

Storm Outage Strategies



MESSAGE FROM CEO AND GENERAL MANAGER RICK HAILE

TEXAS WEATHER IS FULL OF SURPRISES—sunny, 75-degree days in February, 40-degree chills in April or rain at any given moment.

Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative does our best to be prepared for every situation, but outages are sometimes unavoidable. Power disruptions are often caused by lightning, and downed limbs and trees.

We hate to think of our members having to go through a power outage, but we know that in a severe storm, it's possible. In that case, your co-op wants to remind you of a few things:

First, give us a call at 1-800-840-2957. Don't rely on your neighbor to let us know the power is out. The more that people report outages, the better idea we'll have of the outage location. The sooner we can pinpoint the outage, the more quickly we can restore service.

We send repair crews as soon as possible, and they work until the lights are back on. Depending on the outage's severity, restoration could take several hours, so make sure you keep supplies on hand, including flashlights or lanterns, and water, nonperishable food and blankets.

Also, turn off everything in your house but a porch light. That way, when power is restored, a power surge won't damage sensitive equipment. The porch light also helps our employees see when your power has come back on. Once the lights are back on, you can turn on needed appliances, one by one.

Please, above all, be safe. If you see downed power lines, stay away from them. Call the co-op and 911 to let public safety authorities know so they can help keep the area clear.

If the outage is a long one, and you decide to use a portable generator, know how to operate it safely.

Avoid a power surge when service is restored by turning off everything in the house except a porch light.

Don't plug it directly into your home's wiring. This can cause a dangerous condition known as "backfeeding" that can send electricity onto power lines, injuring or killing the linemen working to restore your service. Instead, plug individual appliances into the generator. Also, make sure to operate it in a well-ventilated area outside to avoid a buildup of deadly carbon monoxide gas.

At Heart of Texas EC, we take pride in delivering the best possible service at an affordable price. That includes prompt service whenever an outage strikes. Rest assured that we are prepared to do whatever it takes to restore your service.

Thank You to Our Members!

THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL about the utility that brings electricity to your home. It's a consumer cooperative, and you are more than a customer: You are a member! Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative is founded on a hallmark of Seven Cooperative Principles. These are:

VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP

Heart of Texas EC offers membership to everyone who lives in its service area.

DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

Because you're a member of the cooperative, you're eligible to run for a seat on its board of directors. You may also vote for others from your community who run for seats.

MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Heart of Texas EC members contribute equally to, and democratically control, the capital of the cooperative.

AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

Heart of Texas EC doesn't sell stock to Wall Street investors. Cooperatives are locally owned and controlled by their members.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION

Heart of Texas EC is committed to keeping its members up to date about what's going on at your utility. It also makes sure that the community members who serve on the board of directors—along with managers, employees and others—are trained and knowledgeable about the business of the cooperative.

COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

If you've seen a bucket truck with an unfamiliar logo on it after a storm, it could be from a neighboring electric cooperative that has lent its crews to help out during an emergency. Likewise, your utility pitches in when other cooperatives need help.

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

Heart of Texas EC employees live in your community. We take a great interest in the economic development and well-being of the neighborhoods we serve.



Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative Member Service Manager Ron Poston presents a \$5,000 check to Economic Opportunities Advancement Corp. from Heart of Texas EC and CoBank. EOAC's Carla Landrum accepts the donation.

EOAC Gets \$5,000 Donation From HOTEK and CoBank

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES ADVANCEMENT CORP., a local charity serving those in need, has received a \$5,000 donation from Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative and CoBank, a cooperative bank serving vital industries throughout rural America.

Heart of Texas EC Member Services Manager Ron Poston presented the check to EOAC's Carla Landrum.

Heart of Texas EC's donation was matched by CoBank through its Sharing Success program. Sharing Success was established in 2012 to celebrate the International Year of the Cooperative. The response from the bank's customers was overwhelmingly positive, and the bank has renewed the program each year. Since the program's inception, CoBank and its customers have together provided nearly \$14 million in support to charitable organizations across the nation.

"Sharing Success has become one of the cornerstones of CoBank's multifaceted corporate giving program," said Robert B. Engel, CoBank's chief executive officer. "It leverages the passion, expertise and local knowledge of our customers to identify and support the causes and programs that best address the unique needs of rural communities. We're delighted our board has generously re-authorized this program and [are] proud to partner with Heart of Texas EC on this important initiative."

CoBank is a \$107 billion cooperative bank serving vital industries across rural America by providing loans, leases, export financing and other financial services to agribusinesses and rural power, water and communications providers in all 50 states. The bank also provides wholesale loans and other financial services to affiliated Farm Credit associations serving farmers, ranchers and other rural borrowers in 23 states around the country.

For more information about CoBank, visit the bank's website at cobank.com.



Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative

Operating in Bell, Bosque, Coryell, Falls, Hamilton, McLennan and Milam counties

CEO AND GENERAL MANAGER

Rick Haile

DIRECTORS

- Garland Cook, District 1
- DeWayne Draeger, District 6
- Kermit Dreyer, District 7
- Paul Edge, District 2
- Dan Foster, District 9
- Kenneth Hollas, District 3
- Bobby Nawara, District 4
- Allen Shows, District 5
- Larry Stock, District 8



Contact Us

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ROSEBUD OFFICE

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CREDIT/DEBIT CARD PAYMENTS

Online at hotec.coop

By phone at 1-855-399-2688

FIND US ON THE WEB

hotec.coop



Meter Tampering: Dangerous and Illegal

IN THIS LIFE, WE PAY FOR WHAT WE USE. When we run out of milk, we go out to buy another gallon. If there's a hole in the sole of our favorite shoe, we hand over a few bucks for a repair job or buy a new pair. Seems fair.

We also pay for each kilowatt-hour of electricity we consume for lighting, air conditioning, hot water and other comforts. At least, most of us do.



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Some people tamper with their electric meters, breaking them or altering the readings so they don't have to pay for the electricity they use. That costs you and other honest consumers billions of dollars every year. You have to pay for what they steal.

Meter tampering is expensive and illegal. And it's dangerous. People have been killed while tampering with their meters. Others have been injured, and some have set their houses on fire.

A meter that's been tampered with poses the risk of electrocution to anyone who unknowingly touches the damaged device. That includes utility line workers and meter readers. It also includes your children.

All electric meters are sealed for a reason—the same reason you have locks on your doors. The seal keeps out people who have no business opening the meter. Nobody has any business opening it except employees of Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative and electrical contractors with co-op permission.

Heart of Texas EC offers a \$250 reward for reporting verified meter tampering. If you learn that a neighbor or acquaintance is tampering with an electric meter, report it immediately to Heart of Texas EC. You'll help whittle that multibillion-dollar price tag down to size, and you could save someone's life.



PLX Meter Installation Continues

Heart of Texas EC Continues PLX Meter Upgrade

HEART OF TEXAS ELECTRIC Cooperative's state-of-the-art advanced meter reading system upgrade is nearing completion. All the substations have been commissioned and about one-third of the old meters have been replaced with the new PLX meters.

The four-year AMR deployment is continuing on schedule. If cooperative personnel visit your location for any reason, and you do not have the new PLX meter, one will be installed at that visit.

For members who have not yet received a new meter, the procedure is as follows. About a week before the crews go out, a letter will be mailed to members notifying them of the meter change-out. Members can expect to lose power for a few minutes on the day of the installation.

In addition, the next bill will show two meter readings: one from the old meter and one from the new meter.

If a member chooses to "opt out" of having the new meter, there will be a monthly charge to go to the member's location to read the meter.

If you have any questions, contact our office at the following numbers: McGregor, (254) 840-2871; Rosebud, (254) 231-0444; or toll-free, 1-800-840-2957.

Taking Your Bids

HEART OF TEXAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE is putting a vehicle up for auction. Sealed bids must be received before 10 a.m., August 15. Envelopes must be marked "Sealed Bid" and delivered by mail or in person to either of the Heart of Texas EC offices. If you have any questions, please contact Member Services Manager Ron Poston at 1-800-840-2957. Heart of Texas EC reserves the right to refuse any and all bids. The vehicle may be seen at the McGregor office August 1-12. Unit is AS IS and includes NO WARRANTY.



UNIT #1390—2004 CHEVY 1500: Extended cab, 4-wheel drive, 5.3-liter V8 gas engine, automatic transmission, tow package, air conditioning, AM/FM clock radio, approximately 279,000 miles. Transmission slipping. AS IS. NO WARRANTY.

