

The Current

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

“The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957”

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Are you ready for summer?

Pull down shades and turn up thermostats to chill bills

Soaring temperatures and sultry summer nights can cause electric bills to skyrocket. This summer, take a vacation from high electric bills by making your home – and your family’s habits – more energy efficient.

Beat the Heat

Air conditioning helps most Americans beat the sweltering summer heat. According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), air conditioning accounts for as much as 50 percent of the average household electric bill. Proper maintenance and smart use of your home’s cooling system will help keep your electric bill in check.

First, make sure your air conditioner’s external unit is clean and free of debris. Clear away dead leaves or overgrown plants and weeds to enable the unit to perform as it should.

Second, change all of the air filters inside your home quarterly, or more often in homes with allergy sufferers or smokers. Fresh filters not only reduce the strain on your cooling system, but improve the air quality in your home.

Third, the DOE recommends that you set your home’s thermostat as high as possible, while

still maintaining a comfortable environment for your family during the summer months.

Bumping the thermostat up at least two degrees can make a noticeable difference on your power bill. Investing in a programmable thermostat can lead to even greater savings by automatically adjusting it so that the cooling system runs more often when you are at home and less often when you are away.

Made in the Shade

Windows are not only great sources of natural light in your home, but also great sources of heat during the summer. Curtains, blinds, and shades are some of the most cost-effective ways to make your windows and home more energy efficient. These window coverings offer low-cost, stylish solutions to shield the sun’s rays and keep the interior of your home cool and comfortable.

Proper weather stripping and caulking around window panes and casings will also improve the function of your windows by keeping the cool air in and the hot air out. Solar film applied to your home’s existing windows will further repel the summer heat.

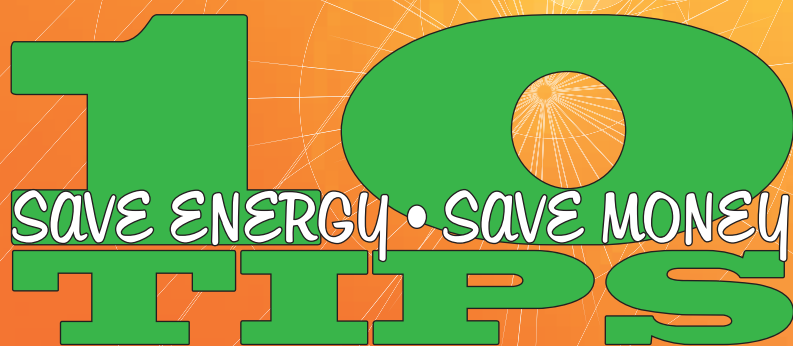
Daily Grind

Today’s appliances are more energy efficient than ever, performing better and using less electricity than they did in the past. But despite their functionality and efficiency, most major household appliances give off heat when in use. During peak daytime temperatures, the residual heat from appliances can put an unnecessary strain on your home’s cooling system and send your power bill soaring.

Cooler temperatures in the early morning or late evening make these ideal times for running the dishwasher or washing and drying clothes. When possible, turn off your dishwasher’s dryer cycle. This prevents even more residual heat from warming your home and saves on your power bill. Washing your clothes in cold water and hanging them out to dry are also great strides in reducing your household energy consumption.

As your summer heats up, call on your friends at Cotton Electric for more ways to lower your power bill. You can also visit TouchstoneEnergy.com to find out how little changes around the house can add up to big energy savings.

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, EnergySavers.gov, TouchstoneEnergy.com



1. Use a microwave, toaster or countertop grill for cooking when possible.
2. Use a slow-cooker instead of simmering foods on the stove.
3. If you are heating water on the stove, use hot tap water instead of cold.
4. Monitor your home’s relative humidity in the summer. If it consistently stays in the 60% range or higher, ask your HVAC technician about lowering your central air conditioning unit’s indoor fan speed.
5. Don’t run the pool pump 24/7.
6. Avoid running the clothes dryer during the heat of the day.
7. Consider using a “solar-powered” clothes dryer: an old fashioned clothes line.
8. Ensure window A/C units are weather-stripped. Remove the unit in the winter and close and lock the window.
9. Keep “fresh-air” vents on window A/C units closed
10. Have your HVAC system serviced once per year by a NATE-certified technician.

WHAT IS THIS?

Power cost adjustment explained

We receive many questions from our members about why bills vary from month to month. The primary reason is often an increase or decrease in the kWh used by the member. Another reason why bills vary slightly is the Power Cost Adjustment, also called the PCA.

The PCA reflects the increase or decrease in Cotton Electric’s cost of power purchased from our wholesale power provider, Western Farmers Electric Cooperative. The fluctuation in the PCA is typically caused by changes in the cost of fuel for generating power.

Cotton Electric’s cost of wholesale power is usually more than 70 percent of our total expenses. As a not-for-profit utility, it is critical that we recover all of the Cooperative’s

wholesale power cost from the members who used power. Our goal is to break even, and our rates are designed to accomplish that task.

Part of your monthly kWh rate includes the PCA. Residential members on Cotton Electric’s General Service rate pay \$0.08950 per kWh. The rate includes 6.25 cents per kWh to cover the cost of wholesale power. Cotton Electric maintains your electric system and distributes electricity on the small difference of 2.7 cents per kWh.

When the cost of purchased power is more or less than 6.25 cents per kWh, the Power Cost Adjustment is increased and shown as a charge in order to recover the price we paid for power. When the cost of purchased power

is less than 6.25 cents per kWh, we return the difference, and members receive a credit.

The PCA has been a credit 15 times in the last 24 months. For June 2017, a change in our cost of purchased power resulted in an increased PCA. This month’s PCA is a charge of \$0.01299 per kWh. If a member used 1,000 kWh, the PCA charge would be \$12.99.

Members monitoring power consumption through SmartHub may notice the rate adjusts around the middle of every month when the PCA credit or charge is applied and included with the kWh charge.

If you have questions about the Power Cost Adjustment or your bill, please contact us at 875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after June 1, 2017, is \$0.01299 per kWh.

On a member’s average bill of 1500 kilowatt hours (kWh), this will amount to a charge of \$19.49 on the June bill.

May 2017 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	79	37	58	16	80	63	72
2	86	43	65	17	86	61	74
3	71	53	62	18	88	65	77
4	73	47	60	19	73	63	68
5	79	43	61	20	76	54	65
6	87	46	67	21	78	49	64
7	89	52	71	22	75	52	64
8	84	58	71	23	71	51	61
9	84	61	73	24	81	46	64
10	78	63	71	25	93	57	75
11	80	58	69	26	93	66	80
12	78	53	66	27	99	71	85
13	82	48	65	28	86	58	72
14	91	55	73	29	89	54	72
15	91	65	78	30	89	55	72
				31	90	58	74

Source: srh.noaa.gov/oum/
Average Daily High: 83 Average Daily Low: 55

Did You Know?

