The value of electricity

Today, cell phones and personal digital devices are a part of our culture. Everyone, it seems, is connected on the go — whether they’re just making phone calls, text-messaging or checking email. Such communication freedom is a luxury we pay for, generally without grumbling.

So why is it that when it comes to electricity — a necessity in our modern world — many of us grumble and complain when the electric bill comes every month? We expect electricity to be there at the flip of the switch, and when it’s not, we get angry or frustrated.

I’m no different — I expect the lights to come on every time, too. And as the general manager of Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, I have a special responsibility to make sure your electric service is safe, reliable and affordable. But I also believe that when compared to other commodities, electricity remains a great value.

For example, over the past 10 years, gasoline has shot up 10.9 percent on average every single year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. A loaf of white bread has increased 4.2 percent annually and a dozen eggs 6.5 percent per year. In comparison, electricity has increased just 3.7 percent a year nationally for the past decade. When you consider the reliability electricity is, the value goes up even more. Electricity is a 24-hour-a-day commodity, and we endeavor to reduce even the briefest interruptions, increase our service reliability and control costs through innovative technology.

Those cell phones I mentioned earlier? Nearly a third of all U.S. households have four electronic devices such as cell phones plugged in and charging, according to the Residential Energy Consumption Survey by the U.S. Energy Information Administration. In the past 30 years, the amount of residential electricity used by appliances and electronics has increased from 17 percent to 31 percent. More homes than ever use major appliances and central air conditioning. Digital video recorders, computers and multiple televisions have become ubiquitous.

Clearly, our appetite for electricity shows no signs of slowing down. So the next time you flip a switch, use your toaster or run your washing machine, remember the value electricity holds. And know that we at CEMC are looking out for you by working together to keep electric bills affordable, controlling costs through innovation and putting you, our members, first.
Spring storms bring community together

By Seth Roberts, Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation energy consultant

In the spring of 2010, Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation’s members fought floods never before experienced in our counties. This spring, like many areas of the Southeast, CEMC was bombarded with lightning, high winds, tornadoes and flooding throughout our five counties. These weather systems scattered damage across our service area, causing countless outages and leaving many members in our system without power for days at a time.

Stewart County was hit particularly hard on the evening of May 24. An EF2 tornado touched down in Big Rock, producing wind speeds ranging from 115 to 120 mph, according to the National Weather Service. The tornado also destroyed 10 homes and left approximately 25 other structures damaged, including the local post office and fire station.

A lot of hard work goes into restoring a community after such devastation. Fortunately we live in an area where folks are quick to volunteer and offer their neighbors a helping hand. Within approximately 36 hours of the Big Rock tornado, roads were again passable, those capable of receiving electric service had it restored and a Federal Emergency Management Agency relief center had been set up and in operation for several hours.

Much of the CEMC service area was affected by this spring’s storms. Thankfully, like Big Rock, we respond as a community and weather the storms together.
The Steps to Restoring Power

**Step 1.** Tennessee Valley Authority transmission towers and lines supply power to one or more transmission substations. These lines seldom fail, but they can be damaged by a buildup of snow and ice or by a tornado. Tens of thousands of people could be served by one high-voltage transmission line, so if there is damage here, it gets attention first.

**Step 2.** Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation has several local distribution substations, each serving thousands of consumers. When a major outage occurs, CEMC’s distribution substations are checked first. A problem here could be caused by failure in the transmission system supplying the substation. If the problem can be corrected at the substation level, power may be restored to a large number of people.

**Step 3.** Main distribution supply lines are checked next if the problem cannot be isolated at the substation. These supply lines carry electricity away from the substation to a group of consumers, such as a town or housing development. When power is restored at this stage, all consumers served by this supply line could see the lights come on, as long as there is no problem farther down the line.

Now storms, ice storms, flooding, high winds and tornadoes. Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation members have seen them all. And with such severe weather come power outages. Restoring power after a major outage is a big job that involves much more than simply throwing a switch or removing a tree from a line.

The main goal is to restore power safely to the greatest number of members in the shortest time possible.

The major cause of outages is damage caused by fallen trees. That’s why CEMC has an ongoing right-of-way maintenance program.

This illustration explains how power typically is restored after a major disaster.

