

National Co-op Month

Celebrating the Co-op Connection



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER CLINT GARDNER

Each October, millions of co-op members across the U.S. observe National Co-op Month, designated by the National Cooperative Business Association to celebrate cooperatives and the qualities that make the business model unique—local, democratic control; a commitment to supporting and improving quality of life in the communities they serve; special benefits and services; and the return of margins (the co-op term for profits) to members in the form of capital credits.

Electric cooperatives were formed when rural communities were struggling because investor-owned utilities weren't willing to invest in rural America. So neighbors banded together

or other civic needs that might otherwise go unmet.

In addition to electric cooperatives, Texans are served by credit unions, food co-ops, agricultural co-ops and more. All of these member-controlled organizations are guided by the Seven Cooperative Principles:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Members' Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

Co-ops mean business

Cooperatives provide a viable alternative to the traditional for-profit business model for more than 130 million members across the U.S. Co-ops range in size from small storefronts to large Fortune 500 companies, including REI and Nationwide Insurance. Coleman County EC is one of more than 900 electric cooperatives serving 42 million people in 47 states.

Co-ops make connections

Co-ops strengthen ties with members and their communities through education and networking opportunities. Today, just as in the past, we connect with other cooperatives by practicing Cooperative Principle No. 6, "Cooperation Among Cooperatives." Co-ops also connect with members through annual meetings and publications; with policymakers through advocacy; and with young people through youth and leadership programs.

Your electric cooperative has a basic responsibility to provide reliable, affordable and safe electricity, but we take it a step further by supporting our members, enriching our schools and enhancing our communities.

Worldwide, co-ops are recognized as a force for positive economic and social change. Since the 1930s, co-ops across the United States have observed National Co-op Month every October to commemorate the many ways that people work together to create better businesses and a better quality of life for their communities nationwide. At Coleman County EC, we are proud of our cooperative structure and our connection to the more than 30,000 cooperatives across the U.S. More importantly, we are committed to you, our members, and we're proud to be your cooperative.

For more information on cooperatives, visit our website at colemanelectric.org.



and lit up the countryside when no one else would. That's the spirit in which we at Coleman County Electric Cooperative celebrate during National Co-op Month each October, and every day of the year.

Co-ops are special

Co-ops are owned and governed by their members—the same people who use the co-op's goods or services. Profits are distributed to members (not stakeholders) or reinvested in the co-op or the community, often meeting technological, humanitarian



Only Crackpots Take Potshots

It doesn't take a crack shot to hit an electric insulator or transformer, just a crackpot

During hunting season, careless shooters taking potshots at electric equipment can cause major problems for your electric cooperative. Here's why:

- ▶ You are inconveniencing your fellow member-customers whose electricity has been disrupted.
- ▶ It could even be a matter of life and death to someone on a life-support system or to someone who is hit by a stray shot.
- ▶ Damage to electrical equipment is very expensive to repair. Lines may be cut or weakened from a shot, and they may sag or break, becoming a severe hazard for anyone who comes in contact with the line.
- ▶ Broken insulators can cause power outages that are hard—and expensive—to find. An insulator cracked by a bullet can remain on line for a long time before it finally fails.

Enjoy your sport, but be a responsible hunter. Teach your children to respect power lines, electrical equipment and guns so that they, too, will be responsible hunters.



Coleman County Electric Cooperative

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Operating in Brown, Callahan, Coleman, Coke, Concho, Runnels, Taylor and Tom Green counties

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Clint Gardner

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Power Tip

Fall is here, and that means colder months will be here before we know it. Is your home prepared for the drafts that may enter? Tight-fitting insulating drapes or shades are a perfect way to keep the heat in and the cold out.



Cowboy Co-ops

The origin of electric cooperatives is an inspiring story that demonstrates the exceptional nature of the people who populated rural America, then and now. During National Co-op Month in October, Coleman County Electric Cooperative reflects on the reasons for the creation of electric cooperatives.

It's hard to imagine what life was like outside urban areas in 1935, especially through the lens of our 21st-century existence—news taking days to reach you, dirt roads, manual labor and no electricity. Life for a large portion of the American population was, for all intents and purposes, a frontier life.

Rugged people made a living by strength, persistence and hard, often crushing, work. They relied on themselves or their neighbors when things got tough. Though a few are still around who remember how things changed when the lights came on, for most of us today, life without electricity is an alien concept. However, in the 1930s, while 95 percent of urban dwellers had electricity, only one in 10 rural Americans was so blessed.