Cotton Electric offices will be closed Tuesday, July 4, 2017, for the Independence Day holiday. Emergency calls will be answered at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520. The next issue of The Current should arrive in mailboxes on July 17, 2017.

Contact Us

Do you have a story idea for The Current or do you need to place an ad? If so, let us know. We can be reached at 580-875-3351 or by email at info@cottonelectric.com. You can also drop us a line at Cotton Electric Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572.

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More news at cottonelectric.com

From the CEO

Storms spur improvements in response

Several storms blew through Cotton Electric's service territory during the month of May, temporarily knocking out power to more than 17,500 of our 22,111 meters. The majority of these outages occurred May 18 when severe thunderstorms brought down 80 poles. Wind speeds of over 100 miles per hour were reported just north of the Cooperative's headquarters and tornado warnings prompted many of us to go to the cellar for the first time in several years.

Overall, Cotton Electric was very fortunate that our damage wasn't extensive. Our linemen and contractors were able to restore power quickly. Work still remains as crews make permanent repairs, remove debris and prepare for the next round.



Jennifer Meason, CEO

Although we strive to provide power 100 percent of the time, Mother Nature and circumstance intervene. When this happens, we use these outages as opportunities to learn and improve.

Over the past 17 years, I've witnessed an evolution in how we approach outages, incorporating high-tech and low-tech solutions to improve service to the members of Cotton Electric. Your board of trustees has given us a clear mission: Provide the best quality of service at an affordable rate. When we make investments at your cooperative, we keep this mission at the forefront.

When I first began at the cooperative, the member's only option for reporting outages was by calling and battling the busy signals when lines were full. This was a time-consuming and frustrating

process. We've since expanded our phone system to incorporate Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology and also offer the SmartHub app to allow members additional methods for reporting outages. Members still have the option to call and speak to either a Cotton Electric employee or one of our friends at the Cooperative Response Center (CRC), who assist with phone calls during major outages.

We've also evolved in our dispatch center. The old wall map still remains a fixture but all eyes now turn to large monitors that display reported outages, broken poles, crew locations and weather maps. This information is also available to crews in the field, allowing our team to restore power in a safer and more efficient manner.

Communication with members has improved as we are able to

post timely updates on social media. Plus, members are now able to view the outage map.

Finally, the investment in our right-of-way program has made a substantial difference in the quality of service for our members. Clearing the right-of-way not only reduces the number of outages that occur, it also speeds the restoration process.

As your cooperative, our work is never done. We'll learn from the recent string of damaging storms and continue to make improvements to the system to prevent future outages. And, thank you for your kind words and support during this last round of storms.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding our outage restoration process or about your cooperative in general, please don't hesitate to call or email me. I can be reached at 580-875-3351 or jmeason@cottonelectric.com.

Deadline for Tune-up Rebate is June 20
Applications must be turned in by June 30

Time is running out to qualify for a rebate on an HVAC system tune-up.

Typically, tune-ups on cooling systems that have been neglected for a few years can provide as much as 15 percent energy savings. A yearly tune-up of your cooling system can improve efficiency and comfort. Plus, an annual tune-up can increase the life of the system.

Cotton Electric is offering a rebate of up to \$50 per home (50 percent of the cost of your tune-up, excluding repairs, up to \$50) for members who get a tune-up for their HVAC system. In order to qualify, the following guidelines must be met:

- Must be a Cotton Electric Cooperative member. Residence must be within Cotton Electric's service territory.
- Rebate is not available for new construction.
- A completed Rebate Application is required. Application forms can be down-

Tune -Up Checklist:

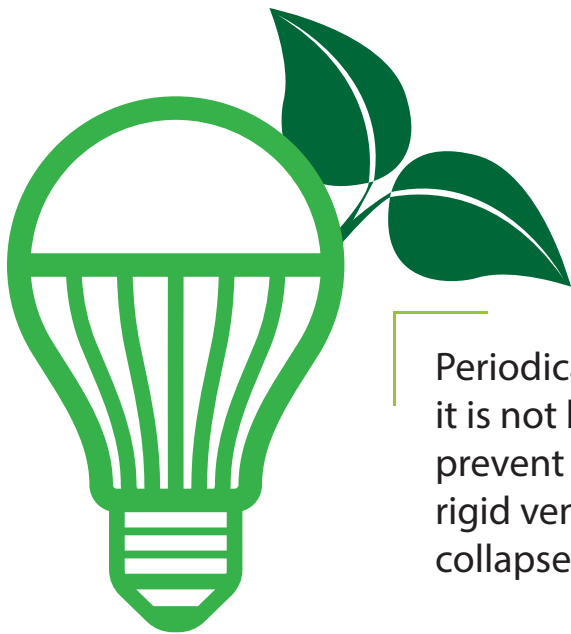
Tune-ups must be performed by a qualified service professional and must include the following criteria:

- Check and correct unit's refrigerant pressure and tubing
- Check thermostat settings, wiring, and other electric parts and connections
- Inspect air filters
- Test AC and furnace starting capabilities
- Test safety controls

loaded at CottonElectric.com and will be available at the Walters and Duncan offices, or by calling 580-875-3351. Ask for Mike Stephens.

- Application for rebate must be signed and dated by both the member and a licensed and bonded HVAC contractor.
- Member must submit a dated, itemized invoice as proof of service completion from a qualified contractor. Failure to provide required information will result in denial of rebate.
- Rebates are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis until program funds have been depleted.
- Gas-fired furnaces are not eligible for rebates.
- Rebate limited to one tune-up per home annually.
- HVAC tune-ups must be completed by June 20, 2017. Rebate applications must be received by June 30, 2017.

- Clean and adjust blower components
- Measure temperature difference
- Measure volts/amps on AC and furnace
- Lubricate all applicable parts
- Check temperature calibration and adjust, if needed
- Check AC evaporator coil and clean, if necessary
- Clean AC condenser coil
- Clean AC condensate drains
- Check thermostat operation



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Periodically inspect your dryer vent to ensure it is not blocked. This will save energy and may prevent a fire. Manufacturers recommend using rigid venting material – not plastic vents that may collapse and cause blockages.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

COTTON ELECTRIC CO-OP
Mission Statement
Our mission is to be the leader in providing the most reliable and innovative electric system, with affordable rates, through the positive, enthusiastic and professional use of its resources and people.

