

## If the Lights Go Out, Do You Know What To Do?



**MESSAGE  
FROM  
MANAGER  
ALAN  
LESLEY**

A year ago this month, an unusual series of events nearly plunged most of the state into darkness. A deep cold snap, coupled with failures at several power plants, led to rolling blackouts that surprised many electricity users.

The rolling blackouts, which lasted from minutes to a few hours, were necessary to help the state's major power grid limp through the crisis, which was brought on by high demand from folks trying to stay warm paired with an unexpected loss of generation.

The possibility of more rolling blackouts—or worse, a complete fail-

more generation is built, an ERCOT forecast predicts.

If the call goes out for usage cuts, would you heed it? If the power fails, whether because of a grid emergency or storm, do you know what to do?

If a power emergency is imminent and an alert is issued, we ask that you cooperate. Switch off lights and appliances that you can live without. Turn the thermostat on your home's air system cooler in winter or warmer in summer. Every bit of power we can save in that situation could keep the crisis from becoming worse.

If the grid becomes overloaded and goes down, it could take many hours or even days for it to come back up.

If a rolling blackout hits your area, turn off everything that was running except one light. That way, when power is restored, you'll know it. Leaving big energy consumers such as your air system or oven switched on could cause a surge that might blow a circuit.

If the power does fail for longer than a couple of hours, keep some of these tips in mind.

- If it's cold, gather everyone in the warmest room in the house. If you have an alternate source of heat such as a fireplace, use it. But be sure there's plenty of ventilation.

- Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to keep the cold air in.

- If you have a generator, don't hook it to your home's wiring.

This can put your co-op's service personnel at risk of injury or electrocution. Operate the generator in a dry, well-ventilated area and plug appliances into it.

We don't expect the power to fail, and we at Comanche Electric Cooperative work hard to see that it doesn't. But if the lights go out, we are ready. We want you to be prepared, too.



**Blackouts throughout the Texas power grid are a possibility in extreme weather.**

ure of the power grid—is a real one, according to the grid operator for most of the state, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas.

As early as this summer, there could very well be more power alerts and more rolling blackouts unless



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

### HEADQUARTERS

201 W. Wrights Ave.  
Comanche, TX 76442  
(325) 356-2533  
1-800-915-2533

### EASTLAND OFFICE

1311 W. Main St.  
Eastland, TX 76448

### EARLY OFFICE

1801 CR 338  
Early, TX 76801

### OFFICE HOURS

7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Monday through Friday  
Eastland closed from noon to 1:15 p.m.  
Early closed from 1 to 2 p.m.

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### YOUR "LOCAL PAGES"

This section of Texas Co-op Power is produced by CECA each month to provide you with information about current events, special programs and other activities of the cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact Shirley at the Comanche office or at [sdukes@ceca.coop](mailto:sdukes@ceca.coop).

# CECA Members, Local Organizations Receive \$28,050 Through Operation Round Up Donations

**O**peration Round Up is a voluntary program in which electric bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar. Every month, the additional pennies, nickels and dimes are added to a special fund. The Operation Round Up Trust Board, composed of CECA members, decides how funds are to be allocated.

In 2011, \$1,250 was donated to cooperative members who lost their homes to fire; \$6,750 in donations were made to members suffering from debilitating illnesses; \$750 to American Cancer Society fundraisers within the CECA service territory; and \$6,000 to senior classes for Project Graduation. In addition were the following organization donations: \$300

to the Eastland Crime Victims Assistance Center; \$500 college scholarship; \$500 to Drew's Dash; \$500 to Comanche Head Start; \$2,500 to Community Rehab Project; \$500 to The Ark; \$500 to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association International Foundation; \$5,000 to the Park Enhancement Group; \$500 to Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International; and \$2,500 to various charities for Christmas donations.

To get an application for funds, visit our website at [www.ceca.coop](http://www.ceca.coop), or call 1-800-915-2533. To become a member of Operation Round Up, fill out the opt-in form and return to CECA at P.O. Box 729, Comanche, TX 76442.



**ABOVE:** The Ark is a domestic violence shelter in Brown County. Its mission is to provide safe shelter and comprehensive resident and nonresident services through advocacy, referrals and education to support and empower victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault, one family at a time. It received a \$500 donation. From left are Destiny Michael, Alanna Reitz-Beard, Alicia Robles, Kenan Boland, Joan Blisard, Tracey Gwinn, Val Garcia, Regena Davidson and Billy Ann Marshall.



