

Safeguarding Employees While Serving Members



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER DARRYL SCHRIVER

BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS, MY HOPE AND prayer is that the coronavirus pandemic will be on its way to the history books. This was a situation none of us had ever experienced. A serious look back at the way our people have responded will undoubtedly help us prepare for the next one.

As a member-owned electric utility, Tri-County Electric Cooperative made it our priority to keep our employees safe so they could keep your power on during those months of spring storms and outages. 1925001

In times like these, we make it our business to stay up to speed on the latest information from federal, state and local government. Our national and state associations are also valuable resources, and we rely on the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other respected institutions for advice on how to reduce the spread of the virus.

As an essential service provider, Tri-County EC's first course of action was to protect our employees. That's why we closed our lobbies and restricted traffic to drive-thrus only. Our cashiers wore protective gear and took steps to prevent infection from items that came through their drawers. Members were encouraged to pay their bills through TCEC Connect; on our website, tcectexas.com; by mail; or by calling the office at (817) 444-3201.

To make sure we formulated a deliberate and reasonable response, we gave our employees personal protective equipment so they could continue to do their jobs safely. We practiced social distancing, asked people to bring their own lunches, paid strict attention to sanitation and hygiene, and held most of our meetings by phone or email.

Since our linemen and member services personnel are "in the trenches" serving our members, we decided to continue bringing staff to the offices rather than letting people work from home. Our phone system and the technology we employ make it difficult for many of our employees to work from home. We decided to work together as a company.

We did have a few employees who were exposed to the virus, and they were asked to stay home until they had cleared the 14-day quarantine. As of this writing, we are not aware of any employees who contracted the virus, but we were prepared for that possibility and determined to limit its spread.

As a provider of an essential service, Tri-County EC was exempt from many of the emergency orders that restricted other businesses. We were keenly aware, however, of the impact those restrictions had on many of our members and their businesses, which in turn also affected the size and scope of our operations. 800664645

As of this writing, we are still considering more severe measures, such as reducing our workforce through unpaid leave or layoffs. It's our prayer that it doesn't come to this, but we know that many of your businesses have dealt with these situations, and we pray for a quick recovery.

The U.S. economy, and the Texas economy in particular, is strong and resilient, and we are confident that once the unknown becomes known and can be dealt with, this will pass. We will learn from it, and we will emerge stronger.

Our greatest resource is our people—our members, our employees and the people of this great country. As we move on, be assured that the future is still bright—different, certainly, from what we expected but still bright.

To secure that future, it's our plan to keep your lights on.



Meet Your Board Members Seeking Reelection



DISTRICT 1 MEETING

Wednesday, July 8 | 404 Main St., Azle

Registration opens at 6 p.m. with the meeting to follow at 6:30 p.m. Member-owners who reside in District 1, as designated by the board of directors, will receive an invitation in the mail in early June to attend this meeting. The purpose of this district meeting is to nominate a director to the board to represent the member-owners of District 1. Director Todd Smith has indicated his intention to seek reelection to the Tri-County Electric Cooperative Board of Directors.



TODD SMITH

TODD SMITH, DISTRICT 1

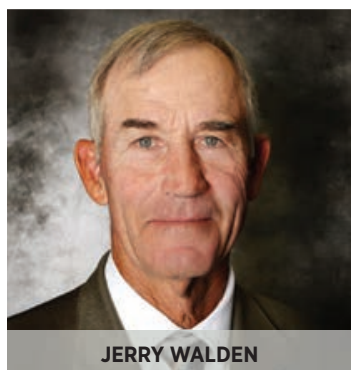
Smith represents the member-owners of District 1 and has served on the Tri-County EC Board of Directors since October 2002. He is currently board vice president. Smith has completed training requirements for his Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership certificates and completes yearly training to maintain his Director Gold credential, all through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. He is a graduate of Tarleton State University and is the interim superintendent for Azle Independent School District. He taught agriculture science at Azle High School for seven years and served as assistant principal for Azle High School, principal of Walnut Creek Elementary, and director of district operations and assistant superintendent. Smith is very active in his community and church. He is a member of the Azle FFA Alumni Association, Optimist Club of Azle and Texas Health Resources Foundation-Azle and served as a board member for the Azle Chamber of Commerce.



