

# Electric Cooperatives' Policy Priorities



## MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER ALAN LESLEY

**AT COMANCHE ELECTRIC** Cooperative, providing you with safe, affordable and reliable electricity is our top priority. Our members might be surprised to know just how much of the work we do in our communities is affected by what lawmakers do in Washington, D.C. That's why co-ops across the country join together in making sure our congressional representatives know what's important to co-ops and their members.

We do this, in part, through our membership in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national service organization that works on Capitol Hill and before federal agencies to represent the interests of the nation's more than 900 electric cooperatives. Here are some policy priorities for NRECA and America's electric co-ops in the next couple of years.

### Strengthening Rural America

Electric cooperatives built the infrastructure that brought electricity to rural Americans by securing federal loans through the Rural Electrification Act of 1936. Today, co-ops provide power to 42 million Americans in 47 states. We know that growing a vibrant rural economy is essential to America's success and prosperity, and we continue to count on the federal government for support.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has long been a partner in helping co-ops fund a variety of activities, including electric infrastructure improvements and expansion of rural economic opportunities. Co-ops will work to further strengthen our relationship with the USDA in 2017 and beyond.

In 2018, Congress is scheduled to produce a new farm bill. Co-ops will track this closely to ensure that updates of our nation's agricultural and rural policies strengthen rural America.

### Avoiding Regulatory Overreach

Electric cooperatives advocate for public policies that are driven by consumers' interests and needs—not a "Washington knows best" mentality. Overreaching federal regulations have a significant impact on rural America, so co-ops are asking policymakers to revisit federal rules that have hurt rural communities and threatened co-ops' mission of providing affordable and reliable electricity.



US SCHOOLS | ISTOCK.COM

We're looking ahead to future actions under the Endangered Species and Clean Air acts to ensure that they consider the nation's environmental and economic goals without putting undue burdens on rural Americans.

### Improving Infrastructure

One of the themes that ran through last year's presidential campaign is the need to improve the nation's infrastructure. Electric co-ops have been in the infrastructure development and improvement business for decades and hope to work with leaders in Washington to continue this important progress.

Co-ops continually improve the cyber- and physical security of our systems and have been leaders in developing and using smart-grid technologies. Here again, a strong public-private partnership remains essential, particularly in the area of cybersecurity.

Electric cooperatives also support a wide range of research activities to help improve our nation's energy infrastructure. The U.S. Department of Energy and other agencies remain key partners in advancing this research.

These are just a handful of examples of co-ops' major policy priorities over the next couple of years. America's electric cooperatives are working just as hard in Washington as we are here at home to keep the electricity flowing and enhance the quality of life for our members.

# Billy Henry Retires After 40 Years of Service



**BILLY HENRY CAME TO CECA** in 1977, just a few years out of high school. During the past 40 years, he has not only been a stable employee of CECA but also has made a name and a place for himself with the cooperative. Billy began his career in the construction department, moving to maintenance after 10 years. He later transferred to the Member Services department for two years, and eventually landed in the metering department as meter coordinator/AMR supervisor.

Billy's wife, Glenda, is a music teacher at Comanche Elementary School. He has three children—Jason, Wes and Debbie—and four precious grandchildren. Billy plans to spend his retirement years helping his children out around their places and following the grandchildren in their many and varied activities. In addition, he has farming and ranching interests as well as rental property that should keep him well-occupied and out of Glenda's hair.

Billy says, "I have met lots of people through my years with the cooperative that became friends. I will always have lots of memories of my adventures in all the departments I have worked in."

We have lots of memories with you, too, Billy, and wish you the very best! You will be missed.



P.O. Box 729, Comanche, TX 76442

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

## HEADQUARTERS

201 W. Wrights Ave.  
Comanche, TX 76442

## EARLY OFFICE

1801 CR 338  
Early, TX 76801

## EASTLAND OFFICE

1311 W. Main St.  
Eastland, TX 76448

## OFFICE HOURS

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

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

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

## General Manager

Alan Lesley

## Board of Directors

Randy Denning, District 1  
Pete McDougal, District 2  
Ruby Solomon, District 3  
Monty Carlisle, District 4  
Troy Stewart, District 5  
Loren Stroebel, District 6  
Phil Taylor, District 7

## Report an Outage

CECA crews are available 24/7 in the event of a power quality issue by calling 1-800-915-2533.

