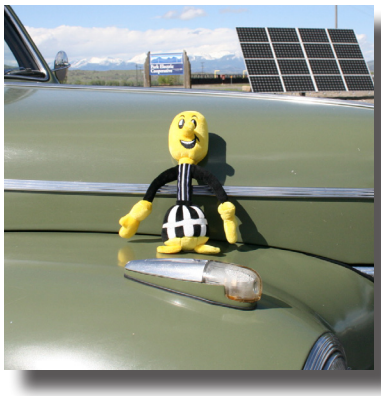
The Park Electric Monthly Newsletter

PARK SPARKS

March 2024



THE STORY OF A MASCOT

By Sarah Boyle

Who is that friendly face on the Park Electric sign? Willie Wiredhand is his name! Willie has been around for nearly 75 years. His image and what he stands for remain true to the values of all electric cooperatives across the country today.

Willie Wiredhand came to be the mascot for the National Rural Electric Cooperatives Association (NRECA) in October of 1950. At that time, NRECA was unifying electric coops across the country as they were bringing power to rural farmers. Investor-owned electric service providers had a similar mascot, Reddy Kilowatt, but were unwilling to license this mascot to NRECA. Since the cooperatives couldn't use Reddy, they held a contest with a $50 prize for the best drawing and from this contest, Willie Wiredhand was born.

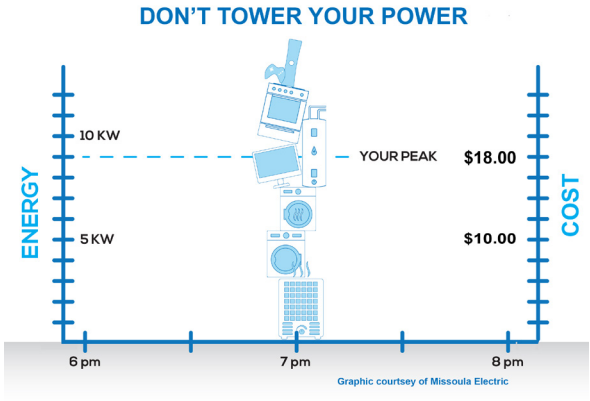
Willie has been described as a wiry, hard-working, friendly icon with a big smile. His legs are an electric plug, his body made of wires. His head is a light socket and his nose is a push button electric switch. His gloves are on and ready for hard work. His last name is a play on the term hired hand – the people who work tirelessly on farms and ranches across the country. He advertises electricity as "the never tiring, always available hired hand to help the nations farmers."

The advent of Willie led to many uses of his image including advertising new electrical equipment, safety videos, publications, and even a special light bulb produced by Sylvania for NRECA. A Park Electric employee happened upon one of these now rare beauties in an old camping trailer. Willie has even been produced as collectors items such as bobble heads, ornaments, and plush figures.

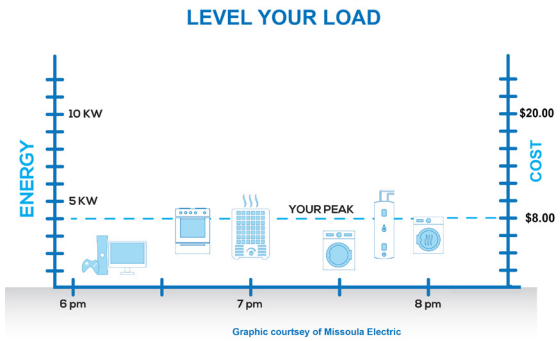
While Willie may be old, he never stops working. Park Electric uses his image to convey the message of friendly, hard working people who work tirelessly to bring our members reliable electricity at fair and reasonable prices.

I know you have all seen an increase in the cost of your power bill due to the rate increase implemented on January 1st, 2024. As much as we dislike increasing our rates, it had been 12-years since our last increase.

A few members have asked "what is demand", and "is there anything I can do to minimize its effect on my power bill?" To answer the first part of the question, demand is the highest amount of electricity used during a period of time. Members will have a daily peak, generally in the morning or evening. The demand charge is factored each month by measuring the highest amount of usage in a one hour period. Each household or business will have a different time that they reach that peak depending on usage patterns. This peak usage is reset each month. If you are curious about the time you reached your peak, you can call the office. In the near future, this information will be provided on the bill. The second part of the question relates to how Park Electric has structured the new rate. This structure rewards members who change their usage habits to lower their demand. You don't have to change anything with this rate, its simply going to help us recoup our costs if no changes are made.



When thinking about ways to reduce demand, remember that some electricity usage is impossible to avoid. For instance, appliances like refrigerators and freezers typically run, regardless of the time of day. Other loads, especially those that use a large amount of power, may be able to run at other times. We encourage our members to "level your load", and spread out the use of major appliances rather than running them at the same time. For example: You could do laundry and other chores that require significant amounts of electricity when other appliances aren't running such as mid-day, later in the evening, or on weekends. Consider setting a timer to run your dishwasher, washer and dryer, and other appliances at different times.



If you run all of your appliances at the same time, it creates a peak usage, creating a higher demand. For example, when you wake up in the morning, you likely turn on several lights, start some coffee, take shower, turn on the heat, then you might also start a load of laundry or do dishes. When you add the electric usage of each one of these running at the same time, this is what raises your peak. On the other hand, if you decide to set a timer on your dish washer, washer, or dryer for let's say 30 minutes after you plan to leave your house, this might lower your demand peak. After you leave, you will turn off lights, possibly lowered your thermostat temperature by a few degrees, and your oven or microwave will not be on. There will be less electricity usage overall.

As a final note, I want to point out that your demand usage is likely going to follow the weather patterns. For example, your demand should be higher in the winter months if the weather hits -30. Just think about how much harder your furnace has to work to keep up with this temperature change. Then on the flip side, as I write this letter, it is supposed to be 54 degrees today, during what is historically been the coldest month of the year. This will lower your demand usage.

Each of us have slightly different needs each day, but I'm sure after reviewing this, you can think of other things in your house or business that can give you an opportunity to save. Please also review our website for rebates on Energy Star appliances and other items to help you save on your future power bills.