcommerce.com or All Things Hamilton on Facebook, call (254) 386-3216, or email hamiltonchambertx@gmail.com.

Hico

For more information about Hico events, contact the Hico Chamber of Commerce at (254) 434-1249 or chamberhicoctx@gmail.com.

Lampasas

Lampasas County Farmers Market and Crafts, Saturdays, 9 a.m.–1 p.m., Lampasas County Courthouse parking lot.

Stars at Night, March 1, 5–8 p.m., Old Middle School Cafeteria, 207 E. Avenue A. Children's activities, information tables, night sky demos, food vendors and star gazing with professional telescopes. No admission fee. Sponsored by Friends of the Night Sky and Vision Lampasas.

Art in the Park, April 5.

For more information about Lampasas County events, contact the Lampasas County Chamber of Commerce at (512) 556-5172 or

admin@lampasaschamber.org or visit lampasaschamber.org.

Lometa

Yoga and Mimosas, March 1, 10–11 a.m., Fiesta Winery at Bend, 18727 W. FM 580. For more information, call (325) 628-3433 or email info@fiestawinery.com

Wine Pick Up Party and Taste of Texas, March 8, 11 a.m.–6 p.m., Fiesta Winery at Bend, 18727 W. FM 580. Artisan food market. Live music by Cord Jackson (11 a.m.–1 p.m.) and Lochness Rockers (2–6 p.m.). For more information, call (325) 628-3433 or email info@fiestawinery.com.

Diamondback Jubilee and Rodeo, March 28–29, 7:30 p.m., Lometa Regional Park, 15115 N. Highway 183. Snakes, vendors, bands, chili cook-off, cornhole tournament, wild hog sacking, rodeo, mutton busting, dancing, 1st Cavalry Detachment and rattler team roping! Sponsored by the Lometa Lions Club. Register online at lometalionsclub.org. For vendor information, contact Susan Hines at (512) 556-2822 or susan@areawidelocksmith.com.

Easter Egg Hunt Through the Vineyard, April 19, 12:30 p.m., Fiesta Winery at Bend, 18727 W. FM 580. Live music by Dillon Havins (2–5 p.m.). For more information, call (325) 628-3433 or email info@fiestawinery.com.

J's Dueling Pianos, April 26, 6–9 p.m., Fiesta Winery at Bend, 18727 W. FM 580. J's all-request, sing-along piano show. For more information, call (325) 628-3433 or email info@fiestawinery.com.

Pearl

Pearl Bluegrass, March 1, doors at 7 a.m., Pearl Community Center, 6301 FM 183. Free admission. Come join others to pick or just to listen. Jam rooms for all levels. Open mic opportunities begin at 10 a.m. Sign up upon arrival. The kitchen opens at 11 a.m., home cooking and desserts, cash only. Proceeds benefit the Pearl Community Center. For RV spaces, call Connie at (254) 223-0621. For more information, follow us on Facebook at Pearl Community Center

Texas or visit pearlbluegrassjam.org.

Pearl Book Cottage; March 1, April 5; 9 a.m.–3 p.m. Junk-in-your-trunk and farmers market outside of the book cottage. Vendor booths are \$5. Books and resale items will be available inside the building. For information, call Kay Pruett at (254) 865-5864 or Linda Ray at (254) 865-9282.

Feed My Sheep, March 21–23, Pearl Country Church, 6795 FM 183. Featuring dynamic DFW evangelist Kathy Wampler. Set aside your hectic schedule and join us for a spiritually uplifting experience! Friday, 6 p.m. service and ice cream social; Saturday, 10 a.m.–2 p.m., Ladies' Retreat and luncheon, followed by 4 p.m. meal featuring fried ribs and fish for everyone, with service at 6 p.m.; Sunday, 10:15 a.m. service followed by taco lunch. Bring your family, friends and your appetite. For more information, contact Jimmy McPherran at (254) 394-2998. All donations benefit Abide Retreats for military/first responder wives and female service members/first responders.

San Saba

San Saba Reunion Sheep Dog Trials, February 27–March 3, 510 State Highway 16. Kim and Regan Kirk are hosting the Texas Sheep Dog Association San Saba Reunion Sheep Dog Trial at their ranch. Spectators are welcome. Bring your lawn chairs and dress for the weather. Please leave your pet dogs at home. Admission is free. TSDA is excited to be returning to its roots in San Saba, and we hope to see you all there!

Night at the Museum, March 1, 4–7 p.m., San Saba County Historical Museum, 271 S. Thomas Stewart Drive. Celebrating Texas Independence Day with live demonstrations, speakers, campfire cooking and more. Proceeds benefit the museum.

Stan Weik Stomp Out Cancer 5K and 1 Mile Walk, April 5, 9–10:30 a.m., San Saba River Golf Course, 723 County Road 102. Fundraiser for the San Saba Never Surrender Cancer Foundation.

Catkins Ball, April 26, 6–11:30 p.m., Risien Park, Highway 190 E.

For more information about San Saba events, contact the San Saba County Chamber of Commerce at (325) 372-5141 or visit sansabachamber.org or sansabatexas.com.

Hamilton County Electric Cooperative welcomes your local event submissions.