## Contact Us

### CALL US

**1-800-915-2533** toll-free

### FIND US ON THE WEB

[www.cecacoop.com](http://www.cecacoop.com)



[facebook.com/CECA.coop](https://facebook.com/CECA.coop)

# The Anatomy of a Blink



BY SHIRLEY KIDD DUKES

**BRENDA IS A 34-YEAR-OLD MOTHER OF FOUR** and the wife of a dairy farmer. In addition to helping out around the dairy and keeping the company books, she home-schools the two oldest children, chases the toddler and protects him from the daily hazards of his young life, and spends countless hours feeding the baby and changing her ever-wet diaper. She lives a crazy, hectic life, and one thing she does not need is an unplanned interruption. However, life on a dairy is fraught with the unexpected, so she has come to expect those interruptions and plans her days accordingly.

Brenda depends on the reliability of her electric service. When she flips the switch, she expects the lights to come on and stay on. When she heats the oven to cook dinner, she expects it to stay on and complete its very important task of preparing sustenance for her family. When she pushes the button on the computer to begin her daily accounting work for the dairy, she expects the computer to stay on and protect her entries until all the documents are completed and saved for future calculations.

David, Brenda's hardworking husband, also depends on that same electricity to complete all the necessary functions that keep the dairy running and in tip-top shape. There are cattle to be fed and milked; milk to be stored and kept cold while awaiting transport to the production plant; and equip-

ment to be cleaned and sterilized in preparation for the next milking session.

These chores barely scratch the surface of all that Brenda and David face on a daily basis. They definitely do not need a power interruption.

CECA works hard to put in place as many precautions as possible to ensure that the member's day is not interrupted by outages, blinks or fluctuations. We constantly evaluate our power lines to identify potential blink-causing problems so we can take preventive measures. Our metering and mapping systems have been updated with alarms to notify us of voltage drops. We continually update our system so we can be proactive in our efforts to assure you a constant and dependable source of power. We also work tirelessly to remove vegetation that can encroach on our lines.

Despite all that, the occasional power interruptions, commonly known as blinks, still occur. There are basically two reasons for this: 1) because of a fault (short circuit) on the power line; or 2) the operation of a protective device working in reaction to a fault.

A temporary fault on a power line, referred to as a system blink, can be caused in a number of ways, including: a bull rubbing on a guy wire, a tree branch hitting a line, a bird or animal touching an energized part and grounded part at

the same time, a lightning strike or other similar events. These actions can result in a quick blink and are the effect of devices on the system designed to protect the system's equipment from possible damage.

One such device is called an oil circuit recloser, or OCR. An OCR is similar to a circuit breaker in your home. However, it is designed so that when a disturbance occurs on the system, rather than tripping off, it will attempt to close three times before it remains open, causing an outage. You may have noticed your lights blinking three times before the power stays on or goes off. This is an indication that the OCR is attempting to reset itself and is the system's normal reaction to a disturbance.

Let's assume a tree limb comes in contact with a power line or transformer. If the limb remains on the line, the breaker opens and tries to reclose again. If the obstruction remains on the line after the third try, the breaker opens and does not reclose automatically. At this point, a cooperative lineworker must be dispatched to remove the obstruction and manually reset the breaker.

Occasionally, members experience blinks caused by an unknown source that may require extensive research and line evaluation to isolate and contain the disturbance. CECA refers to those as "nuisance blinks," and they are closely monitored in-house through the mapping, meter and SCADA systems in our dispatch center. "Our goal is to be proactive, and locate and repair the problem before it becomes a nuisance and is reported by our member," said



After a blink, if the indicator on a fault-finder remains white, left, it indicates to the technician that the fault is farther up the line. If the indicator turns red, right, the technician knows he has narrowed the fault to a smaller area and adjusts his search accordingly. The process is repeated until the fault is located and repaired.



CECA makes every effort to protect wildlife from encountering harm on our lines and equipment. In addition to design specs that minimize damage, we also use insulated bird wire and insulated bushing. However, birds, squirrels, snakes and even ants, as well as livestock can cause blinks.



In electric power distribution, oil circuit reclosers are used on overhead distribution systems to detect and interrupt momentary faults. Because many short circuits clear themselves, a recloser improves service continuity by automatically restoring power to the line after a momentary fault.

Shane Kinnamon, CECA dispatcher. Kinnamon and the rest of the dispatch department use Sensus, CECA's metering software program, to track how often a line or individual meter blinks.

