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Important Guide to Reporting a Power Outage

FOR FASTEST RESTORATION DURING OUTAGES (short or long), members should always report an outage rather than relying on neighbors to do so. Once multiple outages in a neighborhood are recorded, the information helps predict where the outage is along the miles of Wood County Electric Cooperative (WCEC) line and helps shorten diagnostic time and ultimately restoration time.

WCEC's computerized outage reporting system has tremendous capabilities to immediately record outages. It offers tools to circumvent busy telephone signals to quickly

give and get information during times of large-scale power outages. This system does not replace our personal service but is a hassle-free and fast way to report an outage.

To use the system, it's critical that member contact information and phone numbers be up-to-date so the system can "recognize" you and identify your account. Don't wait until a power outage to discover whether this easy and effective tool will or won't work for you. To verify that your account information is up to date, please call us at (903) 763-2203 or follow these steps:

1. Visit Account Services at wcec.org
2. Select My Account
3. Select Account Profile
4. Enter Updated Information
5. Select Submit

It's also important for members to know that their verifiable personal account information, which gives us exact location data, is required before workers will be sent. Therefore, reports of outages cannot be received via social media.

To Easily Report Outages, Update Your Info!

Our outage reporting system is computerized. It's fast and direct. But it is only as good as the records it contains. When your power is out, WCEC needs your current personal information. When you call to report an outage, the system identifies you by one of two things: 1) Your telephone number(s), or 2) Your account number.

Many people don't have their account number memorized, but they do know their phone number. However, that feature won't work if our records do not contain the phone number a member tries to input. A member may have moved or acquired a new phone number and forgotten to update their 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.

All the Ways to Report an Outage

HIGH-VOLUME TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE OUTAGE HOTLINE

This is a speedy way for members to directly log their outages and get trucks rolling to restore power. This toll-free phone hotline can handle almost unlimited simultaneous calls to avoid a busy signal at the office. A member can immediately record an outage, just as if speaking to a person. When called, it "recognizes" members by either: 1) Their account number, or 2) The phone number listed on the account.

Instructions for the Outage Hotline

- ▶ Be prepared by having available your WCEC account



Wood County Electric Cooperative

501 S. Main St. • P.O. Box 1827
Quitman, TX 75783

CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

Debbie Robinson

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Contact Us

CALL US
(903) 763-2203

EMAIL
info@wcec.org

OUTAGE HOTLINE
1-866-415-2951

FIND US ON THE WEB
wcec.org

MEMBER BENEFITS AND SERVICES

- Online account access and bill payment
- Paperless E-Bill services
- Free bill-paying app
- Visa, MasterCard and Discover accepted
- SmartPower prepay electric system
- Scholarships and youth programs
- Safety and energy conservation programs

MOBILE CONVENIENCE CENTER

Monday, First Methodist Church, *Van*
Tuesday, Rutherford and Highway 37, *Mount Vernon*
Wednesday, City National Bank, *Hawkins*
Thursday, Brookshire's, *Winnboro*
Friday, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*

number or phone number that is on file with WCEC.

- ▶ Dial toll-free 1-866-415-2951 to report and hear about an outage.
- ▶ Listen for the updated information regarding any large-scale outages.
- ▶ Follow the simple prompts. Enter your account number or telephone number if prompted.
- ▶ The system will notify our 24-hour dispatcher to direct crews to the outage location.
- ▶ Lastly, the system will offer a callback feature if the member wishes to be notified when power is restored.

OUTAGE TEXTING

A new way to report outages that's just as fast as the high-volume toll line is by sending us a text from your mobile phone.

Instructions for Outage Texting

- ▶ To set up your account for outage texting, your mobile phone number must be in our records. If it's not, just give us a call at (903) 763-2203, and we'll input it.
- ▶ Then, to enroll, text the word "WOOD" to the number 85700. You'll receive a return text message to verify the meter location. Reply with the correct option that matches your address, and you'll be enrolled.
- ▶ Once you are registered for outage texting, you can report outages by texting the word "OUT" to 85700.
- ▶ You can also receive status updates by texting the word "STATUS." To unenroll and stop receiving messages, text the word "STOP" to 85700.