	2017	2016
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$4,321,943	\$4,423,939
Cost of Purchased Power	3,251,230	3,099,292
Taxes	90,549	86,610
Total Operating Expense Per Mile	903	921
Average Farm and Residential Bill	101	105
Average Farm and Residential kWh	839	828
Total Meters Billed (farm, residential)	18,271	18,222
Miles Energized	5,165	5,155
Density Per Mile	3.54	3.53
New Service Connects YTD	85	59
Services Retired	49	34

The Current

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Community Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the July issue, please submit information by July 3 by calling 580-875-4259 or send an email to info@cottonelectric.com.

Western tech featured at CTHC

Ever wonder how chuck wagons carry all that equipment? Or why a cowboy uses certain tools? Answers can be found at "Technology of the West: Cowboy Tools of the Trade," a special exhibition running through Aug. 15 at Chisholm Trail Heritage Center in Duncan.

This exhibit explores the development of chuck wagons and the essential role they played on the cattle trail. Invented in 1866 by Charles Goodnight, the chuck wagon was built to serve as a working, moving kitchen and gathering spot for the nightly cowboy camp.

The chuck wagon is just one of many tools discussed during this summer exhibit celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Chisholm Trail.

Located just north of the Simmons Center at 1000 Chisholm Trail Parkway in Duncan, the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from 1 to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

Cotton Electric members can present a Co-op Connections Card to get \$1 off the admission price, per card per visit.

Heart of Truth hosts revival

Summertime is revival time. The Heart of Truth Church will hold its annual camp meeting June 12-16. Service times are 10 a.m., 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. at 117 E. Ohio in Temple.

LCT offers 'Young Frankenstein'

Lawton Community Theatre closes the 2016-17 season with the musical "Young Frankenstein."

Based on the 1974 comedy film of the same name, the musical carries forth the same heritage, with music and lyrics written by Mel Brooks.

Performances are set for 8 p.m. June 16-25. Ticket information is available at www.LCT-OK.org.

Horse club plans Fun Trail Ride

Duncan Lake Horse Club is planning Fun Trail Ride on June 17 at Duncan Lake. Riders will leave the lake pavilion at 9:30 a.m. and participants may want to bring a snack for trail break. A hamburger meal will be provided at 1 p.m.

Negative Coggins required.

The club does not charge participants, but the City of Duncan charges a \$2 trail fee and camping fees. For information about the ride, call Brenda at 580-475-7190 or visit duncanlakehorseclub.com.

Directions to Duncan Lake: From U.S. Highway 81, travel east on Plato Road for nine miles. Go ½ mile south on Duncan Lake Road and look for a sign posted on the west side of the road.

Chautauqua begins June 20

Commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Chisholm Trail, the theme for the 2017 Lawton Chautauqua is "The Great West: Cowboys and Cattle Trails." The event is a series of historical enactments, workshops and discussions examining the roles cattle drives and cowboys played in shaping American history and culture from the 1840s to the 1890s.

Daytime workshops will be at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. at the Museum of the Great Plains. Evening programs will be at 7 p.m. in the Lawton City Hall Auditorium. Performances will run from June 20 through June 24.

Evening events will include first-person presentations and audience questions to a historical figure in character and to the scholar portraying the character. Por-

trays of figures such as Jesse Chisolm, Judge Isaac Parker, and more will provide a close-up view of this era in Oklahoma history as well as presenting a broader, national perspective.

All Chautauqua programs are free and open to the public.

Noon Lions plan 37th open rodeo

Duncan Noon Lions will present the 37th annual open rodeo at 7:30 nightly June 22, 23 and 24 in Claud Gill Arena, just south of the Stephens County fairgrounds.

Admission price at the gate is \$8 for adults and \$3 for children.

Proceeds from the event are used in Stephens County to promote vision conservation, provide scholarships and support other local charitable efforts.

Night of singing at Hilltop Church

Come join us for a night of singing at 7 p.m. June 23 at Hilltop Church of God, 1318 N. Howard Road, Marlow. Featured singers are Seeds of Abraham from Heart of Truth Church.

Special preaching guest is Mike Brown.

Founder's day packed with activities

There are several activities planned in Duncan to celebrate Founder's Day on the last weekend in June. They include:

Chisholm Trail Municipal Band – Volunteer musicians kick off the weekend with an 8 p.m. June 23 concert in Fuqua Park.

Car cruise – Enjoy tailgate parties, shopping, trophies, door prizes, goodie bags, and more on June 23 on Main Street.

5K run – Registration and packet pickup begins at 6:30 a.m. at Fuqua Park. A one-mile fun run begins at 7:30 and the USATF-sanctioned 5K run starts at 8. The event is a fundraiser for the Oklahoma chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Antique tractor parade and show – Registration begins at 9 a.m. at 12th and Walnut. Parade is at 10 a.m. on Walnut from Seventh to 12th. Tractors will be on display for public viewing until the noon award ceremony for Oldest Tractor, Founder's Day Queen's Choice and Most Original.

Queen crowning and home tour – Stephens County Historical Museum crowns the Founder's Day queen at 10:30 a.m. in Fuqua Park. Historical home tours begin at 1 p.m.

Art Walk – Artists, performers, kids' zone and food vendors are part of this annual event. See them all from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday in Fuqua Park.

Foreman Prairie House open house – Events recognize Duncan's birthday, when the first train came through in 1892.

Lawton's Freedom Festival is July 1

Freedom Festival is a free, family-oriented celebration the first Saturday in July in Elmer Thomas Park in Lawton. Planners have a day full of activities lined up. Throughout the day there will be concerts on the Lake Helen stage, a bounce house for kids, onsite vendors and plenty of food.

Don't miss the car show where you'll see all kinds of hot rods, muscle cars and some of the newest models on display. Pick your favorite and hang around to see if it wins "Best of Show" or a Top 25 award.

The evening ends with a giant fireworks display in the park at dusk. Attendees are welcome to bring picnic baskets and chairs.

There will also be a free shuttle service from the McMahon Auditorium and the Lawton High School parking lot to make parking easier.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



In light of recent stormy weather, we wanted to show you this remarkable photo from our Stormy Weather photo contest. This funnel cloud west of Walters was photographed by Pattie Calfy.

Enter your "best shot" in our Photo of the Month contest. Theme for July is **CAMPING TRIP**. Entries can be emailed to info@cottonelectric.com or mailed to The Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. Winners will receive a Cotton Electric prize package of CEC goodies.

