

# Seal of Approval

Check the seals around your doors and windows to make sure cooled or heated air is not escaping. If you feel a draft, add weather stripping or caulking to keep the elements outside and your bill low.



**Sam Houston**  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



# One Penny at a Time

## Electricity is about the only thing you can still get value for just a penny's worth



A lot of us can remember when penny candy actually cost a penny. For a nickel, you could buy enough candy to rot your teeth out, as our mothers used to say.

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 you can still get for a penny is electricity. You might call it "penny electricity."

To make the math easier, let's say the average rate for a kilowatt-hour of electricity is 10 cents. That is

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.

Where else can you get that kind of value?

How many eggs will a penny buy? How much milk, bread, coffee, medicine or gasoline? Gas has come down from its stratospheric levels of several years ago, but there is still no comparison to the value of electricity. For example, if a gallon of gas costs \$2.50 and your car gets 25 miles to the gallon, you can drive 176 yards—about two blocks—on a penny's worth of gas.

Most of us would take 11 hours of lighting for a penny over a two-block drive any day. The value is just as evident when powering things other than lighting. Take, for instance, your smartphone. Using the same 10 cents per kWh price, penny electricity allows you to fully charge your iPhone more than 18 times for a penny. You can charge it once every day of the year for about 20 cents total.

Not impressed? Well, how about these other examples of what you can do with just a penny's worth of electricity: power a 1,000-watt microwave on high for 6 minutes; run a 200-watt desktop computer for 30 minutes; watch 2.5 hours of your favorite shows on a 40-watt, 32-inch, LED television or 1.3 hours on a 75-watt, 75-inch mega TV. The examples are endless.

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. It's that we use it for so many different things: lighting, heating, cooking, cooling, refrigeration, cleaning, washing, pumping, entertainment, communications—even transportation these days.

Few corners of our lives are left untouched by electricity.

Unfortunately, we don't always appreciate it. When our monthly electric bill comes, we open it and may 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 received for the money.

Many of us might remember penny candy, but fewer and fewer of us remember the day electricity came to our homes. And for those who do, they'd probably tell us "young people" that we'd never know what it was like to have electricity for the very first time. It must have been glorious. Nowadays, we take it for granted.

Most of rural America was energized in the 1930s and 1940s. The price of electricity at the time was slightly less than a penny a kilowatt-hour—true penny electricity.

A lot has changed since then. Wages and the cost of living today are a far cry from 1940, when the average annual wage was less than \$150 a month and the average cost of a house was \$3,920. But one thing that hasn't changed is the value of electricity. In nearly 80 years, its price has risen much slower than the rate of inflation.

A penny in the 1930s and 1940s had as much buying power as 17 cents today, which means the residential price of electricity—which now averages 12 cents a kWh nationally and less than 10 cents in the Pacific Northwest—is actually a better deal today than it was in 1940.

The value of electricity is like the bygone days of penny candy, and it's OK to indulge yourself a little. But, unlike penny candy, penny electricity won't rot your teeth out.

ISTOCK



# Keep-Cool Strategies for Summer

ISTOCK



Saving money on air-conditioning bills is more likely to happen if you have a plan. Plan a strategy for keeping your home cool this summer without breaking the bank.

Here are five tips:

1. Get a qualified service technician to give the once-over to your central air conditioning system and any window units you might have. A well-tuned air conditioner will operate in the most energy-efficient way.
2. Set your thermostat to 78 degrees while you're home, and higher before you leave the house. If you have a programmable thermostat, it can set itself.
3. Turn ceiling fans on when you enter a room and off when you leave. A ceiling fan moves the air around so anyone in the room feels cooler. There's no benefit to running a fan when nobody is around.
4. Close your drapes or blinds to block the heat when it's sunny outside, but leave them open on cloudy days to get some natural daylight into your rooms.
5. Avoid cooking inside on hot summer days. Instead, grill outdoors, serve cold dishes, order takeout or heat food up in the microwave.

# Preparing for Hurricane Season

ISTOCK



When a hurricane threatens, listen for instructions from local officials. When they call for an evacuation in your area, get going without delay.

- Discuss evacuation plans with your family before hurricane season (June 1-Nov. 20). Make a checklist of what you need to do before you leave town and review it.
- Monitor NOAA weather radio and local TV and radio broadcasts during storm season.
- Prepare an emergency supply kit including: radio, flashlight,

extra batteries, extra eye glasses, bottled water, non-perishable food, dry clothes, bedding, insurance information, important documents, medications, copies of prescriptions and special products for babies, seniors, medically fragile family members, and pets.