DISTRICT 4 MEETING

Thursday, July 9 | Garner Elementary School

Registration opens at 6 p.m. with the meeting to follow at 6:30 p.m. Member-owners who reside in District 4, as designated by the board of directors, will receive an invitation in the mail in early June to attend this meeting. The purpose of this district meeting is to nominate a director to the board to represent the member-owners of District 4. Director Jerry Walden has indicated his intention to seek reelection to the Tri-County EC Board of Directors.



JERRY WALDEN

JERRY WALDEN, DISTRICT 4

Walden represents the member-owners of District 4 and has served on the Tri-County EC Board of Directors since September 1999. He is a lifelong resident of Parker County and enjoys farming and ranching with his family in the Garner and Millsap communities. He has built custom homes for many years and shares ownership of Walden Farm and Ranch Supply with his family. He served on the Garner Independent School District board for 10 years, including as board president.

2020 DISTRICT MEETINGS



Members Benefit From Advances in Safety Practices

But attitude is still the most important factor

BY BOB BUCKEL, COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE

IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT ELECTRIC LINE WORK IS MUCH LESS dangerous than when cooperatives started, back in the late 1930s. Technology, protective gear and an emphasis on training have combined to achieve a steady decline in reported injuries. 800783731

Still, the most important safety device continues to be the human brain.

"The industry's a lot safer today than it was 30 years ago, for sure," says Wes Scheets, chief operations officer for Tri-County Electric Cooperative. Scheets, who started at the co-op in 1985 as an apprentice lineman, has seen some major advances over the years.

"The safety equipment is better than it was 30 years ago," he says. "There's better testing done on the equipment to make sure it's in good working condition, and technology has helped

quite a bit because of the hot-line tag and the new procedures in place."

But the biggest change has been attitudes.

"The mindset of the company is different," he notes. "There's better guidelines in place. The company is doing a lot better job at pushing safety."

Scheets says that when he started, the priority was to keep the power on at all costs.

"That's not the mindset today," he says. "If you have to take a clearance—kill the power—in order to work it safely, you take the clearance and you work it safely."

A 10-year study conducted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association showed a steady decline in reported injuries. However, serious injuries and fatalities continue to occur at an average of 23 per year nationwide. Tree trimming,



THE HOT-LINE TAG

When Wes Scheets started at Tri-County Electric Cooperative, linemen often operated under a “three shots to lockout” system, meaning in the event of an accident, the system would try three times to reconnect before it would lock out. In the mid-’90s, that went to a one-shot system.

“Anytime you were working on a main feeder or behind a breaker, you would have to set that device into a one-shot application,” Scheets says. “That means if you messed up, you would only see one arc flash.”

Since then, the co-op has gone to what’s called a hot-line tag: an instantaneous lock-out that greatly reduces the chance of a lineworker getting hurt.

“You have to set that on any main feeder or any breaker that you work behind now,” Scheets said. “You can actually knock the line out sometimes and not even know you knocked the line out.”

LINEMAN’S EQUIPMENT

A lineman’s gear can easily weigh 50 pounds. **Along with tools, that includes:**

Fire-resistant clothing, including pants, shirts, undershirts and jackets. Tri-County Electric Cooperative now calls on linemen to bring their gear in once a year to have it checked for effectiveness.

Insulated rubber gloves with leather gloves worn on top to protect the rubber from punctures.

An insulated hard hat to protect the lineman from falling objects.

Steel-toe boots.

Safety glasses to protect eyes from loose debris and other hazards.

A safety harness, whether the lineman is on a pole or in a bucket, to prevent falls.

1. Jared Day, an apprentice lineman out of Tri-County EC’s Azle office, puts on his climbing hooks as he gets ready to go up a pole.

