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Mission Statement

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation is committed to meeting the needs of our membership by delivering safe, affordable and reliable services the cooperative way.

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Between the Lines

News from your local leadership

Let's talk

The energy industry is undergoing rapid change, and technology is paving the way for innovation in the way energy is used, produced, stored and shared. Consumers are interested in green energy alternatives while smart homes and apps make managing energy use and paying your electric bill more convenient than ever. While the changing energy market has created more options, it has also resulted in utility scams and misleading information.

Utility scams are common because of the vast number of utilities that exist, and consumers are understandably anxious with the threat of disruption to their service. Second, new products and services in the energy industry provide an opening for scammers and pop-up companies to provide misleading information or shoddy products and services.

A common phone scam typically begins with a phone number that appears to be from a valid utility company. The scammer will claim you have a past due account and threaten to disconnect service or take legal action. The scammer will typically demand that you use a prepaid debit card or money order — often within a very short, urgent time frame — to pay the “past due” amount.

You can combat this scam by being aware of the status of your account. Never give your banking or personal information over the phone to someone you did not call. If you have a question or concern about your energy bill, call Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation directly at 1-800-987-2362. Do not use the phone number given by the scammer.

Another scam we see from time to time is connected to rooftop solar. Homeowners with rooftop solar may receive sales calls offering accessories, upgrades or extended warranties. Again, if you are not expecting the call, don't be fooled. These calls offering misleading information are likely a scam. Call CEMC or the company that installed the solar

array if you think there may be a problem. Other than occasional cleaning, rooftop solar (if installed correctly) is virtually maintenance-free.

If you're considering solar for your home, make sure you are working with a reputable company. Because this is still an emerging industry with evolving technology, there has been a proliferation of pop-up companies in the market to make a quick buck. Representatives of rooftop solar companies may have more sales experience than knowledge of the energy industry, and their primary goal could be making a sale and moving on to the next prospect.

If you are considering installing solar, give us a call. CEMC can offer candid advice and information to help you determine whether rooftop or ground-mounted solar is right for you. After all, CEMC has a different “bottom line” that is not driven by profits. We take a more holistic, objective view of how to achieve energy and cost savings for our members, and that may or may not include rooftop solar.

In this ever-changing environment, it's important to remember you have a trusted energy adviser — your local electric cooperative. We are a community-focused organization that works to efficiently deliver affordable, reliable and safe energy to our members.

Remember: We're just one call or click away, so please reach out with any questions about your electric service or bills. We're here to help.



By Chris A. Davis
*General Manager,
Cumberland Electric
Membership
Corporation*

CEMC partners with TVA to donate \$70,000 toward COVID-19 assistance

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation is proud to announce that it has partnered with the Tennessee Valley Authority to award \$70,000 to seven local assistance agencies to help the local communities it serves during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

“CEMC has worked with these agencies for many years, and they do an excellent job of providing assistance in a fair and respectful manner to those in need in our communities,” said Seth Roberts, CEMC member services manager. “Gallatin C.A.R.E.S., Good Samaritan of Stewart County, Portland C.A.R.E.S., C.O.P.E. of Robertson County, White House Hope Center, Bethesda Center of Ashland City and Urban Ministries of Clarksville will each be using the donations to assist CEMC members with COVID-19 related relief.”

Funding through CEMC was matched by TVA’s COVID-19 Community Care Fund, which helps local power companies meet immediate needs in their communities by providing matching funds for local initiatives addressing hardships created by this pandemic.

“In the spirit of public power, we are honored to partner with local power companies to address the unprecedented challenges facing those we serve,” said Jeannette Mills, TVA executive vice president and chief external relations officer. “TVA has a mission of service to make life better for the people of the Valley, and providing these funds to address immediate needs is one way we can help ease the burdens on families and communities.”

For additional information about CEMC, visit us online at www.cemc.org. To learn more about TVA, visit www.tva.gov.



Director candidates must meet Aug. 11 deadline

Members of Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation who are interested in serving on the board of directors can obtain petitions from the general manager's office. Each petition must be signed by at least 15 members.

The petition must be completed and turned back in by the deadline of Tuesday, Aug. 11, which is 60 days prior to the 2020 annual meeting. This year's meeting will be held Saturday, Oct. 10, at Stewart County High School in Dover.

An election will be held for the following director positions: North Stewart, North Montgomery, South Sumner and Director at Large.

Anyone with a valid membership in good standing as of Aug. 11 can vote in director elections. Those applying for membership after Aug. 11 will not be eligible to vote in this year's election but are welcome to attend the meeting and register for prizes.

(CEMC Bylaws Article 3 — Section 3.05)



Project Help: Neighbors helping neighbors

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, in cooperation with local energy assistance agencies, offers a program in which members who choose to participate can donate \$1 or more each month to help provide some relief to individuals who are struggling to pay their utility bills.

