

Use Generators Safely

Our Linemen's Lives Are on the Line



**MESSAGE
FROM
MANAGER
ALAN
LESLEY**

No season in Texas is safe from severe weather. When one of those destructive summer thunderstorms rolls through our area, lines can go down and members can lose power—sometimes for an extended period.

During an outage, some folks rely on portable generators while power is being restored. If you use a generator,

do you know enough about it to operate it safely?

The safety of our members and our employees is a top priority at Comanche Electric Cooperative, especially during dangerous times. When storms hit our area, we rush to restore power as soon as conditions allow.

Our line crews take necessary precautions before they work on downed power lines, taking care to ensure that a line is de-energized before working on it. But even after these measures, an improperly connected generator can put our workers' lives at risk.

Comanche Electric is proud of our outstanding safety record, but sometimes, no matter how many steps we take to keep everyone safe, the very people we are there to help unknowingly put our lives—and their own—in danger.

Portable generators can prove fatal to linemen when used improperly.

Of course, no one would ever purposely cause the death of a lineman. Nevertheless, a generator connected to a home's wiring or plugged into a regular household outlet can cause backfeeding along power lines and electrocute anyone who comes in contact with them—even if the line seems dead.

Comanche Electric employees are not the only ones in danger when a portable generator is used improperly. Those who operate generators improperly can risk being electrocuted, starting fires, damaging property or being poisoned by carbon monoxide.

Portable generators can

be very helpful during outages. But it is imperative that you follow these safety guidelines when using one:

- Never connect a generator directly to your home's wiring unless your home has been wired for generator use, which includes having a transfer switch installed by a qualified electrical contractor. The transfer switch will disconnect your home from the power grid. Connecting the generator to a house's wiring without such a switch can cause current to flow out of your home's circuitry and along power lines. This situation can hurt or kill anyone coming in contact with the lines.

- Always plug appliances directly into generators or use only heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords. Make sure extension cords are free of cuts or tears and the plug has three prongs. Overloaded cords can cause fires or equipment damage.

- Ensure that your generator is properly grounded.

- Never overload a generator. A portable generator should only be used when necessary to power essential equipment or appliances.

- Turn off all equipment powered by the generator before shutting it down.

- Only operate a generator on a dry surface under an open structure.

- Always have a fully charged fire extinguisher nearby.

- Never fuel a generator while it is operating.

- Read and adhere to the manufacturer's instructions for safe operation. Never cut corners when it comes to safety.

We encourage you to protect the well-being and safety of your family during outages and safeguard those who come to your aid during emergency situations. When we work together for safety and the good of our communities, we all benefit.



Using a generator without the proper safety precautions can cause injury—or even death—to co-op linemen working to repair an outage.

AT COMANCHE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Conservation Matters



Stay Cool, Save Money

By **Brian Sloboda**

Cooperative Research Network

Cooling a home on hot, humid days can be energy-intensive—in fact, cooling generally becomes the largest energy expense homeowners face during the summer. A room air conditioner may seem like an easy-to-install, low-cost way to add comfort, but it could waste energy and money.

A room air conditioner is basically a self-contained box designed to be mounted in a window, through a wall, or as a console. Costing between \$100 and \$1,000, they can be purchased at home improvement centers, big box retailers—even yard sales and flea markets. They tend to last a long time with minimal maintenance, so selecting the right unit is important.

Room air conditioners rated by Energy Star, the federal energy-efficiency program, are at least 10 percent more efficient than the federal standard. The energy-efficiency ratio (EER) measures each unit's efficiency. The higher the EER rating, the more efficient the air conditioner will be. National appliance standards require room air conditioners built after January 1, 1990, to have a minimum EER of 8.0 or greater.

Energy Star-qualified units have advanced compressors that use less energy and run more quietly. However, they do cost slightly more.

An average consumer in a hot and humid state such as Texas could save up to 300 kilowatt-hours per year with an Energy Star-rated room unit versus a less efficient one.

Consumers should look for models with timers and programmable thermostats that allow users to cool spaces according to their preferences. For example, a homeowner can program the air conditioner to turn on 20 minutes before bedtime to make the bedroom comfortable.

Installing a room air conditioner is typically an easy job. Most units fit in a window. Large-capacity units often require a dedicated electrical circuit or may have specific wiring and breaker requirements. These units may need to be installed by a professional. Improper installation can negate the savings offered by even the most efficient of units.

Here's a tip: Put window units in an east- or north-facing window out of the direct sun. It's even better if the unit is shaded by a tree or awning. Also, make sure the external surface is not blocked by shrubbery. And, make sure the unit is level so its drainage system operates properly.

Room air conditioners come in a variety of sizes, and buying the right one is important. A unit that is too large will cool the room too quickly to properly remove all of the humidity, leaving the room feeling cool, but also wet and clammy. Buy the unit from a knowledgeable retailer who will help you select the right size for your room.