**RIGHT:** The Park Enhancement Group of Comanche County, or PEG, has an ongoing project to upgrade the park and play equipment. A donation of \$5,000 was made to upgrade the kiddie park with some much-needed new equipment and fencing. From left are Amanda Auvenshine of PEG, Shirley Dukes of CECA and Nancy Tindol of PEG.

# COMANCHE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



Drew's Dash is an event organized to draw awareness to autism and help defray medical expenses. Pictured are Drew Ingram and his father, Zack. Operation Round Up donated \$500 for the event.



Accepting the donation for the Salvation Army during their Christmas drive are David and Kathy Petty. The Salvation Army can purchase canned goods for 18 cents per pound.



CECA donated \$500 to the American Cancer Society at its 2011 Relay for Life event at the Comanche High School stadium. The CECA employees also had a team and walked in honor of fellow employee Kay Branham, who has been battling cancer for the past year. Pictured are Robert Potts with the American Cancer Society; Sandra Storey, 2011 chairwoman for the local chapter; and Branham.



Operation Round Up donated \$250 to each volunteer fire department within the CECA service area. Dwight Dold with the Desdemona Volunteer Fire Department is part of one of 26 VFDs that received donations. Desdemona VFD used its donation to help pay for the replacement of a hose damaged by the 2011 wildfires.



From left, Jana Pittman, Glenn Stockard and Jamie Harrison with the Eastland Crime Victims Assistance Center accepted a \$300 donation to assist the victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in Eastland and Stephens counties.



Comanche Head Start received \$500 to add to its Outdoor Learning Environment. The money went toward the purchase of math, literacy, music, art and nature studies learning kits as well as installation of root-view planters, raised-bed planters, birdhouses and feeders, and nature books.



# Conservation MATTERS

THE LATEST NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT ENERGY CONSERVATION FROM YOUR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## Caulk Up the Savings

BY BOB DICKELMAN

The greatest sources of heating and cooling losses in your home are often invisible air leaks. As a result, controlling air leaks provides the best way to extend the life of your home, conserve energy, save money and increase comfort.

Bottom line? If you don't tighten up your home first, money spent on insulation may be wasted.

Fortunately, you can seal a lot of leaks around your home's exterior with less than \$100 worth of caulk. It's generally possible to seal openings up to one-quarter inch between window frames and siding or around door frames. For larger gaps, add a backing material before caulking, or use a spray foam sealant instead.

Most types of outdoor caulk are sold in tubes that fit a caulking gun. In addition, some caulks come in aerosol cans; they're a good choice for filling gaps up to one-half-inch wide around pipes and wires.

When shopping for caulk, there are myriad choices. Prices range from a couple of dollars to several dollars per tube, so be sure to read the labels and choose a product that will adhere best to the materials you're sealing.

If your budget allows, spend a little more for a higher-quality caulk. Inexpensive caulks may last only a few years, while premium-priced caulks are rated for 20 years or more.

### Caulk like a pro

- As a rule of thumb, you'll probably use half a cartridge per window or door and up to six cartridges for foundation work.
- Most caulks pose no known

health hazards after they're fully cured. However, some high-performance caulking compounds contain irritating or potentially toxic ingredients, so you should carefully read the manufacturer's instructions and take the appropriate precautions.

- The best time to apply caulk is during dry weather when outdoor temperatures are above 45 degrees. Low humidity is important during application to prevent cracks from swelling with moisture.

- If the gap you're sealing is too wide, use a special filler made for the purpose. You'll find fillers in the caulking department of your local hardware store or home center. However, note that fillers are not designed for exposure to the elements, so you'll need to caulk or seal over them.

- Before applying new caulk, remove the old caulk or paint residue with a putty knife, stiff brush or special solvent.

- Make sure your work area is dry so you won't seal in moisture.

- Hold the caulking gun at a consistent angle; 45 degrees is best.

- Caulk in a straight, continuous stream, avoiding stops and starts, and make sure the caulk sticks to both sides of the crack or seam.

- Start caulk at the bottom of an opening to avoid bubbles.

- Release the trigger on the caulking gun before pulling it away from the crack to prevent applying too much caulk. A caulking gun with an automatic release makes this much easier.

- Don't skimp. If the caulk shrinks, reapply it to form a smooth bead that completely seals the crack.

