



GREG MELAND | ISTOCK.COM



## Become Part of the Legacy

Students can apply for an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC

**SINCE THEIR FOUNDING** more than 80 years ago, Texas' electric cooperatives have been committed to empowering the communities they serve. That mission includes providing electricity, but it's so much more. Co-ops not only power homes and businesses across rural and suburban Texas but also invest time, energy and compassion into improving their members' quality of life.

That means investing in our young people—the leaders of tomorrow. And one of the main ways Wood County Electric Cooperative works to empower local youths is through the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, a 10-day, guided trip to Austin and Washington, D.C.

After a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, WCEC is proud to sponsor a high school student from its service area to participate in Youth Tour, June 12–21.

Texas' electric cooperatives sent their first Youth Tour delegation to Washington in 1965. The group of 58 deserving teens joined their peers from across Co-op Country to explore the capital, meet with their congressional representatives to discuss important issues and broaden their view of the world. Since then, more than 4,400 Texas students have gone on the unforgettable trip.

Current high school sophomores and juniors can apply now for their chance to become part of this enduring legacy and represent WCEC on Youth Tour. The winning student will join

more than 150 other Texas teens in Austin before taking a chartered jet to Washington, where they will visit Smithsonian museums, national monuments, the Museum of the Bible, and Arlington National Cemetery for a wreath-laying ceremony, among many other stops.

To be eligible, applicants must:

- ▶ Be a high school sophomore or junior.
- ▶ Be a dependent of a WCEC member with permanent resident status in the co-op's service area.
- ▶ Submit an essay of approximately 500 words on the following prompt: Electricity powers America.
- ▶ Submit the official application form available at [wcec.org](http://wcec.org) on the Youth Programs page under the Programs & Sponsorships tab.

Applications can be submitted via email to [information@wcec.org](mailto:information@wcec.org) or mailed or delivered in person to the cooperative's headquarters at 501 S. Main St., Quitman, TX 75410. The application deadline is February 11.

Visit [texasyouthtour.com](http://texasyouthtour.com) for more information about Youth Tour. ■

# WCEC To Award \$18K in Scholarships

**WOOD COUNTY** Electric Cooperative is accepting applications from area students for 13 scholarships. The co-op will award 10 \$1,500 scholarships to students planning to attend traditional college programs and three \$1,000 scholarships to those pursuing vocational or technical trade certificates.

To be eligible to apply, applicants must be a graduating high school senior and dependent of an active WCEC member. They must also be living in a household on WCEC's distribution system.

Applicants must write a 500-word essay describing themselves; their current interests; their educational, professional and/or personal goals; and why they have chosen their field of study. Along with the essay, applicants must submit an application form, two letters of reference and a certification of academic standing from their school.

A panel of judges will select recipients based on their essay, academic achievements, civic participation and extracurricular activities.

Scholarship funds will be paid directly to the college or vocational or technical school once the student is enrolled.

WCEC's scholarship program is funded entirely by unclaimed capital credits payments returned to WCEC by the state of Texas.

Applications can be downloaded at [wcec.org](http://wcec.org) under the Programs & Sponsorships tab. All entries must be received at WCEC headquarters by March 15. Late entries will not be considered. ■



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## WOOD COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP

### CONTACT US

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### CEO/General Manager

Trey Teaff

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**24/7**

**Report  
an  
Outage**

**CALL TOLL-FREE  
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866-415-2951

**DOWNLOAD THE APP**  
Search for MY WCEC  
in the App Store or  
Google Play

### ABOUT WOOD COUNTY EC

Founded in 1938, WCEC owns and maintains more than 5,140 miles of line to provide electric service to over 38,000 meters in parts of nine counties: Camp, Franklin, Hopkins, Rains, Smith, Titus, Upshur, Van Zandt and Wood counties.

### 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
- Operation Round-Up community grants

### MY WCEC

Your cooperative, in the palm of your hand, our free app gives account access 24/7. See usage graphs, get alerts, estimate upcoming bills, pay your bill and quickly report outages. Free in the App Store and Google Play, search for My WCEC and download.

