

# Innovating To Serve



## MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER ALAN LESLEY

Electric cooperatives have come a long way. In the mid-1930s, nine out of 10 rural homes were without electric service—a service that the majority of us now greatly depend on to live our day-to-day lives. Electricity is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity. Today, to meet members' electrical needs, electric co-ops are providing reliable power using the most advanced technologies available.

### Equipped for Reliability

When electric co-ops first formed, today's state-of-the-art equipment simply wasn't an option. Groups of men gathered their strength to raise utility poles, and spools of thick electrical wire were unraveled and strung individually. Once the poles were set in place, these ambitious men climbed the poles to hang the wire.

Now digger or derrick trucks are used to dig holes and place utility poles and electric lines. Bucket trucks have replaced the majority of the climbing. These advancements not only improve the safety of our lineworkers, they also make the process faster and less strenuous.

Much like setting poles and stringing electrical wire, clearing rights-of-way is no longer done by hand. Thanks to technological advances, power saws and tools have made clearing much easier. Clearer rights-of-way mean more reliable electric service.

### Accountable Metering

Even though homes come in different styles, they all have one thing in common: an electric meter. These small devices constantly keep a tally of electricity use. The older styles of meters, which track kilowatts with small, spinning discs, are quickly becoming obsolete.

Automated meters have the capability to report energy-use updates every hour. With automated meter reading in place, a co-op has the ability to create an advanced metering infrastructure. AMI can be established when automated equipment (found at CECA's substations and on distribution lines) is teamed with AMR. AMI allows a variety of advanced applications to become possible, including outage management, "blink" monitoring and remote disconnection and reconnection. AMR and AMI both play major roles in keeping reliable power flowing to your home and the electric grid running efficiently.

### Securing the Network

The Internet is one of the greatest technological advances known to humanity. But the online world can be a dangerous place if proper security measures are not taken. With help from the Cooperative Research Network—the research branch of the Arlington, Virginia-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association—electric cooperatives can arm themselves with technological innovations in security to maintain safe and secure systems for their member-owners.

A new project by the CRN and several partners is underway to ensure that co-ops are delivering power and service in the safest and securest way possible. Through this ambitious effort, researchers are developing the next generation of automated cybersecurity for the industry.

These are just a few of the technological advances that electric cooperatives have made, and we remain focused on finding ways to improve our service to you. Technology is ever-changing—but here at CECA, we'll continue to stay ahead of the game, ensuring safe, reliable and affordable electric power for you, our member-consumers.



## Tree Trimming Keeps Everyone Safe

**If you love the big trees in your yard, you might hate to see your electric cooperative's tree-trimming crews coming. But keeping vegetation away from overhead power lines is necessary to keep your neighborhood safe and the electricity on.**

It's important to maintain a clearance of 15 feet on either side of power lines so that branches, leaves and trunks won't touch the wires, even when they sway in the wind. Crews are obligated to cut branches that have grown within an unsafe distance.

Here's why: Trees and bushes that touch power lines can conduct electricity, interrupting the delivery of power to your house—which means nobody's in danger, but your lights might blink.

More serious problems occur when falling branches rip down lines or damage equipment. That can cause a power outage for you, and possibly your neighbors.

An even greater concern is that a tree touching a power line poses a safety hazard to anyone who comes into contact with the tree.

If a tree is growing too close to a power line near your home, give your electric utility a call so co-op personnel can check to see if it needs trimming.

A tip: Don't try to trim a tree yourself. It takes a trained professional to work in close proximity to power lines without getting hurt.

And the next time you plant a tree in your yard, consider how tall and wide it will eventually grow. If it could potentially come within 15 feet of a power line, plant it farther away.

# Don't Get Scammed

It's becoming more and more common for thieves to target people for scams over the telephone. Sometimes they call a co-op member and say they're collecting on an overdue bill from the "electric authority" or an electric company that doesn't even have customers nearby, and try to scare their target with threats of disconnecting their electric service.

These scammers are trying to get your bank account or credit card numbers so they can rob you.

Remember that if an authentic employee of your electric cooperative calls you on the phone, he or she will never ask you for a password, username or Social Security number. So if someone calls and claims to work for the cooperative and asks you for this information, you'll have a pretty good idea that the person is a fraud.

Never give out personal or account information over the phone unless you have initiated the call, or you're sure that the person on the line is legitimately who they say they are. If you suspect a caller is pretending to be an electric cooperative employee in an effort to scam you, hang up. Then call the cooperative to report what happened.



## Happy Thanksgiving

CECA will be closed Thursday, November 27, and Friday, November 28, for the Thanksgiving holiday. Crews will be on standby in case of outages.

