

CEO CORNER



Ryan Bartlett,
President / CEO

Unplug to Cool Off and Beat the Peak

We're in the thick of it. Summer's heat is near its peak, school's out, vacations are underway, and the Fourth of July is here again. As you plan celebrations, travel or simply go about enjoying the rest of the season, take a cue from the holiday and declare independence from needlessly high electric bills.

Here are a few simple, low-tech ways to rein in midsummer energy costs.

Run the washer and dishwasher only when each appliance is full, and beat the peak by not using either between 3 and 7 p.m.

Use a clothesline or dryer rack to air-dry laundry. Your clothes will stay in better shape longer, and you'll cut out one energy drain entirely.

Set your thermostat to 78 when you're home and turn on ceiling fans in occupied rooms to add to the cooling effect. Run the blades counterclockwise to create a cooling downdraft and turn off the fan when you leave the room.

Use countertop appliances to make dinner without turning on the oven. Better yet, make a salad with a combination of fresh and pantry ingredients. Start with greens and add cucumber, avocado, canned black beans or chickpeas, sunflower seeds, dried fruit, or whatever you have on hand for a satisfying meal that doesn't require cooking.

Take a break from devices and screens and get outside after dinner—after the heat relents just a little—and use that much less electricity while you digitally detox.

Take a walk, water plants, say hello to a neighbor, or just enjoy the sunset and nature with a cool drink.

While you're outside, consider some areas around your home that might benefit from energy-wise landscaping. Providing shade for an outdoor air conditioning unit can increase its efficiency, and planting deciduous trees on the east, south and west sides of your home will create shade in the summer while still allowing sunshine in the winter. You might also see some opportunities to plant trees to shade windows now; as they mature, they'll shade your home's walls and roof.

Once you're back inside, unwind with a cool treat from the freezer and a tech-free activity like a board game or book. If you would like more tips on how to save, visit our website taylorelectric.com/blog/behind-the-power.

The long light and lazy days of this time of year are fleeting, so make the most of them. Taylor Electric Cooperative wishes you and your family a restorative summer.



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New Utility Scams Capitalize on COVID

A SPATE OF SCAMS is targeting utility customers, as fraudsters alter their strategies and seek to capitalize on vulnerabilities created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members of an electric cooperative in Wisconsin recently reported two unique tactics, according to a report from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

One involved a call from a bogus representative of an investor-owned utility claiming to have taken over the member’s account and demanding immediate payment or disconnection. The member wasn’t fooled and contacted the co-op to warn others.

This scam comes on the heels of an earlier trick in which a swindler claiming to be with the co-op told a member that she had overpaid her utility bill and that to get the refund she was due, she’d need to provide her financial information. The member didn’t fall for the scam, hung up the phone and notified the co-op.

Members need to stay vigilant because scammers have adapted their tactics over the past two years to exploit consumer vulnerabilities and changes in habits created by the pandemic.

The increased use of technology paired with concerns about the economy have created a breeding ground for scams, according to Utilities United Against Scams.

Numbers from the Federal Trade Commission show that consumer fraud in general spiked during the past two years.

In 2021, about a quarter of all reported fraud losses stemmed from scams originating on social media. Those scams resulted in \$770 million in total losses, which is an 18-fold increase from 2017, according to the agency’s latest Consumer Protection Data Spotlight report.

Somos, the entity that manages toll-free numbers in the U.S., tracks when those numbers are used fraudulently. They often work with UUAS to combat scams, and their collaboration has shut down more than 12,000 phone numbers since 2017.

If you receive a suspicious message—whether a phone call, text, social media message or email—regarding your electric cooperative account, please contact Taylor Electric Cooperative immediately. ■

Taylor Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

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Electric Lawn Care Options Abound

UNTIL RECENTLY, electric lawn mowers tended to be underpowered, expensive and unreliable, making them an inferior choice for many homeowners.

But today, with those problems largely solved, the best electric mowers have the power and battery life to keep pace with just about any gas mower, depending on the size of your lawn. A cordless electric mower with a large, 56-volt battery can run for about an hour. Plug-in electric mowers can of course go even longer, but using a long electrical cord can be challenging.

Quality electric mowers—especially the cordless, rechargeable ones—still tend to cost a little more than most new gas models. But you can recoup some of the expense with cheaper operating costs, since electricity is a less expensive fuel than gas, and electric motors generally require less maintenance than gas engines.

Another important cost consideration is that rechargeable batteries typically need to be replaced after three to five years. The cost savings also depend on the size of your lot. A small lot uses less gas, so fuel savings are less significant.

You can save a significant amount on purchase price with a corded mower, if you don't mind the hassle of navigating around the cord.

There are additional benefits of electric mowers besides lower fuel and maintenance costs. Electric mowers are much quieter than their gas counterparts—a benefit your neighbors will appreciate if you like to mow early on weekend mornings—and they start instantly. Electric mowers produce zero emis-

sions, but the overall environmental impact depends on how the electricity you're using (to charge the mower) is generated. The environmental benefits will be greater if the electricity is generated from renewable sources.

