



Basis Points – May 12, 2020

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Above the Fold

Another Good Thing ... Your Electricity Bill

The global pandemic has shuttered local offices, workshops, factories and even corporate headquarters, leaving millions to work from home. All those vacant workspaces have dramatically lowered power demand, leading to the biggest energy consumption decline since the Great Depression.

Wholesale power prices in many American cities are anywhere from 10% to 40% less than five-year rolling averages — some more, some less depending on the makeup of commerce in the area. New York City has seen some of the biggest declines.

Electricity trades like most other commodities, where traders and speculators help set prices using factors like weather and projected economic activity to determine fair market values. Because much of America's electrical grids can't store much power, prices are extremely sensitive to large declines in utilization. And since consumption is likely to be stifled for the near future, most of us should see declines in our bills. For millions of consumers who live in deregulated energy states, don't forget to shop around when your electrical service contract is up — you may be in for a pleasant surprise.

Three Things

1. *This Port on Your Computer May Be Extremely Vulnerable to Hackers* – Millions of devices (Macs somewhat less so) could all be easily susceptible to hackers with some simple hardware. Recently, an issue has surfaced with Intel's Thunderbolt-enabled computers made before 2019. While a fix is offered, experts note that it was not universally implemented, and the only way to fully prevent an attack is for users to disable Thunderbolt ports in the BIOS, enable hard drive encryption and turn off computers when leaving them unattended.
2. *A U.S. Silicon Boom Coming?* – With the pandemic straining supply chains and relations with some Asian nations, the Trump administration and American chip makers are hoping to spark development of new chip factories on U.S. soil. Microchips manufactured here would be given purchase priority by domestic governments and could help buffer future disruptions for consumer-bound chips as well.
3. *Slowly Getting Back to Business as Usual* – Many retail stores closed their doors due to the pandemic. Now, things are starting to reopen. Notably, after closing all U.S. locations in early March, Apple began opening up a small number (six) of its stores this week in Idaho, South Carolina, Alabama and Alaska. The locations were selected due to their regions' relatively low infection impact. Apple plans to slowly open more stores here and abroad as improving data and regional social distancing laws allow.

Did You Know?

The Latest (Fact-Checked) COVID-19 Positives

- Shuttered since January, Disneyland in Shanghai reopened with social distancing guidelines in place. Masks are required, parades are on pause and character meet-and-greets are not yet allowed.
- An increasing number of COVID-19 patients are being treated [without ventilators](#). Even though their blood-oxygen levels are clinically low, these "happy hypoxemics" are able to breathe and function relatively well and are receiving less-invasive treatments through CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) type machines.

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