



MESSAGE FROM
CEO/GENERAL
MANAGER
TREY TEAFF

Co-op Month Is Cause for Celebration

EVERY OCTOBER for most of the past century, non-profit cooperatives of all types have recognized National Cooperative Month—and we continue that tradition this year at Wood County Electric Cooperative.

Although Co-op Month was celebrated for years before a national proclamation, the U.S. officially lauded co-ops in 1964, when U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman proclaimed October as National Cooperative Month.

This year, members from more than 29,000 cooperatives nationwide proclaim the advantages of cooperative membership and the benefits and value that co-ops deliver.

Co-ops—including Wood County EC—are non-profit, democratically controlled, member-owned businesses. Co-ops provide value to their members through highly personal customer service; economic

during the toughest times.

From attending an annual meeting to serving on the board, members are encouraged to be actively involved in the business of their cooperative. Members maintain democratic control of their co-op, which means they elect fellow members to represent them on the board of directors.

For the health and safety of members and employees, the 2021 annual meeting will be online in the form of a detailed brochure. There's nothing more important to us than member and employee health and safety, and that's why we took this step. The report will be available at wcec.org on October 8. I hope you'll spend some time reviewing the information.

The cooperative business model also gives members economic control. Because cooperatives are owned and controlled by the people who use their

services, decisions are made with the best interests of co-op members in mind—not to financially benefit corporate stockholders. Instead of issuing stock or paying dividends to outside shareholders, co-ops return margins (“profits”) to their members in the form of capital credits at the end of the year when they're able.

Another principle that sets co-ops apart from other businesses is their concern for community. Cooperatives have a special responsibility and desire to participate in and support the areas in which their members live and work.

Co-ops are more personal and accessible than other types of businesses because their employees work and live alongside those they serve.

Co-ops are dedicated to powering communities and empowering members.

Here at Wood County EC, we think the cooperative difference is worth celebrating this year and every year. ■



development, conservation and service programs; the retirement of capital credits; and democratic representation in business decisions.

Electric co-ops are owned by those they serve. That's why those who receive electric service from America's electric cooperatives are called members, not customers. Co-ops exist to serve their members, and we strive to keep our level of service high even



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Take Extra Care With Space Heaters

THEY'RE CONVENIENT and come with all kinds of built-in safety features, but space heaters still contribute to more than 40% of house fires and 81% of house fire-related deaths, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

If you rely on space heaters to keep rooms warm, follow a few common-sense precautions.

- ▶ Before using any space heater, read the manufacturer's instructions and safety precautions.
- ▶ Only use space heaters on flat surfaces—preferably the floor but never a carpet or rug.
- ▶ Keep the heater at least 3 feet away from flammable fabrics, including furniture and draperies.
- ▶ Likewise, place the heater at least 3 feet away from the wall where it's plugged in. If it's too close, it could overheat the wall and start a fire.
- ▶ Choose a model that lets you tilt the heating element upward so you can direct the heat away from the floor.
- ▶ Never disable a tip-over switch. Most modern space heaters come with them built in.
- ▶ Don't use a space heater in a bathroom, laundry room or any other space where water could touch the appliance. Water and electricity do not mix.
- ▶ Turn off the heater when you leave the room. If it does tip over, you need to know immediately so you can pick it up before it starts a fire.
- ▶ Keep a close eye on a space heater when kids and pets are in the room with it. Or better yet, don't use a space heater around children and animals.
- ▶ Plug space heaters into wall outlets, not extension cords, power strips or surge protectors. Using those kinds of cords increases the risk of an overloaded circuit, which can start a fire.
- ▶ Make sure your space heater has a label indicating that it has been tested by a laboratory recognized by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. ■

WOOD COUNTY ELECTRIC CO-OP

CONTACT US

501 S. Main St., Quitman
P.O. Box 1827, Quitman, TX 75783
Local (903) 763-2203
Email info@wcec.org
Web wcec.org

CEO/General Manager

Trey Teaff

Board of Directors

Cathy S. Roberts, President, District 5
Burke Bullock, Vice President, District 2
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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 prepaid 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

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All in a Day's Work

Wild tales of the co-op kind

A DAY IN THE LIFE of an electric cooperative employee can be quite interesting. There's no challenge too lofty and no mystery unsolvable, and there's never a job left undone. Hard work, a little ingenuity and a measure of courage is the stuff it takes. Where there is a way, these workers have the will. And when there seems to be no way, they will create one.

October is National Co-op Month, and to honor Wood County Electric Cooperative's employees, here are some of their stories to tickle your funny bone, inspire a little awe and maybe help you come to better know the men and women who have served you through the years.

