

BELFALLS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

P.O. Box 598 • Rosebud, TX 76570 • Phone (254) 583-7955

Our People Are Your Best Asset

I've said it before, and here I am saying it again, this time with even more conviction: Co-op employees are among the most committed, hardest working and compassionate human beings I've ever known. And after this past September's events, you're probably saying it, too.

Hurricane Katrina's devastating visit was fresh on our minds when we began preparing for a visit from her sister, Hurricane Rita. At the time of this writing, we are only beginning to realize the extent of Rita's damage in East Texas.

Reports from the affected cooperatives were hard to come by immediately after Rita made landfall on September 24, not just because those areas had lost power, but also because every co-op employee was working long hours under extreme conditions to bring much-needed electricity back to their member-owners. And in many cases those same employees had families waiting for them at their own homes without power, too.

Local people working for their neighbors—that's one of the perks you get by being a cooperative member. Your electric cooperative is locally owned and locally run. Your employees likely think of members as an extended family in many cases. These are the folks you see at the grocery store, school, church and community events. It's our most important value-added service.

And that service extends beyond our co-op's boundaries. Co-op employees in areas that weren't affected by the recent hurricanes rushed in to help our fellow electric co-ops get their lines repaired, rebuilt and back in service. Other co-op employees started food drives, sent supplies like bottled water and ice, loaned out equipment, provided shel-

ter, and helped in more ways than I can count. We were all in it together. It's as simple as cooperatives helping other cooperatives. As a matter of fact, cooperation among cooperatives is so important it is number six of the seven guiding principles that all co-ops adhere to:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership:

Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2. Democratic Member Control:

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership.

3. Members' Economic Participation:

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative.

4. Autonomy and Independence:

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members.

5. Education, Training and Information: Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives:

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7. Concern for Community: While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

The way I see it, those are seven more good reasons to be a cooperative member! A happy and safe New Year to you and yours from your friends—and neighbors—at your electric co-op!

IN EMERGENCIES

To report power failures after business hours, call:

(254) 583-7955

If no answer, call:

Kenneth Fikes (254) 583-4556

Larry Koslosky (254) 583-4555

Doug Matous (254) 583-2957

Bobby Skala (254) 583-7219

Jeremy Tepe (254) 583-2557

Jake Willis (254) 583-0191

Ernest Martin (254) 583-2219

Joe W. Marek (254) 583-4016

James Campbell . . . (254) 583-2786

USE HOLIDAY LIGHTS SAFELY



You know the name Thomas Edison. Meet his friend Edward Johnson, the first person to hand-wire red, white and blue light bulbs to string on an ever-green tree in 1882.

The ancestors of today's elaborate strings of holiday lights include candle-like lights, hand-painted bulbs and liquid-bubbling, 1960s-style lights.

Since their creation, holiday lights have brightened the holidays. Still, they can start fires and shock people who use them improperly. Keep your home lighted and safe this season. Some tips:

- Take your time to untangle and inspect each string of lights before plugging it in. Look for tears in the wires and socket. If a string appears to be in good condition, plug in the lights and wait 15 minutes before hanging them to make sure the wires don't melt or smoke.
- Use lights outdoors only if they are rated for outdoor use. All lights—indoor and outdoor—should carry an Underwriters Laboratories label.
- Avoid plugging too many lights into sockets in the same room. Spread your decorations all over the home so you don't overburden wall sockets.
- Attach lights to timers so they will automatically turn off when you go to bed. Unplug them before you leave the house.
- Keep your Christmas tree fresh by watering it regularly and locating it away from heating vents. Dry, brittle needles paired with hot lights are a fire hazard.
- Separate the lights from heavy decorations when you pack them away until next year. If you stack your decorations for storage, place the lights on top to avoid damaging them.

GIFT-GIVING IDEAS THAT SAVE ENERGY

Holiday gift-giving is heartwarming, full of surprises, and fun. It also creates an extra 1 million tons of waste between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve every year!

Why not consider giving presents that use less energy and create less trash? Some suggestions:

- Give energy-efficient small appliances like kitchen aids and grooming devices.
- Stuff stockings with compact fluorescent light bulbs.
- Look for clothes and products made from recycled materials.
- Bestow blankets, sweaters, socks or scarves to help keep warm and hold down heating costs.
- Create a handmade gift, like a basket of baked goods, a collection of your family's favorite recipes, a videotape of family members sharing their



favorite stories, or a wreath strung with holly and pine cones.

- Buy something you know the recipient will use: tickets to a ball game or concert, a gift certificate to the video store or grocery store, or a membership in a health club.

As you celebrate the season of joy and giving, give and use wisely. Who knows how far the benefits will spread!

Cool Leftovers Quickly

Your belly and the holiday turkey aren't the only things that will get stuffed this season. Your refrigerator and freezer are going to bulge with holiday leftovers.

Keep treats tasty and safe to eat by quickly storing them someplace cool. Here are some tips:

- Refrigerate leftovers within two hours after the meal.
- Choose small containers that will let the food cool quickly.
- Eat refrigerated extras within four days after preparation. Frozen leftovers, however, stay good for up to a month. Thaw them in the microwave, then heat thoroughly.

Good news: Your refrigerator is most efficient when it's full. Still, leave enough room between items for cool air to circulate.