Town of Velma celebrates summer

Team roping, a farmers market, bounce houses and fireworks are among the big plans on tap for the Town of Velma's second annual Super Summer Celebration scheduled for July 2.

Registration begins at 6:30 a.m. for the Velma EMS Community Run. Runners take off at 7:30. Call Patricia for information at 580-606-7753.

Vendors will be set up at L.L. Humphrey Park, where there will also be music. Local talent will entertain during the day, and a free concert featuring Lucky Southern and Brandon Jenkins will begin at 5:30 p.m.

A fireworks display begins at 10 p.m.

Chapter of Blind meets monthly

Duncan Chapter of the Blind meets at 1:30 p.m. on the third Saturday of each month at New Hope Baptist Church, 200 S. 42nd Street. This is an opportunity for those who are visually impaired or blind and their caregivers to learn about the availability of services and equipment such as white cane training and large lighted magnifiers. The group also provides information about free access to an extensive library of audio books.

For information about the group, call Jerri Gay at 580-252-6404.

More Community Spotlight on Page 4

WE ALL USE ENERGY DIFFERENTLY



We rely on Cotton Electric Cooperative for information about safety, efficiency and renewables. In our community, power is more than electricity. It's the expert information we get from our local Touchstone Energy cooperative.

Visit CottonElectric.com to discover the power of your co-op.

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COTTON
ELECTRIC CO-OP

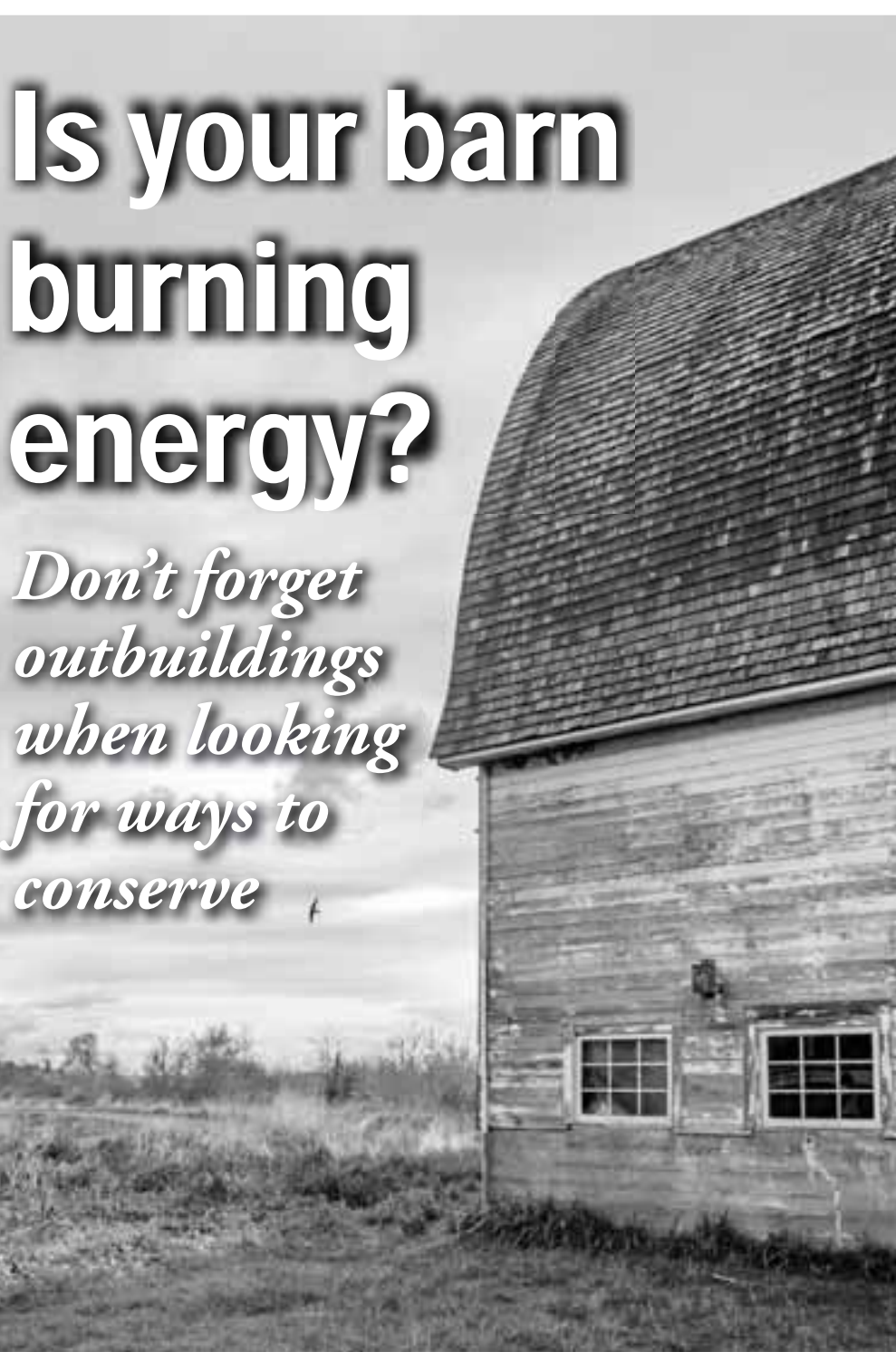
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

Upcoming Deadlines for The Current

July		August		September	
Ad Sales	June 30	Ad Sales	July 28	Ad Sales	Aug. 25
Classified	July 6	Classified	Aug. 3	Classified	Aug. 31
Publish Date	July 17	Publish Date	Aug. 14	Publish Date	Sept. 11

Is your barn burning energy?

Don't forget outbuildings when looking for ways to conserve



By Meghaan Evans

There are many benefits to having an energy efficient outdoor shop or barn. Aside from saving energy, an efficient outdoor building can keep the environment around your structure healthy and safe; save money on your water and power bills; keep your animals happier and healthier; and save you from costly structural repairs.

Whether you are looking to build a new structure or make changes to an existing structure, there are many ways you can make your outdoor shop or barn more energy efficient.

Are you planning to build a new structure on your property? Follow these tips to achieve energy efficiency:

- Location matters. If possible, carefully consider where you build your shop or barn. Consider drainage, sun exposure and how the building may affect your neighbors.
- Start with a sustainable design plan. A sustainable design plan, according to the U.S. General Services Administration, includes the ability to use environmentally preferable products; protect and conserve water; enhance indoor environmental quality; and optimize operational and maintenance practices.
- If you are hiring a contractor to help build your structure, make sure you look for companies who specialize in "green" buildings and energy efficient practices.
- Choose efficient building methods. Pole barns offer reliable shelter without costly excavation, concrete foundations or general site disruption.

