

# INNOVATING FOR THE FUTURE

The energy industry is changing, but electric co-ops are known for adapting to their local members' needs. As we plan for changes and challenges ahead, innovative solutions are essential.

Here are a few ways we're innovating for the future.



## Use of Advanced Technologies

Drones aid in power line inspection and maintenance.

Smart meters provide real-time data and help pinpoint service issues.

## Preparing for Increased Energy Use

The demand for electricity is increasing as more technologies are electrified.

Co-ops are exploring innovative solutions like battery storage to meet demand.

## Energy Solutions for Members

Co-ops provide innovative efficiency services like flexible billing options to help members manage their energy use.

## Strength in Numbers

By working with and learning from other co-ops, we are uniquely positioned to improve service for our local communities.

## WORK ZONE AWARENESS WEEK APRIL 15-19, 2024

Please remember to slow down and stay focused when approaching roadside work zones. Let's all do our part to keep roadside crews, drivers and passengers safe during the busy construction season.

## Local Students Win Trip to D.C. in Annual Youth Tour Contest

Three local students are set to embark on an extraordinary adventure this June, representing Big Country Electric Cooperative on the renowned Youth Tour. Colton Hopkins and Haelynn Logan of Haskell, along with Kaitlyn Saffel of Rule, have been selected as the winners of Big Country EC's annual Youth Tour video contest.

Since its inception in 1965, Youth Tour has been a cherished tradition among Texas electric cooperatives. Inspired by then-Senator Lyndon B. Johnson's vision to encourage young Americans to experience their heritage and government firsthand, this initiative aligns perfectly with co-ops' mission to support and empower the communities they serve. Over the decades, more than 4,000 Texans and 50,000 young Americans have seized this remarkable opportunity offered by their electric cooperatives.

The journey for these bright young leaders begins in Austin, where they will join over 150 Texas teens before flying to Washington, D.C. There, they will embark on a whirlwind tour of the nation's capital, exploring iconic landmarks such as Arlington National Cemetery, Mount Vernon, and the Smithsonian Institution. They will also engage in educational activities, including learning about rural electrification and meeting with congressional representatives.

For Colton Hopkins, Haelynn Logan, and Kaitlyn Saffel, this trip promises to be a transformative experience filled with enriching opportunities to deepen their understanding of American history and government. Their adventure will not only create lasting memories but also equip them with invaluable leadership skills and insights that will shape their future endeavors.

By investing in the next generation of leaders, Big Country EC aims to inspire and empower today's youth to become the leaders of tomorrow. Information about the 2025 Youth Tour contest will be shared with local high schools this fall and posted on [bigcountry.coop](http://bigcountry.coop).

For more information about Youth Tour, visit [TexasYouthTour.com](http://TexasYouthTour.com), find the Texas Youth Tour Alumni page on Facebook, or contact Big Country EC for a copy of *Your Tour* magazine.



**Haelynn Logan**  
Haskell High School



**Colton Hopkins**  
Haskell High School



**Kaitlyn Saffel**  
Rule High School



# Membergram



## Lineworkers Extend Support and Assistance to North Plains EC

In the aftermath of the devastating wildfires that swept through Canadian, Texas, last month, Big Country Electric Cooperative (BCEC) stepped up to offer aid and support.

Responding to the call for assistance, BCEC employees lent a helping hand to North Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC). Demonstrating the cooperative's commitment to community, BCEC employees gathered items for donation to families affected by the fires. Additionally, a crew was dispatched to join the restoration efforts at NPEC, embodying the cooperative spirit of mutual support and solidarity. Despite the challenges posed by the wildfires, BCEC's lineworkers remained undeterred in their commitment to restoring electricity and bringing hope to the affected communities.

BCEC expresses its heartfelt appreciation to all those who supported and prayed for the safety of the lineworkers during their journey and restoration work. Together, we stand strong, embodying the true spirit of cooperation and community resilience.



[www.bigcountry.coop](http://www.bigcountry.coop)

April 2024

SAVE  
the date

### SEPTEMBER 2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

September 24, 2024

Member Appreciation Open House 4-7:00 p.m.  
Virtual Annual Meeting online all day!

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

A well-designed landscape can add beauty to your home and reduce home heating and cooling costs. Plant deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns to the south of your home to block sunlight in the summer and reduce the need for air conditioning. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter, allowing sunlight to warm your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs with low crowns to block winter winds. Dense evergreen trees and shrubs planted to the north and northwest are the most common type of windbreak and can help lower energy used for home heating.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



### Committed to Community

For complete information about our Operation Round Up program or to opt out of participation, visit [bigcountry.coop](http://bigcountry.coop) and click on the Service Beyond Electricity dropdown menu.

### In March, the following organizations were approved for Operation Round Up grants:

Anson Volunteer Fire Department	\$4,000.00
Sparrows Nest Maternity Home	\$1,000.00
Stonewall County Senior Citizens Center	\$3,000.00
Fisher County Youth Baseball	\$500.00

### Who can apply to Operation Round Up?

- Local organizations or programs that provide vital community services, such as food banks, shelters, medical and health needs, rescue organizations, educational projects, childcare programs, and other community needs.
- Families and individuals with demonstrated financial need due to life-altering circumstances.

