

On the Line With Co-op Linemen



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

IMAGINE SEEING A CLASSIFIED AD for a job that reads like this: "Line Worker Wanted:

Long and unpredictable hours, hazardous working conditions. Requires a lot of weekend and holiday work. Must be able to learn complex technical operations, work under extreme pressure and deal with people under difficult conditions—all with a smile."

You'd think a job description like this would scare people off, wouldn't you? But not all people. These demanding jobs attract dedicated and highly skilled people.

People who know that they'll be out in the middle of the night, working long hours in driving storms, all to make our lives better. These intrepid people are Lamar Electric Cooperative linemen.

To make sure they are ready to respond no matter the situation or weather conditions, these employees take advantage of dozens of training opportunities and safety courses. Much of this training is done by our statewide association, Texas Electric Cooperatives. Our linemen go through regular training to ensure that they can work safely and proficiently with specialized equipment.

For example, we have over 100 large automatic voltage regulators located throughout the service area. Each one of these devices must be monitored and maintained to ensure each member receives proper voltage, but it only takes one little slip-up and the regulator becomes a bomb containing flaming oil. We have several hundred breakers on the main lines that help isolate a fault and disconnect power to the fewest members possible. Many of these breakers have computerized control panels that give the lineman information but securing this information requires knowledge of how the breaker works and how it's programmed.

Even bucket trucks must be regularly tested and often require the lineman to clean the boom to maintain the insulation. Something as simple as hydraulic levers can get complex when maneuvering near high voltage wires. A slight move in the wrong direction can ground the lineman and place his life in eminent danger of electrocution. Not only are the linemen tested; but the equipment is tested as well.

There are a few simple things you can do to help keep our

linemen safe. About this time every year, private property and no hunting signs start showing up nailed to utility poles. Once one sign is up, the political parties are usually not far behind. Utility poles are not bulletin boards. The staples, nails, or tacks can puncture or rip a hole in the lineworker's rubber glove, even with the use of leather protectors over the rubber. This compromises the safety of the man when he reaches the top or uses that pair of gloves while in a bucket. This unwanted clutter can also snag the pants leg or climbing hooks, causing the man to fall. A

lot of pole climbing is done in the middle of a storm or at night, which makes it even more difficult for the lineman to even see what snagged him.

Utility poles are not to be used for basketball hoops, deer stands, satellite dishes, birdhouses or even flags. All of these items seem innocent, but present an unnecessary safety hazard and can result in a very serious or fatal accident for the lineman that must climb the pole.

Linemen must focus on safety because often there is more than their own life on the line. The action of one man can place the lives of co-workers on the line. For linemen, there can be no slip-ups or careless actions on the job. Mistakes can cost a limb or a life. That's one of the reasons linemen form a brotherhood. When you put your life in the hands of co-workers every day, they become more than colleagues. They're family.

That sense of family extends throughout the area Lamar Electric serves. Like the rest of our co-op employees, linemen are generally fellow members of your co-op; they're neighbors and friends, and they look out for their community. Your comfort and safety are big reasons that our linemen take such pride in a tough job.

Lamar Electric linemen are one of the key ingredients that make this rural area a great place to live. If you agree, give our hometown heroes a big thumbs-up when you see them at work—or shake their hands and thank them when you see them in the grocery store or at the co-op's next annual meeting.

They expect no special recognition. It's reward enough for them to know your family is safe and warm, regardless of the weather. Nevertheless, we'd like to thank our linemen for their hard work and dedication.



NRECA



STURT / ISTOCK.COM

If you have any concerns about your home's wiring, don't attempt to fix it yourself. Contact a licensed electrician to get the job done safely.

Don't Overload Your Home

ABOUT 47,700 HOME FIRES IN THE U.S. are caused by electrical failures or malfunctions each year, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Overloaded electrical circuits are a major cause of residential fires. Help lower your risk of electrical fires by not overloading your electrical system.

Warning signs of overloaded circuits include:

- ▶ Flickering, blinking or dimming lights
- ▶ Frequently tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses
- ▶ Warm or discolored wall plates
- ▶ Cracking, sizzling, popping or buzzing from outlets
- ▶ Burning odor coming from outlets or wall switches
- ▶ Switches that lean to one side or feel loose when flipped
- ▶ Mild shock or tingle from appliances, receptacles or switches

A few vigilant measures can help prevent electrical overloads in your home:

Never plug major appliances into extension cords or multi-outlet converters. All major appliances should be plugged directly into wall receptacle outlets. Plug only one heat-producing appliance into a receptacle outlet at a time.

A heavy reliance on extension cords is an indication that you have too few outlets to address your needs. Power strips only add additional outlets; they do not change the amount of power being received from the outlet. Have a qualified electrician inspect your home and add new outlets.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that more than half of the electrical fires occurring every year in the United States could be prevented by arc-fault circuit interrupters. Whenever an arc fault is detected in a circuit, these devices interrupt the flow of power, preventing sparks and fires in the wiring. If your home is older than 40 years and its outlets are not equipped with AFCIs, consider having these installed.

All electrical systems should have an inspection conducted if the home is older than 40 years, or has undergone a major addition or renovation, or has had a large appliance added.



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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.

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Seal To Save

BEFORE YOU TURN ON THE HEAT THIS FALL, do a sweep of your home to learn where that heat might be leaking outside. The less heat that escapes, the less you waste—and the more comfortable your home will feel.

