

# Building on What Works



## MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER KATHI CALVERT

**FRENCH NOVELIST JEAN-BAPTISTE ALPHONSE KARR** coined the saying, “The more it changes, the more it’s the same”—which also is true when it comes to your electric meter. Technology has changed and capabilities have changed, but the electric meter still serves the exact same purpose it did 77 years ago when Houston County Electric Cooperative was founded. The meter is used to measure our members’ electric usage to ensure that all members receive accurate and fair monthly bills.

HCEC has used power line carrier meters for more than a decade. With a power line carrier meter, usage data is delivered over the power line back to our office. In fact, HCEC was one of the early adopters of meters with remote reading capabilities due to our low member density and the number of miles of line we serve. It was cost-beneficial to our membership for the co-op to use remote reading capabilities.

However, many of those meters are at the ends of their lives and failing. It is time for us to begin a meter exchange project to replace our old meters. We have evaluated many meter solution options. After considering costs and capabilities, we have determined that upgrading our existing power line carrier meters will be the best solution for our members.



First, this solution was the most economical. Approximately 30 percent of our meters have already been upgraded through the normal course of business, and these will not need to be replaced. We will not see additional network or communications costs that would be required by other metering solutions.

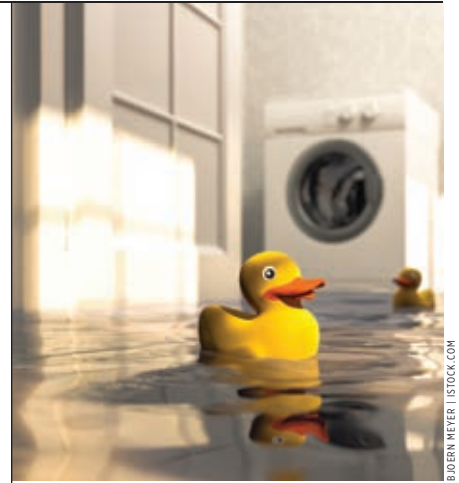
Second, technology with the power line carrier has continued to improve.

We will have more capability to offer time-of-use products and more predictive capability to support outage-restoration efforts.

Finally, it is a technology our members are familiar with. There is no need to be concerned about radio frequencies or invasion of privacy. We are only able to gather data on how much energy you use to provide an accurate bill and determine whether your power is off to assist with outage restoration.

By now, I hope you are asking, “Where’s my new meter? When are you coming to my house?” Please be patient with us. Part of what makes our choice the most economic solution is that all meters will be replaced by HCEC linemen. We are not outsourcing this project. We are not adding resources. We are completing this project in-house over the next three years. The linemen who know our service territory, the people you see day in and day out, the employees you trust to take care of your co-op will be replacing your meter.

Just as it was 77 years ago, members, linemen and meters led to the creation of our cooperative. As much as things do change, Houston County EC remains the same—focused on serving our members.



No season in Texas is safe from flood risk.

## It’s Still Storm Season

### HURRICANES AND OTHER FALL STORMS

not only damage property, but they can also cause health and safety hazards. When a storm blows your way, your response can head off a disaster, so be prepared. Some tips:

**Know the storm is coming.** Listen to weather reports constantly during this hurricane-prone season.

**Once a storm knocks the power out, unplug all major electrical appliances.** This could prevent an electrical surge from damaging the motors of those appliances when the power is restored.

**Unplug basement appliances;** storms often cause flooding downstairs.

**After the storm, turn off the electricity** to areas of the home that got wet. If you step in water—even a puddle—that is touching a plugged-in appliance, you could be electrocuted.

**Don’t turn flooded or wet appliances back on** until an electrician inspects them and gives you the OK.

**Keep the refrigerator door closed during power outages.** Food will stay good for four to six hours in an unopened refrigerator.

**If someone in the house is on life support** or relies on any electric medical device, make a plan for where to take the person in case of a power outage. The local hospital can help you with the plan.