Consumers replacing an existing unit with a more efficient unit should not throw the old unit away. Air conditioners contain refrigerant that should be removed by a trained technician before the unit is recycled or discarded. Contact a local solid waste organization for information on how to properly dispose of old air conditioners.

Air conditioning will impact your monthly electric bill—your purchasing decisions, climate and length of use determine how much of an impact there will be. Making smart energy choices will leave you happier, cooler and with a couple of extra bucks in your pocket.

BEFORE YOU BUY

Before investing in a room air conditioner, take some easy and inexpensive energy-saving measures in your home. Any of these measures will maximize the cooling power of your air conditioner.

- Add caulk and weatherstripping around doors and windows.
- Add insulation to attics and exposed walls.
- Move furniture or obstacles away from room air conditioners.
- Close blinds or curtains during the day.



This shot, circa 1910, was taken by a photographer believed to have had a business in Scranton. By the 1950s, most of these buildings were gone. The white structure at left was a grocery store, eventually owned by the Morgans. Behind it is a stone building that housed a dry goods store operated by Lee Ray. In the right edge was a general store owned by the Gattis family. Just behind it is Gattis Drugs. The two-story building on the right of the street is believed to have been a boarding house.

Scranton Has Faded but Not Vanished

BY SHIRLEY DUKES

It was one of those places that just seemed to “become.” No one is sure how it happened or when—or where it got its name. However it came about, it seems to have happened quickly. All that is left of it today are the remains of a few buildings and a scattering of memories still being passed on through stories by the descendants of those who once lived there and who still have a fondness for the town that once was. “It” is Scranton, Texas, a once thriving community in Eastland County just south of Interstate 20.

On a cold and windy day in March, I met with Thelma Sellers, who showed me around what is left of the little community, and her brother Norris Starr and his wife, Marie, who told some tall tales about the families that settled the area. The trio was very hospitable and extremely entertaining, and I thoroughly enjoyed my day in this now-empty little town.

As with so much of this area of Texas, the Scranton area was once occupied by Indians, most likely Comanches. Proof of this lies in an old burial ground just north of Scranton underneath a rock bluff. The area is rich with arrowheads and other artifacts left behind after the Indians either moved on, or were forced from the area. Norris Starr said that for years, kids playing in the area would find arrowheads, grinding stones, pop rocks and other artifacts. There were at least two huge Indian grinding stones built into the sandstone of the area. However, it has been reported that at some time in the not-too-distant past, someone tried to remove them by tying chains around them and pulling them from the earth. But the sandstone was too fragile to be handled in this manner, and the grindstones were broken. Such a sad demise for an archaeological treasure.

There are two accounts of when the first Europeans came to Scranton. One story says they arrived before the Civil War in 1858, another that they came in the aftermath of the war in 1875. Both accounts are most likely correct, with Civil War refugees being the ones who actually settled the area.

Robert Shrader was raised in Scranton and graduated from the school there. His close ties to the community led him to research and write its history, which is where much of my information comes from. On his website, www.members.tripod.com/~scrantontexas, he wrote, "Like many other areas of Texas, Scranton was founded by refugees from the Civil War. The Old South had been destroyed, and life was miserable for the inhabitants who remained. Many residents went west in search of better opportunities for their families and themselves. This trip to Texas and other destinations was made on foot or horseback and by carts and wagons. Horses, mules and oxen pulled the carts and wagons. Most of these settlers brought with them an ethic of hard work and their dreams, their scars from the war, their religion and their prejudices. Those attitudes still shape the beliefs of their ancestors residing in the Scranton area today."

At the beginning of its settlement, the community was originally known as the "Uncle Joe Brown Neighborhood." Although it is not known how the town got its final name, it is believed to have come from a railroad surveyor named Scranton who visited the area around 1872. As with many towns of that era, the coming of the railroad was a big boon for the community, allowing them to purchase needed goods as well as providing them a connection to the outside world and an outlet to ship and market the local products of the area. The town quickly grew to include professional services such as doctor's and dentist's offices and a druggist. Bell Telephone still owns the land where a telephone

exchange once stood. The Gattis brothers were a big presence in the town, owning interest in the drug store, a general merchandise store, a soda fountain that supplied homemade ice cream and several grocery stores, one of which would stay in business until 1966. The town also boasted a blacksmith shop, a cotton gin, a cleaning shop and its very own newspaper, The Scranton Reporter.