### VISIT US ONLINE

[wcec.org](http://wcec.org)



Check us out at  
[TexasCoopPower.com/wood](http://TexasCoopPower.com/wood)



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## Is Your Electric Use Higher Now Than Last Year?

**IT'S NOT A BAD IDEA** to compare your energy use from year to year. It's a good way to spot differences that might be related to your family's lifestyle and habits—and to get those under control before your bill skyrockets.

Wood County Electric Cooperative helps you do that by including comparison charts of kilowatt-hour use over the last 13 months on each bill. Even better, our free app, My WCEC, puts the most current data right in the palm of your hand.

A few culprits could rack up the charges without your knowledge. Start by addressing these.

**Your appliances are getting older.** That could mean they're operating less efficiently with each passing year. Replacing a major appliance like a refrigerator or water heater at least every 10 years means you use a more modern model with better energy-saving features.

**More electronics in your home means more wasted energy.** The more appliances and electronics you collect, the more of them you plug in. If you're turning them off but not unplugging them, they're all using small amounts of electricity when they're not in use. That can add up.

**Older insulation is less efficient.** Even if your attic was properly insulated when you bought your home, that insulation can diminish as it ages. As you lose insulation, your heating and air conditioning systems must work harder to keep your home comfortable. Nearly 90% of homes are underinsulated, according to the North American Insulation Manufacturers Association. Have your insulation inspected in the attic and around doors and windows.

**You're not tracking your energy.** In our region, most homes use more energy during the peak of winter, followed by the hottest days of summer. Monitoring your energy bills from month to month, and checking how you are doing through WCEC's app, can quickly flag increases so you can decide how to cut your use elsewhere.

**Changes in the weather.** If summer is especially hot one year or winter is unusually frigid, your family will rely on its heating and air conditioning system more than usual. Don't be surprised if your energy bills increase as a result. A tip: Prepare your home to withstand weather changes by caulking around windows and doors, sealing penetrations on the inside of exterior walls where cables and wires enter the home, and replacing old, single-pane windows with efficient double-pane models. ■

## Energy Efficiency All Year Long

**2022 BRINGS A** fresh start. If you can focus on mastering one energy-saving habit a month, your power bill will be better for it.

**January:** Set a reminder to change the air conditioner filter every 60–90 days.

**February:** Instead of turning up the heat, put on an extra layer of clothing or get under a cozy blanket.

**March:** Turn off lights when you leave a room.

**April:** Wash clothes with cold water.

**May:** Decorate your backyard or porch with solar-powered lights and keep other outdoor electric lights off.

**June:** Take short showers instead of baths.

**July:** Dry heavy linens outside on a clothesline instead of using the dryer.

**August:** Turn off ceiling fans when you leave the room.

**September:** Seal all pipe penetrations into your house with spray insulation.

**October:** Unplug energy vampires, including gaming consoles and computers.

**November:** Plant a tree to shade your home in warm months.

**December:** Decorate for the holidays with LED lights. ■



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# Resolve To Save Energy in 2022

**THE START OF THE** new year always seems to bring about the inevitable lists of resolutions to improve one's life: Lose weight, stop smoking, exercise more ... conserve electricity.

Well, that last one maybe isn't actually on your resolutions list, but it can be just as important as any personal health goals—both to your financial bottom line and the overall health of our cooperative and the state's electricity system.

As one saying goes, it takes 21 days to create a new habit. During that time, it may take a conscious effort to change your behavior—for instance, remembering to switch off lights as you leave a room. But you may find, after a few repetitions of a new behavior, you won't even have to think about it. You'll turn off the lights automatically.

Here are some other energy-saving resolutions that you might consider for 2022:

▶ Unplug phone chargers, plus the coffeemaker and other kitchen and bathroom countertop appliances, when you're through using them. These items draw electricity as long as they are plugged in, even when they're turned off. Consider using smart power strips for electronics. Smart TVs, cable boxes and computers continue consuming energy even when in sleep mode. Smart power strips, not the traditional ones, can detect sleep mode and will cut the power to the device, eliminating phantom loads.

▶ If any of the overhead fixtures, table lamps or outdoor lights around your home or business still have those old, inefficient incandescent lightbulbs or CFLs, change them to LEDs, which use less electricity and can reduce your power bill.

