



*Big Country Electric
Cooperative, Inc.*

MEMBERGRAM

February 2018

In the Works at BCEC

2017 was a very busy year for us. 958 work orders were completed between our three offices: A work order can be anything from setting a new security light, building new service to a house, or building 30 miles of new line or even larger projects. We finished out the year with no storm damage to report for December, which truly made Christmas a Silent Night for us!

2018 is shaping up to be busy, and we're thankful to see some signs of economic growth in our area.

Oilfield activity seems to be increasing system-wide, electric service is consistently being requested for us to serve new wells and reconnect wells which were shut down when the price of oil dropped. We have steadily seen a few new homes connect to our lines each month, which is a reassuring sign as well for the economy of our area, the co-op, and you – the co-op member.

Our planned maintenance projects for the year are well underway.

- Primary Utility Services, our contractor, is about 30% complete with a one hundred pole changeout project north of Rotan. These poles have been recommended for preventive replacement by our inspector due to signs of wear and tear; we are proactively replacing these to hopefully head-off outages. We routinely inspect and perform similar replacement projects throughout our system.
- System maintenance on Longworth substation, feeder #3 is complete and should help improve reliability north of Sweetwater.

- Snyder crews are replacing approximately 30 poles that have been identified as defective.

While preventive maintenance does require much forward planning and careful budgeting, it is a wise investment to improve the integrity of our system. No system is ever perfect, and Mother Nature is a force to be reckoned with but, considering the strong storms which frequently blow through our area and our low number of downed poles, we see proof that investing in maintenance on your behalf has more than paid for itself. Maintenance

is much cheaper than restoration.

Most notably in new construction, BCEC crews are rebuilding service to the Paint Creek School, which is constructing

additions to their facilities. BCEC will re-route power lines behind the school, out of parking lots and away from traffic.

Our unaudited billing and financial reports show that 237,297,201 kilowatt hours were sold to BCEC members in 2017, which is a slight (5%) increase from 2016. These financial reports and complete billing and accounting data will be thoroughly reviewed by outside auditors later this month. We engage in this process annually prior to reporting data to the membership at the annual meeting.

Each month, BCEC leadership – both the board and management – are reviewing internal policies and procedures to improve safety, quality, and efficiency in operations and service to you.



**SAVE THE DATE: ANNUAL MEETING
THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 2018**

THE COLISEUM, SNYDER

Roby (325) 776-2244 • Snyder (325) 573-3161 • Stamford (325) 773-3684



**Big Country Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

Monday - Thursday 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Friday 7:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Call Toll Free: 1-888-662-2232

Roby: (325) 776-2244 Stamford: (325) 773-3684

Snyder (325) 573-3161

Please call or text your local BCEC office report power outages!

www.bigcountry.coop



We're mobile!

Access your BCEC account anytime,
from anywhere!

bigcountry.coop - click on the Smart Hub icon.

Download the free SmartHub app from the App Store or Google play and have access to pay your bill, view usage, request service and more!



Ask about our partnerships with:



Call 811 at least 2 working days before you dig.
Visit www.texas811.org for more information.

Rural Development Assistance Available Through BCEC

Big Country Electric Cooperative, Inc. has a limited amount of funds available for low-interest loans to qualified applicants to stimulate rural development. Applicant does not have to be a member of Big Country Electric Cooperative. Please contact Sarah McLen at smclen@bigcountry.coop for details.



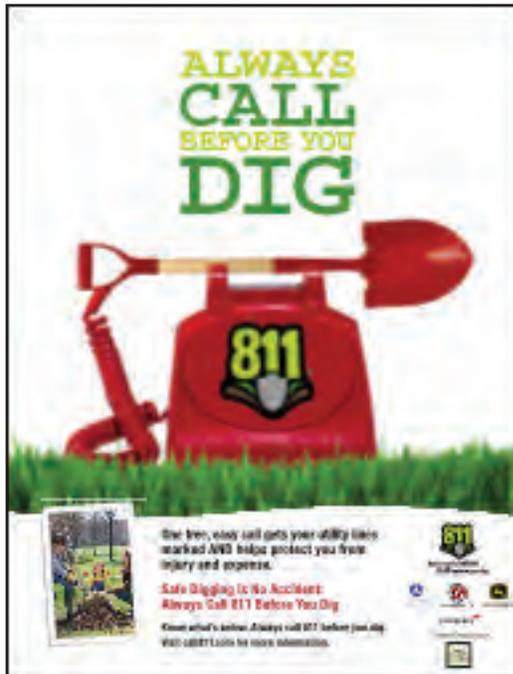
*BCEC is an Equal
Opportunity Lender*

Agricultural Tax Exemptions - In order to claim an exemption from Texas sales and use taxes on electricity and other items used in agricultural and timber operations, you are required to provide us with a registration number on Texas Agriculture Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certification Form 01-924. All water wells should be exempt if used for irrigation or watering livestock. The Texas Comptroller's Office issues the registration number and those wanting to claim the exemption must fill out an application. Registration numbers must be renewed every four years. Applicants can request a paper application to mail in by calling 1-800-252-5555 or download a copy from the comptroller's website, www.getreadytexas.org. The generic exemption certificate, Form 01-339, cannot be used to claim the agricultural exemption. Accounts that do not have the new required form on file will be subject to taxation.

