



Meriwether Lewis Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Member Handbook

www.mlec.com

Keep this book handy for quick reference.



MLEC

Your Touchstone Energy[®]
Cooperative 

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Keep us posted!

Please let MLEC know any time you have a change in your address or phone number for the home where your power is connected.

Update your information by contacting MLEC:

- Phone your local office
- E-mail us at power@mlec.com

Welcome to MLEC

As a member-owner, you have unlocked a door to exceptional services, and we're not just talking electricity. MLEC's rich history of commitment and progress will serve you well in the exciting future that faces the electric industry.

While providing reliable, affordable electric service is our foundation, it is important to know that electricity is not the only thing MLEC does well. We provide other services (like the ones outlined in this hand-book) and will continue to offer more to add value to your MLEC ownership.

While MLEC is providing you services like electricity, energy efficiency information, safety programs, and rebate programs, we also maintain an active, visible role in community development and school programs.

MLEC and its employees take great pride in the relationship we have with our members and communities. As a new era dawns in the electric industry, we will partner even more to evolve into a full-service, quality organization.

From MLEC's humble beginning to where we are today, to where we hope to go tomorrow, a cooperative means working together. That is something MLEC members, communities, employees and board members have been doing well since 1939 and will continue into a new day.

On behalf of the MLEC employees and board members, I welcome you to our cooperative.



Hal Womble
President and CEO
Meriwether Lewis Electric Cooperative



- *non-profit*
- *locally owned and operated*
- *servicing your communities since 1939*
- *looking forward to a bright future*

The Cooperative Difference

What is an electric co-op? Three key phrases describe electric cooperatives:

Locally owned and operated. Electric cooperatives are owned by their members and focus on member needs and local priorities. They are an integral part of the communities they serve.

Consumer first. Co-ops weren't created to make a profit, but simply to deliver electricity. Co-ops offer stability, reliability and better value.

Responsive to local needs. Electric co-ops are located in the communities they serve, making them easily accessible and responsive to members' needs. They work hard to achieve a better quality of life for their member-owners.

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives use four values as the foundation for service.

Innovation - Accountability - Integrity - Commitment to Community

With the help of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who established the Rural Electrification Administration in 1935, friends and neighbors banded together to create a new kind of electric utility, where the voice of every person made a difference.

Electric cooperatives brought electric power to the countryside when no one else would.

Today, America's electric cooperatives continue to answer that call. With the same focus on customer needs, today's electric cooperatives provide much more than competitively priced, reliable energy. They are committed to improving the quality of life in their communities and to the member-owners who live there.



Billing Services

For convenience and budget planning, your electric bill is due on the same date each month. If your due date falls on a weekend or holiday, payment can be made before 4:30 p.m. the next business day without incurring a late fee. If the bill is not paid by the cut-off date listed on your statement, service can be disconnected for non-payment and a reconnect fee will be charged.

Special Billing Date: This program is for members who are at least 55 and live on a fixed income. The bill due date coincides with receipt of monthly charges. Your local office can assist with enrollment.

Payment Options

VIEW AND PAY BILL ONLINE: Empty your mailbox by receiving your bill via e-mail. You can also pay online by using a credit card or checking account. If you receive an e-mail bill, you will not receive a paper statement. You can deactivate this service at any time.

CREDIT CARDS: MLEC accepts Visa, Discover, and MasterCard.

HANDI-PAY: Each month the amount of your electric bill is automatically transferred from your checking account to MLEC by an electronic transaction on the due date. The debit is listed on your bank statement. You will continue to receive a statement each month marked **"DRAFTED - DO NOT PAY."**

MAIL: Another convenient method to pay is mail. Return envelopes are included with each statement. When mailing a payment, please enclose the bill stub to ensure the proper account is credited. Also, for your protection, mail only a check or money order. **DO NOT MAIL CASH.**

PAYMENT BOX: For your convenience, MLEC has payment boxes located outside each office so you can make a quick payment during or after office hours. Please use only a check or money order and include your bill stub in the envelope for proper crediting. Again, **DO NOT USE CASH.**

IN PERSON: To ensure we deliver on the promise of excellent service, MLEC has a fully staffed office in each county we serve. Office hours are Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Special Services

The Tennessee Magazine is mailed each month, as a courtesy, to all residential members. With over 770,000 readers statewide, it contains articles on everything from recipes to travel. The five-page MLEC section is written especially for our members. A digital version is also available at www.mlec.com.



