

What You Can Do in an Outage

Power outage FAQ for members



MESSAGE FROM CEO AND GENERAL MANAGER RICK HAILE

POWER OUTAGES ARE A FACT OF LIFE—a disruptive one for co-op employees and members alike. In last month's issue, we described the steps that cooperatives go through to restore power, but our thoughtful members often wonder what they should do when an outage occurs. Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative has the answers to some of our members' frequently asked questions.

Q: Does the cooperative automatically know when I have lost electric service?

A: Advanced meters can send outage information to the cooperative; however, we ask that when you have a power outage, you call the co-op to report it.

Q: What can I do to help get my power back on quickly?

A: First, check your fuses or circuit breakers, making sure that they have not blown or tripped. Next, call the co-op office and have your account number ready. Let us know if you saw or heard anything, such as sparks, loud noises, or trees or limbs on the power lines. This will help our field crews find the problem more quickly.

Q: How do you decide whose power to restore first?

A: The outage restoration process begins at the substation where power is supplied into our distribution system. After these repairs have been made, crews work on the lines serving the greatest number of members until electricity is restored to all main lines. Then crews begin repairing lines to individual members.

Q: Why can't you tell me how long it will take to restore my power?

A: Each outage is a result of different circumstances that can make restoration times difficult to predict. During the power restoration process, crews encounter factors that affect the time it takes to find the problem and make the necessary repairs.

Q: Why would a crew pass by my house without restoring power?

A: Our No. 1 goal is restoring power to as many members as quickly, safely and efficiently as possible. If you see a service crew pass by without stopping, it could be because crews are working to restore main lines; responding to an emergency; or going past your location to access lines and substations serving your area.

Q: Why does my neighbor have power, but I do not?

A: Who is affected by an outage depends upon the cause and location of the problem. If your neighbor has electricity but you do not, it's likely that you're on separate lines. Also, make sure your power is not out because of a tripped breaker at your home.

Q: Is a generator safe to use when I lose power?

A: A generator can be a wonderful tool during an outage, but it can also be extremely dangerous if used improperly. Without a transfer switch, a generator is a fire hazard if it's on line when electricity is restored. Improper connection of a generator also endangers service crews working to restore power. If used without ventilation, generators can cause deadly carbon monoxide poisoning.

Q: What about members with special medical needs?

A: In case of extended outages, members who require electricity for health care should have an emergency backup plan, such as moving to an alternative location, using a portable generator or installing battery backup for medical equipment. Please call our offices at 1-800-840-2957 if you have a critical medical need for electricity, or if you have questions about outages.



STUDENTS:

Deadline Approaches for DC Trip

APPLY NOW FOR THE Government-in-Action Youth Tour, an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., sponsored by Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative.

Youth Tour, held June 7-16 this year, is an action-packed trip with approximately 125 of your peers and chaperones from across Texas. You'll visit the Washington National Cathedral, Arlington National Cemetery, Smithsonian Institution, memorials and more. Activities include seeing a performance at the Kennedy Center and meeting elected officials.

Eligible entrants must:

- ▶ Be a sophomore, junior or senior;
- ▶ Be a dependent of a Heart of Texas EC member with permanent resident status in the co-op's service area; and
- ▶ Submit an application and essay on the history of electric cooperatives.

Applications must arrive at the co-op's office by February 15. They can be submitted in person; by email to ronposton@hotec.coop; or by fax to (254) 840-4250.

Visit youthtour.org and texasyouthtour.com for more information, or contact Ron Poston at 1-800-840-2957 or ronposton@hotec.coop.

Power Line Safety Tips

HERE'S A FACT YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW: You don't have to touch a power line to be in danger; high-voltage electricity can jump to anyone who gets too close. Fortunately, there are many ways to stay safe around power lines, whether they're in the air or on the ground.

Look up before raising a ladder or pole to make sure that it will not come within 10 feet of any power lines. Use wooden or fiberglass ladders outdoors. Metal ladders conduct electricity.

Contact Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative immediately to report downed power lines, which can carry an electric current strong enough to cause serious injury or even death. Electricity tends to move from a high-voltage zone to a low-voltage zone—and it could make that journey through your body.

You should assume that all downed power lines are live. You cannot tell just by looking at a power line whether it is energized. Move at least 10 feet away from it and any nearby object it is touching, such as a fence or a tree limb. The ground around power lines also might be energized.

The proper way to move away from a downed line is to shuffle away with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times. This will minimize the potential for an electric shock.

If you see someone who is in direct or indirect contact with a downed line, do not touch the person—or you could become the next victim. Call 911 and your cooperative for help.

Do not attempt to move a downed power line or anything else in contact with it by using an object such as a broom or stick. Nonconductive materials, including wood or cloth, can conduct electricity if even slightly wet.