On May 11, 1935, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 7037, creating the Rural Electrification Administration. Immediately, the people who would make up our “cowboy” cooperatives took the bit in their teeth and started putting together electric cooperatives all across America, Coleman County EC getting its start in 1937.

The term “cowboy” might conjure up Hollywood images of hard-living, rugged individuals fighting injustice against great odds. The cooperative model matched the cowboy ethic perfectly. A book written by a retired Wall Street executive, James Owen, captured this ethic and boiled it down to the following eight points:

1. Live each day with courage.
2. Take pride in your work.
3. Always finish what you start.
4. Do what has to be done.
5. Be tough, but fair.
6. When you make a promise, keep it.
7. Ride for the brand.
8. Talk less and say more.

Some might think that so-called “cowboy co-ops” would be restricted to the West, but the case can be made that every cooperative was formed by the cowboys of their area. They were tough, self-reliant, hardworking, honest, resilient men and women willing to take bold action to serve their interests and create a better life for their families. They were working together for their neighbors and for their communities.

Don't Get Lost in the Shuffle

Six hundred pages, plus another 1,000 of supporting documents—that's the length of the latest proposal from the Environmental Protection Agency that would amend the Clean Air Act to limit carbon dioxide emissions from the power plants on which we rely today.

One issue lost in the shuffle of these thousands of pages is the impact on people. How much will electric bills increase? Will manufacturers relocate? How many jobs will be lost? Which power plants will be forced to shut down?

These are difficult questions, but they're important ones. At Coleman County EC, we work hard to keep your electricity affordable and reliable. That's why we're asking the EPA for answers to these and many other questions.

We don't want you to get lost in the shuffle. We put you—our members—first. We advocate for you. We work with you. We often live next door to you. We know when times are tough.

That's why we keep reminding the bureaucrats in Washington, D.C., that the rules they write have an impact in the real world. That's why we're encouraging everyone to take 30 seconds to visit Action.coop and tell the EPA we cannot afford these regulations.

Please raise your voice. Don't get lost in the shuffle. Together we'll remind regulators and lawmakers that the impact of new rules and laws on real people should be their first thought, not their last.

RENEWABLE ENERGY NUCLEAR POWER
NATURAL GAS CLEAN COAL

America needs an
ALL OF THE ABOVE STRATEGY
to keep electric bills affordable

VISIT ACTION.COOP

SASCHA BURKARD | LISTOCK | THINKSTOCK



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's 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. So caulk holes and penetrations wherever you see them: around faucets and pipes and wiring, inside cracks in your exterior siding, and around windows and doors.

ADD OR REPAIR INSULATION. Especially if your home is older, it's likely that your attic has too little insulation or that the insulation in it has fallen away from the ceiling, walls and floor it is supposed to protect. Reattach or replace old insulation to reduce heat from escaping through the attic during the winter and from coming into the house during the summer.

CALL A PROFESSIONAL TO CHECK YOUR HEATING SYSTEM. The tech will look for damage, worn-out parts and other potential trouble. A do-it-yourself tip: Change your furnace filters every couple of months during heating season. And if your equipment is more than 10 years old, consider replacing it with a new, high-efficiency system that will almost certainly lower your heating bills and make your home more comfortable.

CONSIDER HAVING A PROFESSIONAL ENERGY AUDIT. An energy assessment company can find leaks in places where you can't: inside walls, under floors and in crawl-spaces, for instance. Using huge fans and infrared cameras, an energy auditor can find trouble spots and recommend ways to remove them.

Celebrate the Cooperative Way

The utility that keeps your lights and appliances humming along every day is a cooperative business, not a corporation.

Cooperatives are owned by the consumers who use their services: you and your neighbors. In fact, your electric cooperative doesn't refer to you as a "customer." Instead, everyone who works there knows that you are a "member."

October is National Co-op Month, when members from more than 29,000 cooperatives nationwide—including more than 900 electric cooperatives—celebrate their heritage.

Take a few moments this month to learn a little more about the way your electric cooperative does business.

Here is the basic cooperative business philosophy: They are not-for-profit, democratically controlled and member-owned.

That means they don't sell stock to out-of-state shareholders or let outsiders decide what's best for their local consumer-members.

And it means that any member—including you—can run for election to the cooperative's board of directors, the governing body that hires the manager and sets policies for the utility.

If you don't want to be a board member, you still can vote for the candidates you would like to represent you.