The next deadline for applications is at 5:30 p.m. on May 21, 2024.

## SCAM ALERT

Watch out! Scammers target everyone.



### Recognize scammers. They may:

- PRETEND** to be from an agency or organization you know.
- Say there's a **PROBLEM** or promise a prize.
- PRESSURE** you to act immediately.
- Tell you to **PAY** in a specific way.



Do not give scammers money or personal information – Ignore them!

### How to avoid a scam:

- Remain calm.** Talk to someone you trust.
- Hang up or ignore** the message. **DO NOT** click on links or attachments.
- Protect your money.** Criminals will insist that you pay in a hard-to-trace manner, such as with a gift card, prepaid debit card, cryptocurrency, wire transfer, money transfer, or by mailing cash.
- Protect your personal information.** Be skeptical of a contact you didn't initiate.
- Spread the word.** Share your knowledge of Social Security-related scams. Post on social media using the hashtag #SlamtheScam to share your experience and warn others. Visit [ssa.gov/scam](http://ssa.gov/scam) for more information. Please also share with your friends and family.

Social Security Administration  
Publication No. 05-10597 | January 2024 (February 2023 edition may be used) | Produced at U.S. taxpayer expense



## To the Top!

### Training Stages for Electric Lineworkers

Known for their strength and agility, lineworkers are dedicated to ensuring our communities have reliable power. Safety is always top priority on the job, which is why lineworkers spend thousands of hours training as they advance their skills.

### Here's a look at the career progression of a lineworker.

#### Crew Leader

A crew leader is an advanced position that requires supervising lineworkers on job sites, coordinating with contractors and directing daily activities for crews.

#### Journeyman Lineworker

Post-apprenticeship and with roughly 7,000+ hours of training under the belt, journeyman lineworkers are fully trained in their field. They repair, update and install overhead and underground power lines, as well as other electrical equipment.

#### Apprentice Lineworker

Before reaching lineworker status, they are required to work as an apprentice. Apprentice lineworkers earn competitive wages while receiving hands-on training and experience in the field. They typically spend four years in their apprenticeship.

#### Groundperson/Linehelper

Many lineworkers begin their career as a groundperson, or linehelper. They assist line crews with tools, keeping job sites safe and operating smaller equipment.

*Regardless of stage, all lineworkers continue education and training throughout their career. Training and testing requirements vary from utility to utility.*

## Lineworker Appreciation Day

### Monday, April 8th



## Upcoming Pole Changeouts and System Maintenance

Big Country EC has an upcoming project that involves pole changeouts and system maintenance in our service area. This maintenance will be conducted by our contracted pole line crews and centered on the Longworth Substation.

### Project Details:

**Location:** The project will cover areas from North Roby to the Royston area and extend south and east past Sylvester.

**Start Date:** The project is scheduled to commence on April 1, 2024, and will be ongoing.

**Expected Impact:** During the maintenance period, some individual outages may occur as poles are replaced and other necessary work is carried out. Our contractors will notify residents in advance of any outages. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and assure you that these temporary disruptions are necessary to carry out the required maintenance effectively.

### Areas Affected:

HWY70: North of the Longworth Gin to Roby.

FM 1224: Meters from 180 extending past Royston.

HWY 180: East of Roby up to the HWY 57 overpass.

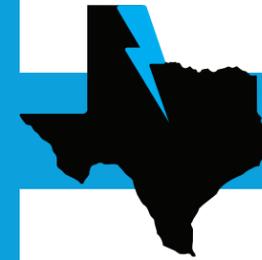
FM 1085: South of HWY 180 extending past Sylvester.

We understand the importance of uninterrupted power supply and strive to minimize any inconvenience during this period. Our contract crews will work diligently to complete the maintenance as efficiently as possible.

Thank you for your understanding as we work to improve our infrastructure to enhance the reliability and efficiency of our distribution system, ensuring better service for all our members. Should you have any questions or concerns about the upcoming project, please feel free to call us.

## National Safe Digging Month

April marks Safe Digging Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of safe excavation practices. With spring in full swing and outdoor projects underway, it's crucial to remember to call 811 before digging to prevent accidents and damage to underground utilities. Whether you're planting trees, installing a fence, or embarking on any excavation project, take the necessary steps to ensure safety for yourself and your community.



[www.bigcountry.coop](http://www.bigcountry.coop)

### Office Hours

Monday - Thursday: 7:30-12:00, 1:00-5:30

Friday: 7:30-11:30

### Contact Us

Toll Free: 1-888-662-2232

Roby: (325) 776-2244

Stamford: (325) 773-3684

Snyder: (325) 573-3161

### Report Outages

Please **call** your local BCEC office to report power outages.



## We're Mobile!



Access your BCEC account anytime with SmartHub! Download the app for your mobile device today by visiting [www.bigcountry.coop](http://www.bigcountry.coop) or searching for SmartHub in the app store.

### Ask about our partnerships with:



**Rural Development Assistance Available Through BCEC**  
BCEC is an Equal Opportunity Lender.

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](mailto:smclen@bigcountry.coop) for details.



Call 811 at least 2 working days before you dig.  
Visit [www.texas811.org](http://www.texas811.org) for more information.

**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](http://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.