



CURRENT COMMUNICATOR

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MEMBER NEWSLETTER OF CENTRAL VIRGINIA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Winter 2013

"Improving the quality of your life in a quietly impressive way."

Volume 22, Number 1

WANT TO REDUCE YOUR ELECTRIC BILL?

The trick is to manage your energy consumption. But to paraphrase an old saying:

You can't manage what you "don't" measure.

So let's take a look at the two basic categories of energy use:

COMFORT

The **cost of comfort** is driven by the energy used to heat and cool our living spaces.

CONVENIENCE

The **cost of convenience** is the result of the electric appliances, tools and gadgets that we use in our homes.

How can you measure these? Gather your bills for the last two years, showing your monthly kilowatt (kWh) hour usage. CVEC can help if you don't have those records.

The Calculation Process	kWh usage (example)	The Cost Categories
Find the month with the lowest usage, typically spring or fall when the outdoor temperature is close to the desired indoor temperature (<i>little or no HVAC is required.</i>)	1000 kWh	Represents the cost of convenience (appliances and tools) without the cost of comfort.
Next find the month with the highest kilowatt usage, typically during a winter or summer month.	3000 kWh	Represents the cost of convenience plus the cost of comfort during the hottest or coldest month of the year.
Now, subtract the lowest usage month from the highest usage month.	2000 kWh	This represents the cost of comfort during the hottest or coldest month of the year.

From this chart, a member can determine that their house consumes roughly 2000 kWh per month to heat or cool during the hottest or coldest month of the year and consumes 1000 kWh per month to power the appliances and tools.

Since people spend more time indoors during the winter, the cost of convenience rises during that time as well. Members can make an appropriate adjustment in the comfort/convenience usage ration.

Herein lies the analysis of an electric bill...

Factors affecting the cost of comfort include:

- ✓ The quality of weatherization (insulation and sealing) and the condition of ductwork. A savings of up to 20% can be achieved for heating and cooling costs with an upgrade to sealing and insulation.
- ✓ The type of heating system in combination with the outdoor temperature. For example, when the temperature drops below 35°, a residential heat pump is no longer effective in heat exchange mode. It may begin to operate on resistance heat which can be three times more expensive. If you use a woodstove for heat, you should focus on ways to save with your air conditioning in warm weather.
- ✓ Energy savings strategies, such as installing a programmable thermostat and setting back the temperature by 10° at night and when no one is home. **(Save 3% for every 1° drop!)**

Want to reduce your heating and cooling costs?

- ✓ Begin with small upgrades and keep track of your savings!



Factors affecting the cost of convenience include:

- ✓ The number of people living in or visiting the home.
- ✓ The time of year, with winter seeing a rise in the use of lights, cooking, television, and other conveniences.
- ✓ The age and energy efficiency of major appliances.
- ✓ The quality of insulation for the water heater and water pipes if in an unconditioned space.
- ✓ The level of effort made by household members to turn off items when not in use.

Want to reduce the cost of convenience in your home?

- ✓ Use the worksheet on page 7 or on our website (www.mycvec.com > Save Energy > Appliance Usage Worksheet) to conduct an audit of the appliances and tools in your house.
- ✓ Estimate the hours that each appliance is in use each month.
- ✓ Consider replacing old appliances with newer, energy-efficient ones.
- ✓ Reduce the unnecessary use of convenience items.

Visit www.mycvec.com and www.togetherwesave.com. ♡

Because we're a not-for-profit, CVEC has no incentive to encourage you to use more electricity than needed for your lifestyle and budget. If you consume more, we would make no profit from the sale of that extra electricity. We buy just enough power to take care of our members' needs and pass it through to members at cost.

What we **CAN** do is help you in your efforts to eliminate unnecessary usage (conservation) and get as much done with less electric consumption (energy efficiency). There are helpful tools in this newsletter and more on our website www.mycvec.com. Additional helpful tips and tools can be found at www.TogetherWeSave.com. ♡

TRACKING DOWN HIGH ENERGY USE



If your bill is high, you are obviously using too much electricity! Want to lower that usage?

You might need to run a Breaker Test.