- Learn evacuation routes before storm season. When there's a hurricane in the Gulf, keep your gas tank as full as possible. Expect traffic delays in an evacuation.

Register in the State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry (STEAR) online at <https://STEAR.dps.texas.gov> or Dial 2-1-1 to register if you have a disability or medical needs or if you simply do not have transportation. Gulf coast residents in evacuation zones with a disability or medical needs—who do not have friends or family to help—or do not have transportation should register in STEAR in advance.

SOURCE: PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF TEXAS

# Co-op Connections Deals



The Co-op Connections Card® is a member benefit program that

delivers discounts from participating businesses, both local and nationwide. Visit [www.connections.coop/samhoustonec](http://www.connections.coop/samhoustonec) for more deals. Sign your business up by visiting the Co-op's website at [www.samhouston.net](http://www.samhouston.net).

## Avon - Nancy Petersen

152 West Dove  
Livingston, TX 77351  
936-327-0150  
[www.avonbeautysite.com](http://www.avonbeautysite.com)  
Offer: \$2 off an Avon kit sign-up.  
Purchases up to \$25, 10% discount;  
\$25-49, 15% discount; more than \$50, 20% discount

## B&B Stake Company

Livingston, TX 77351  
936-327-2161  
Hours: M-Th, 7:30-5; F, 7:30-4:30  
Offer: 2% discount

## Bauer Carpet Cleaning & Restoration

2810 Hwy 190W  
Livingston, TX 77351  
936-327-6110  
Hours: M-F, 8-5  
Offer: 10% discount (residential only).

# Conservation Corner

ISTOCK



Make the sun work for you! Consider solar lights for outdoor lighting. Solar cells convert sunlight into electricity that

can be stored in a battery and tapped at night to make light.

SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY



## Kitchen Efficient with No-Bake Recipes



Cooking in the summer can be unbearable, and the last thing you want to do on the hottest, most humid days is turn on the oven to make dinner. Your air conditioner works extra hard during summer months to keep your home cool, so why not give it a break with easy, efficient, no-bake recipes? The recipe below is meant to help you make a delicious treat for your family, without breaking a sweat!

### Lemon Truffles

These quick and easy lemon truffles from “Premeditated Leftovers” is sure to satisfy any sweet tooth! Here’s the recipe:

2 1/2 cups lemon cake mix  
8 tablespoons melted butter  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
Zest of one large lemon

For Lemon Cake Mix:  
2 3/4 cups cake flour  
1 3/4 cups fine white sugar  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
3/4 teaspoons salt  
Zest of two lemons

Combine the cake mix ingredients into a large bowl, stir gently to combine. Add the melted butter, lemon juice and lemon zest. Use your hands to combine until the flour is moist and flakey. Roll dough into two-inch balls, roll in sugar and serve!

Remember, no-bake recipes are a great way to keep your kitchen cool during the summer and show off your culinary skills. This is just one tested favorite, but you can find a wealth of no-bake recipes online. Stay cool, and happy cooking!

## Keep the Whole Family Safe this Summer



Summertime is here! School is over, the weather is warm, the grill is hot and the pools are cool. Time to make sure our children and family members remember to have fun and be safe at the same time. Learn more at [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

For safety outdoors, children and adults should follow these rules:

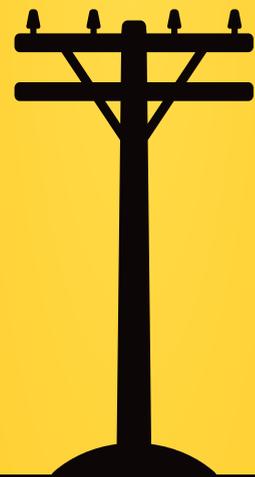
- Stay away from electrical equipment on the ground and overhead. Always be aware of the location of power lines.
- Never climb trees near power lines.
- Fly kites and model airplanes safely away from trees and overhead power lines.
- Water and electricity never mix! Keep electronics away from any water source.
- Never touch an electrical appliance if you are wet; always dry off completely.

## SAFETY STARTS WITH YOU

### Power poles are a bad place to post signs.

Power poles may seem like the ideal place to hang a garage sale sign or a basketball goal, but nails and tacks make it dangerous for line technicians to climb poles.

