



The Randolph family, Cindy and John with daughters Lacie, 12, and Alyse, 11, are looking forward to the changes to their home that will help them conserve energy and save on their electric bill.

## WCEC Member Family Wins \$10,000 Home Energy Makeover

**W**ood County Electric Cooperative members John and Cindy Randolph of Grand Saline will receive significant energy-efficiency upgrades to their home after being named one of the five winners in the Texas Co-op Power Home Energy Makeover Contest.

The Randolphs were among more than 12,000 Texas cooperative member homeowners who entered this statewide contest sponsored by Texas Co-op Power magazine. Five winners from across the state were selected to each receive energy-efficiency improvements valued at up to \$10,000. Improvements can include—depending on the evaluation and needs assessment of each home—new air-source heat pumps, ductwork improvements, insulation enhancements, water heaters and other upgrades to improve energy efficiency. Each of the five winning homes will receive energy makeovers tailored to their unique circumstances to achieve the best efficiencies based on home type and family lifestyle.

Texas Co-op Power, partnering with local cooperatives, created the competition to promote home energy efficiency

by demonstrating the possible energy savings that can be achieved through the use of a range of products, from insulation to an Energy Star-rated HVAC system. Corporate sponsors of the Randolphs' home energy makeover, through donation of equipment and services, include Lennox Industries with Ben Maines Air Conditioning, Johns-Manville with Garland Insulation and Marathon Water Heaters.

Three other WCEC member families—Carmen Snow, Deborah Brothers and Marsha Bucheit—received a free home energy audit performed by one of two professional audit firms: Bumblebee Energy Solutions, located in the Dallas and Austin region, and Fox Energy Specialists of Fort Worth. These audits provided in-depth details about each home and offered recommendations for improvements to best achieve maximum energy efficiencies.

A more in-depth report about the five homes that won makeovers, with before and after photographs, will be featured in the August issue of Texas Co-op Power and posted online at [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com).



# WCEC Teen Wins Runner-up Award in Co-op Teens Power Texas Contest

Levi Cooper, son of Wood County Electric Cooperative (WCEC) members David and Lojuana Cooper of Lindale, has been named a runner-up in the Co-op Teens Power Texas contest. Levi received \$250 for winning the Youth Appeal category.

Texas Co-op Power magazine, in conjunction with electric cooperatives across Texas, asked high school students to create a one- to three-minute educational video that explored a developing facet of renewable energy. Levi, who was sponsored by Lindale High School, created the film with acting and production help from four of his classmates: Jacob Voyles, Christian Cheatham, Caleb Karrenbrock and David Irwin.

## TEXAS CO-OP POWER Co-op Teens Power Texas

“It was interesting to learn how hydroelectric plants work to get energy from water,” Levi said of making the video. Of winning, he said, “I was actually surprised, because when I make a video, I always think I could do better.”

Debbie Robinson, CEO and general manager of WCEC, said, “It took research, initiative and time for these young men to develop this creative project. I’m pleased they were recognized for their efforts and can’t wait to see what achievements and accomplishments their futures will hold.”



The creative team behind the Youth Appeal award video winner: Bottom row, from left: Jacob Voyles, Christian Cheatham and Caleb Karrenbrock. Top row: David Irwin and Levi Cooper.

## INDEPENDENCE DAY

*Wishing all WCEC members a joyful and safe day as you celebrate Independence Day and the birth of our nation.*

# POWER OUTAGES

*Ever feel as if you are screaming at a rock?*



Who would have thought that this year alone would bring us two large-scale power outages caused by difficult and dastardly weather? All of us at Wood County Electric Cooperative (WCEC) were still reeling from the February snowstorm that affected 8,000, and then ... WHAM! In April, our members were knocked about again by the tremendous wind and tornado activity that extinguished the power and lights for 12,000.

Neither one of these events was typical, but what's amazing is the fact that the second storm actually did much more damage to our system than the first. For the April event, there were over 63 poles downed and 25 transformers that required replacement. Additionally, 45 main three-phase lines were downed, and there were miles of individual line to restring. Because of the amount of devastation and the level of heavy construction required to make all repairs, it took workers three days to get all the power back on. To give

some perspective, WCEC's cost associated with this last storm is estimated at around \$170,000. We should all consider ourselves very lucky, though, as this was the same storm system that tracked to Mississippi, where many lives were lost and millions of dollars' worth of property was damaged.