Be careful not to touch or step in water near a downed power line.

Do not drive over downed power lines. If your vehicle comes into contact with a downed power line while you are inside, stay in the vehicle. Honk your horn to summon help but warn others to stay away. If you must leave your vehicle because it is on fire, jump out with both feet together and avoid simultaneous contact with both the vehicle and the ground. Shuffle away from the vehicle.

Never drive over downed power lines or step in water near them.



Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative

Operating in Bell, Bosque, Coryell, Falls, Hamilton, McLennan and Milam counties

CEO AND GENERAL MANAGER

Rick Haile

DIRECTORS

Garland Cook, District 1
DeWayne Draeger, District 6
Kermit Dreyer, District 7
Paul Edge, District 2
Dan Foster, District 9
Kenneth Hollas, District 3
Bobby Nawara, District 4
Allen Shows, District 5
Larry Stock, District 8



Contact Us

McGREGOR OFFICE

(254) 840-2871 local

1-800-840-2957 toll-free

1111 S. Johnson Drive • P.O. Box 357
McGregor, TX 76657

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Drive-thru 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

ROSEBUD OFFICE

(254) 231-0444 local

1-800-840-2957 toll-free

159 Loop 265 • P.O. Box 598
Rosebud, TX 76570

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

CREDIT/DEBIT CARD PAYMENTS

Online at hotec.coop

By phone at 1-855-399-2688

FIND US ON THE WEB

hotec.coop



Operation Round Up

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



OPERATION ROUND UP IS A VOLUNTARY PROGRAM in which Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative members' electric bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar every month. The additional pennies, nickels and dimes are added to a special fund to be distributed back to local community organizations. The Operation Round Up Trust Board, composed of HOTEK members, meets once every quarter to review applications and decide how the funds are to be allocated.

The next scheduled board meeting is March 6. Applications for funding must be received by February 20. Nonprofit organizations interested in applying for funds should visit our website at hotec.coop or call 1-800-840-2957 to request an application.

RECENT OPERATION ROUND UP RECIPIENTS INCLUDE:

Davilla Community Center	\$2,500
China Spring Tabernacle	\$2,500
Economic Opportunities Advancement Corp.	\$2,500
Hill Country Community Action Association	\$2,500
Valley Mills Public Library	\$2,500
Valley Mills Youth Baseball Softball Association	\$1,000
McGregor ISD Education Foundation	\$500
McGregor Youth Vocational Ag Booster Club	\$500
Midway ISD Education Foundation	\$500
Oglesby FFA Buyers Club	\$500

Statement of Nondiscrimination

HEART OF TEXAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE is an equal-opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a civil rights complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call 1-866-632-9992 to request the form. You also may write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, by fax to (202) 690-7442 or by email to program.intake@usda.gov. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.



Check CO Alarm During Heating Season

IT'S STILL COLD OUTSIDE, and all your windows and doors are closed. This makes heating season a perfect time to make sure the carbon monoxide detectors in your house are working properly. If you don't have any, it's time to install them.

Carbon monoxide is a potential byproduct of burning fossil fuels including gas and oil. It's colorless and odorless, but it's potently toxic and can cause everything from dizziness to death.

Stay safe this winter by taking a few precautions:

- ▶ Install a carbon monoxide alarm outside of every bedroom and one on every level of your house.
- ▶ Replace batteries in the alarm at least twice a year. While you're at it, change the batteries in your smoke alarms, too.
- ▶ If you notice any warning signs that carbon monoxide is at harmful levels in your home—the air is stuffy and stale; condensation appears on windows; burner flames turn yellow; pilot lights flutter or extinguish—turn appliances off and open the windows. Call a natural gas contractor to inspect the equipment.
- ▶ Properly maintain your furnace, boiler vents and chimneys.



Power Tip

A crackling fire in the hearth warms the house, but don't let it heat up your electric bill! Caulk around the fireplace hearth, use a fireplace insert and keep the damper closed when no fire is burning.

Distributed Generation 101

Know the rules before you invest in DG power

DISTRIBUTED GENERATION, or DG, refers to the small-scale production of electricity on-site near the end user. It is a concept Thomas Edison developed to produce electricity for his own use before the modern development of centralized power plants, which produce large quantities of electricity for many customers.

Prompted by concerns about the environment to interest in cutting electricity costs, Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative members continue to express an interest in renewable energy and in energy conservation. There has been a resurgence of DG, especially in the form of wind turbines and rooftop solar panels.

Heart of Texas EC supports and encourages wind, solar and other DG projects. Producing “green” power is important to us all. Installing geothermal heating and air conditioning or switching to an air-source heat pump can drastically decrease your electric consumption.

But not everyone is interested in or can afford to install DG equipment.

“It is just as green to reduce electric consumption as it is to install DG equipment,” said HOTEK Member Services Manager Ron Poston.