Commercial Tax Exemption Records - A completed and signed exemption form is required for each commercial tax exempt account. Accounts that do not have current exemptions on file will be changed to taxable accounts. Any refunds for taxes must be claimed from the State of Texas. Thank you for your help.



For complete information about our Operation Round Up program or to opt out of participation, visit bigcountry.coop and click on the Operation Round Up icon.



Spring is an optimal time for landscaping masterpieces, perhaps your dream project. If any of your projects require setting posts--remember to call 811. Underground utilities, such as gas lines, can be thrust away from turning a shovel. Play it safe by dialing 811. Your call will be routed to the appropriate utility planning to dig and what underground utilities will be notified. In a few days, a locator will mark underground lines, pipe, and cables in paint so you'll know where to dig. Although many homeowners are familiar with "Call Before You Dig" signs, a national survey shows that only 30% of lines marked before starting a project. The National Alliance (CGA), a federal prevention industry program, states that a utility line is damaged every 10 minutes without first dialing

What do these things have in common?



**SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINES
ARE APPROACHING!**

BCEC Academic Scholarship	2.28.18
Golden Spread Directors Memorial Scholarship	3.11.18
Texas Rural Electric Women's Association (TREWA) Scholarship	3.15.18

visit bigcountry.coop and click on Scholarships for information and applications.

Too Busy to Think about your Air Filters?

Failing to change your air filters can be an expensive mistake. We understand you're not at the top of your to-do list, so take advantage of our Filter Easy program. The right size of air filters delivered right to you automatically. When your filters are delivered, you know it's time for a change!



We've Partnered With
Filter Easy.

Receive Automatic Air Filter Deliveries Right To Your Door.

Never forget to change your home air filters again!

Try It Free

Visit our website or filtereasy.com/bigcountry

Know what's below: Dial 811 BEFORE you Dig

...of year to dream up and achieve your landscaping
...you're planning to build a new deck to enjoy nice evenings.
...require digging--such as planting trees or shrubs, or
...er to dial 811 first.

...such as buried gas, water and electric lines, can be a shovel
...ng a fall project into a disaster.

...1 to find out where utility lines run on your property.
...to a local "one call" center. Tell the operator where you're
...at type of work you will be doing, and affected local

...will arrive to designate the approximate location of any
...es and cables. These areas will be marked with flags or
...at's below. Then the safe digging can begin.

...owners tackling do-it-yourself digging projects are aware of
...services, the majority doesn't take advantage of the service.
...ed that only 50 percent of homeowners called to have their
...rting digging projects, according to the Common Ground
...ally mandated group of underground utility and damage
...professionals. CGA data also shows that an underground
...every six minutes in the U.S. because someone decided to
...811.

Even simple tasks like installing a new mailbox post can damage utility lines, which can disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, harm diggers and potentially result in fines and repair costs.

Never assume the location or depth of underground utility lines. There's no need: the 811 service is free, prevents the inconvenience of having utilities interrupted and can help you avoid serious injury. For more information about local services, visit www.call811.com.

Safe Electricity is the safety outreach program of the Energy Education Council, a non-profit organization with more than 400 electric cooperative members and many others who share the mission of educating the public about electrical safety and energy efficiency.

CGA is a member-driven association of 1,500 individuals, organizations and sponsors in every facet of the underground utility industry. Established in 2000, CGA is committed to saving lives and preventing damage to underground infrastructure by promoting effective damage prevention practices. CGA has established itself as the leading organization in an effort to reduce damages to underground facilities in North America through shared responsibility among all stakeholders.

Space Heater Safety Tips

Space heaters are a great way to warm specific rooms in your home without having to crank up the thermostat, but using space heaters doesn't come without risk! Use the tips below to keep your home safe.

DO: Plug your space heater directly into the wall outlet.

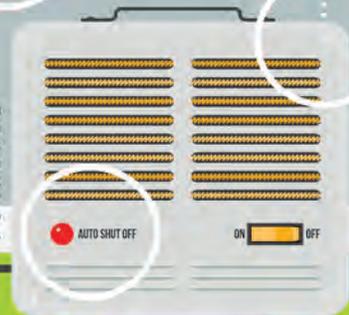


DO: Keep your space heater in low-moisture rooms.

