

What Members Want Most



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER KATHI CALVERT

I'M GOING TO STEP OUT ON A LIMB WITH A THEORY on what our members want most. I have not spoken with every member, but I think it is a safe bet to say that all members would like lower bills. This time of year is typically hard for many recovering from Christmas spending, paying property taxes and colder weather resulting in more energy use.

Here at Houston County Electric Cooperative, we strive to maintain affordable rates and seek ways to be more efficient and effective with our members' resources. We would like to share a few tips from the U.S. Department of Energy on how you can curb energy usage to keep your bills even more affordable.

Adjust the Temperature

- ▶ When you are home and awake, set your thermostat as low as is comfortable.
- ▶ When you are asleep or out of the house, turn your thermostat back 10–15 degrees. Doing so for eight hours a day could save you around 10 percent a year on heating.
- ▶ Be mindful with space heaters. Many space heaters used to heat small areas of the home often use more energy than central heating for the entire home.

Find and Seal Leaks

- ▶ Seal the air leaks around utility cut-throughs for pipes, gaps around chimneys and recessed lights in insulated ceilings, and unfinished spaces behind cupboards and closets.
- ▶ Add caulk or weatherstripping to seal air leaks around leaky doors and windows.

Pay Attention to Windows


- ▶ Open curtains on your south-facing windows during the day to allow sunlight to naturally heat your home, and close them at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows.

- ▶ Use a heavy-duty, clear plastic sheet on a frame or tape clear plastic film to the inside of your window frames during the cold winter months.
- ▶ Install tight-fitting, insulating drapes or shades on windows that feel drafty after weatherizing.

3 COMMON MYTHS:

- ① The higher the thermostat setting, the faster your home will heat.

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This will not make your home heat faster, but you will use more energy.
- ② It is better to leave your thermostat at a set temperature 24/7 instead of lowering it at night or when away.

When you lower your thermostat, you will use less energy and lower your bill.
- ③ Houston County Electric Cooperative increases rates in January.

Our rates have not increased, but our members typically use more energy to heat their home in the winter compared to cooling their home in the summer.

HCEC also offers options to assist eligible members during challenging financial situations. These include average billing, payment arrangements and prepaid billing.

Hopefully these tips will help you, our members, stay warm and comfortable this winter without facing high bills. If you have questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.



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Insulate To Feel Great

DO YOU EVER FEEL A CHILL, CRANK UP THE HEAT, HEAR THE FURNACE KICK ON ... then feel no warmer? Your home might need better insulation.

Heat flows from a warmer spot to a cooler one until there is no longer a temperature difference. This means that in winter, heat flows directly from heated living spaces in your home to an adjacent garage, unheated attic or outdoors.

Properly insulating your home decreases this flow by providing resistance. Unless your home was specially constructed for energy efficiency, you probably can reduce your energy bills by adding more insulation.

Inspect and Evaluate

To determine whether you should add insulation, find out:

- ▶ Where your home is, isn't and should be insulated.
- ▶ The type, including R-value and thickness, of insulation you already have.

Check the walls, floors and ceilings in unheated spaces such as the attic and garage. Structural elements usually are exposed in these areas, which makes it easy to see the type and thickness of surrounding insulation.

To inspect exterior wall insulation through an electrical outlet:

1. Turn off power to the outlet.
2. Remove the cover and shine a flashlight into the gap around the outlet box. You should be able to see if there is insulation in the wall and possibly how thick it is.
3. Pull out a small amount of insulation, if needed, to help determine its type.

Use this method to check outlets on all floors in old and new parts of your house. Just because you find insulation in one wall doesn't mean it's everywhere in the house.

Choose the Right Insulation

Once you've figured out the types and thicknesses of existing insulation, consult the U.S. Department of Energy's online insulation fact sheet at energy.gov/energysaver/insulation to determine the corresponding R-values.

Once you find out the R-values of your existing insulation, you then can use the Home Energy Saver tool at hes.lbl.gov to determine how much insulation you need and where to add it for maximum energy efficiency.

Select the proper type of insulation for your home once you know where you'll be installing the new stuff and what R-value you want the installation to achieve.

Houston County Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 52, Crockett, TX 75835

GENERAL MANAGER

Kathi Calvert

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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 representative 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.

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houstoncountyelec.com



FIND US ON FACEBOOK



HCEC Retires \$900,000 in Capital Credits

HOUSTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE WENT TO CENTERVILLE ISD IN TRINITY County to deliver its 2017 capital credits allocations. In 2017, the HCEC Board of Directors retired funds from 1983, 1984, 1985 and part of 2016. The amount of all retired capital credits was \$900,000.

Pictured from left to right are HCEC CFO Gary White, HCEC Accounting Manager Sonja Key, Centerville ISD Principal Andja Sailer, HCEC Network Administrator Shelby Vance and Centerville ISD District Business/PEIMS Coordinator Tamra Scroggins.

WHAT TO DO IF...

You Encounter a Downed Power Line

EVEN IF EVERY HOME IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD loses electricity during a storm, a power line hanging loose could very well be “live” and electrocute you if you touch it.