CALL OUR REGULAR OFFICE TELEPHONE

Call our office 24/7 at (903) 763-2203. After 5:30 p.m. and on weekends, a limited staff is available to answer the phones and limited phone lines into the cooperative. You may get frustrating busy signals when you call this line, especially during times of high-volume outages. If you just want to report an outage, the quickest and most direct way is by calling the aforementioned high-volume hotline or by texting.

Ways To Get Outage Information

OUTAGE MAP ON WCEC'S WEBSITE

Members can find real-time 24/7 outage information by viewing the outage map. Click Current Outages under the Outage Center at wcec.org. This map displays the entire service territory and real-time outage data, such as the number of members affected and locations. By clicking on a specific outage, users are able to zoom into an area to see the number of individuals affected. The map will also relay the start time of the outage and indicate if it has been verified, which means whether a serviceman has located the cause. It also displays crews on the scene.

WCEC'S FACEBOOK PAGE

On WCEC's Facebook page, facebook.com/woodcountyelectriccooperative, members can receive all types of useful information about contests, co-op news and safety tips. It's also a handy tool for getting outage information. During high-volume outages, WCEC posts snapshots of the outage map, outage pictures and estimated restoration times, when and if possible. Facebook is operated by co-op personnel Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Please note that our Facebook page is NOT connected to the outage reporting system. The only way to report your outage is to call or text the outage reporting numbers. We love to hear from our members on Facebook.

But for it and any social media, it's important to note that any data posted by members can be seen by many. Please refrain from posting account numbers or other personal account information or issues about yourself or others. Also, it's not a great idea to post publicly that your power is out. It's much safer and effective to contact us directly.



Polish-American World War II survivor Sofie Frederick and her son, Jimmy, on the porch of their home, where Old Glory hangs proudly

An American Smile

BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR, BIELSKO WAS a sleepy Polish village of farmers and craftsmen. The prominent town leaders, shopkeepers and bankers were mostly of Jewish descent. They employed others to keep their homes, work in their kitchens, milk their cows and perform odd jobs. A widow and mother of four small children, Katherine Wowk worked for them. Katherine's first-born, Sofie (in 1925), would tag along with her mother as she milked cows for a paycheck.

Sofie, not yet strong enough to milk cows, would help her mother at work and home by carrying buckets and tending to her two younger sisters and brother. Luckily, two uncles would help perform the harder farm chores like hay cutting. But otherwise, the little family of five was on their own to eke out a living.

In English colored by a heavy Polish accent, Sofie offers, "I did not go to school because the villages were so far apart. They were more teaching you working rather than teaching you in the schools. I was the oldest, and when it was still warm outside, I would herd the cows. The Jews had a lot of animals,

and they would pay you to watch them, too."

Sofie also looked after the baby boy of the Jewish family her mother worked for and peeled potatoes or performed other jobs the family would teach her to do. "Then they would give momma a little money, and she could buy some material and make me a dress or something. There were no ready-made clothes then. You had to make your own," she says. "I was always proud to learn and not one of those lazy kids."

Sofie has fond memories of that peaceful life. On holidays, their Catholic priest would come to visit and bless special meals, and they had many joyful times. But that was before World War II. During the war, she and her family and their Christian friends watched in helplessness as their Jewish neighbors, employers and friends were subjected to a reign of terror.

When Germany and Russia invaded Poland, Sofie says, they split the country, each taking half of Poland to rule. Bielsko was occupied by Nazi Germany, and troops frequently descended upon the town in jeeps and tanks. On those days, Sofie and her family hid in the outhouse, the barn or even the

ditches, and silently watched.