This is a way to determine what appliances or tools might be using the most energy. Turn off ALL of the breakers in your house. One person flips breakers on one at a time, giving about 2-3 minutes for all devices on that circuit to run normally. Another takes note of how the wheel in your electric meter is affected ... does it speed up significantly? If it does, that circuit is drawing significant power. Continue with all circuits. This will determine the circuits using the most power and you can investigate what devices are causing the high usage.

Some potential problem spots follow, along with a few easy solutions. In most cases, if the device is cycling on and off too much, running all of the time, or not performing its defined task (keeping water hot, your home warm/cool, your food cold), it is not running efficiently, costing extra money, and it probably needs replacing with a new energy efficient model. 💡

Water heaters

- » Use less hot water (shorter showers, low flow showerheads, cold water clothes wash).
- » Lower temperature to 115-120° (standard temp setting is 140°).
- » Fix leaks in heater, faucets, and shower heads.
- » Insulate water heater and water pipes, if in an unheated space.

HVAC Systems

- » Set your thermostat at 68° in winter and 78° in summer.
- » Turn thermostat down to 55° at night or when leaving the home during winter.
- » Better yet, install a programmable thermostat.
- » If your inside unit is running all of the time, be sure your heat pump is also running outside. If not, call for service.
- » Replace and clean your system's filter regularly.
- » Seal air leaks and insulate well.
- » Electric baseboard heat is very expensive to operate even when running correctly. Consider an alternative.
- » Have your heat pump serviced and the refrigerant recharged annually.

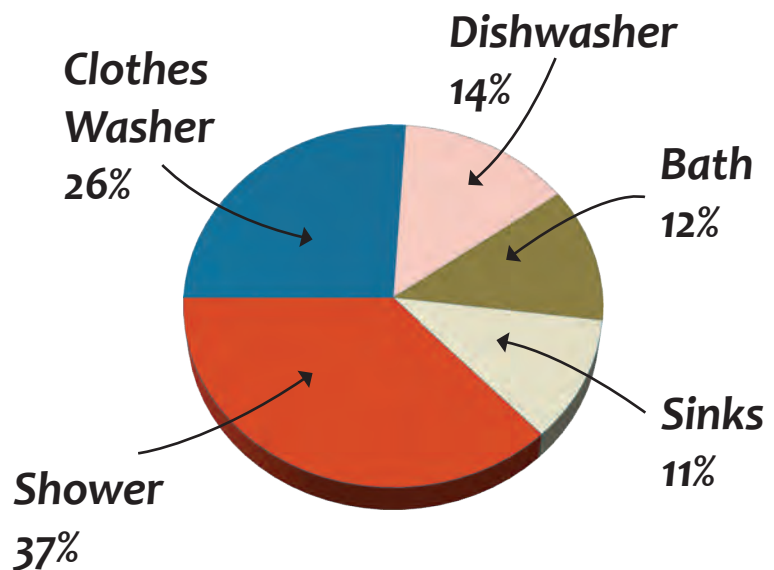
Refrigerators

- » Clean air filters & coils.
- » Keep full without overfilling.
- » Set temps at 37-40° in the refrigerator and 0-5° in the freezer.
- » Defrost when needed. More than 1/4" frost reduces efficiency.
- » Check door seals and keep clean.
- » Old fridges in the garage are energy hogs!

High Efficiency Water Heater

Worth the Cost!

Heating water accounts for approximately 15% of a home's energy use. High efficiency water heaters use 10% to 50% less energy than standard models, saving you money on your utility bills.