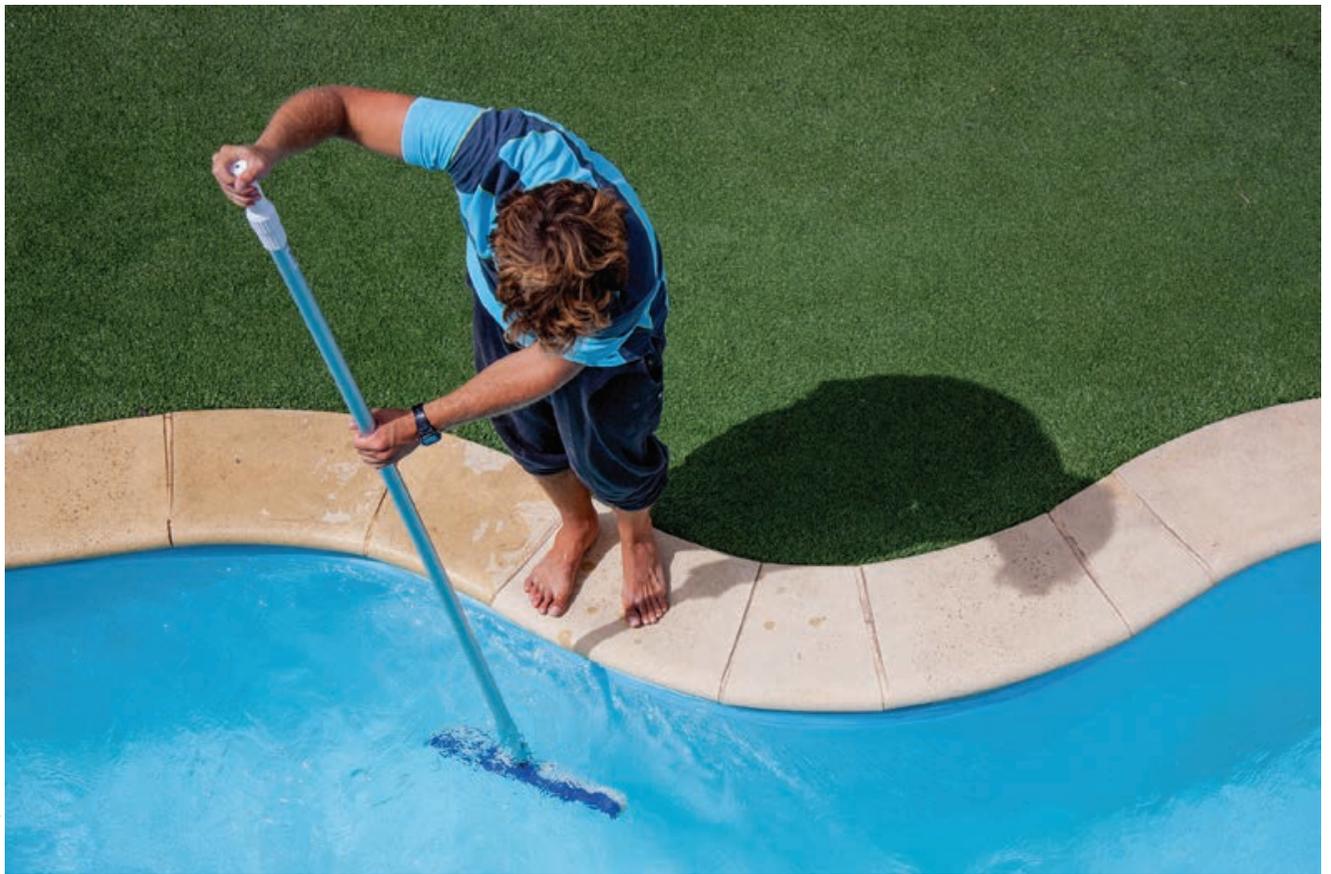
Given all these considerations, it's important for consumers to weigh their priorities. If you're looking to buy new, have a small- to midsize lot, prioritize environmental concerns and don't mind navigating a cord or recharging batteries, an electric mower could be the right choice for you.

If you don't mind the noise, maintenance and other hassles of a gas mower, have a large lot and prefer not to invest as much in the upfront price, a gas mower may be a better option.

If you're willing to keep your lawn mowed regularly and don't mind breaking a sweat, consider a manual reel mower. Some models are more effective than you might think, and they're far less expensive and require little maintenance or storage space.

The most dramatic step you could take is replacing your lawn completely, perhaps with water-efficient landscaping, a rock garden or vegetable garden, or even an artificial lawn. This could dramatically cut your water bill and the environmental impact of a lawn.