Follow these tips to make energy efficient upgrades to an existing structure:

- Replace indoor lighting with energy efficient LED bulbs.
- Ensure your existing structure has adequate insulation levels.
- Choose outdoor lighting designed to be energy efficient, and install motion detectors to reduce energy consumption when not in use.
- Plant trees around your metal shed or barn. In colder weather, trees act as a windbreak, and in warmer weather, trees have a natural cooling effect that can reduce temperatures in your metal building 3 to 6 degrees Fahrenheit. Remember to look up before planting. Locate trees away from power lines.
- Consider adding a ceiling fan to circulate air. Typically, there is a 2 degree Fahrenheit temperature increase for every one-foot increase in ceiling height. A ceiling fan can help keep warm air close to the ground in the winter, and circulate fresher, cooler air in the summer. Not only will this help with energy costs, it will also help keep the air in the building from becoming hot and stagnant, which will keep harmful bacteria from building and will keep insects at bay.

To learn more about how to make your outdoor shop or barn more energy efficient, contact the energy expert use adviser at Cotton Electric Cooperative. Mike Stephens can be reached at 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.

Meghaan Evans 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.

Community Spotlight

Tomato Festival set for July 8

Mark your calendar so you won't miss the Tomato Festival on July 8 at Lawton Farmers Market. Tomatoes are the most popular produce at the market, so why not have a celebration? Activities will include a Great Tomato Ketchup Race and contests between the ugliest, prettiest, and best-tasting tomatoes.

Lawton Farmers Market is open from 7:30 a.m. to noon on Saturdays from April through October at the Comanche County Fairgrounds, 920 SW Sheridan Road.

In addition to local seasonal produce, expect to see specialty foods such as jams, jellies, salsas, baked goods, wine, freshly roasted coffee beans, as well as hand-made soap, herbs, plants, eggs, beef and an assortment of handcrafted items and food concessionaires.

For information, visit Lawton Farmers Market on Facebook.

Walters rodeo begins with parade

All individuals, horse riders, clubs and organizations are encouraged to walk, ride a horse or drive a float in the annual rodeo parade kicking off the Walters Round-Up Club Rodeo and Comanche Homecoming Pow Wow.

Parade lineup begins at 4 p.m. Thursday, July 13, at Broadway and Nevada for all entries except riding clubs, which will

gather at Nevada and Sixth. Judging for floats, Best-Dressed Cowgirl, Cowboy, Indian Girl and Indian Boy, and Best-Decorated Bicycle will be during the hour before the parade kicks off at 5 p.m.

The rodeo begins at 8 p.m. nightly, July 13-15, at the Max Phillips Rodeo Arena west of town.

Dehydrator pedals off on July 29

The 28th annual Dehydrator is a bicycle ride with varied mile routes. Riders leave at 7 a.m. July 29 from the Simmons Center in Duncan.

Entry fees are \$30 per person, \$45 per tandem team, non-refundable. A free T-shirt goes to the first 500 entries. A \$5 late fee will be assessed on entries after July 23. Proceeds benefit band programs at Duncan Middle and High schools.

For information and registration forms, visit thedehydrator.org.

Food pantry open twice monthly

Walters Community Food Pantry is open from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month. The pantry is in the old City Hall, 131 1/2 W. California Street.

Pantry organizers try to provide a two-week supply of basic staples to anyone with identification.

For information, call Roger Noland at 580-591-6826.

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Walters Round-Up Club

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July 13 - 14 - 15, 2017

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\$4 KIDS

GATE TKTS.
\$7 ADULTS
\$5 KIDS

4 & UNDER FREE

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8:00 PM Nightly @ Max Phillips Arena
1/4 Mile West of Walters, OK
PARADE THURSDAY, JULY 13-5PM \$100 \$75 \$50 Place Cash Awards Riding Club

CONTEST EVENTS
ENTRIES MUST BE PAID BY 7:30 PM NIGHTLY - CASH ONLY
Books open 9AM-6PM July 11 Phone 580.658.5533

- Bareback Riding \$50
- Calf Roping \$65
- Bull Riding \$50
- Team Roping (Jackpot) \$40
- Wild Steer Riding \$15
- Saddle Bronc Riding \$50
- Barrel Racing Sr. (14&over) \$25
- Barrel Racing Jr. (14&under) \$15

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2017 Youth Tour essay topic: The Power of the Cooperative Model

Cotton Electric a lifetime member of communities it serves



Connor Kern
Central High School

Editor's note: Four area high school juniors recently won a trip to Washington, D.C., in Cotton Electric's annual Youth Tour essay contest. Each of the essays will appear in The Current.

There are many powerful things in the world today. To some, a champion weight lifter is about as strong as they come. Yet to others, a well-delivered speech or a beautifully painted portrait are more moving than any amount of brawn could possibly be. Regardless of one's personal preference, one of the most economically powerful forms of business today is the cooperative model. Based on principles such as democratic membership, independence, and community concerns, the true capabilities of the cooperative model seem to be nearly limitless.

The cooperative model continues to be one of the most resilient, most successful forms of business in use. A co-op is an "autonomous association formed and democratically directed by people who come together to meet common economic, social and cultural needs."

Although not as common as other methods, a cooperative, or co-op, can be just as successful, or even more so, than its generic counterparts. They are organized and run by the members themselves so as to not be controlled by an oligarchy of profit-seeking executives. By doing so, the cooperative tends to flourish as the members seek only to better their lives and those of their peers, and rather than looking to make a profit, any remaining currency is put toward improving their community.

Not only does a co-op benefit its members, but it can also play a key role in building a more progressive nation. The economic ac-

tivity of the 30,000 cooperatives in the U.S. contributes an estimated \$154 billion to the nation's total income. These cooperatives have helped to create jobs and put food on the table for over 2.1 million Americans.

Other than the fact that these co-ops are working to better the lives of their members, their community, and overall their nation, the democratically-run businesses have much lower failure rates as compared to traditional corporations. After the first 365 days in business, only 20 to 40 percent of corporations were still standing, and after five years, a mere 3 to 5 percent were still in business. Comparatively, a co-op will have a 10 percent failure rate within the first year, and an impressive 90 percent success rate after five years.

All of these factors are what truly sets a cooperative apart from other businesses. Whether it's through creating careers for millions of people, giving back to the community, or supplying goods and services to its members, the cooperative model is the most charitable and most successful form of business in the country.