▶ Install a programmable thermostat. Use it to lower the heat by a few degrees when the family leaves the house every day and to raise it back up just before everybody gets home. You won't feel any less comfortable at home, but you'll notice a dip in your energy bill. If you choose a smart thermostat, you can control it from your phone even when you're away, and it may give you detailed usage reports.

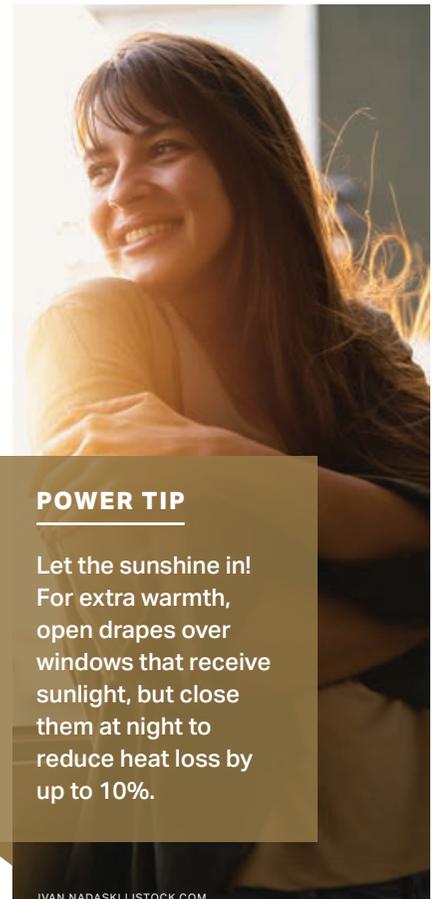
If everyone in Wood County Electric Cooperative's membership embraced just one or two of these ideas, or took other energy efficiency measures, the effect would be greatly magnified. And if everyone in Texas embraced even the simplest of these ideas, like turning off unused lights, it could add up to significant savings. ■



## DID YOU KNOW?

Vampire loads come from electronic devices that use electricity when they appear to be off. Primary culprits are chargers, cable TV boxes and gaming systems.

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## POWER TIP

Let the sunshine in! For extra warmth, open drapes over windows that receive sunlight, but close them at night to reduce heat loss by up to 10%.