The program, Project Help, allows members to contribute an additional \$1 on their electric bills each month to help pay the utility bills of the elderly, disabled and/or those who are not economically self-sufficient. Project Help is a voluntary program. All money collected from Project Help goes to energy assistance agencies in our communities, which determine how these special funds are distributed.

If you would like to contribute to Project Help, you can do so by marking the box on your bill stub and completing the Project Help section on the back of your bill. Or contact CEMC Customer Service by phone at 1-800-987-2362.

By donating to Project Help, you can help provide some relief to individuals who are struggling to pay their utility bills. A dollar a month can truly make a difference.



Make room for roadside crews

When the power goes out, so do Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation's line crews. Lineworkers are the first to respond after an outage occurs, and they work tirelessly to restore power to the communities we serve.

Lineworkers frequently work alongside busy roadways, often only feet away from passing cars.

If you're traveling and see one of our crews on the side of the road, we kindly ask that you move over if possible and give our employees a little extra space to work. We deeply care about the safety of all, and this extra precaution ensures just that. It shows common courtesy, and it is required by Tennessee state law.

In 2011, Tennessee's electric cooperatives led a coalition to revise the state's existing move over law to include utility workers. The requirements of the law are simple.

If you approach a crew while traveling on a two-lane road, moving over to the next lane might not be an option. In this case, we simply ask that you slow down

when approaching roadside crews. If you approach a crew while traveling on a four-lane road and safety and traffic conditions allow, we ask that you move over into the far lane.

CEMC's lineworkers are trained to handle the dangers at the top of the pole, but we have no control over drivers passing by at the bottom of the pole. Unfortunately, our crews have too many stories of a close call with a passing car. You can help our team get home safe — by slowing down and paying attention.

Utility crews aren't the only ones who could use the extra space. Emergency responders like police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians often find themselves responding to emergency situations near busy roadways. Follow the same procedures mentioned above to help keep these crews safe.

There's plenty of room for all. Let's work together to keep everyone safe on our local roadways.

More information about the law is available at moveovertennessee.org.

Know the difference between disinfecting and sanitizing

When it comes to cleaning, not all jobs are created equal. When you've got a big mess in the kitchen, do you clean, disinfect or sanitize? These terms are often used interchangeably, but, believe it or not, each is different.

Cleaning dirt or food from a surface, for example, doesn't necessarily kill germs and bacteria that can cause us to become sick. That's why it's important to know the difference between disinfecting and sanitizing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers this guidance:

Disinfecting works by using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces or objects. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection. Hospitals, for example, disinfect areas that have come into contact with bodily fluids, and parents typically disinfect areas where a baby's diaper is changed.

Sanitizing lowers the number of germs on surfaces or objects to a safe level as judged by public health standards or requirements. This process works by either cleaning or disinfecting surfaces or objects to lower the



risk of spreading infection. Most people sanitize kitchen surfaces that come into contact with food.

Pay close attention to hazard warnings and directions on product labels. Cleaning products and disinfectants often call for the use of gloves or eye protection. For example, gloves should always be worn to protect your hands when working with bleach solutions.

Visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus for more information on how to protect yourself and your family.

Raise the thermostat and stay comfortable

It's air-conditioning season, and that means a spike in your family's energy use. This summer, make an effort to waste less cold air. Three quick do-it-yourself jobs will help:

1. Buy an inexpensive caulk gun from a home-improvement store and caulk around your windows and doors.

Little cracks can be big energy wasters because they let your comfortable, air-conditioned air out of the house.

2. Inspect the interior side of your home's exterior walls. There, you'll find cable and phone cords coming inside. Around them are tiny gaps that double as escape hatches for cool air. They also let hot outdoor air sneak indoors. Caulk around them.

3. Add insulation to your attic. Most homes are built with plenty of attic insulation to keep the hot air that pounds on your roof from finding its way inside. But over time, that insulation deteriorates or gets knocked out of place. If that has happened in your attic, freshen up the insulation.



Then, push the thermostat up to 78 degrees and turn on your ceiling fans. You'll save energy and still feel comfortable.

Visit us online at www.cemc.org/energy-tips.html for more energy-saving tips.

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Alexa, can you help me save energy?

By Paul Wesslund

Before this year's virus protection measures turned business meetings and even family gatherings into smartphone conference calls and video conferences, your electric appliances jumped on the bandwagon of internet-connected energy.

If that makes your gadgets and gizmos sound almost human, well, in some ways that's exactly what's happening. Talking to a computer isn't just for Capt. Kirk on "Star Trek" anymore — surveys show about one in four American adults owns a smart speaker or technology like the Amazon Echo, Google Home or Apple HomePod. Now we can just ask Alexa or Siri to tell us the weather or how to save money on our electric bill.

Appliances you control from your phone aren't just luxury items anymore, says Brian Sloboda, director of consumer solutions with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

"Two years ago, when you would buy a 'smart' appliance, you were really buying a high-end product. Now they're in the middle," he says. "More and more appliances are smart, and they have come down in price. It's everything from lightbulbs you screw into your table lamps to your microwave to your washing machine to

your thermostat that you can control through a voice assistant or apps on the phone."