An example of a successful co-op is a company called Cotton Electric. Originating in 1937 by a man named C.W. Cox, the cooperative has striven to provide a continuous supply of energy to rural homes for nearly an entire century. Although Cotton Electric still supplies electricity to its consumers, and ultimately impacts the lives of thousands of men and women, it has relentlessly striven to better society through the power of the cooperative model.

Cotton Electric continues to give back to its community through support of leadership

groups such as 4-H and the Oklahoma Youth Expo, and it hosts educational programs that emphasize the importance of electrical safety and conservation. Beginning in 1960, Cotton Electric issued the first patronage refund checks. Since then, a total of more than \$4.5 million has been returned to the consumers. A program called Operation Round Up was also developed in 2004 as a way to collect money for worthwhile individuals and organizations. The program is voluntary and simply rounds a member's bill up to the nearest whole number, and those additional few cents are used for a greater cause in the community.

Cotton Electric, like any other co-op, is simply incomparable to other businesses. A cooperative strives to assist its members and help those in need while a corporation searches for various ways to simply increase profit. Whether it's through providing services at reasonable prices, developing and supporting youth programs, or simply giving a member's hard-earned money back to them, Cotton Electric is an exceptional example of how a cooperative should be.

A cooperative can't lift half a ton over its head, and it certainly can't paint a frowning woman named Lisa, but it can still alter the lives of countless men and women from across the nation. A co-op isn't just a business searching for a quick profit; it's a lifetime membership to a community of American citizens who are driven to better themselves and those around them. Providing opportunities and positively impacting those in the community, the power of the cooperative model goes far beyond physical capabilities, and it truly is an economic and social success.

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One of the biggest benefits provided by bonds is their ability to help you diversify a stock portfolio. Stocks and bonds often move in different directions – in fact, the same economic or political forces that can be bad for stocks might be good for bonds, and vice versa. Consequently, if you own a reasonable percentage of bonds, you may not be as vulnerable to the impact of those inevitable downturns

in the stock market. Keep in mind, though, that diversification can't guarantee profits or protect you against losses.

Of course, the other major attribute of bonds is the regular income they provide through interest payments. Unless the issuer defaults – an event that's generally unlikely, assuming you purchase quality, "investment-grade" bonds – you can count on receiving the same payments for the life of your bond. Then, once your bond matures, you'll get back the original principal, again assuming the issuer doesn't default. The ability to receive regular payments may help improve your cash flow and possibly help you avoid selling stocks to meet unexpected costs, such as an expensive car repair. And holding your bond until maturity can help you plan to meet specific goals; for example, if your child will be starting college in five years, you can buy a bond scheduled

to mature at the same time, providing you with an influx of cash you can use for tuition and other school expenses.

Still, despite the benefits of diversification, steady income and the repayment of principal, you may find it hard to ignore the relatively low interest rates you're seeing on your bonds. This is especially true if market rates rise, causing the value of your bonds to fall. (Investors won't pay you the full price – that is, the face value – of your bonds when they can buy new ones issued at higher rates. So, if rates have risen and you want to sell your bonds before they mature, you'd have to offer them at a discount.)

One way of coping with interest-rate movements is to build a "ladder" of bonds of varying maturities. When your short-term bonds mature, you can reinvest the proceeds in newly issued bonds that may offer higher rates, while your longer-term

bonds continue to pay you greater income. (Generally – but not always – longer-term bonds carry higher interest rates than short-term bonds.)

Even within this type of bond ladder, though, you will want to diversify your holdings among different types of bonds from different issuers. In any case, be sure to evaluate whether a bond ladder and the securities held within it are consistent with your investment objectives, risk tolerance and financial circumstances.

Don't ignore bonds when constructing and maintaining your investment portfolio. No matter what interest rates are doing, you'll find that bonds can play an important role in your portfolio.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.

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Clockwise from top left: Journeyman lineman Scott Dennis prepares to lower the "hurt man" to safety.

Apprentice lineman Dillon Wiygul begins his climb.

Journeyman lineman Evan Hays, top, and Safety and Loss Control instructor Greg Hambrick prepare the "hurt man" for his next moment of need.



Safety drills keep employees prepared for unexpected

By Karen Kaley

Many of Cotton Electric's employees have daily tasks that make them more likely to encounter hazardous situations.

They strap on hooks and climb poles or go up as high as 60 feet in truck baskets to work around power lines. They hoist transformers, use chain saws on tree branches and operate heavy equipment.

They tramp around in undeveloped areas that may be swampy, or grown over with tall grass and weeds concealing trenches. They are exposed to the wild Oklahoma weather and unpredictable dogs, killer bees and crazy goats. They could get hurt.

All employees likely to be in the field go through basket rescue drills once a year. Along with line workers there are engineers, meter technicians and warehousemen going through the steps.

They recite a mayday call then climb onto the back of a truck. They switch control of the basket and boom to the lower panel. They lower the basket and tilt it. They climb down and reach into the basket to pull the 180-pound adult-sized practice dummy out.

Pole top rescue drills are required for all linemen, the only employees trained to climb a pole. The drill begins with the same mayday call.

The line worker makes his or her way up the pole to throw a rope over a cross arm or drive a screwdriver into the pole to loop it over. The other end is tied around the dummy's chest. After its safety belt is cut with a knife, the dummy is lowered to the ground.

Larry Phillips, safety director for Cotton Electric, said linemen must complete the pole top rescue in less than four minutes during the annual drill.

"Many Cotton Electric linemen can do it in less than three minutes," he said.

The focus on safety through training and drills are well worth the time and effort. According to the U.S. Bureau of

Labor Statistics, line workers are in the nation's ninth most deadly occupation behind loggers, fishermen, pilots, roofers, steel workers and trash collectors. This is an improvement over figures from 2014, when the job was ranked seventh.

But none of those figures come from Cotton Electric. Phillips said, "The safety culture over the last two decades at Cotton Electric has made a difference.

"We have had no electrical contact accidents in more than 20 years and I can recall only four contact incidents in the 40-plus years I have worked for Cotton."

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Ashley Bradt, an intern in the engineering department, completes the basket rescue drill. His internship will take him all over the co-op's service territory.



Seasonal helper Tanner Dennis goes through the basket rescue drill. Working with linemen and right-of-way crews, he will be out in the field this summer.

All employees likely to be in the field perform basket rescue drills once a year. Along with line workers there are engineers, meter technicians, warehousemen and more going through the steps.