### CECA

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*Operating in Brown, Callahan, Comanche, Eastland, Mills, Shackelford and Stephens counties*

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#### OFFICE HOURS

**Comanche Office:** Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**Early Office:** Monday, Wednesday and Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., closed from 1 to 2 p.m.

**Eastland Office:** Tuesday and Thursday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

#### 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).



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*Six-Man Football:*  
**Short on Players, Long on Excitement**

BY LUCCHESI GORDON



TOP: A Blanket Tiger watches a game from the sidelines after sustaining an injury during practice, his teammates and the action reflected in his sunglasses. ABOVE: The Blanket Tigers break through their tunnel as they take the field for their game against Bluffdale.



**The crowd gathered quickly. Mothers, fathers, teachers, excited kids and curious townspeople sat or walked about and visited, waiting for the much-anticipated high school game to begin. It would be a game unlike any played in the state before. Goalposts built of two-by-fours marked each end of a dirt field, but that was to be expected in West Texas in 1936. It seemed to be typical small-town fare until the team ran out—with an unusually small number of players. Six-man football had come to Texas.**

Although we would love to claim it, six-man football did not originate in Texas, but far to the north, in Nebraska. In 1934, Stephen Epler was working as a teacher and assistant coach at Chester High School. Chester was small—so small it could not form a football team. It was a common plight in rural areas all over America, but Coach Epler was not content with the standard solutions of consolidating several schools or simply playing other sports. He wanted to reinvent the sport—literally.

As part of his graduate course at the University of Nebraska, Epler rewrote the game of football to accommodate small schools with limited resources. He cut down not only the number of players on the field, from 11 men to six, but also the size of the field, which he shrank from a 100 to 80 yards. He must have been tempted to cut the teams down to even lower numbers, because when the game was finally ready in 1934, three other schools in addition to Chester had to be recruited to have enough boys to form two teams to test it.

The four schools met in September in Hebron, Nebraska, to face off in the first-ever game of six-man football. The players battled it out to a 19-19 tie in front of well over 1,000 spectators. The game had not been a dazzling headliner, but it was a definite success. Enough schools were sold on the idea that a league was formed the very next year. Six-man found its way to Texas not long after, in a 14-0 game in Rotan between Sylvester and Dowell High Schools.

## A Whole Different Ball Game

Epler didn't just change the numbers of the game; he rewrote the rules to accommodate the new, smaller set of players. Faster action, wide-open offense, higher-scoring games and athletes who can easily play other positions make six-man a completely different football experience.

First, the term "skill position" can mean anyone on the field. In 11-man, only certain players can handle the ball legally, but in six-man, every player is an eligible receiver in any play. That makes a huge difference in the meaning of a cer-



**ABOVE:** A teammate assists Jordan Chasteen after his legs cramped from exertion and heat.



**LEFT:** After a second ambulance had been called in during the May-Blanket game, Blanket players gathered to pray for the injured May player and the safety of both teams for the remainder of the game.

**BELOW:** Blanket Tiger Rodolfo Valle takes down May player with Quinton Alvarez closing in.



tain position. "When you play 11-man line, you're in the trenches all the time," says Scott Edmondson, who coaches six-man at Blanket, "In six-man, you may be a center—and you may be the best receiver in the district."

"A lot of 11-man kids that would never get to touch the ball, in six-man, they would get passes thrown to them," says May Coach Craig Steel. "That's completely foreign to 11-man, commonplace in six-man."

Because of this characteristic and because there are so few





**ABOVE:** Maria Valle, pictured with Blanket Tiger Adan Lopez, attends a game sporting the Six-Man Heaven T-shirt she won in a Hollywood contest. Valle won the shirt with a poem she wrote about six-man football.

**TOP RIGHT:** May Tiger sophomore Cameron King, No. 9 in white, makes a tackle in a September game against Throckmorton. Assisting is junior Zachary Davis, No. 12. May lost this game 60-40, but it was a hard-fought football game.

**RIGHT:** Senior Hunter Kilgo, No. 19, runs in for the extra point in May's season opener.



of them, six-man players don't play specialized positions as their 11-man counterparts do. "A cornerback in 11-man may have been playing corner his whole life, and there's certain drills: man covers, zone covers," says Steel. "That doesn't really happen in six-man that often."

Instead, each player fills a variety of roles. A player can get away with knowing only his own position in 11-man, but that won't fly in six-man. "You have to have a knowledge of every position," says Shannon Williams, Zephyr coach. "When you don't have a whole lot of kids, each kid can actually go in and play different positions. So they have to know the game; they have to know the positions and know why they're doing that, so if they are put in those situations where they have to go in and do something that they're not used to, they still have a whereabouts of it."