Sloboda says that all those internet-connected devices can not only make you more energy efficient but can help you take advantage of your electric service in ways you never even imagined. But if your machines are acting more like people, you'll also want to take precautions to protect your security and privacy — after all, smart speakers are on and listening in all the time. Sloboda advises that you might want to get in the habit of reading the fine print that comes with instructions and app downloads so you know how your personal information is being used.

Sloboda keeps up with appliance developments as his full-time job, but he also recently brought one of those humanoids into his home.

"My washing machine sends me an email every month telling me how much electricity it has used," he says. "It gives me tips on how to save energy. It suggests I could wash the clothes in cold water to save energy. It will gently tell you that rather than washing a small load, it's more efficient to let the clothes accumulate."

If all that sounds a little creepy, smart speaker manufacturers and marketers understand. They try to encourage customers to get more familiar with their

devices. They want you to ask your smart speaker to tell you a joke or play music. Sloboda says that in electric co-op studies of how people might use voice-activated devices to manage their energy use, owners like making those personalized connections.

"Consumers in these focus groups refer to Alexa as their friend," he says.

About one in four American adults owns a smart speaker or internet-connected device like Amazon Echo, Google Home or Apple HomePod. Now, we can ask Alexa or Siri to tell us today's forecast or how to save on our monthly energy bills. Photo credit: Amazon



“They start to give devices human attributes. They really do refer to Alexa as ‘she’ rather than ‘it.’”

While apps and speakers can help you use energy more efficiently by alerting you to lights on in rooms you’re not using or suggesting you clean the filter in your washing machine, Sloboda says smart thermostats offer some of the biggest potential energy savings. Heating and cooling are among a home’s top energy users, and high-tech thermostats are getting easier to use and more innovative. These days, they not only can change temperatures set for daytime or nighttime but can track your phone as you leave the house or move from room to room, figuring out your habits and making adjustments based on your lifestyle.

Before buying a smart thermostat, Sloboda advises learning about it to make sure it’s compatible with your heating and cooling system.

Sloboda sees the future of smart technology getting even smarter. He says electric co-ops and other utility groups are involved in studies where people describe their values to their apps and speakers. If saving money is the most important thing to you, your lights might dim in a part of the room you’re not using. If comfort is your top priority, the temperature will stay within a certain range. For those especially concerned about the environment, the dishwasher might delay its start until renewable power is available because the sun is shining or the wind is blowing.

Along with all those mind-blowing benefits comes the need for precautions. Anything connected to the internet can be hacked — that could be a home security system, a baby monitor or a TV.

The first safety step Sloboda advises is to change the password on any of those devices. Every one of them comes with a ridiculously easy-to-crack password like “1234” or “Password.” Check regularly for software

updates and install them — they often add protections from the latest cyberthreats.

In addition to security, also pay attention to privacy. Many interactions with the internet will collect information on you. A smart speaker is listening to everything that goes on in your home all the time. Reading all those tiny-type agreements before you click “accept” might seem like an unrealistic pain, but they generally will tell you what kind of protections are in place to keep your personal information private.

Sloboda also recommends getting involved in online communities about your internet devices so you can know more about privacy, security and how to make the best use out of your smart technology.

“All of these devices generally have some sort of online community for people to engage in and learn from each other,” says Sloboda. “Folks love talking about their devices, whether it’s a car or a doorbell. People love talking about technology, and they love showing off the things they’ve figured out.”

He even sees high-tech as a way to bring people closer as they make better use of their electricity.

“We sometimes look at smart technology and we think it is meant to isolate us, but you can really turn it around and go to in-person meet-ups or engage online to share tips and tricks,” says Sloboda. “I am a real big believer that technology can actually bring us together.”

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation’s landscape.

It’s summer: Use less hot water

When it’s warm outdoors, long, hot showers become less necessary. Make a point of using less hot water during the summer, and you could see a drop in both your water and energy bills. The less hot water you use, the less you will have to pay to heat it. The fact is that water heating accounts for about 18 percent of all the energy your family uses at home.

Here is how to cut that energy use:

- Lower the temperature of your water heating to the warm setting, which is 120 degrees. The U.S. Department of Energy says that temperature not only can lower energy bills, it can prevent the water from scalding you.
- Run your dishwasher only when it’s full. Never wash dishes by hand; that actually uses more water and energy.

- Choose the “cold water” setting on your clothes washer. Your laundry will still get clean.
- Fix leaky faucets. One drip of hot water per second from a leaky water faucet or showerhead wastes 1,661 gallons of water a year, according to the Energy Department. And it can cost you up to \$35 a year.
- Switch to low-flow faucets and showerheads. An Energy Department tip: Put a gallon bucket under your showerhead. Turn on the shower as you normally would in the morning, and set a timer. If it takes less than 20 seconds to fill that bucket to the 1 gallon mark, it’s time to replace your showerhead with a water-saving model.