

Now's the Time To Make Your Voice Heard



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER RONNIE ROBINSON

This month, the American people will take to the polls to choose the next president of the United States, members of Congress and state legislators. As electric cooperatives strive to meet our present and future energy needs, we are asking lawmakers of all stripes what they'll do to ensure that consumers continue to enjoy safe, reliable and affordable electric power.

Today, many policymakers and elected officials believe renewable energy—like wind, solar and biomass (tree trimmings, farm byproducts, animal waste and landfill gas)—provide the solution to addressing climate change and establishing energy inde-

pendence. But to keep the lights on and electric rates affordable, electric cooperatives will need to make use of all available generation resources, including renewables, nuclear power and fossil fuels like coal and natural gas.

Our nation's electric system, commonly referred to as the grid, relies on a network of power plants, transmission lines and distribution facilities woven in an intricate web to provide us with electricity. When a piece of this puzzle doesn't fit or goes missing, brownouts and blackouts can occur.

By 2030, demand for electricity is predicted to increase by 30 percent over current levels, and our country has used up the excess power capacity it once had available. That means we will need to build power plants, all at a time when costs for construction materials such as steel, copper and concrete, and generation fuels such as natural gas and coal, are skyrocketing. The challenges we face are immense.

As a result, electric cooperatives are urging lawmakers to invest in technol-

ogy that will allow us to help all households become more energy efficient. It makes sense for lawmakers to fast-track plans for building new transmission lines—connecting rural regions where renewable electricity is generated to the population centers where it's consumed—to cut through the red tape that prevents construction of nuclear power plants and the capture and permanent storage of carbon from coal-fired power plants (as a way to reduce carbon dioxide emissions blamed for contributing to global climate change).

These steps will not only strengthen our nation's electric infrastructure and head off an impending electric power crisis, but also will significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions. Even better, they will help ensure that any climate-change goals ultimately adopted remain politically and economically sustainable over the decades necessary to make a difference.

Now's the time to make your voice heard. In addition to casting your vote November 4, you can also help educate and inform lawmakers about these concerns. Electric cooperatives are currently engaged in a grassroots campaign called "Our Energy, Our Future: A Dialogue With America." Nearly 400,000 letters and e-mails already have been sent to Congress by your fellow consumers from all across the United States, each asking critical energy questions. To join the effort, visit our webpage at WWW.CECA.COOP.

In partnership with the federal government, electric cooperatives met the greatest engineering challenge of the 20th century—spreading the benefits of electric power to the most remote corners of our nation. The time has come once again for Congress to step up and make certain we continue to enjoy the electric service we depend on at a price we can afford.

YOUR VOTE COUNTS!



Heading to the polling place is an important privilege Americans enjoy. Please exercise your rights not only by casting your ballots but also by contacting your elected representatives and letting them know what you want them to do for you.

REMEMBER TO VOTE TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

AT COMANCHE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Conservation Matters!



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

10 Ways To Save Energy—and Money—this Winter

No money for new windows or thicker insulation? Here are 10 cheap and easy ways to shave your energy use this winter—without feeling cold:

1. Turn on your ceiling fan—yes, in the winter. Switch the direction of the fan to clockwise (just flip the switch on the fan's base into the "winter" position), and run the unit slowly. It will circulate the warm air that rises to your ceiling and make you feel warmer while you're in the room.

2. Add weatherstripping or caulk around windows and doors to keep warm air from leaking out and cold air from sneaking in.

3. Rearrange your furniture. Move it away from heating vents. Push your most frequently used furniture away



A programmable thermostat can help lower your utility bill by reducing energy use when you're not at home.

from exterior walls, which can feel colder than interior walls.

4. Install a programmable thermostat. Turning back your thermostat by 10 to 15 degrees for eight hours a day

can save you up to 15 percent on heat.

5. Open drapes and blinds every day to let the warm sun in. Close them when it gets dark.

6. Repair leaks in your ductwork's seams and joints with a duct-sealing compound.

7. Wear a sweater so you can lower the thermostat a few degrees. You can save 1 percent on your heating bill for every degree you drop the heat.

8. Close the vents and doors in unused rooms.

9. Replace burned-out lightbulbs with compact fluorescent lights. CFLs use 75 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs.

10. Switch to cold water for washing clothes and dishes.

Safe Holiday Lighting Tips

Before the last Thanksgiving pie is finished or the final quarter of that heart-stopping football game has ended, some folks are ready to start stringing up holiday lights. When you get ready to decorate, observe these safety tips to help ensure that your holiday season is safe from electrical hazard:

- Before decorating, read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and maintenance of all decorative electrical products.

- Indoors and out, use lights and other electrical decorations certified by a recognized independent testing laboratory, such as CSA, UL or ETL.

- Outdoors, use only lights and other electrical decorations certified for outdoor use.

- Carefully inspect each decoration before plugging into an outlet. Cracked, frayed, loose or bare wires and loose connections may cause a serious electric shock or start a fire. Replace damaged items.

- Always unplug an electrical decoration before replacing bulbs or fuses.

- Don't mount or support light strings in any way that might damage the cord's insulation.