Any change you make, whether in mowing or landscaping, will require a little research. But it's great to know the option of an electric mower is more viable than ever. ■



Is Your Home Full of Energy Hogs?

ENERGY COSTS BETWEEN two homes of similar age and size can vary greatly, depending on the residents' habits and possessions. If you compare your home's electricity bill with your neighbor and find that yours is higher, you may have hidden energy hogs causing you to use more energy.

Perhaps one of the common energy hogs below is increasing your energy use.

An old fridge or freezer in the garage. That second fridge or freezer may be costing more than you think. If the model was produced prior to 1990, it's likely using twice as much energy (or more) than a newer, Energy Star-certified model. If it's located in the garage, it may run constantly in the summer, which adds to electric bills.

Thermostat settings. Using fans and wearing lighter clothing in the summer rather than lowering the thermostat can make a big difference in energy consumption. A smart thermostat can increase savings by automatically adjusting your home's temperature based on your household's schedule, raising the temperature when you're not home and lowering it shortly before you return.

Cooling or heating an uninsulated area. Uninsulated workshops and garages can be expensive to keep cool. Pet owners have been known to heat and cool uninsulated areas to keep pets comfortable, not realizing that this might be costing more

than heating or cooling their actual home.

Water heaters. If your electric water heater's thermostat is set higher than 120 degrees and the tank isn't wrapped in an insulating blanket, you're spending more money than you need to for hot water.

Pumps. If you live on acreage or a farm or ranch, you probably have several pumps, including for irrigation, a well, septic and sump. If you're like most of us, you use those pumps until they break. Consider replacing the oldest and most-used pumps over time with new, more efficient ones that are sized correctly for their task.

Hot tubs. The average hot tub costs \$250 per year to operate. But that amount may be higher if your hot tub is an older, less efficient model or if you live in a colder climate. A smaller hot tub with better insulation, a cover and a pump that runs on a lower voltage will use much less energy than other models.

Swimming pool. If you have a pool, consider installing a smaller, more efficient pump and reducing how often it runs. You can also look at installing a larger filter and maximizing the flow of water through the pipes by making them larger and reducing how sharply the corners turn. These measures could cut your electric use for the pool pump by as much as 75%. ■

Beware of Co-op Equipment

AS YOU SPEND TIME OUTSIDE this summer, Taylor Electric Cooperative reminds you to use caution near electrical equipment. Often we are surrounded by electric infrastructure without even realizing it, so look up and around to make sure you know the location of poles, power lines, transformers and other co-op property in your surroundings.

Never climb trees near power lines. If you touch a tree that is touching a power line, your body could become the path of 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 rescue it. Call your co-op for assistance instead.

Don't fly drones near electrical equipment. Remote control toys should never be flown near power lines, substations or other electrical equipment. 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. To avoid accidents, keep the remote control toy in sight at all times and avoid flying in windy conditions that might make you lose control.

Keep kites away from power lines. Kites can cause power outages if they come into contact with power lines, so it's best to fly them only in wide-open areas. If the wind pushes your kite near a power line, let go of it and don't try to retrieve it without help from your co-op. Never attach anything metal to a kite or fly it when it's wet.

Leave balloons inside and away from power lines. Keep them tethered at all times and attached to weights. Never use metallic ribbon on balloons. Be especially careful with Mylar balloons, whose metallic coatings conduct electricity and can cause short circuits or power surges if they come into contact with power lines. Properly dispose of balloons by puncturing them to release the helium that could cause them to float away.

Here at Taylor EC, your safety is important to us. Share this message of electrical safety so that you and others can enjoy plenty of summer days filled with fun. ■



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Internet-Connected Devices Can Help You Save Energy

INTERNET-CONNECTED DEVICES—often called the Internet of Things—are simply gadgets and appliances outfitted with hardware that allows them to transmit data over the web. That data can be accessed by a user to monitor a device's performance and even control it with a smartphone or computer. Such control allows homeowners to manage appliance use to save energy, identify problems or defer use to off-peak times.

Here are some of the many home items that can be turned into smart devices:

- ▶ Baby monitor
- ▶ Wi-Fi booster
- ▶ Dog tracker and monitor
- ▶ Bed
- ▶ Voice assistant
- ▶ Lighting
- ▶ Smoke alarm
- ▶ Sprinklers
- ▶ Air quality monitor
- ▶ Security monitor
- ▶ Coffee maker
- ▶ Refrigerator
- ▶ Dishwasher
- ▶ Wi-Fi router
- ▶ TV
- ▶ Washer/dryer
- ▶ Oven/stove
- ▶ Slow cooker
- ▶ Thermostat
- ▶ Speakers
- ▶ Remote control
- ▶ Garage door opener
- ▶ Lock
- ▶ Car charger
- ▶ Doorbell
- ▶ Vent
- ▶ Remote control
- ▶ Exterior lighting
- ▶ Electric vehicle
- ▶ Yard lighting
- ▶ Leak detector