2. On the pole, Day wears a belt and a fall-restraint system, which would limit any fall to about 2 feet and then pull Day against the pole, preventing him from falling any farther. Day is also wearing fire-resistant gear, including his shirt, jeans and gloves, and an insulated hard hat and steel-toe boots.

automobile accidents and falls were among the causes, but the main cause of injury for linemen continues to be electrical contact.

The NRECA study zeroed in on the reasons behind that. The researchers found that even with all the advances in safety clothing, equipment and procedures, the human brain continues to look for shortcuts. The more routine an activity becomes, the greater the temptation to find a way to do it faster. All too often, it’s the safety procedures that get skipped over. 800687630

Time pressure, a false sense of security, and limited planning and feedback were cited as reasons why lineworkers did not wear proper protective equipment or abandoned safety procedures. Many of the accidents in the study occurred on small jobs while workers were restoring power.

Jeremy Choate, a first-class lineman who works out of Tri-County EC’s Granbury district office, says safety is a constant priority.

“Safety is job one,” he says. “I’ve done a lot of things, but I haven’t done it all, and there’s still a lot I’ve got to learn. I don’t want to be that guy that thinks he knows it all and he can do it all. I want to be the guy that’s always learning.”

Bottom line? When a job becomes routine, safety procedures can seem uncomfortable, burdensome or time-consuming. When that happens, humans are inclined to take shortcuts. This is true whether you’re a lineworker or a handyman.

All of us need to force ourselves to slow down and consciously and intentionally engage the analytical part of our brains. Doing otherwise, the study concludes, is like putting your car on cruise control in a blizzard.

Budget-Friendly Efficiency Upgrades



STEVE DEBENPORT | ISTOCK.COM

THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO MEASURE ENERGY EFFICIENCY improvements. There's the payback period—the amount of time it will take for the improvement to pay for itself. Then there's comfort. Improvements can often increase the comfort level of a home—not easy to measure but one of the driving forces behind home weatherization efforts. There are several areas of the home that can be improved easily, without breaking your budget. 40619003

Lighting

There has been a steady decline in the price of LED bulbs for residential consumers. Nowadays, 60-watt-replacement LEDs can be purchased for \$5 or less. LEDs should save 60% or more on power costs compared to incandescent bulbs and last for many years. New LED fixtures are also an affordable option. They come with LED bulbs built in so you never need to change the bulbs.

Heating and Air Conditioning

The Energy Information Administration estimates that heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems account for 22% of a typical home's annual electric bill. While newer systems can be 20%–45% more efficient than older ones, the upfront cost is often a barrier to adoption.

But there are still ways to save. Simple solutions such as changing air filters at least every three months will increase airflow to rooms, increase the life of the HVAC unit's motor and improve air quality in the home. Sealing and insulating ductwork can be done in a weekend and results in energy savings of up to 20%. 800818788

To lessen the amount of work that heating and cooling systems need to do, it is important to find and seal air leaks. Look for leaks around exterior doors and windows, electric outlets, and entrance points for TV and phone cables. Also check dryer vents and any place with an opening in the wall. To seal leaks, apply caulk, spray foam or weatherstripping to these areas.

Simple acts such as cooking outdoors on a hot summer day or keeping curtains closed to keep out the summer sun will keep the interior of your home cooler and reduce the amount of time AC units need to operate.

Appliances and Electronics

The appliances and gadgets that make life easier are also among the largest users of

