

Co-ops Collaborate To Deal With Disasters



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

THE DERECHO (YES THAT IS A WORD) that swept hurricane-force winds from the Great Plains to the Atlantic seaboard knocked out power to more than 4 million people in the summer 2012. The damage caused by this devastating storm cost the nation \$2.9 billion. In case you are wondering, derecho is a Spanish word for long-lived, straight-line wind storm. In December 2013 an Ice Storm hit north east Texas causing over \$43 million in damage to public property, not counting the damage to private property. Many Lamar Electric members were without electric power for several days.

Disasters, whether caused by nature, accidents or hostile acts, exact an enormous cost in economic and human terms. Fortunately, Rural Electric Cooperatives—including Lamar Electric Cooperative—maintain a unique and effective approach to emergency management and disaster recovery: Mutual Assistance. Following a disaster, co-ops will rapidly deploy support staff and equipment to emergency and recovery zones to assist sister co-ops. In December of 2013, ten different electric cooperatives sent crews to help Lamar Electric.

The national network of transmission and distribution infrastructure owned by rural electric cooperatives has been built to federal standards, so line crews from any co-op in America can arrive on the scene ready to provide emergency support, secure in their knowledge of the system's engineering. The electric distribution lines constructed by Lamar Electric look the same as rural electric co-op lines across the nation and are constructed with materials that have been approved by the federal Rural Utilities Service (formerly REA).

We work closely with other first responders, state and local government, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure an effective and coordinated response in the event of an emergency. Consideration is given to electric circuits that provide basic needs, such as rural water system pumps and nursing homes. And, yes we do take into consideration members that have medical issues.

Because cooperatives are nonprofit organizations, we are eligible for financial assistance from FEMA, which can fund a

major portion of the cost of emergency work to restore power and the cost of repairing, restoring, rebuilding or replacing damaged facilities. Unfortunately Texas did not receive a disaster declaration from FEMA in December 2013. Somehow the Ice Storm in our area was considered a "Snow & Ice Storm" by the folks in Austin which lead FEMA to consider a big chunk of the damage was due to "Snow Removal" and denied our request. We still cannot figure out how ice in Lamar, Delta and Red River Counties, looks like Snow when viewed from Austin.

Having the ability to call on other electric cooperatives allows us to respond effectively and quickly in times of crisis, and helps protect the financial interests of the cooperative members at the same time.



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With tighter budgets, securing FEMA reimbursements after a disaster has become more difficult. Following Superstorm Sandy, Congress changed the rules: FEMA now allocates funds for rebuilding based on an estimate of costs, not on the actual cost. If the estimate is higher than the actual cost, the excess funds must be used for FEMA-approved projects. But if the estimate is low, the co-op must pay the difference. Without a federal disaster declaration, FEMA will not reimburse anyone, including cities, and county governments.

Electric cooperatives across the country learn from disasters. We learn how to protect our systems better, and we learn how to become more resilient.

When it comes to resiliency, we have a good story to tell: We serve our member-consumers in the most rugged, remote terrain in the country, so we have learned how to restore power in extremely difficult circumstances.

Each Ice Storm or major Wind Storm stretches our talents and gives us determination to spring back with new approaches to hardening the electric system against future disasters. Recently, our approach to keeping right-of-way areas clear of trees has been strengthened. More lines have been upgraded, and hundreds of poles have been replaced.

I know better than to make any predictions about what Mother Nature has in store for us, but I believe these lessons will help us the next time disaster strikes.

Clearing Right-of-Way Delivers Safe, Reliable Power

TREE TRIMMING AND ALL PHASES OF right-of-way maintenance are essential to ensuring reliable electric service. This is particularly true in rural areas, where so many miles of power line are exposed. A majority of all electric blinks occur when a limb comes into contact with power lines or equipment, causing a momentary short circuit. If the limb is not cleared from the line promptly, a complete loss of power can result. Maintaining our ROW is an important part of the service that Lamar Electric Cooperative provides to you, our members, for three reasons: safety, reliability and cost.

Our primary concern is the safety of our workers and members. Properly maintained ROWs keep our crews safe when they are restoring service and maintaining our system. Keeping trees clear of power lines also keeps your family safe. From making sure a child's tree house doesn't touch power lines to creating a safe environment for doing yard work, a well-maintained ROW helps avoid tragedy.

Lamar EC recently awarded a contract to Ray's Tree Service to clear rights-of-way in Lamar and Red River counties. Ray's crews can be easily identified by the company logos on their trucks and hard hats.