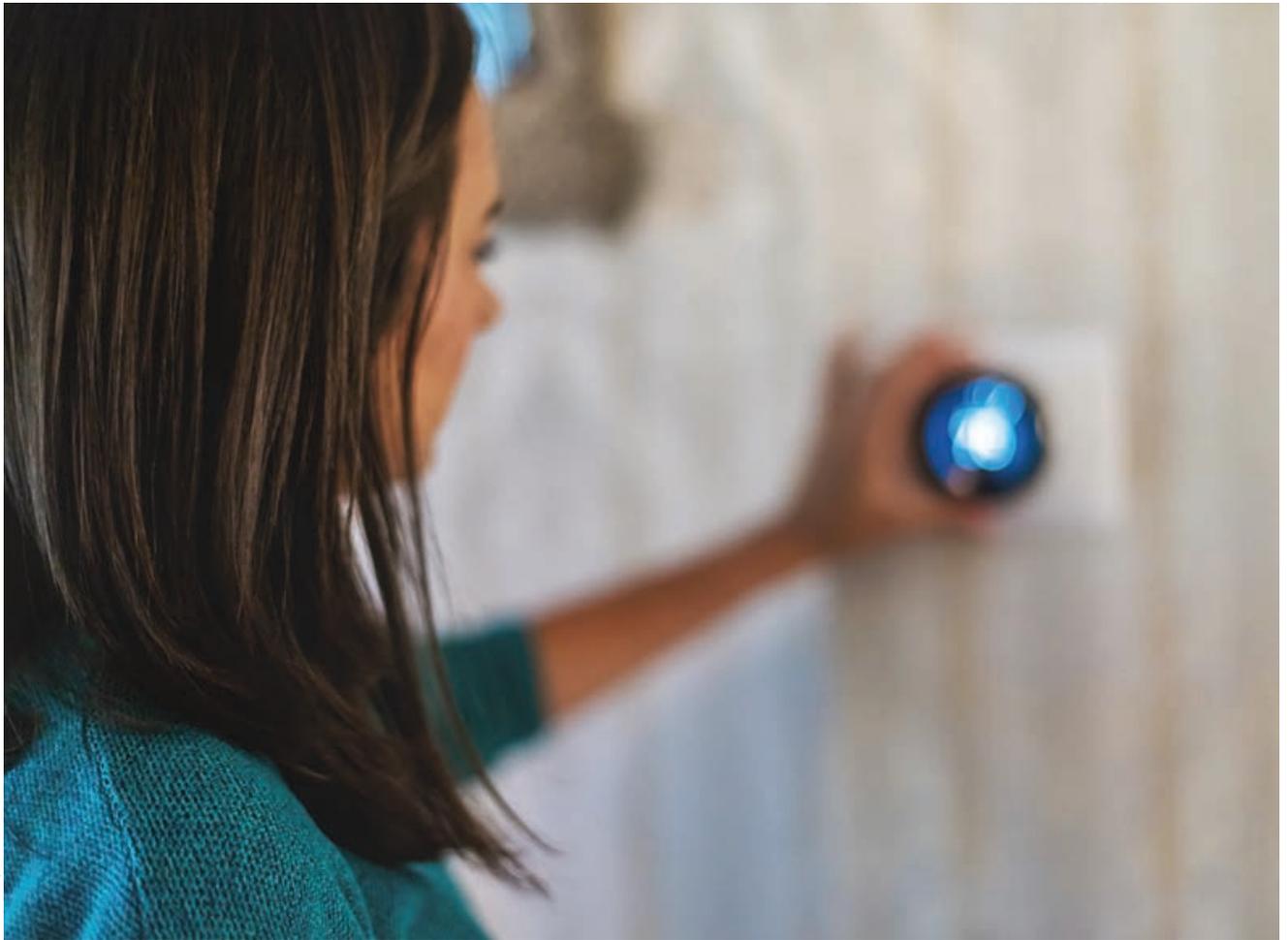
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## Hey, foodies!

Chet here! Join me at the all-new [TexasCoopPower.com](https://www.texascooppower.com) to learn about tasty Texas eats, including hundreds of recipes, and enter your recipe in our monthly \$500 contest.





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## Cost of Heating Expected To Rise This Winter

**HOUSEHOLDS THAT HEAT** their homes primarily with electricity can expect to spend approximately 6% more on energy this winter, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The increase comes as prices for energy are at or near multi-year highs in the U.S. after changes to energy supply and demand patterns because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the expectation of a colder winter, the EIA writes in its winter fuels outlook. The EIA considers the winter heating season to last through March.

The increase in electricity prices is still expected to be lower than other energy sources for heating. Natural gas prices are expected to rise 30%, propane 54% and heating oil 43%. Depending on the severity of the cold and other factors, those percentages could rise or fall.

“Fuel expenditures for individual households depend on the size and energy efficiency of individual homes and their heating equipment, along with thermostat settings and weather conditions,” the EIA reports.

Cold weather can affect expenditures for heating in two ways, the EIA says. It raises the amount of energy required to keep a room at a certain temperature and it raises demand, which could cause supply disruptions.

In the South, the rising price of electricity might not be as noticeable as in other parts of the country. Even though two-thirds of Southern homes are all-electric, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is forecasting winter temperatures in the South to be comparable to last year, so states in that region might see an increase in electricity prices of about 5% compared to last winter, according to the EIA.

Homeowners could also use more electricity in their homes this heating season because social patterns have changed. Many people continue to work from home because of the pandemic, increasing their power bills by 3%, the administration reports.

January, February and March are the peak months for electricity use among Wood County Electric Cooperative members, so now is the time to think of ways to conserve to avoid large increases in your bills. Keep tabs on your usage by reviewing your account online or via the My WCEC app. You can track your usage from as recently as 48 hours prior.

Simply being aware of the amount of electricity you use can help you conserve—and you’ll avoid a surprising bill. ■

## 4 Tips for Winter Safety

**WINTER MONTHS** bring increased potential for fire risks and electrical safety hazards. That's because during the coldest months, folks pull out space heaters, electric blankets and portable generators for added heat.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that 47,700 home fires occur each year in the U.S. due to electrical failure or malfunction, resulting in 418 deaths, 1,570 injuries and \$1.4 billion in property damage. This winter, safeguard your loved ones and your home with these electrical safety tips from Electrical Safety Foundation International.