Sofie and her family watched as the Nazis carted away their Jewish employers. “It was so sad what they were doing to Jews and even to poor little kids,” she says. “When we could see their house, the German trucks and tanks were there. We could see them carry them away behind a big mountain. They carried them behind the mountain, and they built a big fire and they threw them in the fire and burned them. That’s what they did to the richer ones, even the child, and we could not help them.”

Katherine cautioned her children to be quiet and to never run or cry when any soldiers were present. She told them, “There is no way to help; and if you show too much emotion, then the Nazis will torture you, too.”

Eventually, the occupiers removed all of the Jews from Bielsko. The villagers who remained continued to farm. Then, Sofie says, “We were working in the fields, and doing everything we had to do to farm the land. We were allowed to go outside. Then they came and watched, and they were taking people’s names and ages. My age, I was about 15.”

Then the Russians turned their attention to those remaining. “They began killing people if they had religious stuff in their house. Momma hid the pictures before they came in the house. She taught us not to talk about God—and not to pray. Momma took the holy pictures and hid them in the barn in the hay. She said not to go and dig it out. ‘Just pretend you don’t know anything about it. Just carry God in your heart and your mind. If they ask you if you love God or Stalin, [say] you love Stalin because then they will give you a job in the field, and they will give you something to eat.’” Sofie continues, “because when you are hungry, you will do anything as long as you can get something to eat.” And she smiles, saying, “Especially my brother!”

But then Sofie relays how she was taken from her family, “I probably weighed 50 pounds when the Germans loaded me up on the train and carried me to Krakow.” They were crowded into showers that were so hot they burned, and the steam rose up to temporarily blind them. It was pitch-black, and many were crying and screaming. Because of the crowds, steam and shock, she says it was hard to breathe. Due to prior starvation and sheer fright, many fainted and many died. Those who lived were kicked outside onto a field, where Sofie remembers lying on the grass and licking it to just get a little cool water on her tongue.

Survivors were housed while their fates were decided: extermination or forced labor. For Sofie, it was the latter. “They loaded us in the train—not in the people box,” Sofie said. “They closed the door, and we were in that train for a couple of days.”

As the train made stops, captives were unloaded to perform conscripted labor. Sofie was sent to a baker’s family. She was housed in a room on the third floor, given food and a small wage to buy her necessities. Barefoot until winter came, she used her coins to buy wooden shoes. As a servant, she finally learned how to milk a cow and, she says, “They taught me how to talk German. We were not under the guard, but if I

done something like stole, and then you would be punished. But it was better that way, than going through worse things. We were just hoping to survive and maybe go back to Poland and our families after war was over. You kind of want to live.”

Sofie was a servant for about five years. When she was about 20, the war ended and, “The Americans gave us freedom.” Afterward, captives from different countries were housed in refugee camps while their paperwork was sorted. All were eager to return to their own countries and families. This is what Sofie wanted, too. But, Sofie says, “Poland was taken over by Russia, and I had already experienced Russia before the Germans took me. And I did not know if my momma was alive or not, and I knew my daddy was dead. And my sister and brother—I did not know.” She had also heard through the underground, a network of sympathizers and intelligence gatherers, that if she returned to Poland, the Russians would send her to a labor camp.

Sofie says, “And thank God we believed them! I decided I was going to stay in Germany and work. I got a job on an American Air Force base, and a lot of us did, too.” She said it was in a town near Frankfurt and, “We did cleaning and ironing for the officers and cleaned the barracks and scrubbed the floors and things. They hired us and gave us our rooms.”

She lived with other Polish women, and they relied on one another for friendship, support and advice. “I had quite a few girlfriends, but we were separated,” Sofie says. “One of my friends was sent to another base for infantry in another German city. I could keep up with my girlfriend, and we would visit on our days off.” Near Christmas, this friend invited Sofie to visit her base for a party and dance.