Options for energy conservation can include simple techniques such as wrapping your water heater with a thermal cover or investing in a solar clothes dryer (hanging your clothes out to dry).

More involved procedures include upgrading the insulation in your home, installing an air-filtration system or adding roof vents if none exist. If you are interested in more ways to conserve electricity, whether for the sake of your wallet or to reduce your global impact, visit our website at hotec.coop for useful tips.

Work With Your Cooperative

Before investing money in DG and expecting to receive credit for the energy you don’t use, there are a number of considerations you should take into account.

The installation of renewable DG equipment must be approved by the co-op during every phase of the project, from beginning to end. An approved interconnect must follow certain safety and electric reliability guidelines essential to the protection of co-op members and employees. The guidelines also ensure that the electric distribution system’s performance is not jeopardized.

You can familiarize yourself with these requirements by downloading the document *Distributed Generation Procedures and Guidelines Manual for Members* from hotec.coop. The guidelines also are available at the co-op offices in Rosebud and McGregor. This manual provides the procedures, guidelines and requirements to interconnect a DG facility.

Please be aware that there are scammers and dishonest installers hoping to take advantage of unsuspecting consumers. Before you sign a contract, please call HOTEK and verify that the company you are dealing with is reputable.



PLX Meter Upgrade Continues

HEART OF TEXAS Electric Cooperative strives to maintain and improve the quality of electric services for our members.

With this in mind, HOTEK began installing a state-of-the-art advanced meter-reading system in late 2014. The PLX meters replace the “turtle” meter system installed in 1996. The installation and transition to this new technology has gone well and is progressing on schedule. All HOTEK substations have been commissioned, and the meter deployment is approximately 55 percent complete.

The PLX meters from Landis+Gyr allow the cooperative to perform several functions remotely, such as reading meters quickly, monitoring voltage, and reconnecting or disconnecting power at some locations.

In addition, these meters provide more accurate information about outages and restoration times, allow for faster response times to outages and ultimately lead to fewer outages. Improved power quality and more efficient power distribution also will help keep costs down for members.

Deployment updates will continue to be posted on our website, Facebook and in *Texas Co-op Power*.

If you have any questions, contact our offices at the following numbers:
 McGregor, (254) 840-2871;
 Rosebud, (254) 231-0444; or
 toll-free, 1-800-840-2957.





The Texas Snake Man, Jackie Bibby, will perform during the Oglesby Rattlesnake Hunt.

Oglesby Rattlesnake Hunt

OGLESBY LIONS CLUB'S 48TH ANNUAL RATTLESNAKE HUNT will be held February 25–26. Live demonstrations by world-famous snake handler Jackie Bibby will be presented both days. Saturday's demonstration begins at 10 a.m., with another demonstration Sunday at 11 a.m.

Amateur snake-hunter registration begins Saturday morning and ends at 10 a.m. Sunday. Professional hunters are not allowed to register.

Prizes will be awarded for snakes caught, including the most weight, shortest snake and longest snake. General admission for spectators is \$5.

The Oglesby Lions Club sponsors the hunt, but it is a communitywide event. Oglesby is about 8 miles east of McGregor on FM 1996.

The Oglesby Volunteer Fire Department will sell barbecue, and the Oglesby 4-H Club will host a concession stand. There will be arts and crafts booths and entertainment throughout the day at the community center.

Booth spaces are available for vendors to rent. For more information on rentals or event details, contact Charles Walter at (254) 744-7855.

HOTEC To Attend Home Shows

Come meet your co-op's member service representatives!

HEART OF TEXAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE will staff booths at two area home shows this month. Members will have an opportunity to visit with our member services representatives, pick up a few tips on energy efficiency, and learn about two opportunities for our younger members: the Government-in-Action Youth Tour essay contest and HOTEC scholarships.

The Heart of Texas Builders Association Home Products Show is held annually at the Extraco Events Center in Waco. This year's show will be held Saturday and Sunday, February 11–12. Show times are Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m., and Sunday 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

The Bell County Expo Center in Belton will host their annual Home and Garden Show Saturday and Sunday, February 25–26. Show times are Saturday 10 a.m.–6 p.m. and Sunday 12–5 p.m.

Scholarship Deadline Is March 1

ATTENTION, HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES:

Do you need money for college? If so, we have an opportunity for you.

Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative will award five \$1,000 scholarships to local high school graduates. Applications are being accepted now. The application deadline is March 1.

HOTEC takes great pride in our local schools and is excited to take part in furthering area students' educations.

To qualify for a Heart of Texas EC scholarship, a student must have graduated high school within two years of the application deadline and reside in the household of a Heart of Texas EC member. The recipient must be enrolled full or part time in an accredited college or technical school.