Larry Phillips, safety director for Cotton Electric, watches the basket as he performs the rescue drill.



Cotton Electric CEO Jennifer Meason operates controls to lower a basket as she performs the rescue drill.

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If you see police, firefighters, utility crews or other emergency personnel on the side of the road, please slow down and move over when possible.

Together, we can keep our crews safe.



Please make room for roadside crews

By Abby Berry

When the power goes out, so do Cotton Electric's line crews. Lineworkers are the first to respond after an outage occurs, and they work tirelessly to restore power to the communities we serve.

If you're traveling and see one of our crews on the side of the road, we kindly ask that you move over if possible and give them a little extra space to work. We care deeply about the safety of all, and this extra precaution ensures just that.

If you approach a crew while traveling on a two-lane road, moving over to the next lane might not be an option. In this case, we simply

ask that you slow down when approaching roadside crews. If you approach a crew while traveling on a four-lane road, and safety and traffic conditions allow, we ask that you move over into the far lane.

Oklahoma law requires any driver approaching a parked maintenance, law enforcement or emergency vehicle to move over into another lane, if possible. If unable to safely change lanes, the driver should proceed with "due caution" and slow to "a safe speed for the existing road, weather, and traffic conditions." Violation of this law may result in a fine from law enforcement.

Utility crews aren't the only ones

who could use the extra space. Emergency responders, such as police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians, often find themselves responding to emergency situations near busy roadways. We ask that you follow the same procedures mentioned above to help keep these crews safe.

There's plenty of room for all. Let's work together to keep everyone safe on our local roadways.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the service arm of the nation's electric cooperatives.

Stay safe exploring great outdoors this summer

By Abby Berry

Summer is in full swing, and that means it is time for fun in the sun! As you find yourself spending more time outdoors, Cotton Electric reminds you to stay safe.

Planning a home improvement project? When working outdoors, you may be using tools, such as ladders, power tools, shovels – or even paintbrushes with extendable arms. These items help you get the job done but have the potential to be dangerous if used improperly.

Pay attention to where you place metal ladders or dig for fence posts. Before you start any project, always look up and avoid overhead power lines. Keep a minimum of 10 feet between you and overhead lines.

If you are planning a project that requires digging, remember to dial "811" first to find out if the area you will be working



Know what's below. Call before you dig.

in is clear of underground power lines. Power tools should be kept away from wet surfaces, and outlets should not be overloaded.

Exploring the great outdoors is a great way to spend time with the family, but keep these safety tips in mind.

Children should never climb trees near power lines – always assume a wire is live.

Fly kites and remote controlled-airplanes in large open areas like a park or a field, safely away from

trees and overhead power lines.

Planning to take a dip in the pool? Electrical devices, such as stereos, should be kept at least 10 feet away from water sources, and outdoor electrical outlets should always be covered. If you hear a rumble of thunder, exit the pool right away.

Speaking of thunder, summer storms can be dangerous if you're caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. If you find yourself outdoors during

a storm, move toward suitable shelter with covered sides, and stick to low-lying ground if possible.

These are just a few tips to remember when you are spending time outdoors this summer with your family.

Have some fun out there, and always keep safety in mind.

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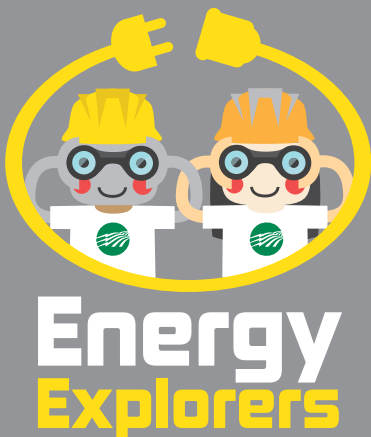
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SWIMMING POOL ELECTRICAL SAFETY

