

Electric News

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Knowledge Can Keep Scammers at Bay

The energy industry is undergoing rapid change, and 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 led to more utility scams and misleading information surrounding solar installations in particular. That's because of two factors.

First, utility scams are common because of the vast number of utilities that exist, and consumers are understandably anxious about 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 call from 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.



You can combat this scam by knowing the status of your account. 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 Little Ocmulgee EMC (LOEMC) directly at (800) 342-1290. Do not use the phone number given by the scammer.

Avoid solar scams

Another scam we see from time to time is related to rooftop solar. Homeowners with rooftop solar may receive a sales call offering an accessory, upgrade or extended warranty to their solar array. The calls could be from crooks claiming to represent a solar company, promising to replace faulty or broken parts or improve efficiency.



Again, if you are not expecting the call, don't be fooled. These calls offering misleading information are likely a scam. Call (800) 342-1290 or the company that installed the solar array if you think there may be a problem. Other than occasional cleaning, rooftop solar (if installed correctly) is virtually maintenance-free.

Use trusted sources

If you're considering solar for your home, make sure you use 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.

LOEMC can offer a candid assessment to determine whether rooftop solar is right for you. After all, we have 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 adviser—Little Ocmulgee EMC. We are a community-focused organization that works to efficiently deliver safe, reliable and affordable energy to our members.

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.

Little Ocmulgee EMC to Celebrate 82 Years of Service to the Members

The 82nd Little Ocmulgee EMC Annual Meeting of Members will be held Nov. 11, 2020, at the Wheeler County High School gymnasium in Alamo. Doors will open promptly at 12:30 p.m. for member registration.

Prior to the business session, which begins at 2 p.m., there will be a health fair, vendor booths and gospel entertainment. Door prizes will be awarded at the conclusion of the meeting.

Pursuant to the Little Ocmulgee EMC Bylaws, a committee to nominate members for directorship has been appointed. The following members will serve:

- **Laurens County (District 1):** Jimmy Butler, Curtis Pauldo, Larry Windham
- **Telfair/Dodge counties (District 2):** Marty Kinnett, Carey Knowles, John E. Seay
- **Wheeler/Montgomery counties (District 3):** Carey Clark, Tommy Clark, Jamie Nobles



If you have comments or suggestions concerning nominations or persons who wish to be considered for director nomination, please contact these committee members.

The Nominating Committee will meet Aug. 25, 2020, to make director nominations. One director from each district is elected each year and will serve staggered three-year terms.

Directors seeking reelection for another three-year term are:

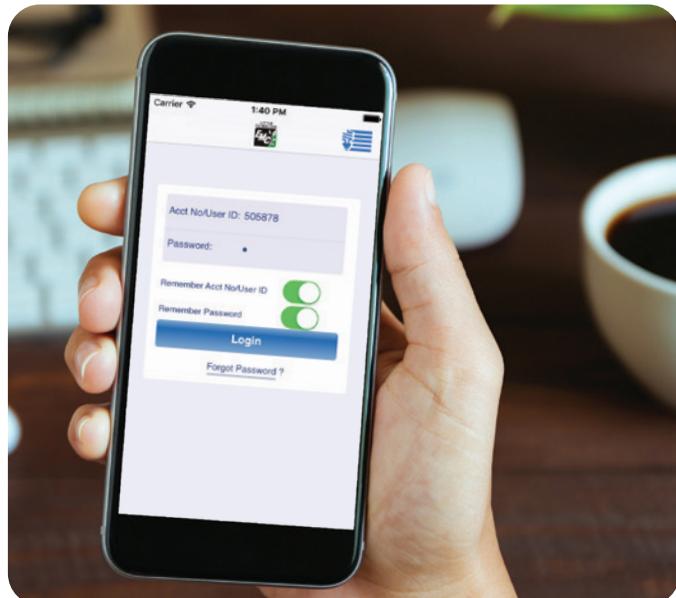
- **Laurens County (District 1):** Fred Gilder
- **Telfair/Dodge counties (District 2):** Jim Knight
- **Wheeler/Montgomery counties (District 3):** Jimmy Grimes

Nominations for directors can also be made by petition, which must be signed by 15 or more Little Ocmulgee EMC members and submitted to the co-op no later than Sept. 11, 2020, at 5 p.m. Nominations are not allowed from the floor at the annual meeting.

Payment Methods for LOEMC Members

During the past few weeks, we have been encouraging Little Ocmulgee EMC members to use as many electronic forms of payment as necessary. This practice can help keep our members and employees safe during a time of crisis, but also during all other times of the year. Try one of the following ways to pay and save yourself time and effort while also staying safe.

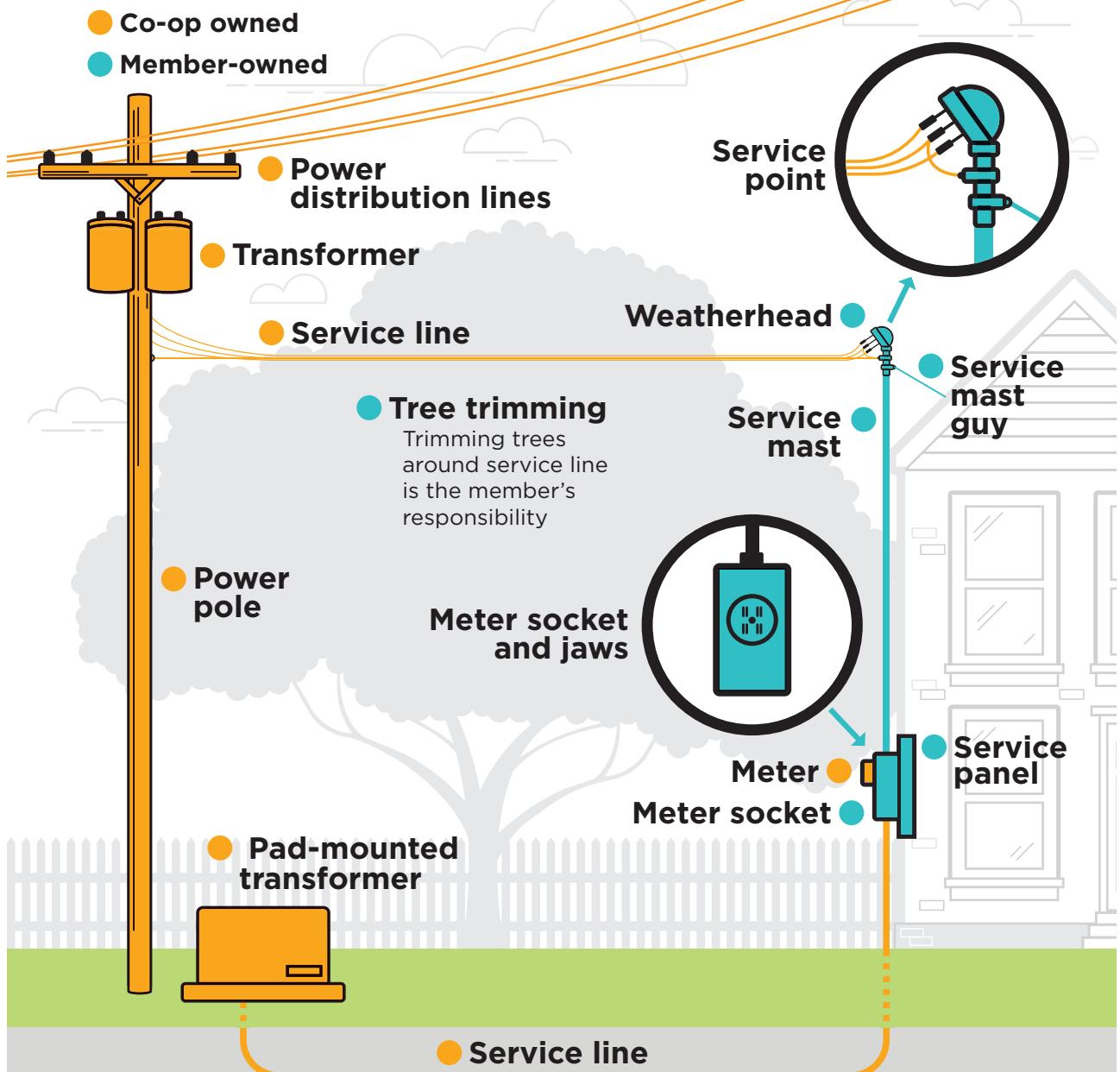
- Set your **account up on draft**
- Visit our **website** at loemc.com
- **Mobile app** (search for LOEMC): Username and password will need to be set up online before using this service
- **Phone:** Call (800) 342-1290 and talk to a Customer Service Representative or use our automated phone system



Who Owns What?