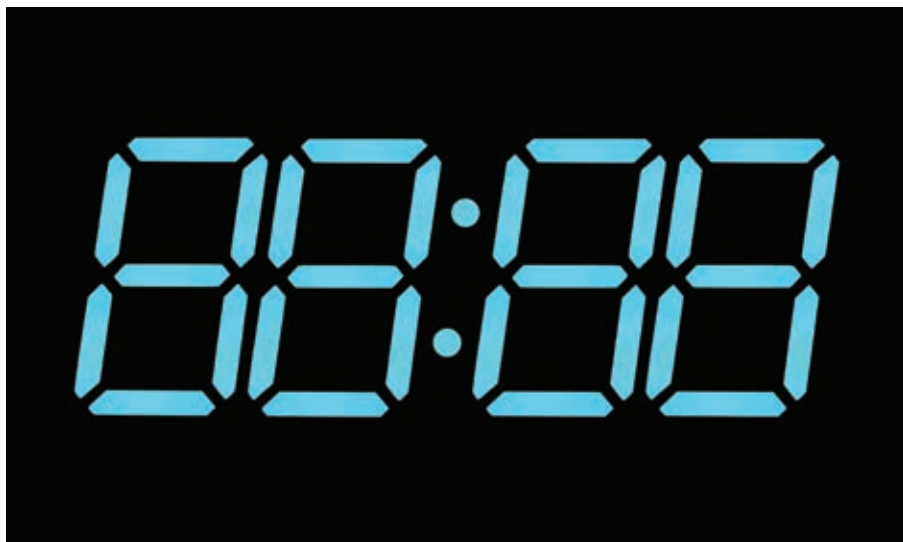
Each scholarship will be divided between the fall and spring semesters, at \$500 respectively. The funds must be used within one year of issuance.

Applications must be received by the Rosebud or McGregor office no later than March 1 to be considered for the scholarship.

For an application and a complete list of qualifications, visit HOTEC online at hotec.coop, click on Programs, then on Youth Tour/Scholarships. For more information, contact Ron Poston at 1-800-840-2957.



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Electric cooperatives work hard to reduce the number of blinks and outages at work and home.

Don't Blink

THE MANY ELECTRIC DEVICES all around us today register power interruptions that went unnoticed years ago. Before digital clocks, some people never noticed power interruptions. Now these aggravating events seem to happen more often. In reality, they are not more frequent; we are just more aware of them.

Some power quality problems begin in the home or business. A spike (or transient surge) can occur in a building's wiring upon startup of electric motors, such as those on a refrigerator or air conditioner. Other problems might come from faulty wiring, loose connections, poor grounding or inadequate wire size. These conditions can cause partial power, momentary interruptions (blinks), dimming or too-bright lights.

Most times, having the power interrupted is better than the alternative of having it go out completely. Power interruptions are most often caused by exterior devices installed by Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative to protect the electrical system. These devices are called reclosers.

Reclosers essentially act like the circuit breakers in your home, with one major difference: They reset themselves after breaking the circuit. The intent is that after a tree touches the line—or other problem causes the recloser to open—the device will reset itself, and power will once again flow down the line. If the problem has cleared the line, power will stay on.

If the problem still exists, the recloser will operate again. After trying three times, most reclosers are designed to stay open until the problem is fixed and the device is manually reset. The opening and closing of the recloser is almost instantaneous and is often not even noticed, except by electronic devices such as digital clocks.

The alternative to using a recloser is to use fuses on each line. Although greater use of fuses would result in fewer brief power interruptions, it also would create more extended outages, as a fuse can only operate once.

Heart of Texas EC is continually evaluating our power lines to identify potential problems so that blinks and outages can be avoided. We will never be able to prevent all blinks, but please let us know if your home or business experiences an excessive number of power interruptions or other power problems, so that we can investigate the issue to better serve you.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH



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Honey Cheese Bacon Chicken

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup honey
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Dijon or creole mustard
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon lemon pepper, or more to taste
- 4 slices bacon, cut in half
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella or provolone cheese

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Apply cooking spray to a metal baking dish. Pound chicken breast halves to an even thickness.
2. Mix together honey, mustard and lemon pepper in a small dish. Place the breast halves in baking dish and drizzle evenly with the honey-mustard mixture.
3. Bake chicken 25 minutes, then top each breast half with 2 bacon pieces and increase oven heat to 400. Continue baking about 7–8 minutes.
4. Top with cheese and bake another 3 minutes or until chicken juices run clear, bacon is crisp and cheese is bubbly. Serve with brown or white rice.

This recipe won the *Five Ingredients or Fewer* contest in September 2015. Submit your *Texas Gulf Shrimp* recipe to *Texas Co-op Power* by February 10 for a chance to win \$100 and be published. Visit texascooppower.com/contests.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at
TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM