

BELFALLS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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

EMPOWERMENT AND TRUST— THAT'S THE CO-OP WAY

With each passing day, the news carries stories of how companies are getting bigger and more distant from the people they serve. Many large electric utilities have closed local service offices and moved out of town. Air travel—already tough for rural Texans—gets more frustrating every year as airlines merge and limit options for consumers.

From the big airlines to the big utilities, mergers today are being driven by a rush to stay ahead of the competition. “Get bigger or get eaten” seems to be the mindset in most corporate boardrooms today.

Lost in those boardroom debates is the consumer. And that isn't right.

Some in the electric utility industry are dangerously close to turning the benefits that choice can provide into a myth as average consumers, discarded in the spoils of mega-mergers, are ignored or left behind.

Electric cooperatives, however, have been offering consumers a real choice from the day we opened our doors. The consumer gets to decide how the cooperative is run and what services it offers.

It is a choice that empowers consumers with a network of private, independent utilities focused on their needs. Local electric cooperatives are community advocates. Through a unified cooperative network that reaches 70 percent of the nation's landmass and 83 percent of its counties, cooperatives help and rely on each other to meet the needs of their local consumers and communities.

From providing energy service to economic development efforts aimed at closing the prosperity gap in rural areas, America's electric cooperatives already empower their consumers with choice.

Under the watchful eye of locally elected boards of directors, the country's nearly 1,000 electric cooperatives are focused on delivering high-quality, reliable and affordable service every day to the people and businesses they serve.

And we're not limited to just electric service. Whenever our members tell us there is a need for additional services, we work to find a way to help—you would be hard-pressed to find one of those mega-utilities that would even bother. Our record of accomplishment cannot be matched in our 67 years of service to our communities and members.

Just watch us succeed in the coming years. Already new cooperatives in New York City and California are providing new choice and options for consumers where none existed before. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

In the future, more and more consumers will make the cooperative choice to empower themselves in a competitive marketplace dominated by a few large corporations.

The electric cooperative choice offers consumers a way to take a seat at the table in a marketplace that will otherwise ignore them. It's an easy choice to make.

Empowerment and trust—that is what the cooperative difference is all about.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

Belfalls Electric Cooperative, Inc. is the recipient of federal financing assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which provide that no person in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability shall be excluded from participation in, admission or access to, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organization's programs or activities.

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondis-

crimination compliance efforts is Joe W. Marek, general manager. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from, and/or file a written complaint with this organization; or the Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, Stop 1510, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-1510; or the Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410; or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

MAY IS NATIONAL ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

According to a recent estimate, approximately three people die each day in residential electricity-related incidents in the home. A great many of those are related to problems with outlets, power cords and extension cords. To help reduce those numbers, the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) and your electric cooperative encourage consumers to “plug into electrical safety.”

Following are some tips to help keep you safe:

Outlets

- Have a qualified, licensed electrician inspect your outlets and electrical system.
- Plugs should fit fully and securely into outlets, but should not be forced.
- Make sure there are safety covers on all unused outlets to protect children.
- If an outlet or switch wall plate is hot or discolored by heat, shut off

the circuit and have it professionally checked.

- Have additional outlets installed where you need them instead of relying on extension cords and power strips.

Power cords and extension cords

- Check that all electrical items, including extension cords, are certified by a nationally recognized independent testing lab, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), CSA Group, ETL and MET Labs.
- Extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis; unplug and safely store them after every use.
- Do not place power cords and extension cords in high traffic areas or under carpets, rugs or furniture, and never nail or staple them to the wall or baseboard.
- Never remove the ground pin (the third prong) to make a three-prong plug fit a two-prong outlet.
- Make sure extension cords are

properly rated for their intended use, indoor or outdoor, and meet or exceed the power needs of the appliance or tool being used.

- All electrical items and extension cords should be kept in good condition. If damage is discovered, take the item to an authorized repair center or cut the cord and dispose of it safely.

GFCIs and AFCIs

- Make sure your home includes ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs), which prevent accidental electrocution by shutting off the circuit if they sense a “leak” of current off the circuit, and arc-fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs), which help prevent fires by shutting off the circuit if they sense arcing where electricity has to jump a gap. Consider installing GFCIs and AFCIs on all circuits except those serving major appliances, which may cause nuisance tripping.
- Test your GFCIs monthly and after every major electrical storm.

Prepare Your Central Air Conditioner for Summer

Spring is a good time for maintaining your air conditioner. If you keep the coils of your air conditioner clean, it can improve your comfort and reduce your electricity costs this summer.

Start by inspecting the outdoor condensing unit. The large outdoor coil—it looks like a car radiator—is where heat is dissipated from your home. The fan in the condensing unit has to move a whole lot of air through the coil, so make sure that there are no airflow restrictions around the condensing unit. Cut nearby grass, shrubs and tree branches so they are at least 3 feet away at the sides and 5 feet away overhead.

Most condenser coils are loaded with pollen and dust even when you can't see it. The longest a condenser should go without cleaning is two or three years, depending on how much it operates during the summer. If your cooling season is four months

or more, annual cleaning is an excellent idea. Turn off the power to the unit, and remove any visible grass and lint from the fins and louvers with an old hairbrush or whisk broom. Then put on a pair of rubber gloves and spray biodegradable outdoor coil cleaner into the coil. Wait five or ten minutes and flush the coil with a gentle water spray.

Your indoor coil might also need cleaning, even though you can't easily see it. If your air conditioner's filter or blower is dirty, then your indoor coil is probably dirty, too. Cleaning the indoor coil is usually a job for professionals, unless you have easy access, as with a central heat pump. To help keep your indoor coil clean, make sure your filter fits well, is easy to change, and that you change it regularly. Have your air conditioning contractor make improvements to the filter, if needed, so it will be easy to get to. Change

the filter often to help keep your indoor air conditioner coil clean and reduce energy consumption.

IN EMERGENCIES

These are telephone numbers to call to report outages after business hours and on weekends and holidays.

Kenneth Fikes.....(254) 583-4556

Larry Koslosky(254) 583-4555

Doug Matous(254) 583-2957

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