Just because the electricity is out doesn't mean power lines are dead. **So if you see one, follow these tips to stay safe:**

- ▶ Don't touch a power line with your hand, body, a stick, a broom—not with anything. Stay as far away from it as possible.
- ▶ Call 911 and your electric cooperative.
- ▶ If your car or another person is touching a downed line, don't touch your car or that person. The power could flow through them and into you.
- ▶ Don't drive over a downed wire.
- ▶ If a line falls on your car while you're in it, stay inside. The ground around your car could be energized, and if you touch it, you could be electrocuted. Warn others to stay away and call 911 for help.
- ▶ Teach children about the dangers of fallen power lines.

Stay Back!

Know the difference between types of lines and wires. If you see a downed electric line, be aware that it could be live and dangerous!

<h3>Electric Wire</h3> <p>Electric wires are larger and can be easily identified by the three separate twisted wires, one being uniquely silver or uninsulated.</p>	<h3>Cable Wire</h3> <p>Cable lines are round and look similar to the coaxial cable that connects to the TV in your home.</p>	<h3>Phone Wire</h3> <p>Telephone wires are typically smaller, flat wires.</p>
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Students Learn Safety Skills

FIRST-CLASS LINEMAN DAVID HILDEBRAND VISITED WITH APPLE SPRINGS ISD THIS PAST fall to demonstrate the importance of electrical safety. His safety demonstration involved an HCEC maintenance crew that included Jeremy Bobbitt, Shiloh Crouch, Justin Currie and Brandon Neal. Hildebrand celebrates his 20th anniversary with Houston County Electric this August.

HCEC Is Here To Serve

IT'S A NEW YEAR AND A GREAT TIME TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE MANY SERVICES

Houston County Electric Cooperative offers our members.

HCEC Mobile App: Check your daily, weekly or monthly electric usage. Pay your bill from anywhere at any time. Report a power outage with the push of a button. It's free! Just download from the app store to your device by searching "HCEC."

Electrical Safety Demonstrations: If your company or school would like to have someone present a safety demonstration, please contact us at (936) 544-5641.

Prepaid Billing: Pay for electricity before it's used, then use the electricity until the credit expires. Monitor your electric usage. No more monthly bills and no more late fees. The power is in your hands. Members can use our mobile app to check the balance of their account and will also get real-time notifications when it is time to replenish their account.

Facebook: Like us on Facebook. Stay informed with posts about energy efficiency, updates during major outages, employment opportunities and HCEC's community involvement.

HCEC Website: At houstoncountyelec.com, you can find general information about your co-op, including installation spec sheets, an outage map, energy efficiency information, scholarships, holiday schedules, annual meeting info and more.

Texas Co-op Power: As an HCEC member, you receive a monthly edition of this statewide magazine. Our local section is in the middle, and each month you will receive an update on your cooperative.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH



VIENNETTA | ISTOCK.COM

Chocolate Pots de Crème

6 egg yolks
6 ounces dark chocolate chips
3 tablespoons sugar
2 cups heavy cream

1. Combine egg yolks, chocolate and sugar in a blender and pulse a few times.
2. Heat cream to simmering, then pour over top of chocolate mixture and blend immediately on high 1-2 minutes, until chocolate has melted.
3. Pour into individual serving dishes or one large dish and cover with plastic wrap placed directly on surface of custard. This will prevent a skin from forming on top.
4. Chill at least one hour in refrigerator.

OPTIONAL: Add 1 teaspoon grated orange zest and ¼ cup orange juice to blender before adding hot cream. Sprinkle dash of sea salt on top before covering.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at
TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM

Apply Now for Youth Leadership Seminar



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WE LOVE OUR MEMBERS!

Happy Valentine's Day
February 14



ANIKASALSERIA | ISTOCK.COM

Power Tip

Looking for an easy way to make your home cozier? Try using area rugs to increase the insulation levels of your floors. Area rugs are stylish and can help keep cool air from entering through your flooring. Your toes will thank you!

HOUSTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE HAS PARTICIPATED IN THE EAST TEXAS Rural Electric Youth Seminar for almost 30 years. ETREYS is a leadership camp for 10th- and 11th-graders and is sponsored by nine electric cooperatives. The camp is designed to foster positive ideas and values among young people while enhancing skills in leadership, problem-solving and interpersonal relationships in a wholesome environment. The seminar consists of workshops, presentations and peer-group activities. ETREYS offers students a chance to develop their interpersonal skills while competing for scholarship opportunities.

ETREYS applications are available on our website at houstoncountyelec.com/content/etreys or through your high school counselor. Applications are due April 20.

HCEC Supports Volunteer Firefighters

Right: HCEC employees traveled to Groveton to present the Groveton Volunteer Fire Department with its 2017 contribution check. Pictured from left to right are Houston County Electric CFO Gary White, Groveton Volunteer Fire Chief Glenn Hammond, HCEC Network Administrator Shelby Vance and HCEC Accounting Supervisor Sonja Key.



Left: Houston County Electric's CFO and general manager meet with members of the Midway Volunteer Fire Department to deliver its 2017 contribution check. Pictured from left to right are HCEC CFO Gary White, HCEC General Manager Kathi Calvert, and Ed Faw and Billie Blow of the Midway Volunteer Fire Department.

Right: HCEC employees traveled to Hudson to present the Hudson Volunteer Fire Department with its 2017 contribution check. Pictured from left to right are HCEC Network Administrator Shelby Vance, HCEC Accounting Supervisor Sonja Key, HCEC CFO Gary White, Hudson Volunteer Fire Chief Marcial Foisie and Hudson Volunteer Fire Vice President Frankie Ornduff.

