

Appreciating Electricity, One Penny at a Time

You can still get value for just a penny's worth of electricity



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER CLINT GARDNER

I recently ran across a column written by Curtis Condon, editor of Ruralite magazine in Hillsboro, Oregon. His points were so enlightening, I thought I'd share them with you this month.

SOME OF US ARE OLD ENOUGH to remember when penny candy actually cost a penny. But what does a penny buy these days? Not much. The government can't even make a penny *for* a penny anymore. According to the U.S. Mint, it now costs 1.5 cents to produce one.

About the only thing of value that you can still get for a penny is electricity. I'm not kidding.

Let's pretend the average rate for a kilowatt-hour of electricity is 10 cents. That's 60 minutes of 1,000 watts of electricity for a dime, so a penny of electricity equates to 100 watts. It's enough to power a 9-watt LED lightbulb—the equivalent of a 60-watt incandescent bulb—for 11 hours, all for only a penny.

The value is just as evident when powering things besides lighting. Take, for instance, your smartphone. Using the same 10 cents per kWh price, one penny's worth of electricity allows you to fully charge your iPhone more than 18 times. You can charge it once every day of the year for about 20 cents total.

We are fortunate electricity is such an excellent value because we have a huge appetite for it. We tend to forget that.

Electricity is not expensive. The expense is due to our using it for so many different things: lighting, heating, cooking, cooling, refrigeration, cleaning, washing, pumping, entertainment, communications—even transportation these days.

Unfortunately, we don't always appreciate it. When our monthly electric bill comes, we open it and might complain about the cost. It's

a knee-jerk reaction ingrained in us as consumers. We don't stop to think about the value we receive for the money.

In 1940, when many co-ops were built, a penny had as much buying power as 17 cents today. This means the residential price of electricity—which now averages 12 cents a kWh nationally—is actually a better deal today than it was in 1940. And it won't rot your teeth.



Lightning Safety

IT ONLY TAKES ONE STRIKE of lightning to change a person's life forever. Lightning can cause serious injuries and death. Unfortunately, lightning can be unpredictable. It does not have to be raining for lightning to strike, and you can be injured even if you are inside.

Lightning can strike up to 10 miles away from a thunderstorm. If you can hear thunder, you are within striking distance. It is best to plan ahead so you are not caught outside in a storm. However, if you cannot take shelter in a building, you can follow these tips to lessen the chances of a lightning accident:

- ▶ Take shelter in a vehicle with a solid metal roof. Close windows and avoid contact with electrical-conducting paths, such as the steering wheel, gearshift or radio.
- ▶ Avoid water, high ground and open spaces.
- ▶ Do not seek safety in open-frame shelters or vehicles, such as golf carts.
- ▶ Do not stand near poles, metal fences or bleachers, trees or even other people. Groups of people should spread out at least 20 feet apart.
- ▶ Wait until 30 minutes has passed without lightning or thunder until you return outside.

Even indoors, lightning requires safety precautions. If lightning strikes your home, it can travel through electronics and plumbing. It is safest to stay away from electronics, outlets and plumbing during storms.

Feel a Shock?

Swim away from the dock

BOATING, FISHING AND SWIMMING can be fun ways to enjoy the great outdoors, but they can present dangers, too. Coleman County Electric Cooperative wants to help keep water enthusiasts safe from the little-known hazard of electric shock drowning.

Outdated wiring and a lack of proper safety equipment and routine maintenance on docks and boats can cause situations where electricity “leaks” into the water. Between 10 and 15 milliamps, which is just $\frac{1}{50}$ the power drawn by a 60-watt light-bulb, can cause drowning, according to the Electric Shock Drowning Prevention Association.



If electric current is present in fresh water and someone swims into that energized water, the result can be electric shock drowning. If the electrical current is strong enough, the shock can cause muscle paralysis, which leaves the affected individual unable to swim to safety. This is a particularly dangerous hazard because it's impossible to tell by sight if the water is energized.

People should not swim around docks with electrical equipment or boats plugged into shore power. If a person is in the water and feels an electric current, that individual should shout to alert others, try to stay upright, tuck up the legs to be smaller, and swim away from anything that could be energized. The swimmer should not head toward boat or dock ladders to get out but swim to the shore instead.

If you see someone whom you suspect is being shocked, you should not immediately jump in to save them. Instead, throw them a float, turn off the shore power connection at the meter base, and/or unplug shore power cords. Try to eliminate the source of electricity as quickly as possible, then call for help.

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Operating in Brown, Callahan, Coke, Coleman, Concho, Runnels, Taylor and Tom Green counties

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Power Tip

Let the sun work for you! Solar cells convert sunlight into electricity that can be stored in a battery and tapped at night to make light. Consider solar lights for outdoor lighting.