Project Help is a program designed to help our members who are having temporary difficulty paying their winter energy bills. Many members contribute to this local fund by having one dollar added to their monthly bill.

Brochures and information regarding water heater and heat pump programs, safety, energy efficiency, Internet access and cash incentives are available at MLEC district offices or via e-mail.

Security light installation and maintenance is covered by a small monthly fee added to your electric bill. The lights are a great help at home. They increase safety around the house and allow you to extend your time outdoors past sundown.

Low interest heat pump loans are available to qualified members. Payments are added to the electric bill for convenience.

School and community programs - Being a vital part of our communities is important to MLEC. We sponsor programs such as the Washington D.C. Youth Tour Short Story and Scholarship Contest, Louie the Lightning Bug, safety presentations, Adopt-A-School Grants, 4-H Camp sponsorships and tuition grants, an annual poster contest and rural economic development loans*. Need a speaker for your school, civic or service organization on electrical safety or energy efficiency? We're available!

Internet Access - Affordable access to the Internet with friendly service and a fast and easy set-up. MLEC partners with TransWorld Network Corporation to offer this service. (Not available in all areas.)

FREE Technical Assistance for non-residential members is available. Wiring designs, power factor recommendations, heating and air conditioning, lighting, energy audits and more are available.

MLEC Online Store - Purchase grills and cookbooks without leaving the comfort of home. Visit the MLEC store at www.mlec.com.

** This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

Special Services

Co-op Connections® Card Program - As a member of MLEC, you will receive this **FREE** card that provides discounts at participating local and national businesses on everything from prescriptions to travel. Check www.mlec.com for a list of all discounts offered.



Long Distance Phone Service - No hassles.....no kidding! MLEC's partnership with TransWorld Network Corporation offers our members low rates with no hassles. Call 1-866-864-6532 to learn more.

Green Power Switch - Are you environmentally friendly? Sign-up for Green Power Switch. Your choice to add \$4 to your electric bill adds green power, produced by renewable resources, to the TVA power mix. Make a difference, turn on the switch!

Energy Right® Home e-Valuation Survey - To cut energy costs, check the nooks and crannies of your home and complete a **FREE** online energy right Home e-Valuation survey. MLEC works with TVA to help you identify areas in your home where you can save energy and money. Once completed, you will receive a customized analysis offering no-cost and low-cost ways to improve your home's energy-efficiency.

In-Home Energy Evaluations (IHEE) - MLEC knows how important saving money is to our members. That's why we are spreading the word about a valuable home audit program that can save energy and energy dollars. The \$150 evaluation fee is refundable, and up to \$500 in incentives and rebates are available if suggestions are followed. Call MLEC Energy Specialist Gene Hale at 931-729-3558 to arrange for a certified evaluation today.



Together We Save - Flip the switch. Lower the blinds. Insulate your attic. Change the setting of your thermostat. These sound like simple tasks, but combined they help you rack up big savings. That's the premise of *Together We Save*, Touchstone Energy's national campaign to help co-op members reduce their energy consumption. Go to www.mlec.com, click on the *TogetherWeSave* link, and learn steps to take and the immediate, dollar-and-cents impact of those actions. Includes how-to videos, tips for various rooms of the home and an interactive house tour that makes cost saving estimates for particular energy saving ideas.



Home Energy Savings Tips

HEATING AND COOLING:

1. If you're gone for an extended period and have a central system, adjust the thermostat down in winter and up in summer. Don't pay to keep furniture cool or warm.
2. Keep air conditioner filters clean. Dirty filters make heating/cooling systems work harder and mean more turns on the electric meter.
3. Keep the thermostat at the highest comfortable setting in summer. In winter keep it at the lowest. Even one degree on the setting makes a difference on your monthly bill.
4. If you have individual room heaters and air conditioners, close doors and turn off heat/air to unused rooms.
5. Keep all doors and windows closed when the air or heat is on. (Ask your kids to read this one aloud several times.)
6. Open drapes on the sunny side of your house to bring in winter's free heat. Close them at night to keep it in.