“When I got there, my friend says, ‘I got you a date!’” Sofie recalls. Her friend introduced her to United States Army Sgt. John Frederick. About her first impressions of John, Sofie says, “Well, he was a sergeant, and I was kind of a little shy. But that is all right because he could speak German.”

By the end of that first date, Sofie says, she was surprised—taken aback—when he asked her to marry him. That night, John even hatched a plan for them to register for a U.S. Army marriage application. He said they should apply in the morning before she had to return by train to her own base and work. He reasoned that the long government approval process for soldiers marrying foreigners would give them time to become better acquainted. He also promised that once the application was approved, if she did not want to marry him, she was not obligated to do so.

Sofie says, “My girlfriend and I talked, and she said, ‘Here is your chance.’ We were, in a way, proud to go to America. And I knew that we could not go back home and look for our family because Russia was going to carry us to Siberia and kill us.” So Sofie took a chance and signed the papers and later married John in Germany. Eventually, John was sent stateside, and Sofie followed separately under the War Brides Act.

She first landed in New York, where John picked her up. He then took her to his hometown in North Dakota to live with his mother while he continued his Army service. There, Sofie was



Two of the family's holy pictures that had to be hidden in the hay during World War II now grace the walls in Sofie Frederick's Winnsboro home.

glad for the chance to learn how to cook, exchange money and do many other things from John's mother and other family members. After a time, Sofie and John moved together to Fort Chaffee near Fort Smith, Arkansas, where John was stationed. Sofie says "The people there are a lot friendlier than the northern parts! Oh, they were so friendly! They did not object that I was from overseas or that I could not read or write. They helped me raise my child and get my girl in school." They also helped her study for the United States citizenship test, and she proudly states, "I did become a full American citizen, the day Eisenhower went to Washington to the White House."

When the Korean War broke out, John deployed and Sofie was comfortable enough to stay alone in Arkansas until he returned from Korea. Upon John's Army retirement, the couple moved to be near John's sister in Arlington, Texas, where they raised their family of six children—two girls and four boys. John managed a Stop-N-Go convenience store, and Sofie worked at a sewing factory, where her boss became interested in her story. Her boss, along with family friend Kelly Amato, was later instrumental in reuniting Sofie with her mother via letters and also arranged to send Sofie back to Poland on a