With all of that said, once again we faced a Herculean communications challenge. After the storms, the next several days were beautiful, but power was still out. Unfortunately, many of our members could not reach us by phone because of the overwhelming number of calls coming in. The first barrier, as we've discussed in previous articles, is the limited number of lines that come into the Quitman region. Members may be getting a busy signal that they think is from WCEC, when in actuality they are not even getting through the rural phone hub. Then, if a caller is lucky enough

to get through the rural hub, the next challenge is to connect to an open line at WCEC, of which there are 23.

Customer service reps answer as many of these calls as possible, but they can answer only so many and the others roll over to the computerized phone system.

We know our members want better communication during a major event, so we're performing a study to see how we can beef up our system to handle more calls simultaneously. When we spend members' money, we want to make sure we are doing so in ways that will offer the very best benefit for the solution. In the end, the solution will likely be a hybrid or a mix of technologies that use systems we are already employing. The plan will be to increase the number of calls we can receive while also allowing members to hear a recorded situational report. You'll read more about this in coming issues of Texas Co-op Power, but we wanted you to know now that we are working on a solution.

## REMINDER: Current Personal Information is Important When Your Power is Out

Did you know we have a computerized outage-reporting system? We do, but it's only as good as the information it contains. When you call to report an outage, it knows you by one of two things: 1. Your telephone number or; 2. Your account number. When the lights go out, many people don't know their account number by memory, so if they get the automated system they'll type in their phone number. It's an issue, though, if our system does not have the same number a member is inputting. A member may have moved or gotten a new phone number and forgotten to update his or her information with us. Without the right number, the computer can't log the outage. So, if you've changed your phone number lately, give us a call at (903) 763-2203 and let us update your records. It may save you some frustration later.



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Having a variety of lighting options—overhead as well as task lighting—gives you more control, illuminating what you need without wasting energy.

## Light Only the Space You Use

**A**re you lighting your whole kitchen, home office or family room every time you sit down to read or work on the computer? If so, you're wasting energy.

If you're just occupying a small portion of a room, light up your spot with task lighting. That allows you to reduce lighting costs while adding character and ambience to a room.

Both track lights and recessed lights offer a streamlined look that can make a room feel bigger, add more light or highlight certain areas of a room.

Track lighting and recessed lighting were once restricted to incandescent and halogen bulbs—which use a lot of energy and produce heat along with light, making a room hotter in the summer. Today, you have energy-efficient options in the form of compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs).

You can buy track lighting fixtures designed especially for CFLs and CFL replacements for existing track-lighting systems. For recessed lighting, choose a CFL that's marked especially for recessed lighting, with a reflector to push light out into the room.

Follow these tips for effective task lighting:

- For a reading or desk area, place the light directly above where you sit so your head and shoulders won't block the light.
- Task lighting can increase visibility and safety above kitchen counters. Place lighting directly above kitchen islands, but center lights over the edge of countertops with cabinets.
- When creating a row of lights, place the first light about 3 feet from the wall to avoid making the corners look dark.
- Recessed lighting will typically light an area of floor space equal to the height of the ceiling. To brighten the room, space the bulbs so the area of each halo of light overlaps. A spacing of 6 to 8 feet typically distributes the light evenly.
- Give yourself some lighting options by having your electrician wire different sets of lights to multiple switches so you can turn only one set on for specific tasks, or turn them all on to illuminate the entire room.

## SEND HALOGEN LAMPS PACKING

During the hottest month of the summer, it's time to throw out one of the biggest heat producers—and fire hazards—lurking in your family room: the halogen floor lamp.

These torchiere-style lamps initially gained popularity because they are inexpensive and stylish. But their 300-watt bulbs consume an enormous amount of energy and burn extremely hot—around 1,000 degrees—making them an instant fire hazard if cloth or paper comes into contact with them.

Operating these lamps also can send your energy bill soaring—much higher than their pricier but more efficient counterparts will. It costs nearly twice as much annually to operate a \$20 halogen floor lamp than other kinds of lamps.

The smart alternative is a safe, efficient and equally stylish compact fluorescent floor lamp. Choose an Energy Star-qualified model to reap the biggest savings. Though they start at about \$40, they can save you more than \$130 in energy savings over the life of the lamp.

When you send your halogen lamp packing, however, don't send it off with your college-bound kid. Many college dormitories have banned the lamps because of the fire hazard they pose.