Here are a few tips on how to inspect and weatherproof your home:

LOOK FOR AIR LEAKS. Indoors, check for gaps between baseboards and floors and at the intersections of walls and ceilings. Find cracks and gaps around electrical, cable and phone outlets on the interior side of outdoor walls. Light a match or a stick of incense and hold it in front of each window in the house. If the smoke blows, the windows are leaking.

PLUG THE LEAKS. Sealing those little leaks and drafts can save you up to 30 percent on heating and cooling bills each year, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates. Caulk holes and penetrations wherever you see them: around faucets, pipes, wiring, windows, doors and cracks between exterior siding panels.

ADD OR REPAIR INSULATION. If you have an older home, it's likely that your attic has too little insulation. In most cases, blowing additional insulation on top of existing insulation is the most cost-effective way of achieving the

desired R34–R40 amount of insulation. Air ducts in the attic can shift or be accidentally pushed, allowing leaks at joints. The duct should be adjusted so the insulation is covering the joint, and metallic tape should be used to hold everything in place.

CALL A PROFESSIONAL to check your AC/heating system. The tech will look for damage, worn-out parts and other potential trouble. If your equipment is more than 20 years old, consider replacing it with a new, high-efficiency system that will almost certainly lower your electric bills and make your home more comfortable. A do-it-yourself tip: Change your filters every month.



STUDIO TEN | BIGSTOCKPHOTO.COM

RECIPE OF THE MONTH



RICK PATRICK

White Chili

1 pound lean ground turkey
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cans (15 ounces each) navy beans
1 can (4 ounces) green chiles
1 teaspoon cumin
1 teaspoon oregano
1 teaspoon white pepper
3 cups low-sodium chicken broth
1 tablespoon cornstarch

1. In a small pot, brown turkey in olive oil. Add beans, chiles, spices and broth. Bring to a boil, then remove from heat.
2. Remove 1/2 cup broth and add cornstarch, stirring until lumps dissolve. Pour back into chili and stir well.
3. Serve with chopped tomatoes, avocado, corn, jalapeños and cilantro, as desired.



GORDANA DUMANOVIC | ISTOCK.COM

Happy Halloween

Lamar Electric wishes you a safe and spooky Halloween.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at
TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM

Common Energy Myths Debunked

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ENERGY USE are hiding around every corner of your home, and they can take a toll on your utility bills. Don't be fooled by common energy myths.

MYTH: The higher the thermostat setting, the faster your home will heat.

REALITY: You might think that walking into a room and raising the thermostat to 85 degrees will make the room warm up quickly. Not true. Thermostats direct a home's heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system to heat or cool to a certain temperature. Drastically adjusting the thermostat won't make a difference in how quickly you feel warmer—or cooler—than if you set it at a reasonable level.

The Department of Energy recommends setting your thermostat to 78 degrees during summer months and 68 degrees during winter.

MYTH: Opening the oven door to check on a dish doesn't really waste energy.

REALITY: Although it can be tempting to check the progress of that dish you're cooking in the oven, opening the oven door does waste energy. Every time the door is opened, the temperature inside the oven is reduced by as much as 25 degrees, delaying the progress of your dish—and costing you additional money. Try using the oven light and peeking through the window instead.

MYTH: Leaving lights, computers and other electric devices turned on is a good idea. Switching them on and off wears them out more quickly and produces sudden power spikes that negate any energy savings.

REALITY: If there were ever any legitimacy to this idea, there isn't anymore.

Switching modern appliances and electrical devices on and off frequently will not reduce their life span, and any power surges that might occur are likely to be minuscule. The bottom line is that if you aren't using an electrical device, it should be turned off.

MYTH: Reducing my energy use is too expensive.

REALITY: Many people believe that reducing energy use requires expensive upfront costs, such as purchasing new, more efficient appliances or making construction upgrades to an older home. The truth is, consumers who make small changes to their efficiency habits—like turning off lights when not in use, sealing air leaks and using a programmable thermostat—can see a significant reduction in energy consumption.

REMEMBER: Energy efficiency doesn't have to be difficult. Focus small to save big. To learn more ways to save energy, visit www.lamarelectric.coop.



Power Tip

An average household dedicates 5 percent of its electricity budget to lighting. By replacing a home's five most-used light fixtures or bulbs with Energy Star-rated models, the average home can save \$75 each year.

CHONESS | ISTOCK.COM

Country Corner Events

OCTOBER 1-2

Paris Oktoberfest, Old Gibraltar Hotel Grounds in downtown Paris. Authentic German food, shopping and live music. Visit parisoktoberfest.com.

OCTOBER 3

Clarksville Fall Bazaar, streets around the Red River County Courthouse in historic Clarksville, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

OCTOBER 8

REACH Rally, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Love Civic Center in Paris. Benefiting the Red River Valley Down Syndrome Society. Bouncy houses, games, food and fun. Free admission.

OCTOBER 8

Cotton Harvest Festival, on the square in Cooper, all day and all night

OCTOBER 21-23

Texas Square Dance Convention, fairgrounds in Paris, all buildings. For more information, call (713) 862-4300.



OCTOBER 22

Festival of Pumpkins, historic downtown Paris and blocks beyond in all directions. Vendors, food, entertainment and activities for all ages, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.