They can also puncture gloves and other protective equipment, creating a serious safety hazard. Please help us work safely by not posting signs on power poles.



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[www.samhouston.net](http://www.samhouston.net)



Tom McDonough started fishing in Lake Livingston shortly after it was completed in the early 1970s. He would always get his limit of white bass, crappie, stripers, and assorted other varieties. He and his wife moved away for several years, but when they decided to retire in 2003, Lake Livingston was their first and only choice. Tom wanted to enjoy the plethora of fish he remembered from his earlier days.

# WATER- WILLOW

By Jeff Miller

[Opposite] Each of these floating red baskets can hold about a dozen plants. They are transported to the planting sites by boat.



[Above] The water-willows start out as small plants about 3 to 4 inches tall in the water, and within a matter of months, grow to several feet tall.



[Below] After just a few months, the plants have reached the correct size for planting and are transferred to large floating baskets to be used by the volunteers on planting day.

“When we moved back, one of the first things I did was take my boat out to all the places I used to frequent and I was shocked at the lack of habitat,” McDonough said. “The grass was totally gone, there was no habitat coverage for the fish, there were no more frogs in the lake because the tadpoles couldn’t survive. The water was a lot muddier than it used to be. I used to be able to see a spinner bait coming through the water 20 to 30 inches deep easily. Today, you can’t see more than two inches down.”

So he decided to do something about it.

It became apparent to McDonough, and a handful of others who were deeply interested in preserving the aquatic life in the lake, that part of the reason for the diminishing number of fish was due in part to the fact that over the years as Lake Livingston quickly developed and homes were built, bulkheads were going up at an incredible rate as well. Of the 475 miles of shoreline on the lake, an estimated 45 percent is bulkheaded, much of that in the southern part of the lake in Polk and San Jacinto Counties, where most of the bass fishing takes place.

In 2013, the Trinity River Authority (TRA) and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TWPd) approved a plan to foster natural habitat around Texas’ second largest lake. The plan, developed by McDonough, Texas Black Bass Unlimited and the Piney Wood Lakes Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists, created Lake Livingston Friends of Reservoirs (LLFoR) and defined a clear mission to reestablish Lake Livingston as a prime destination for anglers and water enthusiasts by restoring aquatic habitat.

What happened to Lake Livingston over the years is not uncommon for reservoir lakes. It’s typical for lakes to lose

their natural plants and grasses as they age. Over the past 46 years, the once abundant vegetation along the bottom and shores of Lake Livingston has declined to a point of non-existence. The Trinity River, which is the feeding source for the lake, brings in a lot of silt, and with diminished vegetation for “filtering” the water as it flows in, the silt impacts not only the water, but also the very survival of fish, reptiles, amphibians and shore birds, not to mention the enjoyment of fishermen and other water enthusiasts.

LLFoR is working to restore the habitat for fish and wildlife populations, as well as improving fishing and water quality and reducing erosion by planting vegetation in non-bulkhead areas to inhibit silt flow and provide a shelter for the small fish and fingerlings which keep the lake growing. In the process, they did something unexpected.

They built a multi-generational volunteer pool which ranges from local high school students to retirees. The volunteer force includes people in their early teens to octogenarians, and even inmate horticulturalists from Huntsville’s TDC Ellis Unit, who are exploring growth methods to produce larger, healthier plants in less time.

“It became obvious that we needed more than just the members of our organizations to make this 10-year project succeed,” said Ed Parten, with Texas Black Bass Unlimited. “We needed to involve our local high schools to grow, propagate, and plant these water-willows to demonstrate to them the economic and ecological impact of a healthy aquatic habitat. And in the long-term, maybe some of these students will be motivated enough to make it their career.”

To get started, they needed to establish what type of plants would best serve the purpose. Many native Texas water plants

# REJUVENATION

are very invasive and could potentially have a negative effect on the program’s goals by multiplying too quickly and literally choking off areas of the lake, which has happened in other, smaller Texas lakes.

After much research, they ended up choosing the American Water-willow (*Justicia Americana*). These plants are non-invasive, fast-growing and very hardy. They are known to colonize up to 10 square feet per plant within two to three years. Once established, they will create vital habitat for fish, birds, and other invertebrates, and improve water quality, adding significant value to the surrounding community.

Since 2014, 17 sites have been planted with more than 10,000 water-willows, including Lake Livingston State Park, Waterwood, Kickapoo Creek and Wolf Creek Park.