Hog Wild

Many of WCEC's electric lines run through heavily wooded and remote areas. As the co-op's line crews are out making repairs and addressing outages, it's not uncommon for them to come

across wild animals.

One dark night, several linemen were looking for a trouble spot. Seeing nothing amiss from the roadway, it was time for one of them to walk the line. As is common practice, one lineman got out of the truck and hiked into the woods along the right-of-way. The others drove the truck to the road where the walking lineman would come out of the woods.

After what seemed a mighty long time, the waiting linemen radioed to check on the hiking worker's progress. They got no answer. So one of them set out on foot to find him. Not knowing what he'd come upon, the searching lineman walked quietly, huntsmanlike, until he came upon a sight he'd never forget.

The lost lineman was in a tree, hanging on for dear life. Both hands occupied, he'd not been able to answer the radio. At the base of the tree was a frothing herd of wild hogs just waiting for him to fall.

Once radioed the news, the other linemen made a racket by honking the truck horn. This spooked the hogs and drove them away. The treed lineman, a little shaky but none the worse for wear, was finally able to come down safely. After all, they had to finish walking the line.

One for the Dogs

Once upon a time, co-op employees had to read every single electric meter by hand. In doing so, they traversed hundreds of properties in a week. The potential for dog bites, due to that increased exposure, was much greater then. Unfortunately, most of the meter readers had fallen victim to a canine attack—some more than once.

One such meter reader had developed an extremely healthy respect, and eyes and ears, for roaming dogs. Meter readers typically worked alone, but on this day this meter reader had a helper with him. Together, they approached a house and recorded the meter reading. They were headed back to their vehicle when they heard a bark, and without hesitation, the meter reader blasted into a sprint toward the co-op truck.

The helper was left wide-eyed and befuddled. She watched as the meter reader made an Olympic-style hurdle into the truck and slammed the door closed. Huffing and puffing, he wiped his brow. Then, the vicious threat rounded the corner to intercept the intruders of his domain. The helper, still standing in the sprinter's dust, enjoyed a hearty laugh at the expense of the would-be Olympian.

When the beast showed itself, it was all of 3 pounds. Every chihuahua does have its day!

Moonlight and Cows

Over a period of a few weeks, Wood County EC received numerous complaints from several neighboring members about repetitive blinks—those irritating momentary losses of power that cause home electronics to reset.

As the problem continued, the members' frustration grew, and they made it known. Co-op crews, wanting nothing more than to solve the issue, investigated countless times. Up and down the lines they went, over and over, looking for failed equipment, tree limbs and any other potential culprit.

No matter where they looked or what they tried, the blinks kept happening—like clockwork, every single morning around 2 a.m. Finally, the line superintendent, who was completely flummoxed, asked two of the frustrated linemen to set up surveillance.

Ready to get to the bottom of the mystery, the pair launched their investigation in the wee hours. At 1:45 a.m. the two dutiful workers stationed themselves in the area where the blinks were thought to be originating—a troubled line near a dairy. They watched and waited.

As the linemen stood sentry, they spied a line of dairy cows trotting to the milk barn to deposit their cargo. So far, nothing on the power line. Shortly after the cows meandered past, a large bull ambled into the nearby pasture. At precisely the witching hour of 2 a.m., the bull made a beeline for a nearby power pole. Turning broadside he began to vigorously scratch himself along the guide wire. His rubbing was so strenuous that it pulled the pole back and forth, causing the whole line to



forcefully sway.

This turned out to be the source of those annoying blinks. No bull.

Red Brick Road

This one is a legendary tale, passed down through the ranks. Long ago, a WCEC serviceman was working on a particular street when a member approached him with an inquiry. This member wanted to know—"theoretically"—if there was something that he could do to slow down his analog meter. He told the serviceman that he'd keep it a secret if the worker would tell him, saying, "It'll be just between us."

This old serviceman had been around the block a time or two, and he was known for his quick wit and sense of humor. So, conspiratorially, he lowered his voice and told the man who was trying to cheat the system, "You can't tell anyone what I'm about to tell you."

The man, nodding, swore he'd keep the secret all to himself. The serviceman then told him that if he would put a red brick on top of his meter base, it would make the meter turn slower. The creative serviceman then mumbled something about how the properties of the clay would miraculously cause the meter to turn at a slower pace.

The man thanked him, once again promising not to ever tell a soul. A week later, the serviceman visited the street, and he got a good chuckle. Every house on the street, mysteriously, had a red brick sitting on top of its meter base.