A constant source of irritation to power lines are trees. CECA attempts to stay ahead of that problem through our tree-trimming practices, employing a full-time tree-trimming crew to clear trees that may contact power lines, creating blinks. This is an attempt to alleviate problems today and in the near future, but is a cyclical issue that must be addressed periodically.

Doug Erwin, CECA's director of member services, monitors the tree situation and the tree-trimming crews. "Tree trimming is an important issue the cooperative is addressing in a proactive manner," Erwin said. "Assistance from the members is greatly appreciated."

One way in which members can assist CECA is to be conscious of the type of tree you are planting, its size and growth potential, and the location of power lines when planting. The planting guide on this page is an excellent reference when deciding what type of tree to plant and where.

Tommy Patterson, CECA meter technician, has spent countless hours chasing blinks. "We get a call that a meter is blinking, and the first thing we do is look at our voltage charts," said Patterson. "It will tell us how many times a line or meter has blinked," he said that by looking at the maps and charts, you can sometimes narrow in on the area of the problem; however, the majority of the time, it is not that simple.

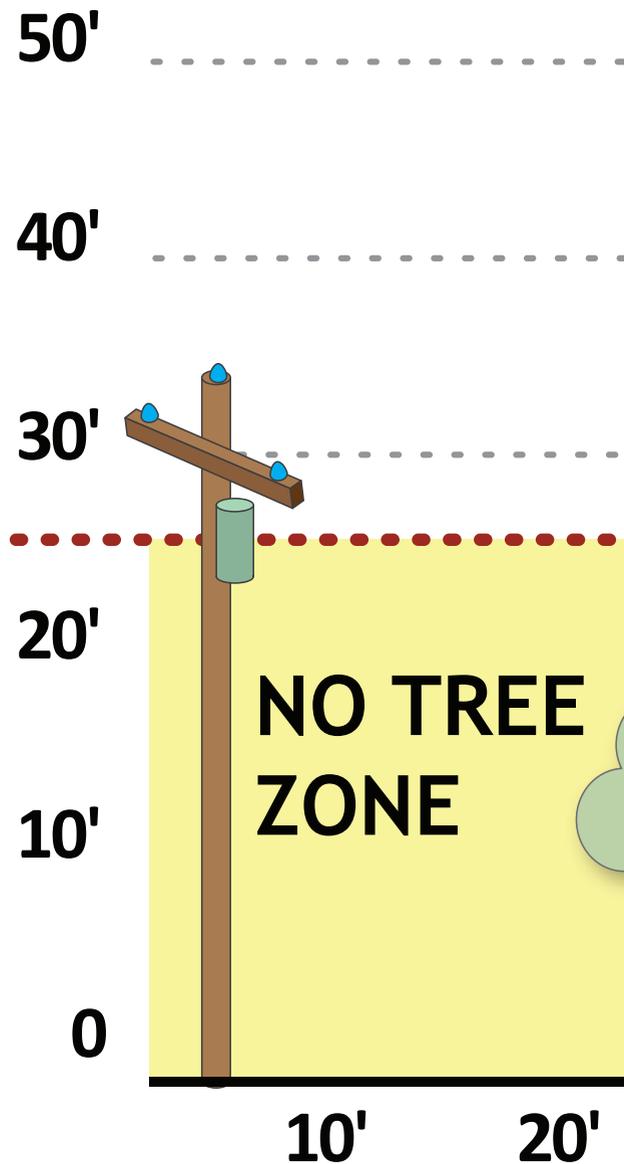
Some blinks, unseen to the naked eye, require the crews to use their tried-and-true method of placing fault-finders on the line and waiting for another blink. In these cases, CECA linemen generally begin the line evaluation by placing fault-finders on the line in question to begin narrowing down the possible locations of the disturbance. These fault-finders are designed to alert co-op personnel when a fault is detected on the line. If the device does not change during the next blink, CECA linemen can rule out that particular section of line and begin to narrow down the possibilities of where the fault lies.

Occasionally the fault is located quickly, allowing CECA linemen to eliminate the disturbance. But more often than not, it is like looking for a needle in a haystack and can take days or weeks to narrow it down to a small enough section of line and finally locate the tiny culprit. "In instances such as these," said Eddie Strube, CECA's director of outside operations, "we simply ask for your patience and understanding as we do all we can to alleviate the problem."