Operation Round Up Grants Total \$21,700



Member Services Manager Ron Poston presents checks to several area nonprofits in the northern service area of Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative through Operation Round Up. The total disbursement for the quarter totaled \$21,700. Those pictured include John and Betty McFarlin with Flat Community Center; Rheadene Weber and Niellee Plemons with Historic Prairie Chapel School Association; Poston; Tom Pearson with The Arc of McLennan County; Robert Jeffcoat with the Turnersville Volunteer Fire Department; Ellie Fowler with Moody Community Library; and Amanda Franks and Audra Denn with McGregor Youth Baseball, Softball and T-ball. Not pictured is the China Spring VFD.



In the southern service area, nonprofits accepting checks from Operation Round Up Board Member Mike Garrett include Sarah and Amara Spellman and Becky Dolgener with Temple-Belton La Leche League; Claralee Gausemeier and Doris Voltin with Westphalia Historical Society; Gary Kleypas with the Buckholts VFD; Garrett, Red Carson and Eddie Silva with the Lott VFD.



OPERATION ROUND UP distributed grants totaling \$21,700 his past quarter to area nonprofit organizations. One hundred percent of the contributions to Operation Round Up are awarded as grants directly benefiting residents of Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative’s seven-county service area.

“We want to thank our members for their donations,” said HOTE Member Services Manager Ron Poston.

Many HOTE members voluntarily “round up” their bills each month to provide funds for Operation Round Up.

“Seventy-six percent of our members participate in this worthwhile program,” Poston said. “The average donation per member is only \$9.50 a year, but when added together, our members are making a significant impact. You may not miss those few cents each month, but to those who receive that donation, it means a great deal.”

To sign up for the voluntary program, call the HOTE office.

“We would like to encourage our members who do not ‘round up’ to consider participating,” Poston said.

Operation Round Up

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

THE OPERATION ROUND UP TRUST board meets once every quarter to review applications and decide how the funds are to be allocated.

Applications are being accepted until August 29 for the next quarter. The next board meeting is scheduled for September 12.

Nonprofit organizations interested in applying for funds should visit our website at hote.coop, go to Programs and select Operation Round Up, or call the office at 1-800-840-2957 for an application.

FUNDS ALLOCATED THIS QUARTER

Flat Community Center	\$2,500
The Arc of McLennan County	\$2,500
Buckholts Volunteer Fire Department	\$2,500
Lott Volunteer Fire Department	\$2,500
Turnersville Volunteer Fire Department	\$2,500
China Spring Volunteer Fire Department	\$2,500
Historic Prairie Chapel School Association	\$1,500
Westphalia Historical Society	\$1,500
Temple-Belton La Leche League of Texas	\$1,500
Moody Community Library	\$1,200
McGregor Youth Baseball, Softball & T-Ball	\$1,000



SAVE THE DATE!

HEART OF TEXAS EC ANNUAL MEETING

Tuesday, October 18

Why You Should Attend Your Co-op's Annual Meeting

BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, IT WILL BE ANNUAL MEETING TIME. On behalf of Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative, we'd like to personally invite you to join us on Tuesday, October 18, at the Frank W. Mayborn Convention Center in Temple. Our guest speaker will be Sheriff J.B. Smith. We look forward to gathering with you, the members of our co-op community, to catch up, hear what you have to say and enjoy some refreshments and fellowship.

This event is not only a chance to visit with members of our co-op community but also a great opportunity to learn about programs offered by Heart of Texas EC and get to know your co-op staff. Our annual meeting makes it possible for us to gather feedback from you by providing a forum where you can let us know how we can better serve you and your family.

This is an occasion to discuss and learn more about the issues affecting our local communities. It's also an opportunity for you to exercise one of the greatest rights of being a member of an electric co-op: voting for the upcoming year's board of directors.

Your cooperative is not owned by faraway investors, and it is not run by a board of directors appointed by investors. We are run by a democratically elected board of directors—a board given the privilege to serve because of your vote.

Our directors are members of the local community. They are concerned with the issues you face every day because they face them, too. Don't forget, they are co-op members, too.

A democratic and open election is one of the many elements that distinguishes our electric cooperative from other utilities. Having a voice in who makes the major decisions that directly affect your life and your family is a right we all share as Americans. We all vote for our state and federal congressional representatives, but not every American has the right to vote for those who represent community interests within their electric utility. You have that right, so why not exercise it?

Rest assured, no matter what happens, we remain dedicated to providing you with safe, reliable and affordable electric service—but we also encourage you to take part in helping us improve how we deliver that service. So make it a point to join us on October 18 at our annual meeting. We hope to make it worth your while!