Approximately 9½ miles of line will be cleared in the area along FM 197 west of Forest Chapel in north Lamar County. Approximately 11 miles of line will be cleared in the Ambia area south of FM 1506, northeast of Roxton and along FM 2122. Approximately 6 miles of line will be cleared along CR 13400 and CR 14400 west of Pattonville. Later in the spring, crews will begin to clear ROWs in the English, Annona and Boxelder communities and along Highway 37 south of Clarksville.

The ROW maintenance will include clearing brush and trees 15 feet from either side of the pole. The stumps will be treated with Garlon 4 Ultra herbicide to prevent unwanted sprouts.

As a nonprofit cooperative, Lamar EC strives to keep costs affordable for you, our members. Maintaining our ROWs is an important part of controlling costs. Fewer and shorter outages save money for everyone. When crews work in well-maintained areas, we can reduce risks for employees and equipment, too—another way to keep costs low.

Safety, reliability and cost: This is why we believe in ROW clearing. If we compromise in one of these areas, it affects the others. At Lamar EC, we aren't willing to compromise. Maintaining our ROWs is a priority for your safety, comfort and pocketbook.



1485 N. Main St. • P.O. Box 580
Paris, TX 75461

GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO

Jerry D. Williams

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Allen Branch, President, *Sumner*

Charles Dooley, Vice President,
Annona

Mike Williams, Secretary-Treasurer,
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Matthew Albus, *Roxton*

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Ron E. Tippit, *Clarksville*

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Member Benefits

- Level billing
- Automated meter reading
- Free bank draft service
- E-Bill
- Visa and MasterCard accepted

Your Local Pages

This section of Texas Co-op Power is produced by LEC each month to provide you with information about current events, safety, special programs and other activities of the cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact the local office.

CONTACT US

CALL US

(903) 784-4303 local or
1-800-782-9010 toll-free

FIND US ON THE WEB

www.lamarelectric.coop





SAVE THE DATE!

LAMAR EC ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Saturday, April 18

Time Is Running Out For Youth Tour Applications

EACH YEAR, LAMAR ELECTRIC Cooperative selects two high school students to attend the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, an all-expenses-paid tour of Washington, D.C., including a stop at the U.S. Capitol to meet members of Congress.

Eligible students must be in 10th, 11th or 12th grade and must live full time in a residence served by Lamar Electric or attend one of the four high schools served by Lamar EC, which are Prairiland, Roxton, Detroit and Faith Christian. Home-schooled students served by Lamar EC are also eligible.

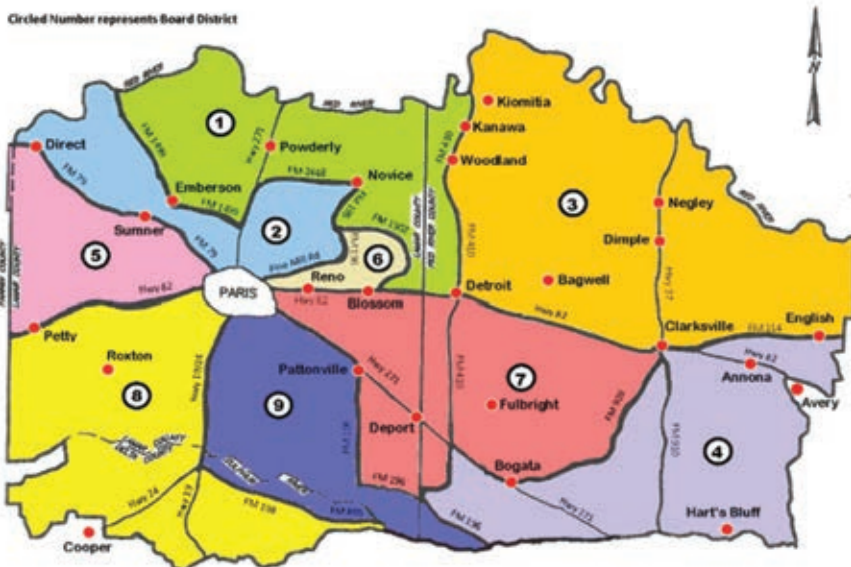
Completed applications and a three-page typed essay on the topic, "Why Is Electricity Important to Me?" must be received by Lamar EC no later than 5 p.m., February 13. It's that easy!