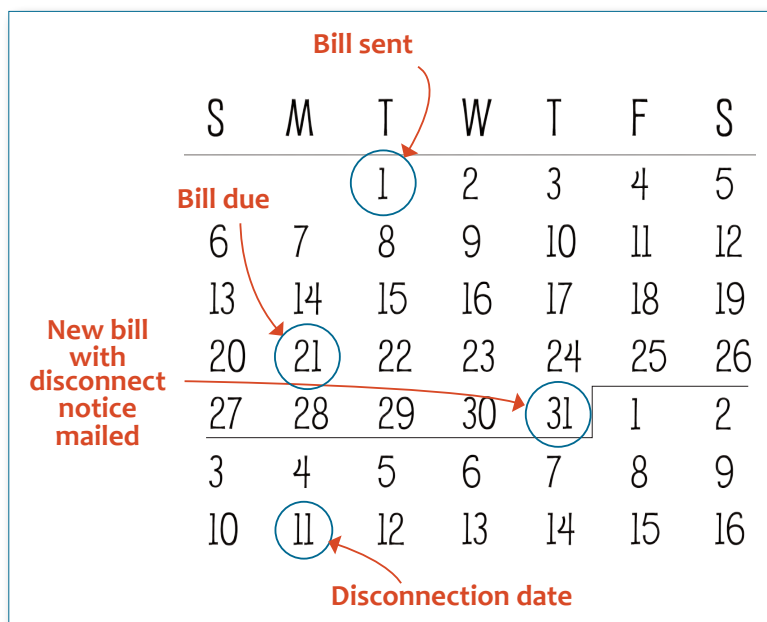


CVEC BILLING AND COLLECTIONS PROCESS

Keeping Your Lights On

CVEC reads meters on a regular basis and the usage data is sent back to our substation via the powerlines. But once a month, we convert a monthly read into a bill for services used.

- On a monthly cycle, we bill each account for the month's kilowatt-hour consumption.
- After the bill is issued, the member has **20 days** to pay for the previous month's usage.
- In another **10 days**, the next monthly reading is taken and another bill is issued. If the prior bill has not been paid, the new bill includes the current due amount and the past due amount, and a **10-day Disconnection Notice is printed on this bill.**



While most members pay their bill on time, a very small portion do not. Once a disconnection notice is printed, CVEC will attempt to contact members by automatic phone calls if we have a phone number on file. The recorded voice will ask you to please contact the Co-op about your bill. Most members call in and are able to make a payment to clear their balance. Some do not and CVEC is forced to disconnect service for non-payment based upon energy consumption that occurred 45-75 days in the past.

The Cost of Disconnection

Not only is a disconnection disruptive to the member, it is also the least productive activity for CVEC employees. CVEC's **Terms and Conditions** outline the following fees to recover a portion of the trip, labor, and equipment costs.

- \$45 | Disconnection Fee
- \$40 | Reconnection Fee (prior to 4 PM)
- \$150 | After-Hours Reconnection Fee (Serviceman must leave home, drive to CVEC office, then travel to member's home for a single reconnection, then reverse the process; only one after-hour reconnect per year per account)

The Importance of Your Phone Number

To avoid disconnection and discomfort, please share your phone number and e-mail with us so that we have a means of contacting you in the event that your payment is not received.

- Call Member Services to check if we have your correct number: **800-367-2832 (FOR-CVEC)**
- You can also go to our website to update your info: **mycvec.com > The Latest > Update Your Records**



Even those members who pay regularly and on time should have a number on file.

- What if you put your payment in the mail and it becomes lost?
- What if you've had a busy month and forgot this once to make your payment?
- What if you have had a medical situation that makes you unable to attend to your monthly bills?

We will call you and remind you when you're overdue. So let us help keep your account current.

Be sure we have your phone number! 📞

HOW TO PAY YOUR BILL?

* First, find your account number!

CVEC does not accept payments in the field to ensure the safety of our service people.

Payment Options:

Online: Payments can be made by credit/debit card or check/ACH at www.mycvec.com.

By mail: Send check or money order to **CVEC, P. O. Box 7417, Merrifield, VA 22116**

In person: Visit a CVEC office

By phone: Call **800-367-2832, Option 2**. Follow the voice prompts to make a credit/debit card or bank draft payment.

By bank draft: You can have your payment drafted from your checking account each month. You will receive a monthly bill stating your charges and the date the funds will be drafted. For an enrollment form, go to the **Products & Services > Payment Options** at www.mycvec.com or call/visit the Co-op for a form. Complete and return to **CVEC, P. O. Box 247, Lovingson, VA 22949** with a voided check.

Third-Party Payments

Third-party options are available, but you should know that your payment won't be credited immediately. It might simply be mailed to the Co-op. **Your bill is not PAID until payment is received by CVEC!**

- Call your local bank and ask if they take payments for CVEC.
- Some local businesses offer a third-party payment system that may include a convenience fee.

Last minute payments?

If you are close to having your service disconnected, call Member Services at CVEC to discuss your account and determine the quickest method of payment that can be verified by CVEC.