WATER HEATING:

7. Be sure you have an energy-efficient electric water heater. If you need a new one, MLEC is a great source of information on the best models.
8. Add an insulated blanket to your water heater. Insulating pipes going into and out of the tank add up to savings as well.
9. Your dishwasher releases the same amount of water whether it is full or not, so run it only when full. This is a two-for-one tip. You save water and energy.
10. A low-flow shower head can reduce water use by 50-70 percent. Also, fix leaky faucets. Why let hot water drip? One drip per second equals 200 gallons a month. (*Another two-for-one saving tip.*)

LAUNDRY:

11. Wash and rinse full loads of clothes in the coolest water possible. This saves some miles and energy on your water heater.
12. Besides cleaning your lint filter after every load, make sure you dry full loads of clothes without overloading.

Home Energy Savings Tips

13. Stop the dryer as soon as clothes are dry. Over-drying wastes energy and sets in wrinkles. Who needs that?
14. Dry loads one right after another. The dryer uses less energy because it is already heated.

KITCHEN:

15. Use the microwave when possible. It is faster and uses less energy.
16. Keep the freezer full. The fuller the freezer, the less cold air you lose when opening the door.
17. Don't stand with the refrigerator or freezer door open. Time is money when cool air is escaping.
18. Keep the temperature between 36 and 40 degrees in the refrigerator and 0 and 5 degrees in the freezer.
19. Flat-bottomed pans that fit stove heating units save money by reducing cooking time. So does using the pot lids.
20. Baking or microwaving defrosted food uses one-third less energy than starting with frozen food.
21. Stop the dishwasher after the final rinse. By avoiding the dry cycle, you can save a few dollars.

LIGHTING:

22. Place floor and hanging lamps in corners. The wall reflection gives more light.
23. Turn off outdoor lighting during the day. Timers or photoelectric controls are great helpers.
24. Turn off lights, TVs, game systems, computers, and radios if not in use. Little things can make a big difference. Power strips with an "on/off" switch can help.
25. Replacing table lamp bulbs with compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs can save up to 75 percent in lighting energy. They produce more light and last up to 10 times longer. How's that for performance?!



Outdoor Electrical Safety

- **Downed Power Line:** Always assume that the line is energized because touching it could be fatal. Report the downed line to MLEC.
- **Before You Dig:** Have underground utilities marked before doing any excavating, grading, boring, blasting, or demolition. Before you dig, call MLEC to avoid hitting any utility lines when you start.
- **Shock:** Never touch someone who has been shocked. Since their body may be energized, you could be shocked or killed by touching them.
- **Map It Out:** Locate overhead power lines, and map out ways to avoid them when moving equipment.
- **Plug It In:** Plug into grounded outlets when using electrical equipment outdoors, or use a power cord with a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) built in.
- **Keep Away:** Stay away from underground high-voltage transformer and transformer cabinets. Call MLEC if any underground transformer or pedestal is found without a padlock.
- **Keep Out:** Stay clear of substations, including those operated by MLEC. Substations change extremely high voltage from transmission lines into lower distribution voltage so that it can be transported to homes and businesses.
- **Do Not Touch:** Besides being illegal, tampering with an electric meter can electrocute you.
- **Auto Accidents:** When involved in an auto accident, our first reaction is to get out of the vehicle. However, when accidents involve power lines, it is best to stay inside and wait for help. Since you can't tell by looking at a power line if it is energized, stepping outside the vehicle can lead to tragic results.



Indoor Electrical Safety

Most of us don't think much about electricity unless we are forced to go without it. But just like light bulbs and appliances, the electrical system in your home deserves your attention.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International urges consumers to take an electrical tour throughout their homes to look for potential hazards.

Many potential hazards are easily identified and corrected.



- Check to see that lamps and extension cords aren't cracked, frayed or covered by rugs or furniture.
- Check light bulbs to determine that the wattage is appropriate for lighting fixtures.
- Electrical appliances should be kept away from damp and hot surfaces and have appropriate air circulation.
- Dim or flickering lights, arcs or sparks, sizzling or buzzing sounds from your electrical systems, odors, hot switch plates, loose plugs and damaged insulation, among other things are signs of potential hazards and should be looked at by a qualified electrician.



Generator Safety

How can electrocution occur? If a portable electric generator is connected to your home's wiring system, the energy it generates can flow back into MLEC's power lines and electrocute lineworkers or others who come in contact with the lines. Even a line that has been knocked down and is verified to be "dead" by MLEC could become energized without warning.

How can it be prevented? You must have a qualified, licensed electrician install a double-pole, double-throw transfer switch between the generator and utility power in compliance with state and local electrical codes. Also, let MLEC know if you have a generator. This information can be used for lineworker safety.