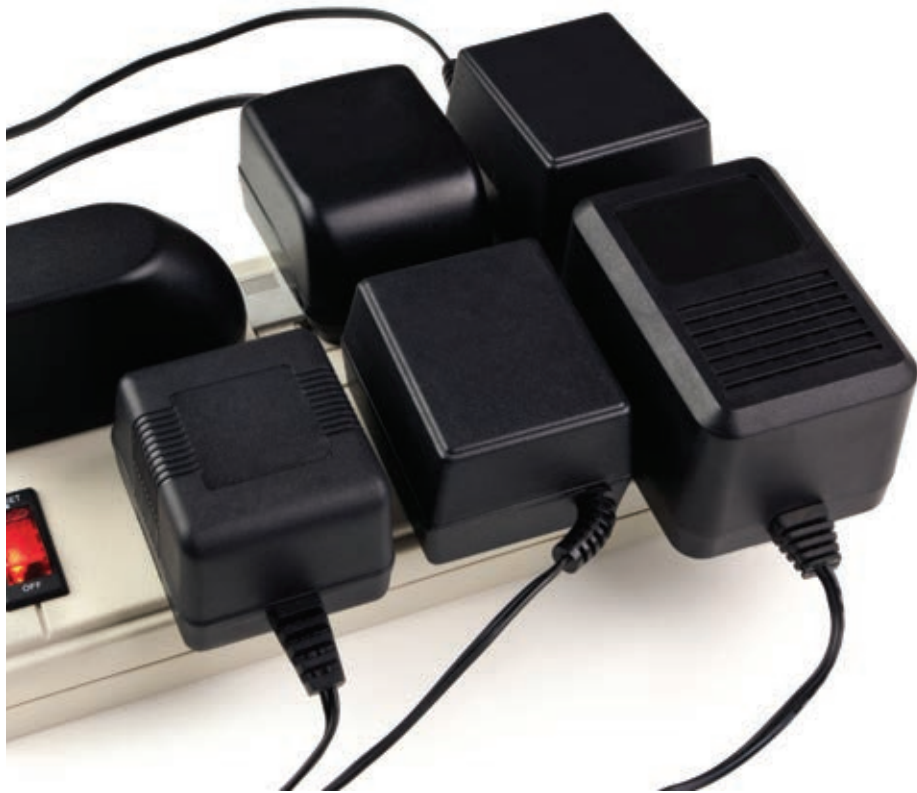
Learn more about the Government-in-Action Youth Tour at lamarelectric.coop under the Youth Programs tab.

THREE POSITIONS ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS are up for election each year. This year, Districts 5, 6, and 7 will be voting at the annual meeting. Any member residing in Districts 5, 6, and 7 who wishes to be a candidate for one of the three available board positions must appear in person at the main office of the cooperative to fill out a nomination form no earlier than January 18 and no later than February 17, as outlined in the co-op's bylaws. If you are unsure of which district you live in, please refer to the district map, below.

Lamar Electric Cooperative will hold its annual meeting at 10 a.m., Saturday, April 18, at Love Civic Center, 2025 S. Collegiate Drive in Paris. If you have any questions, call Laura Williams at (903) 783-4907.

Qualifications for board members are specified in our bylaws. The qualification portion of the bylaws was published last month in this magazine. A copy of the bylaws is available at the Lamar EC office and on our website, lamarelectric.coop.





Phantom Energy Use Can Add to Your Bill

BETWEEN THE PRICE OF THE PHONE and the cost of the service, a smartphone is a pretty big investment. Don't add to the cost by wasting electricity while you charge it up.

If your phone is plugged into a charger that's plugged into the wall, it's using electricity. If the phone is fully charged and still plugged in, it's still using electricity. And if you unplug your phone but leave the charger plugged into the wall, that charger is still using electricity.

The same is true for nearly every other device that you plug into a charger. Add up the number of those devices in your home, and you'll see that's a lot of potentially wasted energy.

The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that the average home wastes about \$100 a year on "phantom energy" from electronic devices whose chargers remain plugged in when not in use.

Why waste and pay for energy that you're not using? Simply plug chargers and other digital equipment into power strips, and turn off the power strips when you're not using the devices.

Lamar To Award Six \$1,000 Scholarships

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS: Don't forget to enter for a chance to win one of six scholarships to be given away at the Lamar Electric Cooperative annual meeting Saturday, April 18. The scholarship application deadline is April 10.

For more information and an application form, visit lamarelectric.coop and apply today. You can also email Dena Beason for an application at dena@lamarelectric.coop.



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