# Think Outside the Range

**IT'S BEEN A LONG, HOT SUMMER**, and there's still a while to go before Texas sees cooler fall temperatures. For at least another month, nobody wants to stand over a hot stove or oven to prepare a good meal.

The good news is that a little creativity can make the rest of the kitchen pull its weight. Smaller countertop appliances—toaster ovens, microwaves, slow cookers and more—are capable of making the dishes usually cooked on the stove or in the oven, without adding extra heat.

**Slow cookers** are a great alternative for making one-dish wonders. They allow you to put in all the ingredients for a dish in the morning, turn the cooker on for the day and come home to a finished meal in the evening.

You can even consult a slow-cooker cookbook to learn how to make surprising things in them, like bread, yogurt and desserts.

**Electric pressure cookers** have more safety measures in place than the stovetop sort, and most of them can take the place of slow cookers and rice cookers. Some models can even cut out stovetop steps, like browning meat, with a sauté function. Pressure cookers are also good for quick steaming, and that includes things you would normally boil or bake.

Using an electric pressure cooker is generally easy once you learn the various release methods—natural, quick and 10- or 5-minute—and their correct applications.



Pressure cookers take the heat out of summertime meal preparation.

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**Rice cookers** make cooking rice effortless and are good for steaming and for cooking other grains, such as quinoa. With the help of a cookbook, rice cookers can make entire one-pot meals, or quick versions of complicated dishes.

A **steaming tray or basket** is essential in many pressure and rice cooker recipes. A lot of rice cookers come with steaming baskets, but also they can be bought separately.

A **good toaster oven** can do much of the work of a full-sized oven, such as roasting vegetables or baking casseroles and cobblers.

**Microwave ovens** can do a lot more than heat up your leftovers. Microwaves work by spinning water molecules, which means they steam things easily. Also, they can melt chocolates and cheeses more easily than a double boiler or an oven, with a lot less excess heat.

## Houston County Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 52, Crockett, TX 75835

### GENERAL MANAGER

Kathi Calvert

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dan Courmier, President  
Kennon Kellum, Vice President  
Mitchell Huff, Secretary-Treasurer  
Mary L. Pearl Adams  
William Emmons  
Kay Reed  
Charles "Chuck" Siems  
Grady Wakefield  
David Whittlesey

## Contact Us

**TO REPORT A POWER OUTAGE,  
CALL OUR 24-HOUR HOTLINE**

**1-800-970-4232** toll-free

### BUSINESS HOURS

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

### CUSTOMER SERVICE

For general information  
during business hours

**(936) 544-5641** local

**1-800-657-2445** toll-free

To report an outage or other problem  
with electrical service, press 1.

To make a payment over the phone or  
speak with a member services representa-  
tive in the billing department, press 2.

For electrical connects, transfers and  
disconnects, press 5.

For directions to our office, mailing  
address or fax number, press 6.

For satellite Internet services, press 7.

For staking and construction, press 8.