Along with hard work, the little community strongly believed in the importance of education. The first organized grade school was formed in 1886 and was taught by Josh Snoddy. In 1902, Scranton High School was founded and presided over by Professor O.C. Britton. Shrader wrote: "With no state assistance or other external funding, money was raised by individual subscription to provide for faculty salaries, land, and a campus that included a two-story building with six classrooms, an auditorium seating 500 with a well-equipped stage, and two dorms. The school was incorporated by the citizens of Scranton on August 20, 1903, by a vote of 24 to 1. Enrollment grew to over 300 between 1902 and 1917. By 1904, Scranton had an incorporated school district and a population of 150. Early in the 20th century, Scranton was one of only two communities in Eastland County recognized for having progressive school systems."

In 1906 the high school was enlarged to become an academy. However, with the outbreak of World War I, the male student body was depleted, and by some time around 1917 (actual date not available), the school was closed.

Churches were an integral part of almost all communities and were the glue that held those communities together. The Scranton community eventually boasted both Baptist and

W.B. Starr was one of the founding fathers of Comanche County Electric Cooperative. He is pictured here at one of the cooperative's earliest annual meetings. With him is his son Robert (Bob) Starr and his wife, Elizabeth Starr.



COMANCHE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Methodist churches, but before the church buildings were constructed, services were hosted by community members in their homes and presided over by circuit riders. Churches and cemeteries seemed to go hand-in-hand during this era, and Scranton was no exception. The first cemetery in the community was the Lane Cemetery. Records show that the first known people to be buried there were the Lane family. The graves of E.B. Lane and Ophelia Lane show no date of death and burial. Other Lanes buried in the cemetery are: Mary Lane, July 1879; D.G. Lane, April 1880; and Maggie O. Lane, January 1907. Most of the early settlers of Scranton are buried here. Once the only cemetery in the community, the Lane cemetery now stands on private property with no

willing to teach farming methods for the potatoes and peanut. His planting methods were widely known, and people came from far and wide to learn from him. In fact, his grandson Norris Starr can remember a group coming from Uganda to visit the farm. Norris was still a small boy but can remember his grandfather talking to them about when to plow, how much fertilizer to use, how to put the hay back into the ground for mulch and how to develop the best crop to grow the much-needed protein for their diet.

Starr put a lot of value on taking care of his loved ones and doing for his friends and neighbors. His Highland Springs Farm was situated on a piece of property with access to some of the richest and fastest-flowing natural springs in the entire area. One of the things he did that brought him the most respect from his fellows was to make those spring waters available to others. During one very long drought, most of the springs and shallow wells in the area dried up, and many residents were without water. Starr very generously and graciously opened his gates and let anyone with a need come to his springs for water. While others

were charging for water, Starr gave generously of what he considered to be a gift of the land.

Today, the only thing that remains standing of the little town of Scranton is a closed gas station, the burned-out remains of the old gymnasium and a part of the school that now serves as the community center and hub of the once-thriving community. There are about 40 people still living in the little community, but by no means is the community inactive. The community center hosts a musical on the first Saturday of every month. Visitors are treated to lots of good music and a meal, the proceeds of which go to pay the utilities and upkeep on the community center. If a musical celebration is not to your liking, then join them on the Fourth of July for homemade ice cream and a fireworks display, which they promise will not disappoint you. And if it is just camaraderie and fellowship you seek, join them on the first Saturday in June, when they host the annual Homecoming celebration, complete with food and an auction.

This is just a very small sampling of the rich history of the Scranton community. There just isn't room on these pages to include it all. For more information, visit Shrader's website or just drive down and check out the town yourself. If you can find some of the locals to tell you the history, you won't be disappointed!



LEFT: Baptism ceremony at Gin Tank, downtown Scranton, circa 1920. **RIGHT:** Harvie Boykin in front of Gattis Brothers store, downtown Scranton, 1950. Photo supplied to Scranton community by Billy Boykin, 2001.

access and is in a state of disrepair with a number of markers having been lost to time and neglect. In October 1896, Joseph Jackson Ray, more commonly known as J.J. Ray, and his wife, Sarah Frances Morgan Ray, donated a plot of land for a church and cemetery. Known simply as the Scranton Cemetery, it quickly replaced the Lane Cemetery as the community burial location and is still in use today.

A sister community to Scranton is the Mitchell community, originally known as the Dan Horn community. It is in this sister community that one of Comanche Electric Cooperative's founding fathers resided. W.B. Starr was elected to the Board of Directors of Comanche County Electric Cooperative in 1938, was appointed chairman, and made many a trip to Washington, D.C., to lobby for cooperative and REA rights. Starr, who owned the Highland Springs Farm, was an influential and very respected man in the area. He was influential because of his famous Red Star sweet potatoes and because of his work with Texas A&M University on the Star peanut. He earned respect with his generosity and general willingness to help anyone in need.

Through careful planting and cross-pollination, Starr spent several years developing his Red Star sweet potato, which was grown on his Highland Springs Farm. He was known to hire just about anyone in need of a job and was

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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.