- If caulk oozes out of a crack, use a putty knife to push it back in.

- Once you've applied caulk, it takes time for it to dry, or cure. Curing time is described in two ways. The tack-free time tells you how quickly the fresh caulk's outer surface will dry or skin over. The total cure time indicates the time required for the caulk to become completely stable—or reach the point where no further drying or shrinking will occur.

- Don't allow pets and small children to come into contact with fresh caulk.

### Use expanding foam for large gaps

- Be sure to use the correct type of spray foam for the job. Polyurethane expandable spray foam works well around pipes and gaps around the foundation. However, this type of sealant expands with so much force that it can cause damage to window and door frames. In those spots, use a water-based spray foam specifically designed for the job.

- Expanding foam is ideal for filling cracks that caulks can't handle. It comes in aerosol cans and takes a short time to cure. The foam is very sticky and attaches itself quickly, so be prepared to pick up any messes fast.

- To seal gaps too wide for foam, use foil-faced bubble wrap. For really large holes, cut sections of rigid foam insulation to fit and then glue into place with expanding foam before covering the area with wood or another appropriate building material.

*Bob Dickelman writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

# CECA TO AWARD FIVE \$1,000 SCHOLARSHIPS

One of the seven principles of a cooperative is Concern for Community. CECA strives to demonstrate this by supporting the academic endeavors of the students within our service territory through our scholarship program. For the 2012 school year, CECA is offering four \$1,000 Scholarships for Excellence and one



\$1,000 scholarship through the Operation Round Up program.

To qualify for these scholarships, high school students must be living at the residence of parents or legal guardians who are active CECA members residing within the cooperative's service area, and must have maintained a minimum 2.5 cumulative grade-point average on a 4.0 scale. A student currently enrolled in post-secondary educational coursework must be an active member of CECA or still

claimed as a dependent of parents or legal guardians who are active CECA members residing within the cooperative's service area, and must have maintained a minimum of 2.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Parents or legal guardians of students applying for the Operation Round Up program must also participate in Operation Round Up.

Deadline for applications is 4:30 p.m. March 16, 2012. Contact Shirley Dukes at 1-800-915-2533 or [sdukes@ceca.coop](mailto:sdukes@ceca.coop) for a complete set of guidelines or if you have any questions pertaining to the program.

**ATTENTION, STUDENTS!**

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

CO-OP TEENS POWER TEXAS

**One 30-second TV ad can win you \$1500!**



**STUDENTS, GRADES 6-12:** Make your own TV ad for your co-op and post it on YouTube. You could win a cash prize!

**TEACHERS:** You could win \$1000 for your school by sponsoring the grand prizewinner.

For full details, go to [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com)

## TRUCK AVAILABLE

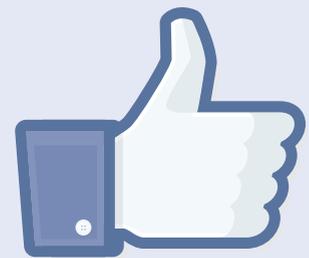
CECA has one "retired" vehicle that will be auctioned to members through a closed-bid process. The minimum bid is \$3,000. This vehicle has a few battle scars, some chipped paint and is well broken-in, as you would expect from a work vehicle.

Additional photos can be viewed on our website at [www.ceca.coop](http://www.ceca.coop). You may also come by the office at 201 W. Wrights Ave. in Comanche to see it in person. Sealed bids can be mailed to: Comanche Electric Cooperative, Attn: Sealed Vehicle Bid, P.O. Box 729, Comanche, TX 76442.

Direct questions to Shorty Hatley or Dale Ogle at (325) 356-2533. Deadline for bids is noon on February 21. The winning bidder will be notified on February 22.



This 2005 Chevrolet 2500 HD 4x4 single cab is for sale through a sealed bid process to CECA members. It has a 6.0-liter engine and 132,407 miles. The minimum bid is \$3,000.



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## Space Heater Safety

Many people turn to space heaters as a convenient source of warmth in winter months. However, space heaters can be dangerous if not used properly.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that more than 25,000 residential fires every year are associated with space heaters. More than 300 people die in these fires. In addition, an estimated 6,000 people annually receive hospital emergency care for burn injuries connected with space heaters.