### FIND US ON THE WEB

**houstoncountyelec.com**



**FIND US ON FACEBOOK**



# Come Celebrate With Us!

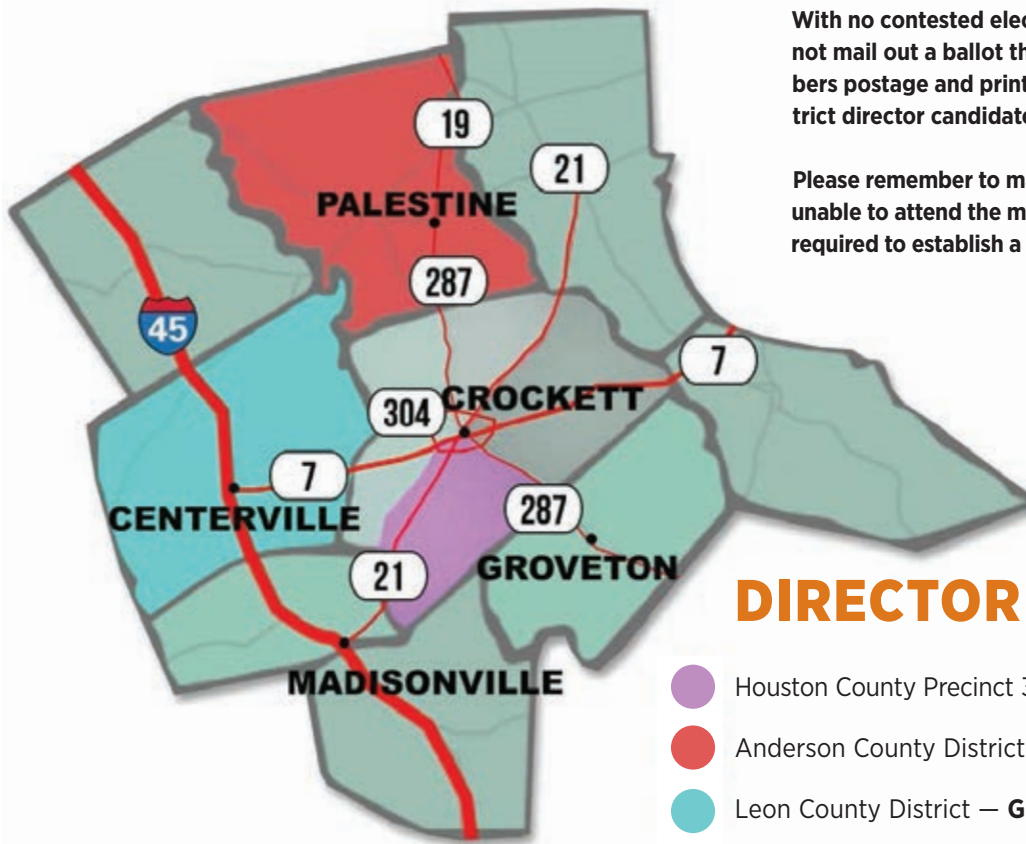
**Houston County Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

# 77<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

**Thursday, November 3, 2016**

Doors open at 4 p.m. • Business meeting at 6 p.m.

## HCEC SERVICE AREA



With no contested elections, Houston County EC will not mail out a ballot this year. This saves our members postage and printing expenses because all district director candidates are running unopposed.

Please remember to mail your proxy card if you are unable to attend the meeting. Proxies are still required to establish a quorum and conduct business.

## DIRECTOR CANDIDATES

- Houston County Precinct 3 District — **Charles "Chuck" Siems**
- Anderson County District — **Jeanette Kay Reed**
- Leon County District — **Grady Wakefield**

# Meeting Notices and Proxies To Be Mailed

**IN OCTOBER, EACH MEMBER OF** Houston County Electric Cooperative will be mailed a notice of meeting and a proxy card.

This notice of meeting will be your official notification that Houston County EC will hold its annual meeting of members November 3 in Crockett. It will also contain a schedule of events for that evening.

On the reverse side of the notice will be directions for sending

in the proxy card and the qualifications for participating in the prize drawings. The deadline to return the signed proxy card is 2 p.m., November 3.

If you are unable to attend the annual membership meeting, please sign and return the proxy. Signing the proxy will allow your vote to be counted in the quorum for the purpose of conducting business on all matters coming before the meeting and adjournments.



# Residential Safety Checklist

*10 quick reviews to help make your home's electricity use safer*



Help ensure your family's safety by replacing broken and missing wall plates.

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## Outlets

Check for outlets that have loose-fitting plugs, which can overheat and lead to fire. Replace any missing or broken wall plates. Make sure there are safety covers on all unused outlets within reach of children.

## Cords

Make sure cords are in good condition—not frayed or cracked. Make sure they are out of traffic areas where people could trip over them. Cords should never be nailed or stapled to walls, baseboards or any other objects. Do not place cords under carpets or rugs or rest furniture on them.