DO: Keep your space heater at a safe distance (at least 3 feet) from kids, pets and flammable items.



DO: Buy a unit with an automatic shutoff in case the unit tips over, or you forget to shut it off.



DO: Always follow the directions and take a broken space heater to a qualified appliance service center.



DON'T: Leave your space heater unattended. Always unplug it before you leave the house or go to bed.



DON'T: Place your space heater near curtains, clothing, furniture or bedding.



DON'T: Use an extension cord to plug in your space heater. It can cause the heater to overheat, and can be a tripping hazard.



DON'T: Try to repair a broken space heater yourself.



DON'T: Put your space heater in your bathroom. The moisture can damage the unit, which could cause it to malfunction.



SERVICE RECOGNITION

We are proud to have built a culture of service not only to our members, but co-op employees as well. One of the best ways that we can serve you is by hiring and retaining employees with the skills to do the job, and the heart to want to do it best. Likewise, your co-op is governed by nine directors who represent you in providing management and employees with direction and guidelines to operate by.

The following employees and directors were recognized for integral years of service accomplished in 2017:

Employees

- Jacob Clawson (Roby) – 5 years
- Leticia Fuentes (Snyder) – 5 years
- Arron Duniven (Roby) - 10 years
- Jeremy McArthur (Roby) – 10 years
- Richard Powell (Snyder) – 10 years
- John Sanchez (Stamford) – 10 years
- Robert Pippin (Stamford) – 15 years
- Will Duniven (Roby) – 20 years
- Joe Baez (Stamford) – 30 years
- Linda Key (Roby) – 30 years
- Ann Sanchez (Stamford) – 35 years

Directors

- Danny Helms – 5 years
- David Beaver – 10 years
- Matt Mueller – 10 years
- Dickie Sloan – 10 years
- Roger Blackwelder – 15 years

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bigcountry.coop Gets a New Look for 2018!



An 80th birthday calls for a new look, right? We are improving our website to make it easier to navigate.

The new look (same address) will debut in February!



Farm Bill Update - What it Means for You and Your Co-op By Dan Riedinger

Every five years, the U.S. Congress considers the Farm Bill, a bill that has huge implications for America's electric cooperatives, including Big Country Electric

Cooperative. The bill sets food and agriculture policy for the entire nation, affecting everything from what crops are grown to funding for food nutrition programs. The Farm Bill is due to be reauthorized by the federal government this year. The Farm Bill is about much more than agriculture policy. It promotes rural economic development and allows co-ops to finance basic electrification activities, deploy high-speed communications and enhance smart grid technologies. Through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), our national service organization, America's electric cooperatives are working to ensure lawmakers in Washington know what our priorities are for the 2018 Farm Bill. Here are a few.

Rural broadband

Increasing high-speed internet access in rural communities is a priority for many co-ops. Broadband access isn't a luxury—it's a necessity. But 34 million Americans in mostly rural areas lack access to high speed internet. So, co-ops have asked Congress to use the Farm Bill to provide significant funding for broadband loans and grants to all viable Internet providers, including cooperatives.

Economic development

Co-ops aren't just electricity providers. They are engines of economic development - powering and empowering the communities they serve. The Farm Bill's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program is an important source of financing for economic development projects in rural communities. Over the last two decades, electric cooperatives have partnered with community stakeholders on hundreds of projects to renovate hospitals, build libraries and expand businesses. Co-ops have asked Congress to ensure ample funding for this program in the next Farm Bill and beyond.

Innovation

Not-for-profit electric co-ops are natural incubators of innovation, because they are driven solely by the needs of

members like you. The USDA runs a number programs that help fund innovative projects, including the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) and Rural Energy Savings Program (RESP). Co-ops use these programs to save members money by financing investments in energy efficiency, constructing new renewable energy resources and deploying electric grid modernization technologies. REAP and RESP help ensure that co-ops are poised to meet the evolving needs of their members.

USDA Rural Development

The health of our nation is dependent on a healthy rural America. Rural America grows most of the food, generates much of the power and manufactures many of the goods consumed by the nation. USDA's office of Rural Development operates many different programs that provide fundamental assistance to those rural communities. Co-ops have asked Congress to maintain a strong rural development in the Farm Bill to reaffirm the importance of these programs.

We look forward to working with Congress and other stakeholders to pass a Farm Bill that promotes economic growth in rural America and allows co-ops to continue meeting the needs of their members.

Dan Riedinger writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

An advertisement for the Cooperative Action Network. It features a photograph of a man and a woman in work clothes looking at a tablet together. To the left of the photo is a red and blue graphic with the text 'COOPERATIVE ACTION NETWORK' at the top, 'STAND WITH US AS WE FIGHT TO KEEP ELECTRIC BILLS AFFORDABLE.' in the middle, and 'ACTION.COOP' at the bottom.