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**Step 4.** The final supply lines, called tap lines, carry power to the utility poles or underground transformers outside houses or other buildings. Line crews fix the remaining outages based on restoring service to the greatest number of consumers.

**Area enlarged:** Consumers themselves (not CEMC) are responsible for damage to the service installation on the building. CEMC can’t fix this. Call a licensed electrician.

**Step 5.** Sometimes, damage will occur on the service line between your house and the transformer on the nearby pole. This can explain why you have no power when your neighbor does. CEMC needs to know you have an outage here so a service crew can repair it.

During a major outage, other cooperatives sometimes send line crews to assist CEMC with restoring power. These additional crews as well as communications equipment and supplies are coordinated through the cooperatives’ statewide organization.

To report an outage, call 1-800-987-2362. Employees or response services use every available phone line to receive your outage reports. Remember that a major outage can affect thousands of other members. CEMC appreciates your patience.

Individual households may receive special attention if loss of electricity affects life-support systems or poses another immediate danger. If you or a family member depends on life support, call your local office before an emergency arises.
CEMC reports student achievements

Right, winners of the North Stewart Elementary Third- through Fifth-Grade Spelling Bee are, from left, Jacob McDivitt, first place; Samuel Vinson, second place; and Colby Warden, third place.

ROBERTSON COUNTY GREEN SCHOOLS TEAM — Below, as part of the Tennessee Valley Authority’s Green Schools Program, “green teams” made up of a unique combination of about 10-20 students, teachers, maintenance staff, administrators and other school faculty were formed at three participating Robertson County schools: Jo Byrns Elementary, Greenbrier Middle and White House Heritage High. The green teams at the schools learned about saving energy and put that learning into practice within the school and in their homes and community. The goal of the program is to provide students with a foundation in energy principles and leadership opportunities so that they feel empowered in their school communities. According to Jennifer Barrie, local project leader for TVA Green Schools, the program focuses on behavior change, which is a no-cost, or very low-cost change. An end-of-the-year celebration dinner was held for all participants. The group at left includes students and faculty representing each of the three participating schools, along with special guests State Sen. Kerry Roberts, Director of Schools Daniel Whitlow, Assistant Director of Schools Dr. Danny Weeks and Board of Education Chair Stony Crockett and Vice Chair Alan Heard. When students return to school in August, green teams will continue with their activities and audits, and, when finished, they will complete final audit reports. For more information about the Green Schools Program, visit www.greenschoolsnational.com.

Winners of the Cheatham County Fifth-Grade Spelling Bee are, from left, Brayden Hively of West Cheatham Elementary, first place; Matthew Armstrong of West Cheatham Elementary, second place; and Kaitlin McNeely of Ashland City Elementary, third place.

Winners of the Cheatham County Fifth-Grade Math Contest are, from left, Alexis Ford of Cheatham Middle, first place; Stephen Jacobs of Harpeth Middle, second place; and Noah Mayo of Cheatham Middle, third place.
Director candidates have July 26 deadline

Members of Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation interested in serving on CEMC’s board of directors can obtain a petition from the general manager’s office. Petitions must be signed by at least 15 members.

The petition must be completed and turned in by the deadline date of July 26, which is 60 days prior to the 2011 annual membership meeting. The 2011 meeting will be held Sept. 24 at Rossview High School in Clarksville.

Anyone with a valid membership in good standing as of July 26 can vote in the director elections. Those applying for membership after July 26 will not be eligible to vote (Article 3 - Section 3.05, CEMC Bylaws). CEMC members can vote for director candidates from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. on Sept. 23 at their district offices or at the annual meeting on Sept. 24.

Tennessee-Kentucky Threshermen’s Association

42nd Annual Threshing Show July 15-16

Bell School Grounds in Adams.

Admission $6 — Children 10 and under FREE
Gates open at 8 a.m. with FREE PARKING
COME JOIN THE FUN!
Sponsored in part by
Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation

CEMC to close for Independence Day

All offices of Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation will be closed for the Independence Day holiday on Monday, July 4. However, crews will be on call in the event of any power outages.

To report an outage or other power emergency, please call CEMC’s toll-free telephone number: 1-800-987-2362.

We hope you have a safe and enjoyable holiday weekend!