

Get To Know Your Co-op Network

The power behind your power



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

EVERY DAY, LAMAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE is hard at work making sure all of our members have the electric power they need at the best possible price. Behind the scenes, we work with a network of cooperatives to make that happen.

Along with four other neighboring distribution co-ops, we are a part of Rayburn Country Electric Cooperative, which secures the power that we and our fellow co-ops receive. We cooperated in creating this second-tier co-op so that we'd have more control over power supply and pricing. By combining the Lamar Electric load with other coops a better price was secured.



Working with other electric cooperatives, we gain better pricing for key materials.

Calculating and handling 12,000 electric bills each month is a formidable task and requires a lot of computer programming. Lamar Electric is a part of the National Information Solutions Cooperative which provides all our data processing programs for billing, work orders, mapping, engineering, accounts payable, general ledger and payroll. NISC was formed by cooperatives like Lamar Electric and provides this service at cost to over 500 electric cooperatives across the nation.

Running an electric co-op requires a lot of money, so when we need to borrow capital, we often turn to the National Rural

Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation or CoBank. Both of these organizations are also cooperatives. CFC is collectively owned by electric co-ops throughout the country, and CoBank is owned by electric and agricultural co-ops nationwide.

Operating an electric co-op also takes a lot of equipment, such as poles, wires, transformers and other items that our members might never see. This is why we take advantage of the products and services offered by Texas Electric Cooperatives, our statewide association, which offers a shared inventory of products to ensure that its 75 member organizations have quick access to all the materials needed at the best possible price. All of the utility poles we install were treated at a TEC pole manufacturing and treatment facility near Jasper, Texas. They also help us produce this magazine each month to provide information about Lamar Electric.

No business can operate without several different types of insurance, such as general liability, auto and workers' compensation. Many electric cooperatives across the country are members of Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange. This allows co-ops to maintain reliable coverage at an affordable price.

Lamar Electric is also part of the Cooperative Response Center, which allows us to answer your calls 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. CRC even has locations in three different states with trained dispatchers and customer service representatives that can take over should a natural disaster such as a tornado or ice storm causes one of the sites to be inoperable.

Should a natural disaster strike the Lamar Electric service area, we have a mutual aid agreement with over 800 other rural electric cooperatives scattered all over the United States. These cooperatives are always ready to move in and go right to work because we all use the same construction specifications. During the last ice storm crews from 10 different cooperatives came to our aid. Power line construction companies are always willing to work during major disasters and we have certainly used them, but they typically only work during day light hours. Co-op crews have equipment with lights because a lot of our work is done in the middle of the night.

Although you are a member of one electric co-op, you are actually connected to a host of others. Connecting to this cooperative network helps us ensure that your needs are met in the most efficient and cooperative way possible.



ABOVE: Cory May performs a pole-top rescue exercise for Lamar Electric Cooperative.

TOP LEFT: Lamar Electric linemen simulate a bucket rescue.

LEFT: Texas Electric Cooperatives Loss Control Specialist Ronnie Wiggins checks equipment and performance for a pole-top rescue exercise.

Linemen: First Responders

LINEMEN WORK WITH THOUSANDS OF VOLTS of electricity high atop power lines 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to keep electricity flowing. Linemen are often first responders during storms and other catastrophic events, working to make the scene safe for other public safety heroes. In the unlikely event that a lineman is on a pole or in the bucket of a bucket truck and has a major medical emergency, his fellow linemen are the first responders. Although an ambulance crew may be necessary, they are not trained at rescuing a person from an electrical pole.

In December, Lamar Electric Cooperative hosted a pole-top and bucket rescue safety training school. Thankfully, it is not a part of linemen’s typical day to rescue a man from the top of a pole or a bucket; however, it is vital that they keep the rescue procedures fresh in their minds, just in case.

Ronnie Wiggins, a loss control specialist with Texas Electric Cooperatives, assisted Lamar Electric with the training. “Most of the guys are experienced and have been through this training a number of times,” Wiggins said. “This is something we train for and hope we never have to use. In case of an accident or injury, we can get the man from the bucket or on the pole

down safely and keep the rescuer safe in the process.” Many linemen across the nation have been injured in attempts to save a fellow lineman. Because of this, a new rule has been implemented by Occupational Safety and Health Administration that the rescuer lineman must be secured to the pole at all times during a pole-top rescue.