Why does it have to be inspected? It's the law. Tennessee law requires a state wiring inspector approve any additions or changes to the wiring in your home. Installing a home transfer switch falls into that category.

What about carbon monoxide? Never use a generator indoors, including in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, and other enclosed or partially-enclosed areas, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent carbon monoxide build-up in the home.



What about electrical hazards? Follow the manufacturers instructions for safe operation and maintenance.

Keep the generator dry and do not use in rain or wet conditions. Make sure your hands are dry before touching the generator.

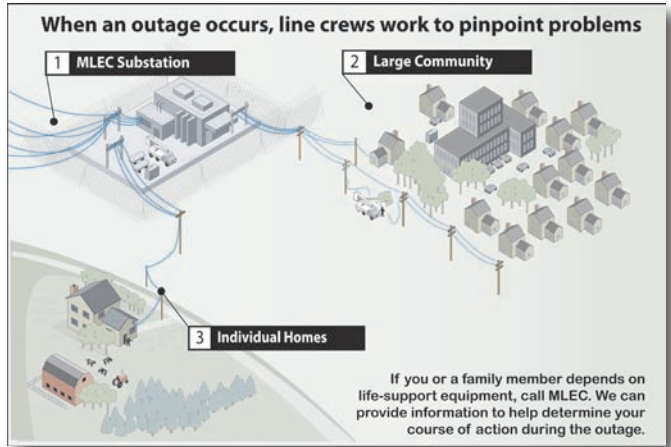
Plug appliances directly into the generator, and make sure it is properly grounded. Also, do not overload the generator. It should only be used to power essential equipment or appliances.

Never try to power the house wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet. This is extremely dangerous and presents an electrocution risk to utility workers and neighbors served by the same utility transformer. It also bypasses some of the built-in household circuit protection devices.

Are there any fire hazards? Never store generator fuel in the home. Gasoline and other flammable liquids should be stored outside of living areas in properly labeled, non-glass safety containers. Also, turn off the generator and let it cool down before fueling. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.

Power Outages

Providing electricity is Meriweather Lewis Electric Cooperative's core business. We take pride in our distribution system and are continually upgrading and improving equipment to ensure safe, reliable power. However, even with advanced planning, circumstances beyond our control (such as ice, snow and thunderstorms) can sometimes cause power outages.



When you report an outage, MLEC uses the information you provide to help pinpoint the problem area, estimate how many people are affected and determine possible causes. Then, line personnel are quickly dispatched and jump into restoration mode. Often, they are on the road and working as other outage calls are received. It is important to understand that this means the first person to report an outage is not always the first person to have power restored. If we went to specific homes first, we could miss isolated damages, possibly lengthening outage time for the initial caller and everyone else as well.

The priority of power outage restoration is to get the greatest number of people back on as quickly and safely as possible. Therefore, MLEC follows a repair plan that many utilities execute. It calls for us to start at the substation and work on lines leading out as we go. This restores power to large groups before tackling smaller groups and individual members. Allowances sometimes have to be made due to circumstances; however, the standard plan is as follows:

1. The main distribution line from the substation must be fixed before anyone can have power. This is our first step because it goes directly to the main power source and repairs damage there first. If a problem is detected and corrected there, power can be restored to thousands of people at one time.
2. Next, we work out from the substation, correcting problems as we go. Crews fix the lines that bring power to the greatest number of people in a community.
3. After larger groups of members have had power restored, crews fix service lines to individual homes.



MLEC

Your Touchstone Energy®
Cooperative 

Important Numbers

District I - Hickman County:

1625 Hwy. 100

Centerville, Tennessee 37033

(931) 729-3558

After hours & holidays 1-800-482-6553 (including Dyer Road)

District II - Lewis County:

28 Park Avenue South

Hohenwald, Tennessee 38462

(931) 796-3116

After hours & holidays 1-800-256-2807

District III - Perry County:

218 East Main

Linden, Tennessee 37096

(931) 589-2151

After hours & holidays 1-800-316-2342 (including Pleasantville)

District IV - Humphreys County:

200 East Commerce Street

Waverly, Tennessee 37185

(931) 296-2581 or 296-2582

After hours & holidays 1-800-893-8273

District V - Houston County:

4574 West Main Street

Erin, Tennessee 37061

(931) 289-3311

After hours & holidays 1-800-650-6814

Office Hours:

All offices are open 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. - Monday-Friday

My MLEC Account Number: _____

Bill Due Date: _____ Cut-Off Date: _____

www.mlec.com