**Don't overload outlets.** Overloaded outlets are a major cause of residential fires. Avoid using extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliance connections; they should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. If you're relying heavily on extension cords in general, you may need additional outlets to address your needs.

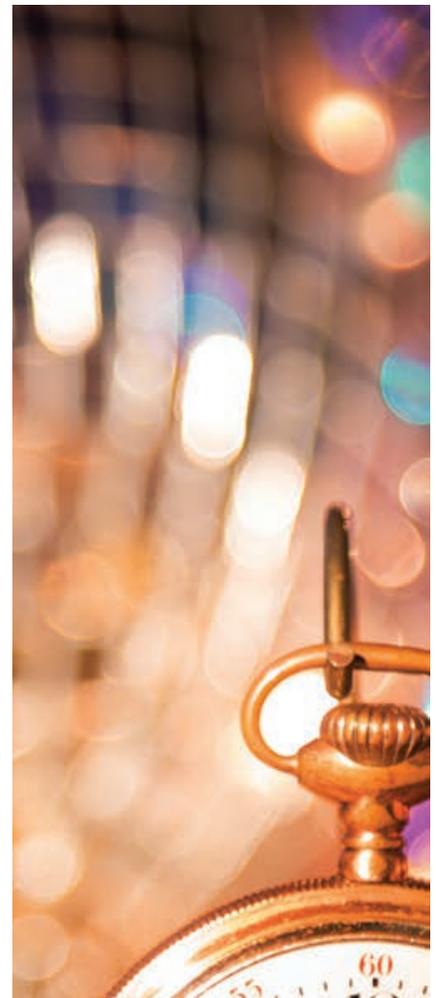
**Never leave space heaters unattended.** Turn them off before leaving the room. Make sure they are at least 3 feet away from flammable items, and remember that space heaters take a toll on your power bill.

**Inspect heating pads and electric blankets.** Look for dark, charred or frayed spots, and make sure the cord is not damaged. Do not place any items on top of a heating pad or electric blanket, and never fold them when in use.

**Use portable generators safely.** Unfortunately, winter storms can cause prolonged power outages, which means many consumers will use portable generators to power their homes. Never connect a standby generator to your home's electrical system. For portable generators, plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator. Start the generator before you plug in appliances and always run it in a well-ventilated area outside your home. ■



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### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**New Year's Day**  
Saturday,  
January 1

Our offices will be closed Friday, December 31, for the holiday.

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day**  
Monday,  
January 17

**Holocaust Remembrance Day**  
Thursday,  
January 27

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## Pack Up Your Tree and Lights

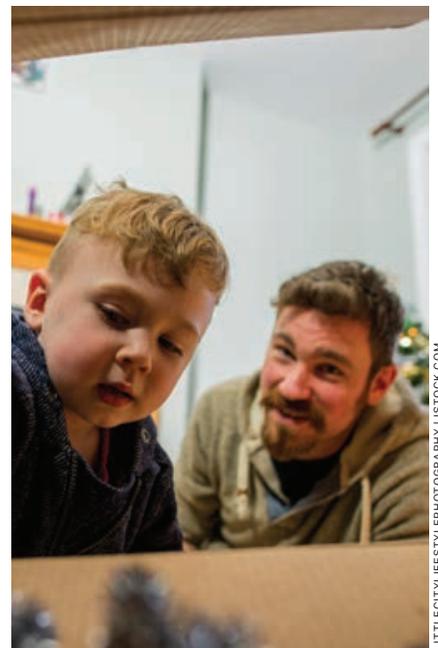
**SOME PEOPLE LIKE** to celebrate Christmas year-round, but there are some practical reasons to take down your holiday decorations.

**A dried-out Christmas tree is a fire risk.** Real trees lose moisture and get crispy even when you trim the stump and keep it soaking in water. Those browning needles and sap make excellent kindling should a spark from the fireplace or heat from a lightbulb make contact. Take your real pine tree down soon after the holidays or as soon as it begins to show signs of drying out.