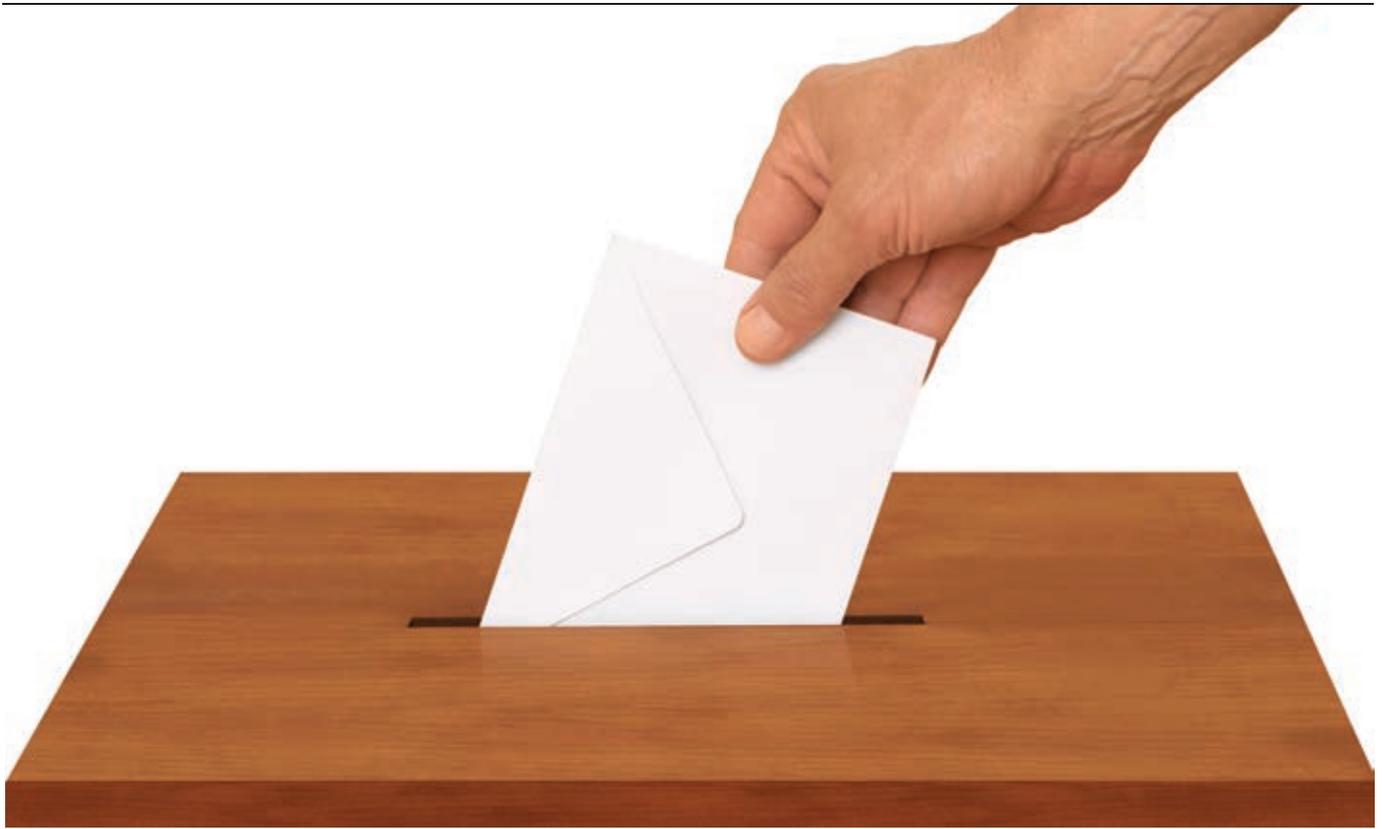
group tour for Polish refugees.

Once Sofie was in Poland, she and her mother, Katherine, met at the hotel where Sofie's group was housed. Katherine brought her daughter two of the family's holy pictures that many years before were hidden in the hay. Today, that cherished art hangs on the wall in Sofie's home, which is now in Winnsboro with her son, Jimmy, and his family.

Long ago, Katherine told her children stories featuring their grandfather who went to America. "We were hungry and we would sit in the dark and hold our stomachs, and we would say, tell us some stories about Grandpa," she remembers. And Katherine would tell her children about how her father glided across the ocean on a big boat.

That sweet memory is revealed in this long-ago mother-daughter exchange told by Sofie: "Oh, Momma, I'm going to pray that I get to go see that ocean." And her dear mother whispered back, "God does not mind you to pray. Go ahead. Just carry it in your heart." Remembering this, Sofie smiles.

Sofie, now 91 years old, is a Wood County Electric Cooperative member, proud United States citizen, mother of six, grandmother of eight, and great-grandmother of two. John Frederick died in 1995.



Legal Notice

THE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE OF Wood County Electric Cooperative, Inc., will meet at the cooperative office at 501 S. Main St., Quitman, Texas, at least 40 days prior to the annual meeting. The committee members are listed below.

Nomination and election of directors is defined in Article V, Section 3 of the Bylaws. Copies of the Bylaws are available upon request by calling the cooperative at (903) 763-2203, or at www.wcec.org.

The Elections Committee shall make nominations for directors for Districts 5 and 6. Directors whose terms are expiring are: Cathy Roberts, District 5 Representative, and Jane Roberson, District 6 Representative.

The Annual Meeting of Wood County Electric Cooperative, Inc. will be held at 2 p.m. on October 7, 2016, at Gov. Jim Hogg Park, 101 Governor Hogg Pkwy. in Quitman, TX, 75783.

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