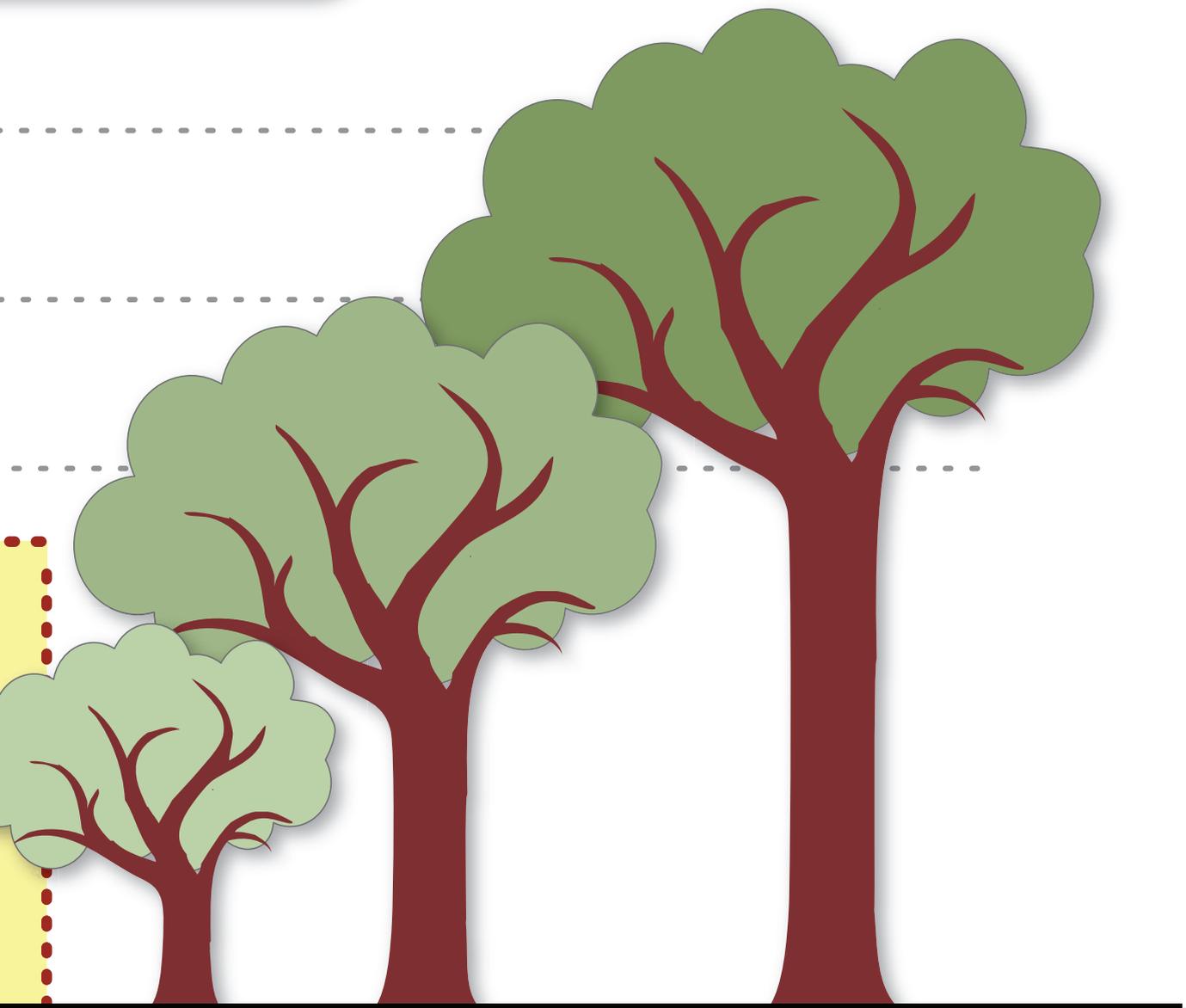
Although employees of CECA work tirelessly to avoid these issues, it is impossible to predict and prevent every obstacle that could possibly result in blinking lights or power outages. "While we monitor the system closely, we admit that we do not catch them all," Strube said. "If you are experiencing blinks and feel that we are not aware of them, we encourage your input. However, it is important to note that just because you do not see us in your area does not mean that we are not working on the problem. It is entirely possible that the line irritant is miles from your actual location."

To report blinks or a potential problem, contact CECA at 1-800-915-2533.