If you have any events that you would like listed in the Community Calendar, please contact Donna Harris. Information must be submitted two months in advance for the magazine. The calendar will be published monthly, and it will contain events scheduled in the month of publication and the following month. HCEC reserves the right to edit and exclude events based on space available and other considerations. We do not certify the accuracy or reliability of any information posted in any listing in this Community Calendar. Please contact the event source directly to confirm event details. Email donna.harris@hamiltonelectric.coop, write to HCEC at P.O. Box 753, Hamilton, TX 76531, or call 1-800-595-3401.



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Affordable Fixes for Drafty Windows

WINDOWS ARE AN IMPORTANT part of the energy efficiency and comfort of your home. But replacing older, inefficient windows is costly, and it could take 20 years of energy savings to recover your investment.

Luckily, you can make significant improvements to your existing windows without investing a large amount of money or time. Let's take a look at how we can address heat loss during the winter and heat gain during the summer. We'll start with the window itself.

Energy loss and drafts often occur in the gaps between the components of the window.

Weatherstripping can be used for areas where a window's movable parts meet the window frame. Retailers offer various weatherstripping for different types of windows. These materials are low-cost, easy to apply and can pay for themselves in energy savings in as little as one year. Ask your local retailer for guidance.

The seam between the window frame and the wall is another common source of air leakage. For any seam smaller than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide, fill it with caulk; for larger seams, use expanding foam and paint over it. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions.

If the window pane is loose, or the glass is cracked or missing, it's probably costing you. If you're handy, it's possible to reglaze a window yourself, or there may be a shop in your area that can do it.

Installing low-emissivity storm windows sometimes can produce as much savings as a full replacement. It's possible to order these windows to the exact size of your window opening. Using low-e glass, which reduces heat transmission, can cut heating and cooling costs by 10%–30%.

Another strategy to consider is window coverings.

There are many types, including interior roller shades, cellular shades and draperies. Recent tests showed that cellular shades can cut heating expenses by up to 24%. Cellular shades can be purchased with a lighter reflective side and a darker, heat-absorbing side. Some can even be reversed with the change of seasons.

Draperies usually are less efficient but can provide a level of comfort during winter and summer months. For maximum effect, make sure they overlap in the middle, are as tight to the window and wall as possible, and run all the way to the floor.

The key to reducing overheating in the summer is to keep the sun's rays from reaching the window by installing awnings or overhangs above windows that receive a lot of direct sunlight. Window films that adhere to the window surface can reflect unwanted summer sun. Solar screens designed to block the sun also can be effective.

If you're on a tight budget or there are windows in vacant rooms that you don't use, you can fasten plywood onto the frame on the outside of the house and cover the inside with rigid foam insulation.

Another low-cost measure for these areas that can produce as much savings as storm windows is to fashion a plastic weather barrier that adheres to the frame. Building supply retailers sell a clear plastic and framing material that can be shrunk into place with a hair dryer.

To learn more about improving the efficiency of older windows, visit energystar.gov or energy.gov. ■

Stay Alert During Storms

IN TEXAS, storm season starts early and stays late, so Texans need to know how to avoid the deadly hazards that severe storms can leave in their wake. Here are some common dangers that arise during storms.

Carbon monoxide poisoning. If the power goes out, you might need to use alternate means to power appliances or for light, heat or cooking. Gas-powered generators can pose hazards if not used safely. Make sure to operate portable generators according to safety specifications. Use generators, grills and camp stoves outside the house and garage, at least 20 feet away from windows, doors and vents.

Electrocution. Severe weather can snap electric lines and break poles, leaving live electric wires down where you or family members could be in danger of touching them. Power lines can carry enough voltage to injure and even kill, so exercise extreme caution around them if you must venture outside.

Never assume that a line isn't live just because it doesn't throw sparks, pop or hiss. Stay away from all downed wires and whatever they're touching, especially water or wet items.

Closer to home, make sure electrical cords and cables you use with portable generators are undamaged and in good repair. Keep cords away from puddles and sources of water.

Flooding. Avoid standing water, which can conceal electrical hazards—outlets or other electrical equipment. Don't operate appliances and equipment that are in water or have been underwater. Dry them out and have a qualified technician clear them for use first.

House fires. You might light candles if the power goes out. Place candles on stable, flat surfaces, out of traffic areas and away from the reach of children. Better yet, use flashlights and battery-powered lanterns instead.

Gas explosions. Storms can damage gas lines easily. If you smell or hear gas leaking, don't use electrical equipment—including landline phones—or switch lights on or off. Before you use a gas appliance or gas cylinder that has been underwater, have a professional check it for damage and leaks. ■



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Using Less Energy To Keep Things Clean

YOUR ENERGY STAR clothes washer or dishwasher operates very efficiently. That's likely one of the reasons you bought it.

But there are simple ways to further reduce how much electricity each of these appliances consumes. Selecting a lower water level or temperature on your washing machine will save even more.

Some Energy Star clothes washers even boast extra energy-cutting features such as presoak and suds saver.

Up to 80% of the energy used by your dishwasher goes to heating water. An Energy Star-qualified dishwasher with a booster heater allows you to set the temperature on your home's water heater at a lower 120 degrees.

In addition, many Energy Star dishwashers offer efficiency settings, such as energy-saving and short-wash cycles that shave energy and water consumption. Most models come equipped with an air-drying option that helps lower electric bills.

While your Energy Star appliances will save money overall, taking advantage of their special energy-saving features can help save even more. ■



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