



Coweta-Fayette



powerlines

DIGITAL DEVICES IMPACT ENERGY USE

We have gadgets galore, and Santa probably delivered even more to our homes over the holidays! They give us the ability to manage our homes in new and innovative ways, brilliant images and captivating sounds of modern entertainment options and of course, the internet. Clearly, digital devices reign supreme. Yet these cool new capabilities come with a couple of pitfalls; vampire loads and the issue of “technology reincarnation.”

Over the course of the Digital Age, electricity use has continued to increase. Families have multiple televisions. Computer prices have plummeted, meaning many homes now have multiple computers. Everyone in the family needs a cell phone. Gaming consoles and set top cable/satellite boxes satisfy our desire for entertainment.

Major appliances aside, most digital devices do not use 120-volt power, which is the standard voltage of a home outlet. They actually use a lot less. So, trying to plug your brand new smartphone directly into an outlet is going to lead to a fried device and lots of tears from someone. This is why low-voltage devices come with a power adapter. These “chargers” take the 120-volt electricity supplied by Coweta-Fayette EMC and convert it to say, five volts. Unfortunately, most folks leave their adapters plugged in to make recharging easier. The problem with this approach is the charger uses power even when it isn’t charging a device.

This invisible energy consumption is often called “vampire load.” Studies show that 5 to 10 percent of the average home’s energy use is from vampire loads. The only way to stop this is to unplug the power adapter when it is not in use or employ smart power strips. These look like the typical power strip but with a twist—only one socket gets power all the time. When the device or appliance connected to it turns on and starts using power, the remaining sockets receive power too. This is perfect for entertainment systems, computer setups, and a variety of other situations.

Technological advances have steadily increased energy efficiency and reduced purchase prices. On its face, this seems like a good thing. Unfortunately, when replacing a product at the end of its life, the tendency is to go bigger, or continue to use the old tech. This is the second issue I noted—technology reincarnation.

For example, flat screen television prices have plummeted as technology has evolved—and so has the amount of electricity they use. Consumers wander into the big box store and are dazzled by walls of giant, brilliant televisions. What they used to pay for the paltry 32” model now might net them a 50” giant. And who doesn’t want to see their favorite show or sports event in near life size? But if you spring for the bigger TV, you won’t benefit from the increased energy efficiency of the newer technology. The bigger model uses as much juice as the older, smaller TV, which likely ends up in another room (reincarnated in another setting) still using power.

Or refrigerators. These are the showpieces of the evolution of smart appliances. Many new models include touchscreens and cameras; they communicate over the internet and probably even keep food cold and make ice. Yet what often happens is the old refrigerator ends up in the basement or garage, reincarnated as a dedicated beverage unit or overflow.

I’ll offer a couple words of advice to help you avoid—or at least reduce—the effects of vampire loads and technology reincarnation. Invest in smart power strips or make a point to use outlets where you can conveniently unplug power adapters when not in use. Don’t oversize your replacement appliances and entertainment gear unless family needs dictate the larger capacities. And recycle the replaced appliances and equipment to stem technology reincarnation. You will enjoy the Digital Age for a lot less.

Tom Tate writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.



770-502-0226

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A LOOK INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

SANTA'S WORKSHOP ENERGY TIPS - 1

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY - PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - 2



JANUARY Conserve energy & improve efficiency in your home by participating in our SmartChoice Home Program for National Cut Your Energy Costs Day. (1/10)

FEBRUARY

Turn down the heat and light up the fireplace for your Valentine! Consider turning the heat off entirely for a cozy, energy-efficient evening.



MARCH "Spring forward" by replacing the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detector. Be sure to check alarms each month.

APRIL

Reduce your carbon footprint for Earth Day! (4/22) Simply reduce your water heater's temperature and/or install a low-flow showerhead.



MAY May is Electrical Safety Month and safety starts with you! Avoid overloading your home's electrical system to lower your risk of electrical fires.

JUNE

Heading outdoors this summer? Gardening is a great way to enjoy fresh air while staying active, but don't forget to call 811 before you dig!



JULY In honor of National Grilling Month, take the cooking outside & save energy! Be sure to inspect & clean your natural gas grill for safety and efficiency.

AUGUST

Get in the back-to-school spirit by increasing your thermostat during the day! With fewer people at home, you'll save energy during those hours.



SEPTEMBER During National Preparedness Month, plan ahead and prepare for potential disasters, such as tornadoes, floods and hurricanes.

OCTOBER

Be sure to change your furnace filter before turning on the heat, and don't forget to lock in your fixed rate with True Natural Gas!



NOVEMBER Cook up savings by using smaller appliances, like microwaves, toaster ovens & slow cookers when possible to increase efficiency!

DECEMBER

Rejoice in holiday savings by using LED lights! LED lights are 75% more efficient and last up to 25x longer than traditional incandescent lights.

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The President's Message

Chris Stephens
CEO

Innovation is great for the energy industry. Technology is paving the way for innovation in the way energy is used, produced, stored, and shared. Consumers are interested in more 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 for consumers, it has also resulted in more utility scams. 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 electric, heating, or water 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.

Avoid Phone Scams

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.

We will never call you and demand payment over the phone. 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 us directly at 770-502-0226. Do not use the phone number given by the scammer.

Avoid Solar Scams

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.

CFEMC offers free solar audits to help you determine whether rooftop solar is right for you. After all, CFEMC has a different "bottom line" that is not directly tied to the sale of a product or service. 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 advisor in Coweta-Fayette EMC. We are a community, and member, focused organization that works to efficiently deliver affordable, reliable, and safe energy to you.

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.

COMMON UTILITY SCAMS: DISCONNECTION DECEPTION

Scammers call and threaten service disconnection, demanding immediate payment.