Space heater hazards stem not just from fires caused by contact with or close proximity to heating elements. They also include fires started by flammable fuels used in the heaters, defective wiring in the appliance, and carbon monoxide poisoning caused by improper venting or an incomplete combustion of fuels.

Here are some tips for using your electric space heater safely:

- Keep the heater at least 3 feet from flammable items such as curtains, furniture or bedspreads.
- Select a space heater with a guard around the heating element.
- When buying a heater, choose one that has been tested and certified by a nationally recognized testing institution such as Underwriters Laboratories.

- Buy a heater that can handle the area that you want to heat.
- Read and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Never leave a space heater unattended.
- Never go to sleep with a space heater on.
- Never use or store flammable liquids near a space heater.
- Do not use a heater in a bathroom—it's a high-moisture area that could damage the appliance.
- Keep heaters away from water to prevent electrocution.
- Do not use an extension cord with a space heater.
- Do not use the heater to dry clothes.
- Be sure the heater's plug fits snugly in an outlet. The cord and plug may feel warm when operating because the unit draws so much power, but they should not feel hot. If they do, unplug the heater and have a qualified repair person check for problems.
- Do not attempt to repair a broken heater yourself. It should be checked and repaired by a qualified appliance service center.

*Source: The Consumer Product Safety Commission*

## The Secret's in the SEALING

If you read about the Texas Co-op Power Home Energy Makeover contest winners in our October issue you might have noticed a trend: The winners felt a difference as soon as their heating and cooling ducts were sealed. Want to feel a difference, too?

Start making improvements today. Making improvements to your duct system can:

**IMPROVE COMFORT.** Sealing and insulating ducts can help with common comfort problems such as rooms that are too hot in the summer or too cold in the winter.

**ENHANCE INDOOR AIR QUALITY.** Fumes from household and garden chemicals, insulation particles and dust can enter your duct system, aggravating asthma and allergy problems. Sealing ducts can improve indoor air quality by reducing the risk of pollutants entering ducts and circulating through your home.

**PROMOTE SAFETY.** Gas appliances such as water heaters, clothes dryers and furnaces release combustion gases like carbon monoxide through their venting systems. Leaky ductwork in your system can cause "backdrafting," drawing gases back into the living space rather than expelling them outdoors. Sealing leaks can reduce this risk.

**SAVE MONEY.** Leaky ducts can reduce heating and cooling system efficiency by as much as 20 percent. Sealing and insulating ducts increases efficiency, lowers bills and will eventually pay for itself in energy savings. Plus, if you're on the market for new heating and cooling equipment, a well-sealed duct system may allow you to downsize to a smaller, less expensive unit.

The only thing old-fashioned  
about co-ops is our  
**business ethic.**



Electric cooperatives were founded over 65 years ago based on consumer protections and ethical guidelines—ideas that are apparently considered old-fashioned by some corporations.

While co-op values have never changed, we are hardly old-fashioned when it comes to new technology that improves service and controls costs. We operate by established principles, and innovation is one of them.

Co-ops are local businesses run by local people.

It's a little something we call  
**The Home Team Advantage.**



# Postal Rates Increasing

*Now is the time to take advantage of CECA's online bill payment options*

By now you have probably realized that a first-class postage stamp is no longer 44 cents. Rates have increased a penny, and those stamps are now 45 cents. No, that's not a huge increase, but as we all know, those pennies add up to nickels, and the nickels add up to dimes. Well, you see where this is going.

But the U.S. Postal Service is not stopping there. According to The Associated Press, plans are being made to eliminate more than 250 processing centers and lay off nearly 30,000 workers. And there could be changes in first-class mail delivery, slowing down an already slow process.

Needless to say, CECA cannot do anything about the speed or the cost of mailing in your bill payment. We can, however, offer you a fast and inexpensive way to manage your account.

In 2011, CECA implemented online bill pay and account management. By paying your bill online, it would save you \$5.40 per year. No, that's not much, but we are now counting dollars instead of pennies. And if those pennies add up, just imagine what those dollars are going to do!

With our online program you can:

- **Pay your bill online:** Make a one-time payment or set up recurring payments using your credit card or E-Check.
- **View your account details online,** and make changes to your account profile, including address and phone numbers.
- **View your billing history.**
- **Sign up for alerts and reminders.**
- **Sign up for automatic drafts.**
- **Sign up for leveled billing** (this option allows you to more accurately budget for your utility bill, as it adjusts your bill monthly to even out your payments with no catch-up period at the end of the year).
- **Sign up for paperless billing.**

Take time today to sign onto our website at [www.ceca.coop](http://www.ceca.coop) and check out all the options available to you. For questions, assistance or a temporary password, contact our office at 1-800-915-2533. Our normal hours of operation are 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.