Lamar Electric Cooperative Line Superintendent Scott Sansom said, “Our goal is to have all of our linemen trained to do a rescue like this and have an injured individual down from the pole as quickly as possible, so emergency medical professionals can begin working immediately.” Linemen must complete the rescue in fewer than four minutes to avoid any brain damage due to lack of oxygen to the injured individual. All of Lamar Electric’s linemen completed a rescue in two minutes and 53 seconds or less.

“In the 25 years that I’ve been at Lamar Electric, we have not had to do a rescue like this,” Sansom said. “I hope we can go another 25 years without an incident.” In addition to being trained for pole-top and bucket rescue, all Lamar Electric linemen have been trained in first aid, CPR and automated external defibrillator use.

Safety Essentials for Your Home

MAKE SURE YOUR FAMILY IS SAFE FROM ELECTRICAL DANGERS. Safe Electricity provides a checklist of basic electric safety essentials to help you keep your home safe from electrical fire and shock hazards:

Check outlets for loose-fitting plugs. Replace missing or broken wall plates so wiring and components are not exposed. If you have young children at home, install tamper-resistant outlets or cover unused outlets with plastic safety caps.

Never force plugs into outlets. Do not remove the grounding pin to make a three-prong plug fit a two-prong outlet. Avoid overloading outlets with adapters and too many appliance plugs.

Make sure cords are not frayed or cracked, placed under carpets or rugs, or located in high-traffic areas. Do not nail or staple them to walls, floors or other objects.

Use extension cords only on a temporary basis—not as permanent household wiring. Make sure they have safety closures to protect children from shock and mouth burns.

Check wattage to make sure that lightbulbs match the fixture requirements. Replace bulbs that have higher wattage ratings than recommended. Screw bulbs in securely so they do not overheat.

Make sure outlets near water are equipped with ground-fault circuit interrupters. Critical areas include the kitchen, bathrooms, laundry, basement, garage and outdoors. Test these outlets monthly to ensure that they are working properly.

Make sure fuses are properly sized for the circuit they are protecting. If you do not know the correct rating, have an electrician identify and label the correct size to be used. Always replace a fuse with the same size you are removing.

If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker or gives you an electrical shock, immediately unplug it and have it repaired or replaced. Look for cracks or damage in wiring and connectors. Use surge protectors to protect electronics.

Check periodically for loose wall receptacles, wires or loose lighting fixtures. Listen for popping or sizzling sounds behind walls. Immediately shut off then professionally replace light switches that are hot to the touch and lights that spark or flicker.

As you continue to upgrade your home with more lighting, appliances and electronics, your home's service capacity may become overburdened. If fuses blow or trip frequently, have a professional determine the appropriate service requirements for your home.

Time 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 the cooperative, which are Prairiland, Roxton, Detroit and Faith Christian. Home-schooled students served by Lamar Electric are also eligible.

Completed applications and a three-page typed essay on the topic, "What would the world be like without electricity?" must be received by Lamar Electric no later than 5 p.m., February 12. It's that easy!

Learn more about Youth Tour at lamarelectric.coop and on texasyouthtour.com.



Valentine balloons and power lines are likely to create an unromantic outage.

Heart-Shaped Balloons?

Keep metallic balloons away from power lines

IF YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE in love this Valentine's Day, shout it from the rooftops; take out a full-page ad in the local newspaper; post it on Facebook for everyone to see. But whatever you do, don't show your love by releasing a bunch of heart-shaped balloons into the sky.

Runaway balloons—especially those with metallic content—too often come into contact with overhead power lines. When they do, they can cause a temporary power outage. Hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses lose their power every year when helium-filled foil balloons drift into power lines.

The balloon's metallic coating can conduct electricity. So when the balloon touches a wire, it can start a fire or create an electrical short. Either way, power in the neighborhood goes out, home electronics are at risk and the electric cooperative's property is damaged.

If you must take balloons outdoors, secure them with weights so they won't get loose. Don't take them near overhead power lines or deliberately set them free to float through the sky.

If a balloon does get stuck in a power line, do not try to retrieve it yourself. Instead, call your electric cooperative and report it.