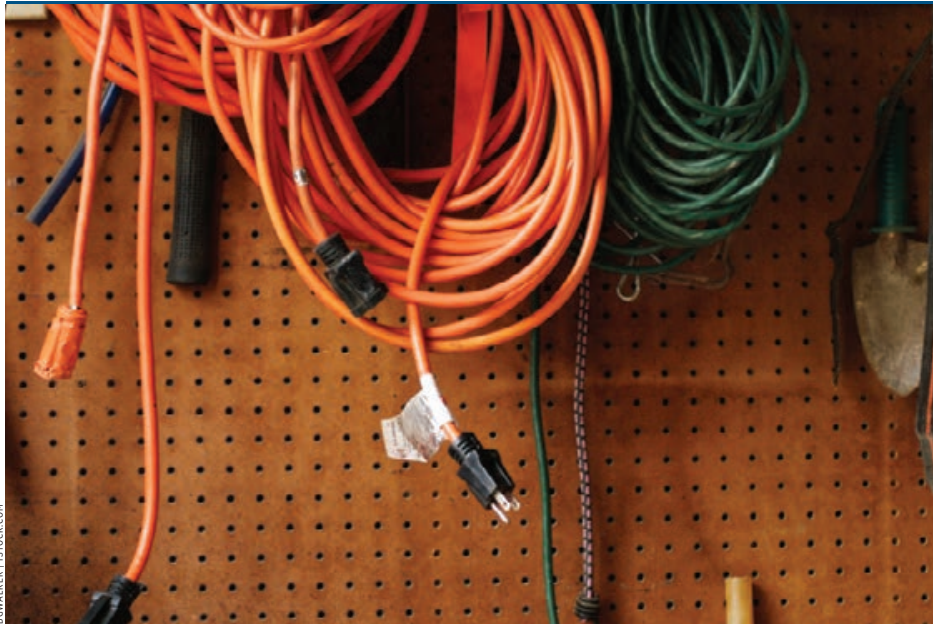
electricity in our homes. When buying a new appliance, narrow your choices to those with an Energy Star label. That simple act can result in 10%–15% savings in energy consumption.

Other simple household tips:

- ▶ Clean dryer lint traps after every cycle, and don't overdry—you'll save energy and extend the life of your clothes.
- ▶ Replace worn refrigerator door gaskets to stop cool air from leaking from the refrigerator.
- ▶ Clean refrigerator coils and keep fridges away from heat-generating appliances such as an oven.

Home electronics, like computers, TVs and game systems, consume power even when turned off—what are known as “energy vampires.” According to a study conducted by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, the average home loses 8% of its monthly energy consumption to these vampires. A full 75% of the power used to run home electronics is consumed when those appliances are turned off, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Cutting off power by using a power or smart strip is an easy way to stop this needless waste of energy.

The best energy efficiency improvements are often the easiest. Turning lights off when leaving a room, sealing windows and doors, and cleaning refrigerator coils aren't as much fun as buying a shiny new appliance. But these simple tasks are proven ways to save energy and increase comfort on a budget.



Reminders for National Electrical Safety Month

EVERY DAY, WE RELY ON ELECTRICITY TO POWER OUR HOMES AND OFFICES. HOWEVER, it can be easy to take for granted the safety of electric appliances and equipment and power lines. May is National Electrical Safety Month—a great time to raise awareness of how to avoid electrical hazards.

Indoors

- ▶ Check electric cords for fraying or cracking. Replace cords that may be damaged, and don't overload electric outlets.
- ▶ Extension cords are intended to be temporary. If you find yourself using extension cords regularly, have an electrician add outlets where you need them.
- ▶ Don't run cords under carpets or rugs and don't tack or nail cords to walls or floors.
- ▶ Keep electric appliances and tools away from water. Never reach for or unplug an appliance that has fallen into water; instead, turn the power off at the breaker before you unplug the appliance or remove it from the water.
- ▶ Never put anything other than an electrical plug in an outlet. Use outlet covers or caps to protect children.
- ▶ Keep your home's electrical system in good repair. Contact a licensed electrical contractor if you have flickering lights, sparks or nonfunctioning outlets, or need wiring repairs or upgrades.

Outdoors

- ▶ Never touch downed power lines. 800755664
- ▶ Always call 911 or your electric cooperative if you see lines down.
- ▶ Watch for overhead lines every time you use a ladder, work on roofs or in trees, or carry long tools or tall loads. Keep kites, drones and metallic balloons away from power lines.
- ▶ Know what's below before you dig. Call 811 three days in advance of your project to have underground utility lines, pipes and cables marked for free.
- ▶ Avoid planting trees underneath power lines or near utility equipment.

Double Savings With Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday

EVERY YEAR AROUND MEMORIAL DAY, you can buy certain Energy Star-certified products tax-free—letting you save on taxes and energy expenses.