**Lingering Christmas lights can cause a tangle.** If they begin to sag off the house or trees, they're not only unsightly but might cause a person or pet to trip or get tangled.

**Left-out lights drain electricity.** Leaving Christmas lights up longer than the holiday season requires electricity that will add to your power bill.

Even if you can't wait for the next round of holidays, don't wait too long to clean up after this season is over. ■



## 6 New Year's Resolutions for Your Home

**THIS YEAR** make New Year's resolutions that are easy to keep while benefiting your home and your family. Here are a few to consider.

**Clean every appliance in your house.** Your refrigerator's coils can get dusty and clogged, which makes it work harder and waste energy. The inside of your microwave oven should be spotless; if it's not, the machine is using energy to "cook" leftover food particles that nobody's going to eat. Even your dishwasher and washing machine need cleaning—inside and out—to prevent mold and clogs. Resolve to clean your appliances once a month for better performance.

**Snake your clothes dryer's vent.** Do this at least twice a year to rid it of lint and debris, which can catch on fire if it clogs the vent and prevents airflow. A clean vent will help your dryer run more effectively.

**Clear the area around your water heater and your outdoor air conditioning unit.** Appliances give off heat and take in air. If you've got boxes, suitcases, Christmas decorations or plants stacked up against them, they can't do their jobs efficiently. The best environment for these big-time appliances is clear of all obstructions.

**Have your heating and air conditioning systems checked out by a professional,** who can tell you if they need repairs. Change or clean the air filters regularly.

**Change the batteries in all of your home's smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.** If you don't have those devices, move acquiring them to the top of your list of resolutions and install them today.

**Invest in a programmable thermostat** so you can set the temperature for optimal efficiency depending on whether you're at home or away. ■

# Be Smart With Your Generator

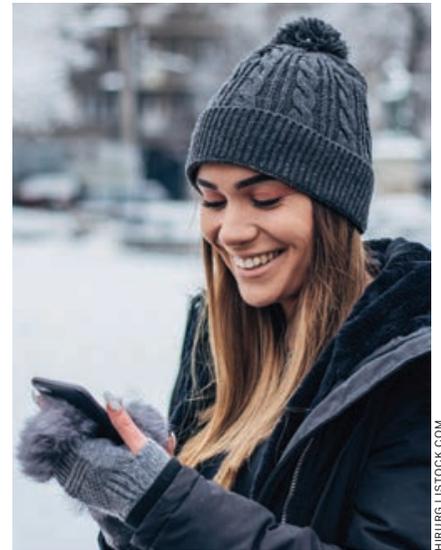
Portable generators are a godsend during a prolonged electrical outage—just be sure to use extreme caution while operating them.

**Never try** to power your home by plugging the generator into a wall outlet. This dangerous practice, known as backfeeding, reverses the electricity flow and sends it out of your house, endangering electric workers and your neighbors. If you must connect the generator to the house wiring, have a qualified electrician do it.

**Plug appliances** directly into the generator or use an extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads. Check that the entire cord is free of damage and that the plug has all its prongs.

**Keep the generator** dry and do not use it indoors, in a garage, near open doors or windows, or in rainy or wet conditions.

**Wood County Electric Cooperative encourages you to always practice safety.**



HIRURG | ISTOCK.COM

## Stay Warm, Fed and Safe During Storms

**WHEN WINTER CONDITIONS** strike, staying safe and warm can be challenging. Wood County Electric Cooperative cares about your safety, and we want you to be prepared.

During a power outage, our crews will continue to work as quickly and safely as possible to restore power, and there are a few things you can do to protect yourself.

**Stay warm.** Plan to use a safe alternate heating source, such as a fireplace or wood-burning stove during a power outage.

**Stay fed.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends keeping handy several days' supply of food that doesn't need to be cooked. Five gallons of water per person should also be available.

**Stay safe.** When an outage occurs, it usually means power lines are down. If you must travel during a winter storm, take a survival kit and do not travel alone. Stay as far away from downed power lines as possible, and report hazardous situations to Wood County EC.

Wood County EC is ready for what Mother Nature has in store, and we want you to be ready too. ■