## Extension Cords

Check to see that extension cords are not overloaded. Extension cords should be used only on a temporary basis; they are not intended as permanent household wiring. Make sure extension cords have safety closures to help safeguard young children from shock hazards and burn injuries.

## Plugs

Make sure your plugs fit your outlets. Never remove the

ground pin (the third prong) to make a three-prong plug fit a two-prong outlet; this could lead to an electrical shock. Never force a plug into an outlet if it doesn't fit. Plugs should fit securely into outlets. Avoid overloading outlets with too many appliances.

## Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupters

GFCIs can help prevent electrocution. When a GFCI senses current leakage in an electrical circuit, it assumes a ground fault has occurred. It then interrupts power fast enough to help prevent serious injury from electrical shock. Test GFCIs monthly according to the manufacturer's instructions to make sure they are working properly.

## Lightbulbs

Check all lightbulbs to make sure they are the correct wattage for the fixture. Replace bulbs that have higher wattage than recommended; if you don't know the correct wattage, check with the manufacturer of the fixture. Make sure bulbs are screwed in securely; loose bulbs can overheat.

## Circuit Breakers and Fuses

Circuit breakers and fuses should be the correct size and current rating for their circuit. If you do not know the correct size, have an electrician identify and label the size to be used. Always replace a fuse with the same correct size fuse.

## Water and Electricity Don't Mix

Don't leave plugged-in appliances where they might come into contact with water. If a plugged-in appliance falls into water, never reach in to pull it out—even if it's turned off. Unplug it first. If you have an appliance that has become wet, don't use it until it's been checked by a qualified service technician.

## Appliances

If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse or trips a circuit breaker, or if it has given you a shock, unplug it and have it repaired or replaced.

## Entertainment and Computer Equipment

Check to see that the equipment is in good condition and working properly; look for cracks or damage in wiring, plugs and connectors. Use a surge protector bearing the seal of a nationally recognized safety certification agency.



Using a combination of fan and air conditioning during the summer months saves money on bills.

# Make the Most of Ceiling Fans

*By turning on the fan, you can turn up the savings*

**IF YOU ARE LIKE MOST AMERICANS**, you have at least one ceiling fan in your home. Ceiling fans help our indoor environment feel more comfortable. They are a decorative addition to our homes and, if used properly, can help lower energy costs. Follow these tips to make the most of your ceiling fans.

**Flip the switch.** Most ceiling fans have a switch near the blades. In warm months, flip the switch so that the blades operate in a counterclockwise direction, effectively producing a “wind chill” effect. This pushes air down into the room, making it feel cooler than it actually is.

In winter, move the switch so that the fan blades rotate clockwise, creating a gentle updraft. This circulates warm air from the ceiling out toward the walls and down into occupied areas of the room.

Regardless of the season, try operating the fan on its lowest setting.

**Adjust your thermostat.** In the summer, when using a fan in conjunction with an air conditioner—or instead of it—you can turn your thermostat up 3–5 degrees without any reduction in comfort. This saves money because a fan is less costly to run than an air conditioner. In the winter, lower your thermostat’s setting by the same amount. When it’s cold out, ceiling fans push the warm, conditioned air that has risen to the ceiling back down toward the living space, which means the furnace won’t need to turn on as frequently.

**Choose the right size.** Make sure your ceiling fan is the right size for the room. A fan that is 36–44 inches in diameter will cool rooms up to 225 square feet. A fan that is 52 inches or more should be used to cool a larger space.

**Turn it off.** When the room is unoccupied, turn the fan off. Fans are intended to cool people, not rooms.



## HAPPY Labor Day

Houston County EC will be closed Monday, September 5, in observance of Labor Day.

As always, crews will be on standby in the event of an outage.

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## Power Tip

Consider insulating your water heater tank, which could reduce standby heat losses by 25–45 percent and save you about 4–9 percent in water heating costs. You can find precut jackets or blankets available from around \$20.