TOUCHSTONE ENERGY

# Boost Mobile Home Efficiency

BY BRIAN SLOBODA

**M**anufactured (or mobile) homes often log disproportionately higher energy bills than traditional wood-frame or modular homes. But you can take steps to help manage energy costs and increase comfort.

**BELLY BOARD PROBLEMS**—In most manufactured homes, the belly board holds the insulation in place under the floor and serves as a vapor barrier. The belly board can be damaged by animals or deteriorate over time, allowing the floor insulation to become moisture laden or to simply fall out, exposing ductwork and dramatically increasing energy losses.

**AIR LEAKAGE/INFILTRATION**—Infiltration of excessive outside air can be a major problem. Specific problems include deteriorated weatherstripping; gaps in the “marriage wall” that joins multiple units making up the home; holes in the ends of ducts; gaps around wall registers and behind washers and dryers; and unsealed backing to the electrical panel. This job will require you to crawl under the home looking for gaps and filling them with weatherstripping and insulation.

**CROSSOVER DUCTS**—Sealing the ducts that run under the sections making up your mobile home will result in tremendous energy savings and increased comfort. Crossover ducts are often made of flexible tubing and are therefore prone to collapse and are easy for animals to chew or claw into. Crossover ducts made of thin sheet metal can leak heated or cooled air to the outdoors. Repairs are generally easy, using special duct sealant or metal tape. If you can afford the upgrade, consider replacing a flexible crossover duct with metal ductwork.

**LACK OF INSULATION**—Insulation levels and R-values in walls, floors and ceilings in manufactured homes can be woefully inadequate. If it is easily accessible, adding additional insulation to ceiling and floors will help. However, adding insulation to walls will be a problem without major renovations that are often not cost-justified.

**UNINSULATED DUCTWORK**—Ductwork itself may not be wrapped with insulation, allowing heating and cooling losses. Wrapping ductwork will lead to energy savings.

**SINGLE-GLAZED WINDOWS AND UNINSULATED DOORS**—Most manufactured homes come with single-glazed windows and uninsulated doors, which have a low R-value. Replacing the windows with double- or triple-glazed windows or adding storm windows will help to make the home more comfortable. An insulated door will also help. At a minimum, you should add weatherstripping to doors and windows. Also, a window film kit is an easy and inexpensive upgrade that will help prevent heat loss.

*Brian Sloboda is a program manager for the Cooperative Research Network.*

## Baked Fudge

- 4 eggs
- 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cups sugar
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup cocoa
- Pinch salt
- 1 cup butter, melted
- 1 cup finely chopped pecans
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup dark chocolate chips
- 1 cup whipping cream

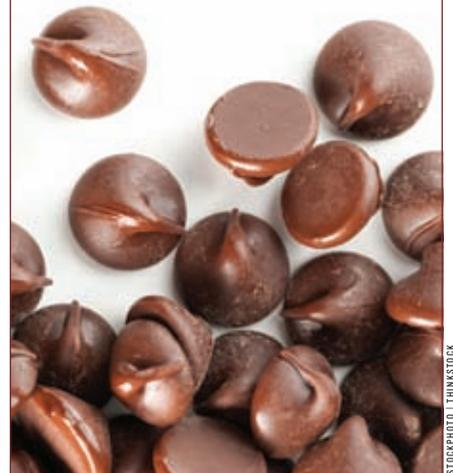
Place eggs in mixing bowl and beat well (about 3 minutes). Add sugar, flour, cocoa and salt; beat well. Stir in butter, pecans and vanilla until thoroughly blended.

Pour into 9 x 9-inch baking dish or pan. Sprinkle chocolate chips on top. Place in larger pan and pour water into larger pan until water comes 1 inch up side of smaller pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 45 minutes or until set and crusty. Test by inserting a knife a half-inch from the edge to see if knife is clean when removed. Do not overbake.

Remove from hot water to wire rack. Cool, then refrigerate until cold. Cut into squares.

Whip cream and put dollop onto each square before serving. Makes about 20 squares.

For more delicious recipes, visit [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com).



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