- Never nail or staple light strings or extension cords.

- Do not connect more than three light strings together.

- Light strings with screw-in bulbs should have no more than 50 bulbs connected together.

- Don't overload extension cords—they can overheat and start a fire. Keep

all outdoor extension cords and light strings clear of snow and standing water and well protected from weather.

- Use caution when decorating near power lines. Contact with a high-voltage line could be deadly.

- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.

- Don't allow children or pets to play with electrical decorations. Even small lights can produce a deadly electric shock if misused.

- Turn off all electrical decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

- Plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).

Comanche Electric Cooperative Crews Continue to Aid in Hurricane Clean-up

Even before Hurricanes Gustav and Ike made landfall, rural electric cooperatives across the state were preparing equipment and making plans to travel wherever needed to help their friends in trouble by restoring power to homes, businesses and public facilities. As early as the day following landfall, crews were dispatched to various cooperatives across the state to assist. Ike affected neighboring electric cooperatives including Bluebonnet, Bowie-Cass, Cherokee County, Deep East Texas, Houston County, Jasper-Newton, Mid-South Synergy, Panola-Harrison, Rusk County, Sam Houston, Trinity Valley, Upshur Rural and Wood County. Sam Houston and Jasper-Newton were the hardest hit, each losing 100 percent of their service during Hurricane Ike.

Armed with special clearance papers to allow them into affected areas, workers from all areas of Texas, including 12 employees from Comanche Electric Cooperative, headed east and south to help with the cleanup. CECA employees Brandon Cook, Craig Hardy, Larry Morgan, Tim Pallette, Eddie Strube and Curtis Tippie were dispatched to the Gonzales Parish office of DEMCO Electric Cooperative in Louisiana following Gustav. Adam Constancio, Kendall Keith, Oracio Lopez, Justin Riley, Scott Rutledge and Labin Scott were dispatched to Upshur Rural Electric Cooperative in Gilmer following Ike.

The damage done by hurricanes is obvious, as we have seen on continued news coverage of the affected areas. What is not obvious, however, is the behind-the-scenes work being done by cooperative crews as they fight their way through the destruction and debris, rebuilding electrical systems one pole at a time. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done.



Crews must remove debris before they can even begin to assess the situation. They must then clean up scrap wire, broken poles, insulators and transformers. Leaning poles must be fixed and line resagged. Crews must also deal with saturated ground, which makes accessibility an issue at times. Crew workers must untangle fallen

trees and power lines, sometimes placing themselves in harm's way.

Why does Comanche Electric Cooperative send crews to these far-away places? General Manager Ronnie Robinson says it is because "we know that restoring power is not as simple as flipping a switch. We know the amount of work required to restore power to a

single residence in the face of such tragedy. We faced many of these obstacles in the fires of 2006 and the floods of 2007. We were grateful for the help we received, and we are proud to be able to offer our assistance to those who are in need. It's all about neighbors helping neighbors. That's the cooperative way of doing business."

If you ask those men who went to serve what they got out of the experience, the answer is unanimous. They will never be able to erase from their memories the gratitude they saw on the faces of those affected by the hurricanes when they arrived and the joy expressed when power was restored.

"There's no better feeling than when you fire up a line and all the people start cheering and clapping," Tippie said.

And Morgan reported that, "even as long as I've been doing it (assisting other co-ops in time of need), it's still a neat thrill when you get power back to people."

Both crews reported that wherever they traveled, people were happy to see them and treated them with respect.

Scott said that every time crews are dispatched to aid other cooperatives in need, they find all cooperatives to be alike in one way: Cooperatives are all consumer-based, and they help each



other out with a camaraderie that is unmatched by big corporations.

The work is not pleasant. An average workday was about 16 hours. Most mornings, the crews were up and at the site by 6 and worked many nights until 10. They worked alongside a plethora of biting bugs, water moccasins and other wildlife and in swampy, humid areas that were barely inhabitable. But when asked if they would go back, they said yes—because the reward is in a job well done and the satisfaction of knowing that you have helped your fellow man in times of need. And if Comanche Electric Cooperative were to need help, you can rest assured that these cooperatives would be here in a heartbeat to help. After all, that's the cooperative way.



**COMANCHE
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YOUR "LOCAL PAGES"

This section of *Texas Co-op Power* is produced by Comanche EC 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.

COMANCHE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



From left are the members of the First Annual 'Hen House' cookie club: Rita Lows, Darlene Williams, Nancy Reynolds, Linda Lancaster, Lillian Parker, Evelyn Woodward, Lucy McCormack, Delores Webb and Doni Allen. Not pictured is Sandra Youree.

Cookies in the Hen House

BY SHIRLEY DUKES

In this month's issue of *Texas Co-op Power*, the recipe section places its focus on "Cookie Swaps." As many of you are well aware, members of Comanche Electric Cooperative don't like to be outdone! So when local members read in the July issue what the topic would be, they contacted me and asked whether I would like to present their cookie swap version! I wish I could have been a fly on the wall during this party (though they probably would have swatted me!), but I was not, so I'm settling for the second-best thing. I had the opportunity this week to visit with several of these ladies and hear their stories. I can assure you it was quite interesting and extremely entertaining. There is no doubt that a wonderful time was had by all!