His secret is safe with us! (Wink.)

On Three!

In the aftermath of storms, the going can get tough for cooperative employees, such as after one particular hurricane, when several WCEC linemen volunteered to help another co-op. This crew was working with minimal equipment and materials. They didn't have the luxury of a bucket truck to help them relift lines that had been torn down. So they had to do it the old-fashioned way: They picked the lines up from the ground using a jack.

As they worked, three linemen each grabbed a section of



downed lines as it was being lifted bit by bit. They needed to keep pressure on the lines to ensure they did not tangle as they were resituated in the air. Eventually the section of line became very taut, and the workers prepared to let go of the line. The supervisor said, "Everybody, let go on three!" Then he called out, "One. Two ... " and then he paused slightly.

Two of the linemen, expecting to hear "three," let go simultaneously. But the supervisor, who had not yet finished the count, did not. Still holding on for all he was worth, he was yanked upward, launching toward the sky. As the line snapped into place, the flying lineman, legs dangling, still clung to the power lines that were now 20 feet in the air. With a surprised and dazed look, the supervisor realized his mistake as his grounded crew members gawked at him.

Letting go of the lines was even much harder now, but he finally decided it was the only way to get down. Upon landing, he was temporarily speechless but otherwise perfectly fine. Still today, he's convinced that some co-op employees can't count.

Showered With Blessings

There'd been a terrible storm, and downed trees and power lines were strewn everywhere. Crews had been working to restore power for many days. A kind member had been watching the progress in her neighborhood, and she was extremely grateful for the hard work that had restored her electricity. She'd also seen, firsthand, some of the trials.

For example, that morning, when her power was restored and everything came humming back to life, her aerobic septic system unexpectedly started up. The sewage water completely doused the hapless lineman that had closed the woman's circuit. She

felt bad for him.

As the men continued to work in her area, she prepared a savory beef stew. When mealtime came, this sweet woman invited the crew to her house to share the stew. They were grateful but declined. Determined to do them a good deed, this member was beyond insistent. She would not take no for an answer. Moreover, she wanted the crew to come sit at her table, shooing away their protestations of being too dirty. As they dutifully filed in, the smell of the wonderful stew and the member's kindness warmed their hearts.

She also made them (most of them, anyway) laugh with glee, as she stopped the lineman who had been christened by the sewage spray. She gracefully handed him his bowl of stew at the door, as she told him she hoped he'd be comfortable on the porch, and to just let her know if he needed anything. Ever the good sport, he heartily enjoyed his hot meal anyway. Even so, sometimes, work can stink!

Our Tall Tales

We hope you enjoyed these co-op tales. Their telling might have a dash of embellishment, but what good stories don't? Even so, each is based on true experiences in a day in the life of a WCEC employee, past or present, as told to the writer. Please know, no cooperative members, employees or animals were hurt in the making of them.

In the end, we also hope the stories have served to illustrate one absolute truth: Not much will get in the way of the employees who serve WCEC members—not wild hogs nor big bad dogs. And that's the unembellished truth. ■

Ventilate for the Best Indoor Air Quality

AIR-SEALING TECHNIQUES, including applying caulk, foam and weatherstripping, help with energy efficiency, but they might hamper indoor air quality if a home does not have proper ventilation.

Indoor air quality can affect the health and comfort of building occupants, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Allowing some outdoor air to enter the building helps control pollutants, odors, temperature, humidity and more.

There are three basic ventilation strategies that can help building occupants stay healthy and comfortable with good indoor air quality, according to the EPA.

Natural Ventilation

Uncontrolled air movement through the cracks in a house is natural ventilation. In older homes, air leakage allowed pollutants to escape and actually helped maintain indoor air quality. But when it comes to newer homes, most are sealed tightly for energy efficiency. Once sealed, a home might need supplemental ventilation. Simply opening windows and doors provides some natural ventilation but does not ventilate a house evenly.

Spot Ventilation

Exhaust fans such as kitchen range fans and bathroom fans remove indoor air pollution and moisture at its source. For this type of spot ventilation, ASHRAE, formerly the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers, recommends bathroom fans move 20–50 cubic feet per minute and kitchen fans move 100–250 cfm.

Whole-House Ventilation

If natural and spot ventilation are not enough to provide satisfactory indoor air quality, a homeowner might opt for a whole-house ventilation system. Whole-house ventilation systems provide even, controlled ventilation throughout a house with fans and ducts to exhaust stale air and supply fresh air. ■



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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

National Do Something Nice Day
Tuesday,
October 5

International Day of Rural Women
Friday,
October 15

Halloween
Sunday,
October 31

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Add Insulation To Keep Warm

AS THE SEASON CHANGES to cooler weather, your thoughts also might turn to keeping out the coming winter cold. Insulating the attic is an effective way to help keep your house cozy and energy efficient—not just over the cool months but at all times of the year.

