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SWRE POWER SOURCE

A Supplement to Oklahoma Living

UNDERSTANDING ENERGY DEMAND AND PURCHASING

Do you ever look at your electricity bill and wonder what it all means? If so, you might be interested in learning how energy demand and purchasing impact your utility bill.

To start, it's important to understand how electricity is made and how it's delivered to your home. Before Southwest Rural Electric can send electricity to your home, it needs to be generated by a power supplier. It then travels over high-voltage transmission lines to substations, where the voltage is reduced to a safer level. Then it travels through distribution power lines and transformers on its way to your home.

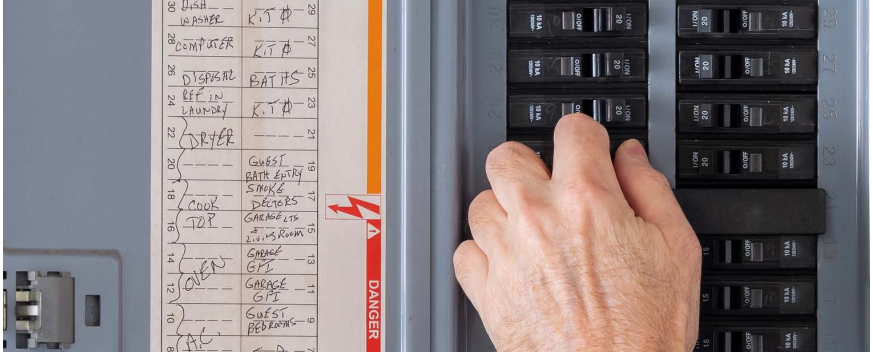
You play a big part in determining how much electricity needs to be generated to satisfy our community's power needs. That's where the terms "demand" and "consumption" come in. Demand is measured in kilowatts, and consumption is measured in kilowatt-hours. A light bulb consumes a certain number of watts, let's say 100 watts per hour. If that light bulb stays on for 10 hours, it uses 1,000 watts, or 1 kilowatt.

If you turn on 10 of those 100-watt bulbs for one hour, you're still consuming 1 kW. However, you're placing demand on SWRE to have that kW available to you over the course of one hour, instead of 10 hours. This requires our power supplier to produce more power in less time to meet your demand.

Your co-op purchases kilowatt-hours based on the peak demand of our members. This is typically during the evening, when families return home from work or school, cook dinner, and use appliances the most. That's why using electricity during this peak demand period often costs more for your co-op and our members.

You can help lower that peak demand—and your electric bill—by shifting energy-consuming tasks to a time outside the peak, which is typically 3–7 p.m. Adjustments like setting the dishwasher to run just before you go to bed, cooking outside on the grill and not setting the thermostat quite so cool can make a difference.

Generating and distributing power can be a tricky and complicated business, but rest assured SWRE works diligently to plan for and meet the energy demands of our community.



BREAKER BOX SAFETY BASICS

We use electricity in our homes throughout the day, but we rarely think about how it gets to wall outlets or switches. Distribution lines bring electricity to homes and most commonly connect to a house through a service drop. The electricity travels through the meter box to the service panel. The service panel, often called a breaker box, is where breakers and fuses protect the wires inside your house from electrical overload.

With so much electricity funneling out of the breaker box into your home, it's important to know how to safely use a breaker box.

Arc-fault circuit interrupters are installed directly in breaker boxes and are designed to protect against fires caused by arcing faults in home electrical wiring. Arcing faults can be triggered by overloaded circuits, damaged wires, cracked wire insulation, loose or improper connections, faulty electrical equipment, and overheated electrical wires.

An AFCI monitors current flow and can distinguish between normal, working arcs and unwanted, dangerous arcs. When an unwanted arcing condition is detected, it shuts down the circuit. It's important to note that AFCIs don't provide protection against all of the possible circuit faults that can cause fires, but they are a significant step forward in electrical fire safety. If your breaker box doesn't feature AFCIs, contact a qualified electrician to have them installed.

If an appliance is malfunctioning or there's another electrical issue, it may be necessary to cut off or switch on the power at the breaker box. If you must flip a switch at the breaker box, always remember to step away and look away as you do so. You want to protect your eyes and body just in case an arc should occur.

Never attempt to turn off power at the breaker box if you must stand in water to do so. Touching the breaker box while standing in water can cause an electric shock or death. If you can't reach your breaker box safely, call your electric cooperative to shut off power at the meter.

Be sure to call a qualified electrician if blowing fuses or tripping circuit breakers are a recurring problem. This means something is wrong with your electrical system, and it needs to be inspected.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

INDEPENDENCE DAY
Friday, July 4
Our office will be closed for the holiday.

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Always be cautious of unsolicited calls (or in-person visits) to your home from companies claiming to conduct energy audits. These are typically telemarketing firms that claim to be a third-party company or pose as a representative from your electric utility to gain access to homes and sell services with the promise of government rebates.

Many electric utilities provide energy audit services, but they are typically scheduled at the customer's request.

Source: Better Business Bureau

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

During summer months, run large appliances that emit heat such as clothes dryers and dishwashers during the evening when the outdoor temperature is lower. Running heat-emitting appliances in the evening will reduce indoor heat gain during the day when outdoor temperatures are highest and ultimately keep your air conditioner from working harder than necessary.

Source: energy.gov

Southwest Rural Electric
P.O. Box 310 • 700 N. Broadway
Tipton, OK 73570-0310
Headquarters: 1-800-256-7973

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Bill Pay Options:
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