# Tree Planting



# g Guide



**30'**

**Small Tree  
Zone:** Trees  
less than 25'  
tall/spread  
at least 25'  
from lines.

**40'**

**Medium Tree  
Zone:** Trees  
25'-40' in  
height/spread  
at least 40'  
from lines.

**50'**

**60'**

**70'**

**Large Tree  
Zone:** Plant  
trees larger than  
40' in height/  
spread at least  
60' from lines.

# The Well-Connected Lineworker

**WHEN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES** were formed in the 1930s, technology was primitive by any standard: digging holes by hand, walking utility poles up into those holes and using ladders to service equipment. If you had to get in touch with the line crew, face-to-face communication was the only option.

Today, the lineworker rivals anyone when it comes to using technology to get the job done safely, quickly and accurately. Let's take a look at a few of the devices behind this evolution.

CECA sends its crews into the field with "ruggedized" tablets, which are loaded with work orders detailing each day's projects. This can include construction drawings, system maps and a bill of materials detailing the necessary equipment. Gone are the reams of paper and cumbersome map books of the past.

Equally important are GPS units. As more co-ops map their systems using coordinates, the GPS capability gets the crews where they need to be in a more efficient manner.

With a forward-looking infrared, or FLIR, camera, line crews can rapidly scan power lines and other equipment for "hot spots." A piece of distribution equipment about to fail often gets hot. Although not visible to the naked eye, it shows up clearly on a FLIR display. Scanning the system with a FLIR camera is a fast and accurate means of spotting a problem

before it becomes an outage.

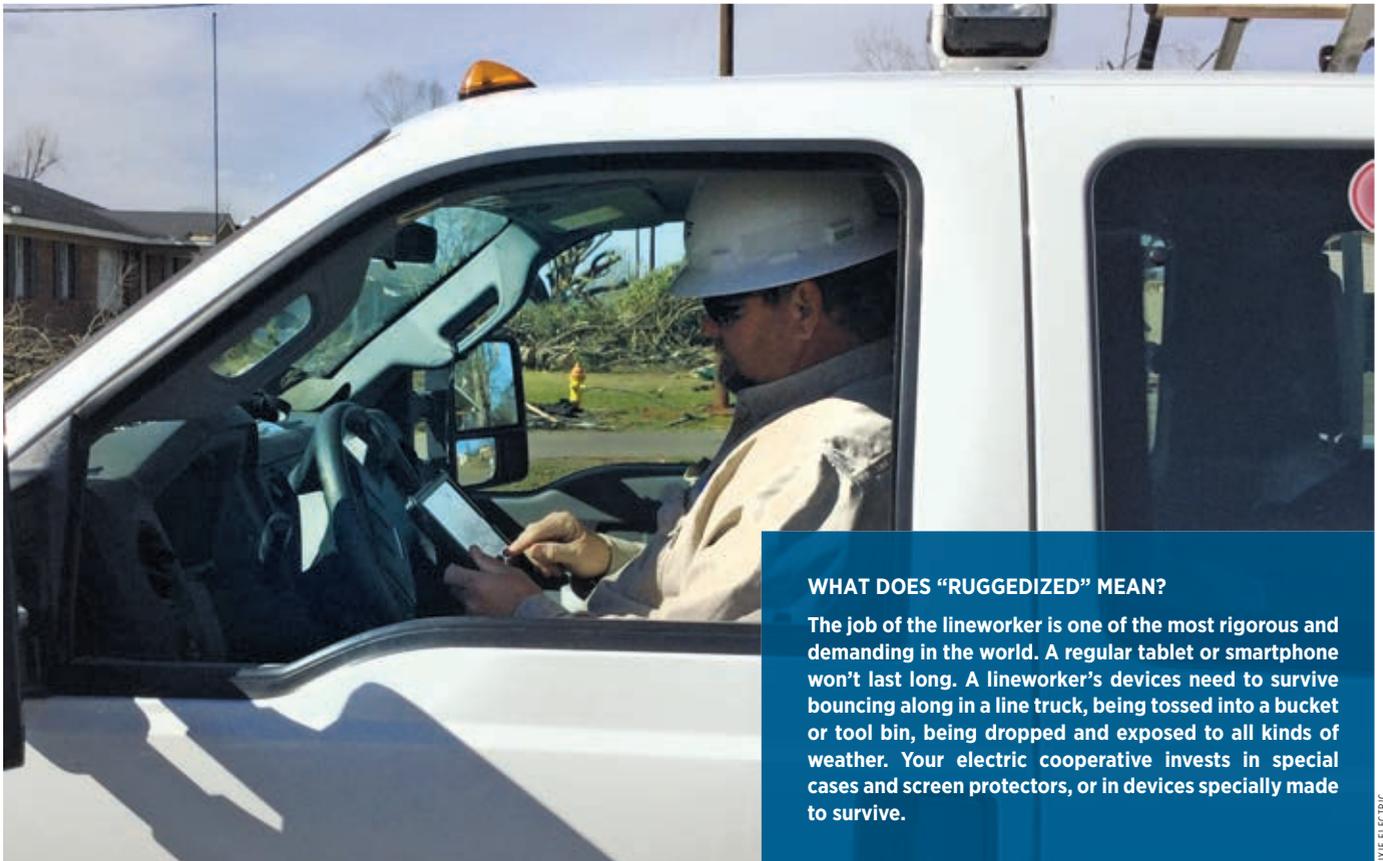
Co-ops are laser-focused on getting the lights back on as soon as possible after an outage. Key in this effort is the outage management system. This system builds on geo-tagged system maps of poles, sophisticated engineering models of the distribution system and an advanced metering system.

