

# NEWSLINE

A PUBLICATION OF SAM HOUSTON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

## WE'RE YOUR ENERGY EFFICIENCY PARTNER

*From the Desk of H.E. Striedel, General Manager  
Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, Inc.*

In a day when it seems that a dollar buys less and less, Sam Houston Electric wants to help you get the best deal you can on electricity. After all, wasting energy not only costs you money – it forces us to buy more power from generating plants, adding to the cost of operating the system and ultimately adding to your electric bill.

The way we figure it, energy conservation is a partnership effort between the cooperative and you, our members. Whether it's providing tips on installing energy-efficient lighting in your home, insulating your water heater, changing the filters in your heat pump, or pointing out ways to conserve energy during the hot summer months – we're committed to providing information that will help you keep your electric bill as low as possible.

While you work to reduce your energy costs at home, we are working to put the latest technology in place to better manage the system of power plants, wires and substations that bring the power to you. This new technology adds to the overall savings and can thereby be passed on to you.

As an electric cooperative, we are here to provide reliable power to our members – not to create profits. The principle on which we were founded – service to our local communities – is just as strong today as the day we opened our doors in 1939.

Regardless of how much electricity you use, the employees and management at Sam Houston Electric Cooperative will do everything we can to help you get the most out of your power dollar.



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## MOST OF TEXAS IS WAITING TO SEE IF DEREGULATION WORKS



**The photographic area of this map shows the geographic area of Texas covered by electric cooperatives who will have the option to “wait and see” whether or not deregulation works before being forced into a restructured market.**

**W**hile the media buzz you’ve heard may have led you to believe that deregulation will automatically take effect for all Texans on January 1, 2002, the truth is that most of Texas is served by electric cooperatives and municipalities. Senate Bill 7 (SB7), the Texas Restructuring Law that goes into effect on January 1, 2002, applies differently to electric cooperatives and municipalities than it does to investor-owned utilities.

When Texas lawmakers designed SB7, they recognized that electric cooperatives operate under a democratic business model and that we answer to our member-owners, rather than to investors. So, cooperatives and municipalities were given the option to “wait and see” whether or not deregulation will be beneficial to their membership before opting-in. This is good news, because there is tremendous uncertainty surrounding the issue; and once a cooperative “opts-in,” the decision cannot be reversed.

Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, along with other Texas electric cooperatives (at the urging of their members), has decided to “wait and see.” This means that the Board of Directors and management of Sam Houston EC won’t “opt-in” to deregulation unless we’re sure that it’s best for you, our member-owners.

## REMEMBER THIS

### IT'S TIME TO USE YOUR POWER WISELY

**A**s the heat of summer arrives, it's time to address cost effective ways to keep your home comfortable without incurring unnecessary electric costs. Here are some things you can do to stay cool, conserve power and improve the energy efficiency of your home:

#### PUT FANS TO GOOD USE

- When possible use a ceiling fan to stay comfortable instead of running your air conditioner. By using only a fan, you'll reduce your energy consumption by 60 percent or more.
- Every degree below 75 that you set the thermostat increases your cooling costs by nearly 10 percent. Turn up the thermostat and turn on a ceiling fan to create a more comfortable atmosphere and reduce your electric bill.
- On very humid days, setting your fan speed on low will take more moisture out of the air and keep you more comfortable. On drier days, set the fan speed on high.



#### MAKE YOUR THERMOSTAT YOUR FRIEND

- Setting the thermostat at a really low temperature to cool off a warm room quickly will only run up your electric bill. Cool slowly for maximum efficiency.
- Even the most modern AC systems are only capable of keeping your home 20 degrees cooler than the outside temperature. Turning your thermostat any lower only uses up energy and dollars. So, if it's 100 degrees outside, keep your thermostat set at 80 degrees to avoid running your AC system ragged.

- Don't place lamps, televisions or other heat-producing appliances near a central air thermostat or window unit. The thermostat will sense the extra heat, causing it to work harder and run longer than needed.

#### BEWARE OF ENERGY THIEVES

- Inspecting the seals around your doors and windows to ensure they are tight will keep hot air and moisture outside and cool air inside your home. Properly caulking or sealing these areas creates a more energy efficient home and saves you money.

- Make sure window units are installed on a level, flat surface and are properly sealed. Otherwise, drainage systems and other features won't work effectively, and the overall efficiency of the units will be reduced.

• A dirty air conditioner filter can lower your air conditioner's energy efficiency by 5 to 15 percent. Your AC filter should be cleaned or replaced every month. Mark your calendar so you won't forget to change your filter regularly.