Electric Cooperative-Owned Equipment vs Member-Owned Equipment

This graphic depicts equipment owned by the co-op (in **gold**) and the member (in **blue**). If a storm damages any equipment owned by the co-op, we are responsible for repairs. If a storm damages any member-owned equipment, the member is responsible for repairs. Members should hire a licensed electrician when making any repairs to member-owned equipment.



Note: This graphic depicts overhead and underground service. Please be aware of which type of service you receive at your home or business.

A Comparison of the Market's Smartest and Most Popular

Heating and cooling costs account for around half of a user's energy bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. So when it comes to reducing energy use and cutting home energy costs, the most impact can be made by programming the thermostat. The right thermostat settings could yield energy savings of 8 to 15 percent, and new technology is making it easier than ever to achieve those settings.

Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and may be controlled remotely through a tablet, smartphone or voice control. Some models use multiple sensors to monitor temperatures in various parts of the home for more balanced heating or cooling, track user temperature preferences and use the data to optimize a heating and cooling schedule. Some are designed for complex multistage systems that will control heating, cooling, dehumidifier and ventilation systems.

If you're interested

in controlling your thermostat with your voice or an app, or in being hands off and letting it learn your habits, consider a smart thermostat. To narrow your choices, factor in smart features, price and attributes that matter most to you, such as color, size or style, and make sure the chosen product supports your HVAC system.

The Nest 3rd Generation Learning Thermostat and Ecobee4 are the most popular and sophisticated devices in this category. Both devices are usually priced around \$250, but consumers can easily recoup their money in energy cost savings.

There are many similarities between the two thermostats. Both can be adjusted via computer, tablet, smartphone, Google Assistant or Amazon Alexa device (the Ecobee4 even has a built-in Alexa-enabled speaker). And both can interact with other smart devices and utilize geofencing—using your phone's GPS to determine if you're home, then automatically adjusting the temperature. Nest's geofencing works with multiple phones, while Ecobee supports just one phone. Ecobee makes up for this with its more sophisticated sensors.

Owners of the Nest and Ecobee can add remote sensors that allow the thermostat to take readings from any room throughout your home and adjust the temperature

accordingly. This can be an advantage if your thermostat is located near a draft or in direct sunlight. The Ecobee's sensors go one step further, noticing movement in the house in order to override geofencing if the primary phone user leaves the house and someone is still there.

While many of the features are similar, a few that are notably different can help you determine which is right for you.

Nest, powered by a rechargeable battery, automatically learns your schedule. When you begin using Nest, it makes

a few assumptions and creates a baseline for its schedule. As you adjust the temperature up or down, Nest records it, and after a week, learns your schedule and the temperature settings you prefer. From then, it continues to learn and respond to your adjustments.

Nest also records 10 days of energy use data that shows you a visual of the times your system

turned on and off during those 10 days. You also receive a monthly email report that includes a summary of your energy use compared with previous months and other Nest users.

Ecobee must be hardwired, utilizes a touchscreen and can analyze HVAC data for 18 months. All temperature and motion temperature and motion data from the thermostat and sensors is recorded and can be accessed online by the owner to help you monitor total energy use, how the weather influences your use and how your home efficiency compares to other users in your area.

The two thermostats also can connect with various energy devices in your home. Ecobee recognizes dehumidifiers and ventilators, and Nest recognizes heat pumps and auxiliary heat.

For those looking for a smart thermostat with fewer bells and whistles, the Honeywell Lyric T5+ is one of the market's most popular, priced around \$135. While it can't sense your presence or learn your schedule, it does have the geofencing feature and can interact with other smart-home devices, such as turning on lights when you arrive or leave home.

Whichever fits your lifestyle and preferences, a smart thermostat is a good investment that can help you save energy and money in a more convenient way than ever.



Smart thermostats, like the Ecobee model, are Wi-Fi connected and can be controlled through your smartphone, tablet or voice.



The Nest thermostat, powered by a rechargeable battery, automatically learns your schedule.