This year's Energy Star sales tax holiday runs Saturday, May 23, through midnight Monday, May 25.

Qualifying products: You can buy or lease the following Energy Star-labeled items tax-free:

- ▶ Air conditioners (with a sales price of \$6,000 or less)
- ▶ Refrigerators (with a sales price of \$2,000 or less)
- ▶ Ceiling fans
- ▶ Incandescent and fluorescent lightbulbs
- ▶ Clothes washers
- ▶ Dishwashers

Nonqualifying products: These items do not qualify even if they are Energy Star-labeled:

- ▶ Water heaters
- ▶ Clothes dryers
- ▶ Freezers
- ▶ Stoves
- ▶ Attic fans
- ▶ Heat pumps
- ▶ Wine refrigerators and kegerators

Note: Delivery, shipping and installation charges are part of the item's sales price. The item's total sales price determines if it is tax-exempt. 8002373602





Jerry Ermins Memorial Rib Feed
MAY 3



Movie in the Park
JUNE 12

Your Co-op's Community Calendar

May

3

Jerry Ermins Memorial Rib Feed,
Seymour Volunteer Fire Department

8

Azle Area Chamber of Commerce Golf
Tournament, azlechamber.com

14

Weatherford ISD Education Foundation
Golf Tournament, weatherfordisd.com

25

Memorial Day, Tri-County EC offices
closed

NOTE: Events are subject to postponement or cancellation due to COVID-19 guidance.
Please check the event resource for updates.

**Interested in promoting
your event in the next issue
of *Texas Co-op Power*?**

June

5

Aledo Summer Blast, aledo-texas.com

5-7

Wildhorse Prairie Days,
haskelltexasusa.com

12

Movie in the Park, *Frozen II*, haslet.org

Email pr@tcectexas.com with the
event name, date and where readers
can find more information.



NATHANIM | ISTOCK.COM

MAY HOLIDAYS

Cinco de Mayo

Tuesday, May 5

Mother's Day

Sunday, May 10

Memorial Day

Monday, May 25

Our offices will be closed in
observance of Memorial Day.

GIRL: BOBEX73 | ISTOCK.COM; RIBS: MICHAEL PHILLIPS | ISTOCK.COM

Beef Enchiladas

JILL BRAINARD | WEATHERFORD

1 pound ground beef
1/2 cup chopped onion
1 package taco seasoning
1 can (16 ounces) refried beans
1 can beef consommé soup, divided use
12 flour tortillas

2 cans (10 ounces each) enchilada sauce
1 large tomato, chopped
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
Taco sauce
Sour cream

1. Brown beef and onion in a skillet. Drain if necessary.

2. Add taco seasoning, refried beans, 1/2 cup consommé soup. Cook over medium heat until thickened. Remove from heat.

3. Fill each tortilla with 1/4–1/2 cup of meat mixture. Roll up and place seam side down in a 13-by-9-inch greased pan. Continue until the pan is full.

4. Combine remaining consommé soup with enchilada sauce. Pour over enchiladas. Sprinkle with cheese and chopped tomato.

5. Bake at 375 degrees for 15–20 minutes. Carefully watch to avoid drying out the dish.

6. Top individual servings with taco sauce and sour cream to taste. Enjoy!



COOK'S TIP Enchiladas go great with a side of Spanish rice.

Tri-County EC Member Recipe Submission Form

NAME

CITY

EMAIL or PHONE NUMBER

RECIPE NAME

Please return to:

Email: Please include the above information with your recipe and send to pr@tcectexas.com.

Mail: Please detach and submit this form with your recipe and mail to:

Tri-County Electric Cooperative
Attn: Recipe Submission
600 NW Parkway, Azle, TX 76020



Tri-County Electric Cooperative

600 NW Parkway, Azle 76020

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Darryl Schriver

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(817) 431-1541

Seymour Office

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(940) 888-3441

IT PAYS TO STAY INFORMED!

Find your account number in pages 18–25 of *Texas Co-op Power*, and you will receive a \$20 credit on your TCEC electric bill. Simply contact one of the offices listed above and make them aware of your discovery!



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