- If you have a window unit, install it on the north or east side of your home so the outdoor heat exchanger will be protected from direct sunlight. A unit working in the shade is up to 10 percent more efficient than an air conditioner working away in the hot sun.



## GET COVERED WITH LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE ...ANOTHER BENEFIT OF CO-OP MEMBERSHIP

**A**s a cooperative member, you know we work hard to serve your best interests and provide you with dependable electric service. But the benefits of membership don't stop there! Sam Houston EC is now providing its members the opportunity to purchase National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Long-term Care Insurance.

As a nation we are living longer, and that's great news. But living longer can mean chronic conditions and illnesses that require care and assistance during the later years of life. While Medicare pays for hospital stays and physician visits, there are few provisions for long-term care costs.

Long-term care insurance is designed to fill the gap between what the government covers and what you could potentially have to pay out of your own pocket. Long-term care insurance is designed to help people with conditions related to the natural course of

aging; such as accidents, physical disability, chronic illness such as heart disease or diabetes, or cognitive impairment, like Alzheimer's disease. Long-term care insurance isn't just for nursing home care anymore. It provides choices, in the event care is needed.

The NRECA Long-term Care Program is reasonably priced and available to cooperative members and their families. Premium discounts up to 15 percent are available for cooperative members, and married couples that sign up receive an additional discount. The younger you are when you first buy a policy, the lower your annual premium will be.

Don't let long-term healthcare costs create a devastating effect on your family. To find out more about the NRECA Long-term Care Program and how it works, call our toll-free number, 1-800-458-0381, and we'll put you in touch with a Long-term Care Specialist. If you desire, you may schedule an appointment for a free personal consultation.

**SAFETY MATTERS****FLICKERING LIGHTS  
AND HOT BULBS MAY  
BE SIGNS OF DANGER**

Just as an ambulance's flashing light alerts you to an emergency, a flickering light bulb should get your attention too. It could be the bulb is simply about to burn out. But sometimes, a flickering bulb is a sign that the light fixture is damaged or the electrical connection is faulty. Don't ignore these signs! Turn off the power immediately and check the connection to the fixture and its internal wiring. If you're not confident in your expertise, call an electrician. Leaving a flickering light to burn could cause an electrical fire. So, take precaution and be on the safe side.



## EVEN OUT YOUR ELECTRIC BILLS

If summer electric bills get to be a strain on your wallet, you might consider Sam Houston Electric's Even Monthly Payment Program. When you sign up for "Levelized Billing," you will be billed a set amount each month for electricity. That way, you don't have to cope with the rise and fall of electric costs throughout the year. To be eligible for this service, you must have had:

- An active account with the cooperative for at least 12 consecutive months; and
- Annual billing totaling \$300 or more.

If you qualify, your set monthly payment will be based upon your average kilowatt-hour usage incurred during the previous year. Interested in signing up? Call a Member Services Representative or log on to [www.samhouston.net](http://www.samhouston.net) for more details on the program.

### YOU MIGHT NOTICE SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT ABOUT YOUR JULY STATEMENT...

For your convenience, Sam Houston Electric Cooperative has created a new look for your electric bill. We think you'll find it more descriptive and easier to read. Maybe one of the best things about the new bill is that it includes a graph of your electric usage. So, you can see how much electricity you use over the course of the year and be aware of your peak usage times. Also, making your payment by credit card has never been easier. If you choose to pay your bill with credit, just fill out the credit information on the front of the pay stub and return it in the envelope provided. We hope you find the new bill format to be more user-friendly. If you have any questions or would like more information about how to read your electric bill, call a Sam Houston EC Member Services Representative at 1-800-458-0381.



## BLUEBERRY BUCKLE

Enjoy this “berry” delicious delight as a light summer dessert or with your morning coffee.

### TOPPING

1/2 cup sugar  
1/3 cup flour  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/4 cup soft butter

### BATTER

3/4 cup sugar  
1/4 cup shortening  
1 egg  
1/2 cup milk  
2 cups flour  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
2 cups rinsed & well-drained fresh blueberries

Mix together topping ingredients and set aside. Combine sugar, shortening and egg; mix thoroughly. Stir in milk. Sift together flour, baking powder and salt; gradually stir into wet mixture until just moistened (do not overmix). Fold in blueberries; pour batter into greased and floured 9-inch square baking pan. Sprinkle on topping. Bake at 375°F for 45-50 minutes or until toothpick inserted comes out clean (or with few crumbs).

Serves 6.