- You can visit one of our offices to pay in person, check or cash, 8:30 AM to 5 PM, M-F.
- After-hours night drop boxes are also available at each office, 24/7 (*checks and money orders only*).
- Another fast solution is a phone payment system powered by Western Union. You can find it on the CVEC phone system (**800-367-2832, Option 2**) or on our website at www.mycvec.com.

Credit Cards:

Because of privacy issues, CVEC does not process credit/debit card payments in our customer service sites (Colleen, Palmyra, and Appomattox). You **can** always use a card account online at mycvec.com or by calling **800-367-2832**.

Speed of the Mail:

If you mail your payment to CVEC, drop it in the mailbox 7-10 days before your due date to be sure we receive it on time. Don't trust that it will be delivered by mail overnight or even in a couple of days!

* *New Account Numbers:*

In April 2012, CVEC converted to a new Customer Information System and each member was assigned a new account number. What's your new number look like?

- The first half is 1 to 8 digits
- Then 1 dash
- Followed by a 3-digit number

When entering your account number online or by telephone, it should be in a continuous string.

For example 54321-001 should be entered as 54321001.

This new account number system replaces old numbers that had two dashes. Do not use the old numbers when paying your bill. **Using an old account number on a check or by phone could easily mean your payment isn't credited properly.**

Budget Billing:

With the Budget Billing program, CVEC averages your previous year of use so you pay a set amount each month. In order to participate you must have 12 months of billing history at your present residential address and your account must be current and free of late payments. The final month of the Budget Billing year is settlement month. In that month, any over-payment will be refunded and any under-payment will be billed on your settle-up bill. Your meter will still be read monthly and actual use will show on your monthly statement to help you keep track of your annual settlement. You can sign up for this service in May and September. 📍

Thank you for prompt payment.

Please contact our Member Services Representatives at 800-367-2832 to discuss your payment or any other aspect of your account.

APPLIANCE WORKSHEET

In this worksheet, we have estimated kWh usage and costs for many of the appliances found in today's homes. You can use the blank columns of the chart to estimate your own kWh usage and power costs.

REMEMBER:

1000 watts = 1 kilowatt (kW)

FORMULA:

Wattage x .001

x Hours used

x 12¢

= Cost per month of an appliance

Fill in first column with actual wattage of your appliance. Divide by 1000, so 900 watts becomes .9 kilowatts (kW).

Multiply that figure by the second column.

Place answer in the third column and you have the estimated kWh usage per month for that appliance.

Multiply the third column by 12¢ (your CVEC kWh price) for the monthly cost in the final column.

You can also download our Appliance Usage Worksheet at the Save Energy section on our website, enter the specifics of your home's systems (including HVAC and water heater) to calculate your personal usage. 💡