So how can they keep the pace of growing these plants as fast as they are planting them? The answer lies with the volunteers.

“When a lake first comes to fruition, plant growth happens naturally,” said Chad Holton, assistant project manager for the TRA. “But as time goes on, these plants die off. Our project has volunteers to build propagation tanks where we can grow thousands of plants at a time. The high school students get involved with not only planting, but also propagating, cutting, transporting, and anything else they can get their hands on.”

The research being done at the Ellis Unit and at Lee College is going to speed up the propagation process so LLFoR can have more plants in less time. They expect to get more plants in the water to get the growth process moving even more quickly.

Students from seven independent school districts—Coldspring-Oakhurst, Corrigan-Camden, Goodrich, Livingston, Onalaska, Shepherd and Trinity High Schools—participate in growing plants on their campuses and in large plantings. LLFoR currently has 22 grow tanks in operation, each one containing between 600 and 700 plants.

“Getting the high schools involved was a real boom to the project,” Holton said. “It not only increased the volunteer base substantially, but it is also making great strides in getting them involved in critical environmental issues at an age where they just might seriously consider doing it for a long time.”

by highlighting innovative projects that are Texan-led, community-organized, and science-based.

But other than reducing erosion and making the lake cleaner, what other benefits do the LLFoR folks want to gain?

“By helping the lake and its fish, birds, and reptiles thrive, we expect to attract larger fishing tournaments, birders, naturalists, and water enthusiasts year-round,” Parten said. “We also want to see improvement of the lake’s shoreline, water quality, filtration, and wildlife habitats to enhance the economic value of Lake Livingston for residents.”

The plantings, which occur several times a year, have a festive atmosphere when all the volunteers show up. Hundreds of people are involved, with a train of school buses and cars bringing in volunteers, as well as a flotilla of boats brought in by volunteers to shuttle the students and other people out to the actual planting sites. There they don knee-high boots and start plugging the plants into the designated planting areas.

The students love it. They not only socialize (and get a day out of school and a delicious lunch), but they also know they are contributing to the long-term maintenance of the lake, where they have spent much of their childhood enjoying all that the lake has to offer. They want to be able to continue to enjoy the lake well into their adulthood.

# GROWING VOLUNTEERS

The project also got a big boost this year when they were named a “Conservation Wrangler” by Texan by Nature, a nonprofit founded by former First Lady Laura Bush. The organization aims to align the broad interests of conservation groups with business, healthcare, schools, the scientific community, and faith-based organizations, with a core belief that Texas’ prosperity and quality of life are inextricably linked to the conservation of natural resources.

“Conservation Wrangler is a program highlighting the very best Texan-led conservation projects occurring in Texas that demonstrate tangible returns for people, prosperity, and natural resources,” said Scott Ball, project director for LLFoR. “Our multi-generational volunteer pool, educational outreach, and focus on improving water quality and natural habitat align closely with Conservation Wrangler Program objectives.”

Ball is confident that a partnership with Texan by Nature will help increase awareness of LLFoR’s success and accelerate their efforts to expand beyond Polk, San Jacinto, and Trinity Counties. Working together, the two organizations will bring the message of conservation to new audiences statewide

The adults enjoy it as well. And many of the volunteers who serve on the board have conducted community outreach presentations, which have taken them into local schools, service organizations and even to the State Conference of Texas Master Naturalists. Much of this is not only to promote the planting program, but also to generate funds to keep the program robust. LLFoR is funded solely by small grants and personal and business donations, so getting the word out to the public is critical.

More and more entities are getting involved as they see the results of the volunteers’ work, and see the population of fish and other wildlife increase in Lake Livingston. But as is the case with almost all organizations, help is always needed to keep this aggressive, volunteer program growing.

If you would like to get involved, donate, or become a sponsor, you can visit their website at [www.llfor.org](http://www.llfor.org) or email [LLFOR2017@gmail.com](mailto:LLFOR2017@gmail.com) for more information.

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JEFF MILLER IS AN AWARD-WINNING LIVINGSTON-BASED FREELANCE WRITER WITH MORE THAN 40 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE.



[Background] The plants start out very small, and local high school students carefully place the small plants in trays after trimming off the excess leaves. These small plants then go into the propagation tanks to reach the proper height for planting.

[Right] The baskets must be hand-carried to the actual planting location after being offloaded from the boats.