When an outage occurs, the system determines the exact location of the fault and the extent of the outage, then crews are sent to the spot to correct the problem. Part of this restoration effort is a vehicle tracking system that tells operations staff the exact location of each line truck. The crews closest to the outage are sent to restore power—and essential information can be accessed via tablets, depending upon the situation.

Sometimes an old-fashioned visual inspection is required. During daylight hours, it can be easy to see the cause of a problem. At night, however, lineworkers need a reliable source of light. That comes from powerful LED flashlights and truck-mounted lights. In the hands of a lineman, they provide an amazing view of the lines during the darkest of nights.

Technology now permeates every aspect of cooperative operations, allowing your electric co-op to constantly improve service. The well-connected lineworker is at the forefront of that technical evolution.

**Technology allows your electric cooperative to continue improving service for members across CECA service territory.**



## WHAT DOES "RUGGEDIZED" MEAN?

The job of the lineworker is one of the most rigorous and demanding in the world. A regular tablet or smartphone won't last long. A lineworker's devices need to survive bouncing along in a line truck, being tossed into a bucket or tool bin, being dropped and exposed to all kinds of weather. Your electric cooperative invests in special cases and screen protectors, or in devices specially made to survive.

DIXIE ELECTRIC

# This May, Plug Into Safety

**THIS MONTH, CECA WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A MOMENT** to reflect on the importance of safety. We all depend on electricity to power our lives, but accidents can happen when electricity is improperly used.

May is National Electrical Safety Month, and throughout the month, Comanche Electric Cooperative will work to raise awareness about the dangers of electricity. Visit our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/CECA.coop](http://www.facebook.com/CECA.coop), to see safety tips and reminders.

## Our Responsibility to You

We care deeply about the well-being of our members and encourage you to plug into safety especially this month. Thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or killed each year as a result of electrical fires, accidents and electrocution in their own homes, according to the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

To promote safety education in our local communities, we conduct safety programs for local schools and other groups. We provide electrical safety content in *Texas Co-op Power*, and we encourage the public to contact us if they see a downed

power line or any other type of dangerous electrical situation. We strive to provide our communities with safe, reliable and affordable electricity and serve as your trusted energy advisor, now and well into the future.

## Our Responsibility to Employees

It is no accident that safety is a top priority at your electric co-op. We are committed to a culture of safety that is integral to our daily operations. We participate in programs and follow specific guidelines and protocols for electrical safety that are considered leading practices. Our lineworkers are required to wear personal protective equipment at all times when on the job.

This includes special fire-resistant clothing that will self-extinguish, limiting potential injuries from burns and sparks. Insulated and rubber gloves are worn in tandem to protect from electrical shock. Our safety team regularly discusses important safety issues pertaining to work in our buildings and out in the field.

At CECA, we believe it is our duty and responsibility to raise awareness about the importance of electrical safety. Take a moment to plug into safety. Please visit [www.cecacoop](http://www.cecacoop) for tips about how to keep yourself and your loved ones safe.

**ELECTRIC CO-OPS**  
are committed to  
keeping members  
and employees **SAFE.**

May is National  
Electrical Safety Month

plug into safety



GMC00P | ISTOCK.COM

Comanche EC thanks all our veterans and wishes everyone a peaceful

## MEMORIAL DAY

Monday, May 29



VLADMAX | ISTOCK.COM

## Happy Mother's Day

from Comanche EC

Sunday, May 14