Based on a household average of 1500 kWh usage per month at CVEC rates	Average wattage	Average hours used per month	Approximate kWh used per month	Cost /month at 12¢ / kWh	MY actual wattage	MY estimated hours used per month	MY estimated kWh used per month	MY estimated cost /month at 12¢ / kWh
Air Conditioner (Room)	900	83	75	\$8.96				
Air Conditioner ES Save 10%	810	83	67	\$8.07				
Attic Fan	370	243	90	\$10.79				
Bathroom Fan	60	30	2	\$0.22				
Broiler	1140	6	7	\$0.82				
Ceiling Fan	100	300	30	\$3.60				
Clock	2	720	1	\$0.17				
Clothes Dryer	5000	15	75	\$9.00				
Clothes Dryer ES Save 30%	3500	15	53	\$6.30				
Coffee Maker	1500	10	15	\$1.80				
Computer (Home PC)	500	30	15	\$1.80				
Curling Iron	350	28	10	\$1.18				
Dehumidifier	500	150	75	\$9.00				
Dishwasher	1300	15	20	\$2.34				
Dishwasher ES Save 10%	1170	15	18	\$2.11				
1/2" Drill	750	2	2	\$0.18				
DVD Player	35	40	1	\$0.17				
Freezer (Frostless 18 cu. ft.)	440	398	175	\$21.01				
Freezer Es as above Save 10%	396	398	158	\$18.91				
Frying Pan	1200	12	14	\$1.73				
Furnace Fan	500	108	54	\$6.48				
Garbage Disposal	450	4	2	\$0.22				
Hair Dryer	1000	5	5	\$0.60				
Heater (Portable)	1500	180	270	\$32.40				
Humidifier	177	79	14	\$1.68				
Iron	1100	12	13	\$1.58				
Laptop Computer	75	90	7	\$0.81				
Light Bulbs (Incandescent 10 hrs.)	100	300	30	\$3.60				
Light Bulbs (CFL)	26	300	8	\$0.94				
Light/Fluorescent (Ballast/4 Tubes)	200	75	15	\$1.80				
Microwave	1500	15	23	\$2.70				
Mixer	125	8	1	\$0.12				
Printer (Home PC)	400	2	1	\$0.10				
Radio	70	100	7	\$0.84				
Range w/Self Cleaning Oven	12000	8	96	\$11.52				
Refrigerator (Frostless 16 cu. ft.)	321	467	150	\$17.99				
Refrigerator as above ES Save 20%	257	467	120	\$14.40				
Refrigerator (Frostless 18 cu. ft.)	615	325	200	\$23.99				
Refrigerator as above ES Save 20%	492	325	160	\$19.19				
Roaster/Broiler	1400	6	8	\$1.01				
Satellite Dish	30	240	7	\$0.86				
Sewing Machine	75	13	1	\$0.12				
Shaver	15	67	1	\$0.12				
Spa/Jacuzzi	2000	90	180	\$21.60				
Stereo	100	90	9	\$1.08				
Sump/Sewage Pump	500	7	4	\$0.42				
Table Saw	1800	3	5	\$0.65				
Tanning Bed	2400	15	36	\$4.32				
Television (25 inch color)	200	180	36	\$4.32				
52 inch LCD Television	300	180	54	\$6.48				
54 inch Plasma Television	599	180	108	\$12.94				
Toaster	1100	3	3	\$0.40				
Toaster Oven	1500	4	6	\$0.72				
Trash Compactor	400	3	1	\$0.14				
Vacuum Cleaner	600	7	4	\$0.50				
VCR	20	120	2	\$0.29				
Washing Machine (Cold Wash)	500	18	9	\$1.08				
Water Heater	4500	84	378	\$45.36				
Water Heater ES Save 15%	4500	71.4	321	\$38.56				
Water Heater (Family of 4)	4500	111	500	\$59.94				
Water Heater (Family of 4) ES Save 15%	4500	94.35	425	\$50.95				
Well Pump	750	45	34	\$4.05				
Window Fan	200	90	18	\$2.16				
X-Box/Play Station	197	70	14	\$1.65				
Nintendo Wii	19	70	1	\$0.16				

KEEPING OUR POLES CLEAN & CLEAR

We ask that our utility poles not be used for anything other than their intended purpose ... carrying wires.

- Nails, staples, or any means of attaching signs and flyers create a safety hazard for the Co-op's linemen when they have to climb the pole. Obstructions can affect getting a solid footing, causing a slip when climbing. There is also the risk that a lineman could tear an insulated glove or other protective equipment, creating a risk for electrocution.
- Don't attach anything to a pole that will be difficult to climb around, such as birdhouses or feeders, basketball goals, or arbors for climbing plants.
- Don't use a utility pole as an element of any structure.
- Don't place landscaping around utility poles that can be damaged when the pole is climbed, or decorations that could hurt a lineman if he fell.
- Use common sense around utility poles . . . remember it might need to be accessed on foot or with a bucket truck in order to get your or your neighbor's power back up in a timely and safe manner. ♡



Meter Seals: A Lockout from Current Diversion



Your Central Virginia Electric Cooperative places a **meter seal** on the meter base (the square box that holds the glass meter) for a number of reasons.

- It is important to protect the meter to ensure an accurate reading and a proper electric bill.
- Unauthorized personnel who enter the meter base are exposed to a hazardous environment.
- A small percentage of members will attempt to divert current to avoid paying for actual usage.