The U.S. Department of Energy estimates homeowners could reduce energy costs by 10%–50% with proper attic insulation.

Typically, houses in warm-weather states should have R-38 insulation in the attic, whereas houses in cold climates should have R-49. Check with your local building department for code requirements.

If you discover you need more insulation, you might be worried about the process. Rest assured that in most cases, you can add the new insulation on top of old insulation.

An exception to this is if the existing insulation is or has been wet. Wet insulation can promote the growth of mold or mildew and cause building materials to rot. If it's wet or appears to have water damage, you should look for the cause and repair the problem to prevent it from happening again. Then remove any wet or damaged insulation.

Here are some additional considerations for adding

insulation to an attic:

- ▶ Batt or rolled insulation and blown loose-fill insulation (made of fiberglass or cellulose) can be installed on top of old insulation.

- ▶ Do not place “faced” insulation on top of existing insulation. Any new batt or roll of insulation added on top of existing insulation in the attic needs to be without a vapor retardant, or facing, because this paper between layers of insulation can trap moisture. Any existing batt or roll insulation should place the facing against an attic’s drywall floor—or have no facing at all.

- ▶ If you cannot find unfaced rolls of insulation, you can carefully pull the kraft paper off without much loss of insulation.

- ▶ If your new insulation is in rolls, you should roll it out perpendicular to the joists. Be sure to use unfaced rolls or pull off the kraft paper.

- ▶ You should not tack down rolled insulation. Insulation needs to be fluffy to block heat flow. Squashing insulation flat to tack it down will reduce the

R-value, or effectiveness.

- ▶ If you discover vermiculite insulation in your attic, be sure to have it tested before doing work there because it might contain asbestos. If the test reveals that asbestos is present, a certified removal expert should remove the vermiculite.

- ▶ You also can hire a contractor to blow loose-fill insulation in your attic.

- ▶ If tackling the project yourself, be sure to take safety precautions, including wearing a long-sleeve shirt, gloves, eye protection and a dust mask. Take care not to cover can lights unless they are rated for contact with insulation. And be careful not to step through the ceiling!

- ▶ Remember, a tightly sealed house is as important as insulation, so fill all cracks in the living area and the attic with caulk or expanding foam. Some areas to pay special attention to are around attic windows, pipes, wires, exhaust fans and ducts, and chimneys and flues. ■



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Fall Checklist: Address Safety, Maintenance Issues

THE BLISTERING SUMMER heat isn't far behind us, but it won't be long until heating season arrives and the house is full of family for the holidays.

Head off any potential problems by scheduling maintenance and safety checks now for your home's heating and electrical devices. Here's where to start:

Furnace. Before you turn on the heat, make sure your furnace is in good working condition. A qualified technician should do a biannual check of your system—once in the fall for heating and again in the spring for air conditioning. The tech can spot small problems before they become major repairs.

Thermostats. If your home doesn't have a programmable thermostat, you could be paying more to heat and cool your home than you need to. Programmable thermostats automatically turn the heat up or down—helpful when you're sleeping or away for a few hours.

Ground-fault circuit interrupters. A licensed electrician can install GFCI outlets in your bathroom, kitchen and laundry room; around hot tubs and pools; and under windows—all areas that have the potential to get wet. A GFCI will shut off the electricity to an appliance that short circuits and circuits that are overcharged—a safety must.

Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. If you don't have them near all bedrooms in your home, it's time to

install them. Then check them twice a year to make sure they're still working and that they have fresh batteries.

Overloaded outlets. You can overload an electrical circuit by connecting an appliance that draws a lot of electricity—like a range, dishwasher, refrigerator or even some entertainment systems and exercise equipment—to a circuit that is designed for a smaller load. You can also overload a circuit by using a power strip to plug too many appliances into a single outlet. Ask a licensed electrician to inspect your home for potential circuit overloads, which can cause fires.

Extension cords. Extension cords can become frayed and damaged with use over time. If you're planning on using them to provide power to holiday decorations, give them a safety check and be sure to use cords that are rated for the outdoors.

Yard tools. Winterize and stow away warm weather tools such as lawn mowers and trimmers. Check cold weather tools like leaf blowers and snow blowers, along with their power cords, if they have them. Repair and replace worn tools and components. ■