THE VALUE OF ELECTRICITY

It might seem that everything costs more these days, but electricity is still a great bargain.

Just look what a dollar's worth can get you:

36 
(intense) hours of gaming

48 
hours of watching TV

72 
freshly ironed shirts

72 
hours of laptop Internet access

100 
hot pots of coffee

375 
pieces of toast (nicely browned)

CALENDAR: TAPPOUSE-STUDIO/ISTOCK.COM

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy; National Rural Electric Cooperative Association



Some prefer to freeze food for storage while others say canning is best.

Canning or Freezing?

ONE OF THE JOYS OF SUMMER is growing and picking the fruits and vegetables we've grown in the garden. But when it comes to preserving the bounty, there is one timeless question: Which is better, canning or freezing?

The answer is: It depends—on variables like preference, time, space and the type of food. But there are other variables that perhaps are worth mentioning, too.

Which has a smaller energy footprint?

Canning involves boiling jars of food to sterilize and seal them, requiring a one-shot—though considerable—burst of energy use. Freezing food requires a long-term consumption of continuous electricity, and the longer you store the food, the more it costs.

A 1980 academic study published in the *Journal of Food Science* calculated the energy use for processing and storing 50 pounds of vegetables. The study determined that freezing them for six months used about three times as much energy as canning them.

However, it's hard to extrapolate this information to today's numbers. New freezers use a third of the electricity used by freezers in 1980, while electricity costs about 2½ times as much as it did then. The numbers also vary significantly depending on whether the freezer is full or not. Also, chest freezers are twice as efficient as uprights, so the difference can greatly affect electricity use.

A more recent analysis concludes that freezing uses 15 times as much electricity and costs four times as much per pound as canning, once the cost of the equipment is factored in.

Which method has a smaller physical footprint?

Another source, *The Natural Canning Resource Book*, made a couple of relevant points about the issue besides energy use.

Availability of resources is an important factor in the equation: If you often deal with outages or other power disruptions, canned food keeps a lot better than thawed-and-refrozen food. If you live in a small space, or if you're a renter rather than an owner, it's a lot easier to store and move canned food than it is to store and move a freezer.

Finally, the issue of taste: *The Journal of Food Science* study found that people preferred the taste of frozen food over canned by a huge margin. Whatever method you use, the end result is that you want people to eat it and like it.

Something's Different About Your Electric Utility

THE WORD "COOPERATIVE" in the name of any business means it operates a little bit differently from other organizations.

Like any cooperative business, an electric cooperative belongs to the people who use it. So you and your neighbors who buy your electricity from the co-op actually own the business.

As a member-owner of your electric cooperative, you may attend our business meetings, vote for the members of the board of directors, or run for a seat on the board yourself. If the cooperative has any money left over at the end of its fiscal year after paying its bills and taking care of business, you could even get a little money back.

More than 100 million Americans belong to some sort of cooperative business. Credit unions are cooperatives. Some food stores are cooperatives. Many farmers belong to cooperatives. Many news organizations belong to a cooperative called The Associated Press.

More than 900 electric utilities are organized as cooperatives, and those organizations serve about 12 percent of the U.S. population.



Scam Survey: Don't Be Fooled



No matter how friendly they may seem, if someone comes to the door claiming to be from your co-op, be sure to ask for identification.

IF IT SEEMS YOU'RE CONSTANTLY being warned about new scams, you have criminal imaginations to thank. This year, electric utilities across Texas are reporting many new twists on old scams.

Perpetrators in Person

In March, three men approached an El Campo residence, claiming to be from Wharton County Electric Cooperative. One of the men gained entry by asking for a glass of water, while the others went to the backyard. Fortunately, a family member arrived and threatened to notify the police.

In April, El Paso Electric received calls from residents about people claiming to be contractors trimming trees near power lines. In one case, a thief distracted a resident while another entered the home to grab cash, jewelry and other valuables.

In May, two men posed as contractors for San Patricio Electric Cooperative. They visited a member's home, ostensibly to do some work on two meter loops—and then stole them!

As similar incidents happen around the state, authorities recommend using caution.

If someone suspicious comes to your door claiming to be a co-op employee, follow these tips:

Do not respond aggressively (because the visitor might be legitimate), but do not let anyone unfamiliar into your home.

Look for identifying markers. Electric cooperative crew members wear uniforms and drive vehicles displaying the co-op's name and logo. Our contractors also display the company name and logo on their vehicles.