Lucy McCormack was the instigator of the first annual "Hen House" cookie exchange. While reading an article in a magazine in the reception area of her doctor's office, the gears in Lucy's mind began churning up an idea she was sure would be such fun!

Lucy contacted her friend Nancy Reynolds with the idea and asked if she would be interested in attending. Of course Nancy said yes, and Lucy quickly responded with, "Then my next question is, can we have it at your place?" Nancy didn't even have to consider whether it was a good idea or not. After laughing at Lucy for the inimitable way she had posed her request, Nancy immediately responded with a resounding "Yes!" and the planning began.

Nancy and her husband, Gerald, had built a 600-square-foot house on their property for Gerald's elderly father, Eazy (Papa) Reynolds, in 2000. Papa passed away during the summer of 2007 at the age of 90, and Nancy, being a champion garage-sale shopper and an even better interior decorator, set about turning Papa's cottage into a retreat to share with family and friends. Gerald and Nancy call their home the Reynolds Roost. Therefore, it was natural that the cottage should become the "Hen House."

What started out as two or three women planning a cookie exchange turned into a group of 10 with diverse backgrounds. Each woman in the group had some type of connection with at least one other person in the group, but all 10 did not know each other prior to the party, nor did they communicate with each other as to what recipe they would be making—yet no two recipes turned out even vaguely the same. The cookies were as unique and diverse as the women who made them.

Each member of the club made and brought six dozen cookies and the recipe. This allowed them to take home a half dozen of each kind of cookie, with another half dozen left over to sample. While tasting cookies and sipping cider and coffee, the ladies exchanged stories of some of the most interesting parts of their lives. Lillian Parker was the matriarch of the group and had the most interesting stories to tell, followed by Sandra Youree, who had spent a portion of her life in Europe. Darlene Williams was deep in

the process of remodeling her kitchen and had no oven. But being a cookie connoisseur, she did not let that simple problem become a detriment! She made her six dozen cookies in a very small convection oven.

Then there was the weather. December should be cold, with a white Christmas looming on the horizon. But unfortunately, this was not the case. December 13, 2007, turned out to be an unseasonably warm day. As I said, this was a fun group of women, and they were determined not to let a little sunshine ruin their picture-perfect

gloomy weather conception of what a typical Christmas party day in December should be. Despite the high temperatures, they donned their Christmas sweaters, turned the air conditioning to a comfortable winter temperature, and commenced with the party!

Although these ladies had not all met one another before the party, each of them left that night with a new group of friends who still keep in touch. When I asked how they felt about doing this again, they all assured me that it was a lot of work but well worth the effort; and, yes, they will do

it again—that is, if Nancy will re-open the Hen House to them. Their advice to those interested in hosting a cookie exchange of their own is to keep it to 10 members or fewer. The more members in your club, the more cookies you have to make, which can turn into lots of work that takes away some of the fun. This is a very fun group of ladies, and any one of them would be more than happy to answer any questions you might have concerning your own cookie club. But if you call, be prepared to have fun. These ladies don't know any other way!



FAVORITE HOLIDAY TREATS



OATMEAL CRISPS

- 1 cup shortening
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon soda
- 3 cups quick-cooking rolled oats
- 1 cup chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Thoroughly cream shortening and sugars. Add eggs and vanilla; beat well. Sift together flour, salt and soda; add to creamed mixture. Stir in rolled oats and nuts; mix.

Chill dough, then form into walnut-sized balls, place on ungreased cookie sheet and mash until about 1/4-inch thick. Bake 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Makes about 5 dozen.

ALMOND COOKIES

- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon soda
- 1 cup shortening
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 egg
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon water
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine flour, baking powder and soda; set aside. Cream shortening and sugar until light and fluffy. Stir in vanilla and almond extract; add whole egg. Add dry ingredients and mix well. Combine egg yolk and water; shape dough into 3/4-inch balls and brush with yolk mixture. Top each with a sliced almond. Bake on greased cookie sheet for 10-12 minutes. Cool on wire racks. Makes about 3 dozen cookies.

ROLL AND CUT SUGAR COOKIES

- 1 cup salted butter
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- 2 tablespoons whipping cream (or whole milk)
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 3 cups unsifted all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Combine butter and sugar. Do not take this mix-

ture to a "light cream." Think incorporate, not cream. Make sure the mixture is smooth—no butter lumps. In small bowl, mix egg, cream/milk and extracts. Add all at once to the butter and sugar. Mix just until the egg is broken. The mixture will "curdle," but that's not a problem. In another small bowl, mix the flour and baking powder and add to liquid ingredients. Process to form dough. Roll out on counter and cut to desired shape with knife or cookie cutter. The beauty of this dough is that it does not need to chill before using. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes or until golden brown. To color dough, add drops of food coloring.

SAND TARTS

- 1 cup butter
- 5 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cream butter and sugar. Work flour, vanilla and nuts into creamed mixture. Form into small balls or crescents. Bake on ungreased sheet for 30 minutes or until lightly browned. Roll tarts in powdered sugar while still warm.

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