The most unusual feature of six-man football is one that often confuses first-time onlookers. "When I first started watching six-man, I could never understand why they would always pitch the ball back," Edmondson remembers. "They would always pitch it instead of the guy keeping the ball."

In six-man, there have to be two exchanges before anyone can run the ball; in other words, the quarterback has to pass the ball off before he can cross the line of scrimmage. "I always wondered, 'Why do they keep doing that? Just run the ball!'"

Edmondson laughs.

It makes the game look—and play—a lot differently. "When I first got to May, the first scrimmage in six-man, quarterback took the snap, dropped back, didn't see anybody open [and] took off running," Steel says, chuckling. "You know, and he got called back. It does take a little bit of adjustment and for people that have never seen six-man, they're like, 'Why doesn't the quarterback just run?'"

All in all, it makes for a faster-paced, higher-scoring and downright more exciting game. "I think people would be surprised to come watch and see how hard-hitting six-man football is," Williams says. "There's a lot of shots in six-man that you don't see in the 11-man game."

Six-man football trims out all but the action scenes. "It's more high-octane offense kind of stuff in six-man; it's just faster," says Edmondson.

In fact, once you're used to six-man, standard football can be a bit of a drag. "You can go somewhere and play and ... Brownwood people, they come out and watch you and they're like, 'Man, this is such a fast-paced game. It's awesome,'" Williams says. "And then the small-town folks go watch an 11-man game, and it's kind of boring to them. It gets a little boring on a 3-0 game compared to a 70-68 game."

The players prefer it, too. "Kids, for the most part, that I've

talked to, who've played both 11-man and six-man, like six-man better," Steel says. And all three coaches say they have no desire to coach anything but six-man. "Once you're around it, it's very addictive," Edmondson says.

## The Game Today

This area is a hotbed for six-man football, Steel says. The game is sparser in other regions of Texas, but it is definitely growing, spreading into East Texas and gaining a foothold in South Texas as small towns all over the state shrink even smaller. "There's a lot more schools playing six-man right now than there were when I was in high school," says Steel. "There's a whole lot more, probably 30 to 40 more. So it's continuing to grow."

More schools play six-man, and more fans are being converted to the game. "More people know about it," Edmondson says. "A lot of people like to come watch six-man playoffs now, when their [11-man] team is out."

And six-man towns are incredibly loyal to their teams. "Even when you have to travel a long ways, you look up in the stands and they're still full with the town people," says Williams. "In smaller towns, you know, that's all they got is their school, and they really, really buy into it and they support it to a 'T.' And that's what makes it fun."

Williams counts himself lucky to be in the six-man world for more reasons than just the way the town backs his team. The area six-man association, he says, is a close group of coaches. "The six-man community, they kind of help each other out. If you have questions, you know, you just call somebody and they'll help you. Eleven-man's a little different. It's more secretive."

Some people worry that playing six-man will prevent their sons from even having a shot at playing football in college, but according to Edmondson, it does not affect a kid's chances as much as you might think. "It's rare because the level of talent usually just isn't as high," he says.

It's more about the numbers. "If you take Brownwood—they've got 60 or 80 kids playing football. Well, of those 60 or 80 kids, how many do you hear about that actually go play at the college level? Maybe five or six. We have 20 kids at most. If we have one [play college football], we're ecstatic."

Although very few six-man players go on to play during college, it is because there are fewer of them, not because playing six-man has disadvantaged them. "I really believe that if a kid's good enough to play, he can play whether he's coming from an 11-man school or a six-man school," says Steel.

It could be argued that six-man does a better job of preparing players for the next level. "You have to be in better shape to play six man football," Williams says. It also makes for much



**ABOVE:** Blanket players discuss plays during down time.



**LEFT:** The Blanket Tigers cheerleaders and team gather before a game.

**BELOW:** Blanket players tackle a Gordon player.



more versatile athletes. "I think six-man gets ... not better athletes than in 11-man, but there are better athletes in six-man than what people think," Edmondson says. "I think more six-man kids could play 11-man than 11-man kids coming to six-man. You could take one of our tackles or one of our guards, and they could play 11-man simply because they could probably play another position."

Six-man football is born of necessity, but once established, it becomes a sport that is popular in its own right and actually preferred to the standard game by fans, players and coaches alike. "Some people feel like it's a lower brand of football," Steel says, "but I can promise you—if you go watch a game, if you watch two good six-man teams play, you'll be hooked."

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