Ask for identification. Co-op technicians carry employee ID cards.

Call the co-op. We can verify whether the visitor's vehicle was dispatched from the co-op.

Look for red flags. Scammers might demand immediate payment, insist that you pay with a prepaid card or try to get personal information.

Do not give out personal information, such as your date of birth, Social Security number or banking information.

If you determine the person is not a co-op employee, tell them to leave, and lock the doors immediately.

Call the police. Give them information including a description of the individuals and their vehicle, including the license plate number.

Phonies on the Phone

Scammers also work via telephone. They call a member with claims of an overdue account and threaten disconnection unless immediate payment is made. Recognize this tactic as a red flag.

You might legitimately receive a courtesy call from the co-op to notify you if your account is overdue, but a co-op employee will never demand immediate payment over the phone.

If you get such a call, do not be afraid of threats—and do not give out personal information. Instead, ask for a number where you can call them back. Then hang up and notify the co-op. You can also call the police and give them any information you collected from the scammer.

Wrongs on the Web

Scammers similarly target members online. They email a co-op member saying that the electric bill is overdue, and disconnection can be avoided by immediate payment. They provide a link to a third-party website, which will accept the member's payment—for a "small additional fee." These websites are not affiliated with the co-op, and payments made through these sources cannot be guaranteed.

Your cooperative will not email you to collect payment online. Even if you initiate a payment, it is unusual for electric cooperatives to charge members for making payments via the co-op's website.

Do not click on links included in emails sent to you by people or organizations claiming to be acting on the co-op's behalf, even if the email looks legitimate. Delete the email and notify your co-op.



Save energy by only washing full loads and avoid using washers during peak hours.

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The Cleanest, Greenest Energy Is the Energy Not Used

MANY PEOPLE ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO CUT ENERGY COSTS—including renewable energy options. But before you invest in a renewable system, first make sure your home or business is as efficient as possible. The cheapest, cleanest and greenest energy is the energy not used, and this comes from energy efficiency.

Let nature do some of the work. Consider leaving your windows open and turning off the air conditioner at night, when temperatures are much more moderate. Then keep the windows shut during daylight hours to help keep that cooler air inside. You can also install window coverings, which can block out sunlight and heat during the day. Also, increase insulation and seal cracks that let out cooled air.

Make sure that your cooling equipment is in top-notch condition. If possible, move the air conditioner out of direct sunlight. Regularly clean or replace dirty air-conditioner filters. A new, more energy-efficient air conditioner can also cut energy use.

A programmable thermostat can cut back on costs while you are away from home. Program the thermostat to a warmer temperature while away and to a lower temperature when you expect to return home. Setting the thermostat as high as you can while still remaining comfortable can help reduce costs and lead to a smaller cooling bill. Also, fans can make higher temperatures in the home feel more comfortable.

On the warmest days, avoid using the oven. Grill outside or use the stove or a microwave.

Cut back on water-heating costs by taking shorter showers and using low-flow showerheads. Run clothes washers and dishwashers only when they have full loads. Additionally, lower the set temperature on the water heater. Energy.gov suggests setting the water heater temperature to no higher than 120 degrees.

Take into account the best times to run your appliances. Avoid using them during typical peak electricity demand hours, around 4–7 p.m. Also be sure to switch off and unplug appliances when they are not being used. Consider air-drying clothes and dishes. Turn off lights that are not in use, and switch to light-emitting diode bulbs.

If you are still interested in incorporating renewable energy after implementing these conservation tips, the Energy Education Council has developed a checklist, available at energyeducation.org/checklist.pdf, to help you assess your energy use, goals, property and more.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Inside-Out Burgers

- 1½ pounds lean ground beef
- 1 tablespoon garlic purée
- 1½ tablespoons dry ranch dressing mix
- 1 tablespoon black pepper
- ½ cup finely shredded cheddar
- ½ cup finely shredded mozzarella
- 1 can (4 ounces) mushrooms
- ¼ cup finely chopped onion

1. Mix ground beef, garlic, ranch dressing mix and pepper, and divide into 8 equal-sized balls.
2. In a separate bowl, mix the cheese, mushrooms and onions to form a stuffing. Flatten 4 of the meatballs into thin patties and center a quarter of the stuffing on each.
3. Flatten the remaining 4 balls into patties and place them atop the first 4 to cover filling. Seal the edges together with your fingers.
4. Grill or fry the patties until cooked through, about 6 minutes per side on medium heat.

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