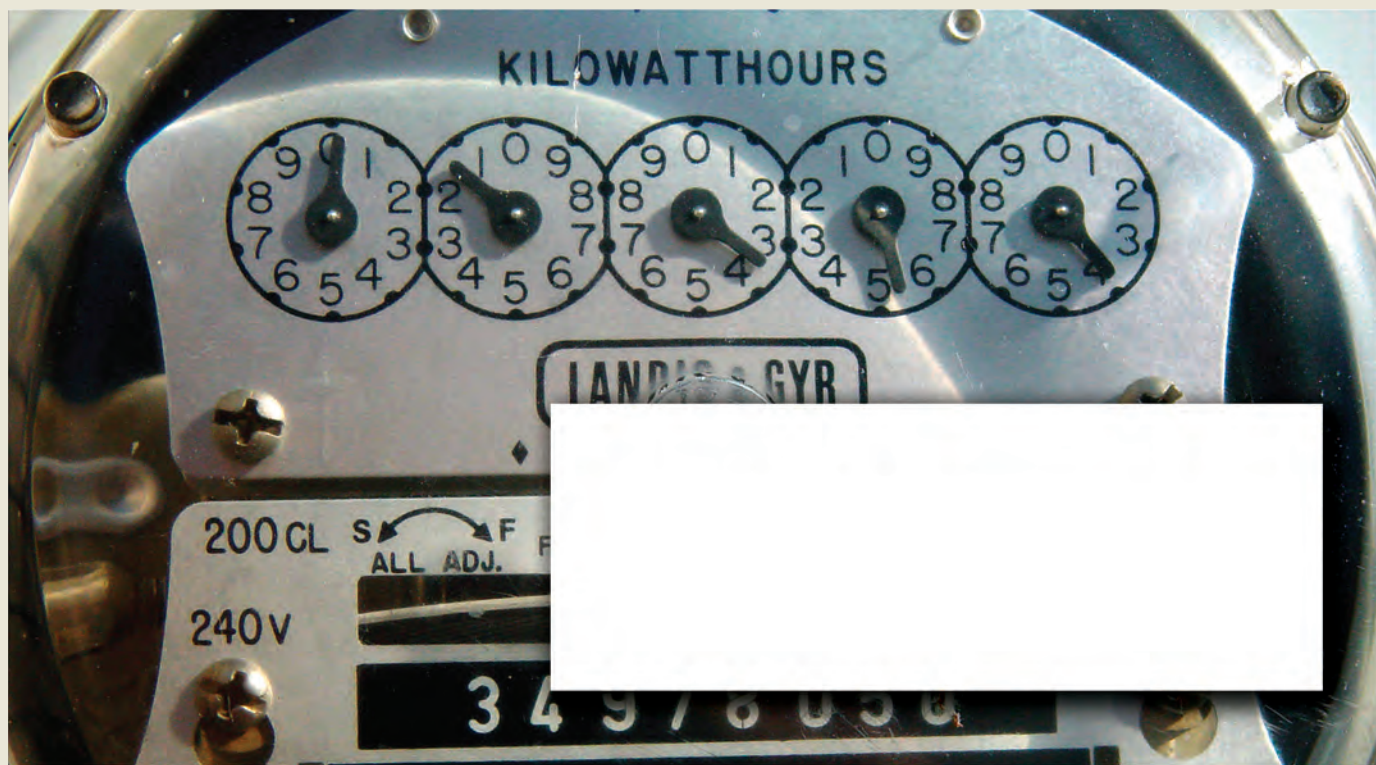
According to CVEC's **Terms and Conditions**, anyone cutting the seal to enter the meter base is guilty of meter tampering.

Health and safety should be sufficient concerns to deter people from meter tampering, but fairness is another consideration. Electric utility statistics tell us that 1-2% of energy is stolen, which is unfair to the other members of a not-for-profit utility. If those figures hold true for CVEC, then the membership is losing \$800,000 to \$1.6 million in annual revenue.

The Co-op is developing a comprehensive current diversion program and will share details in the future. This is good news for good paying members!

In the meantime, remember that meter tampering and current diversion is unfair, illegal, and extremely hazardous. ♡

www.mycvec.com



SCAM ALERT

CVEC learned of a recent effort by scam artists who were contacting electric utility customers, including CVEC members. The scammers identified themselves as a CVEC employees, told the member that there was a past due amount on the member's electric bill, and advised the member to load funds onto a Green Dot Credit Card. **This was not a call from your Co-op!**

We have not heard of any members who fell for this scam.

See the full explanation of how your Co-op processes bills and payments, and settles past due accounts on pages 4-5 in this newsletter. 📌



STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION:

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