

## Managing Money during Tough Times

More Americans feel added stress and anxiety about their financial future as talk of rising consumer debt, falling housing prices, rising costs of living, and declining retail sales bring up worries about the nation's economic health. Although Texas has been less affected than other states, there remains a need to focus on money management and ways to reduce unnecessary household expenses. Learning positive money management techniques can help you and your family adapt to tough economic times.

### Here are a few suggestions to help you free up money in your household:

#### Utility Budget Plans

Consider working with your service provider so your monthly bill is based on an average of the previous year's monthly bills. This is usually called "level billing." Be warned, if you exceed the budgeted amount, you could end up owing money at the end of the current year or your fixed payment will increase next year. In some cases, a utility company may make an adjustment during the year, if usage is greatly exceeding the estimated amount. This strategy provides short term relief to the monthly budget when utility costs are rising.

#### Online Banking and Paying Bills

Consider using online bill-pay; this option eliminates the cost of stamps, checks and envelopes and usually saves you time. InvesTex Credit Unions offers these services at no cost.

Have your paycheck or retirement check directly deposited into your account, this saves you gas money or mailing costs, and time.

Refinance your current loans to lower your monthly payments. You may be able to even extend loan terms. Transfer balances from high-rate credit cards. InvesTex Credit Union has several options for you to choose from to reduce the cost of debt you have at other financial institutions. InvesTex is also very flexible offering a Skip-Pay program that can free up cash flow during years when you needs may arise.

Automated withdrawals also can save you time and money. Funds are taken directly from your account by your service provider. It is common for the provider to provide you with an incentive to do this. InvesTex offers FREE ACH origination for you to transfer funds to and/or from other financial institutions you have accounts with. Electronic transaction save you time, money, gas, postage, etc.

Avoid using payday loans, cashing your paycheck and paying a fee to do so. These are very expensive services.

Track your spending carefully and manage your account balances to avoid unnecessary charges.

### **Too Much Insurance?**

Whenever possible, increase your deductibles to lower insurance premiums. Make sure that you have enough money in an emergency fund to cover the deductible, should the need arise.

Check to see whether you have duplicate or excess coverage that you can eliminate.

Certain policies such as disability insurance require a waiting period. Increasing the length of the waiting period also tends to lower premiums. InvesTex offers credit life and disability insurance designed to protect your assets and your wallet at very reasonable prices. Be sure to select insurance that is necessary for you and your family's needs.

These are just a few ways you can better manage money not just during tough times but all the time. InvesTex Credit Union understands your concerns about the economy. Take advantage of your membership at InvesTex and save whenever and wherever you can!

[www.investexcu.org](http://www.investexcu.org)