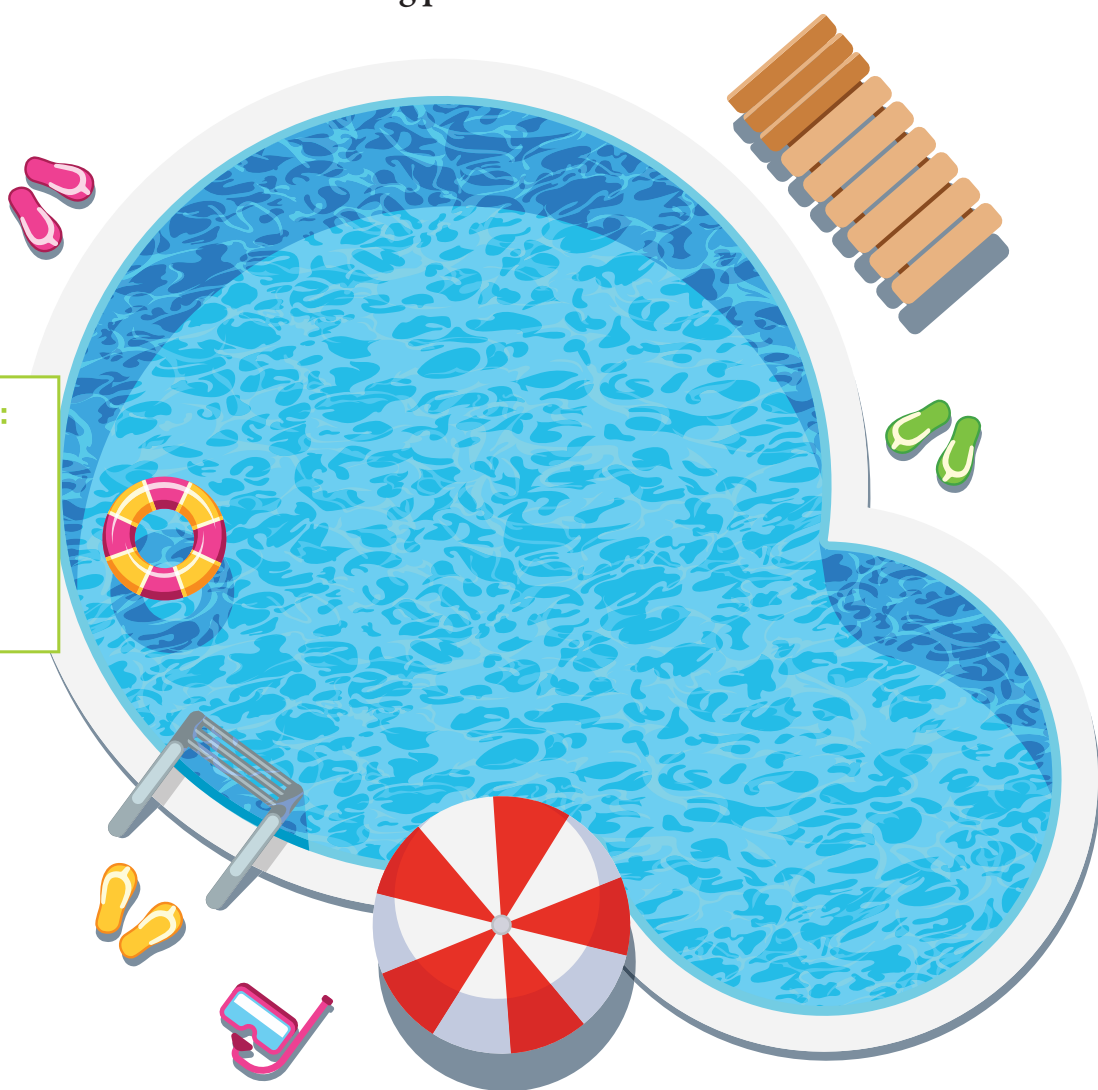


Water and electricity never mix! Remember to practice electrical safety when you're cooling off in the pool. Fill in the blanks in the electrical safety tips below. Use the word bank for help. Hint: Check your answers in the key below.

SWIMMING POOL SAFETY TIPS:

- If you hear _____, immediately exit the swimming pool. Storms may be near.
- Never bring _____ devices near a swimming pool. If they come in contact with water, electric shock could occur. Devices should be kept at least 10 feet away from water sources.
- Outdoor electrical outlets should be covered to keep them _____.
- When possible, use _____ operated electrical devices when outside near a swimming pool.

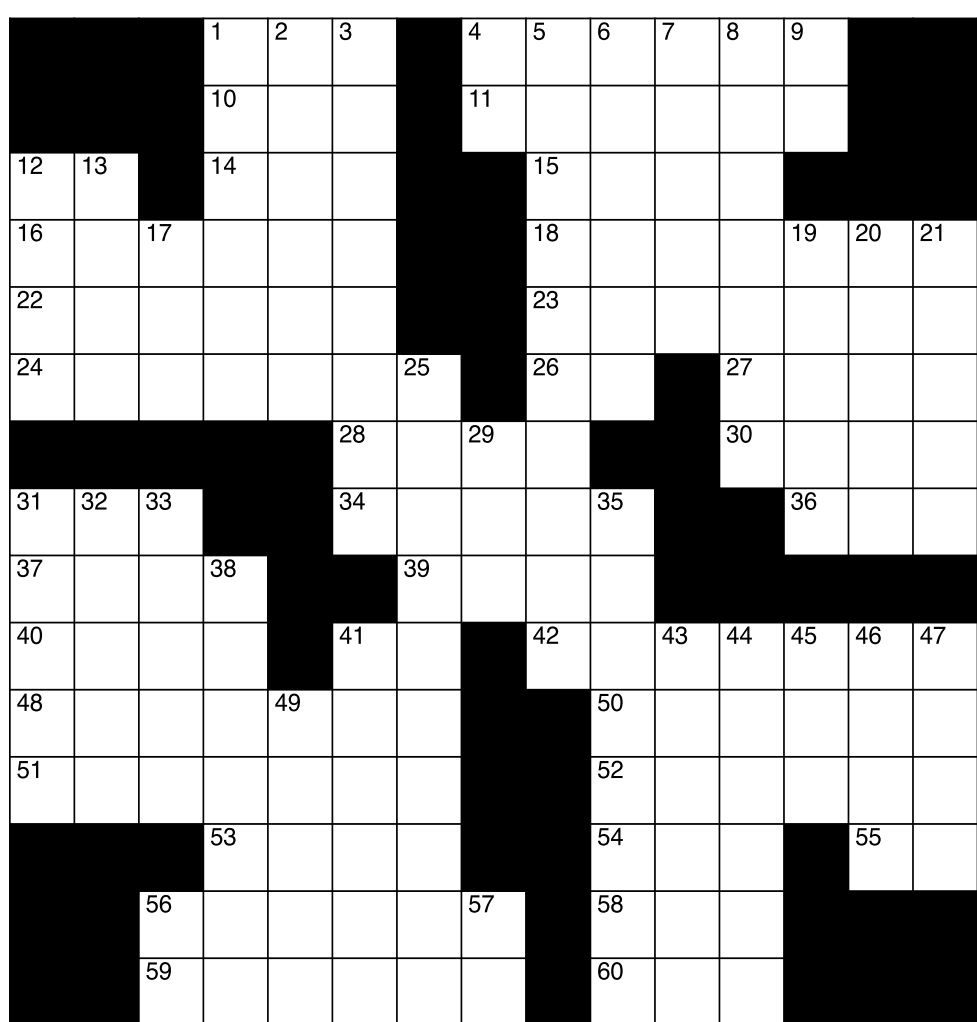
Word Bank:
 electrical
 battery
 thunder
 dry



1. thunder 2. electrical 3. dry 4. battery

ACROSS

- Neither
- Edema (archaic)
- Geological time
- Confidence
- Cerium
- Virtual audio cable
- World's longest river
- A way to inform
- Agents of one's downfall
- Secretly follow
- Put into a position
- Of the desert
- And (Latin)
- Spanish city
- Over there (archaic)
- Regard
- Midway between south and southeast
- Entrap
- Married woman
- A place to explore
- Assist, usually in some wrongdoing
- Arab ruler
- Centiliter
- To which
- "The Friendly Island"
- Inspire with love
- Being cheeky to
- Up
- Middle Eastern country
- Compass point that is one point north of due east
- Thus
- Covered
- Brew
- Enter hostilely



- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 60. Type of bulb | 13. Hebrew unit of measurement | 38. Gradual destruction |
| DOWN | 17. Morse code term | 41. North American country |
| 1. American state | 19. Home to the witch trials | 43. Provide the means to do |
| 2. Speaker | 20. One who is older | 44. Fell down on |
| 3. Courses for cars | 21. Closes violently | 45. Emergency medical services |
| 4. Deutschmark | 25. Unaffiliated | 46. ___ the line |
| 5. Beloved "Dubliner" | 29. Tag the runner | 47. Church booklet |
| 6. Countries of Asia | 31. Trickeries | 49. Russian ballet |
| 7. Hands have them | 32. Polynesian island group | 56. Hello |
| 8. Came down as ice pellets | 33. Immortalities | 57. Delaware |
| 9. Thou | 35. Extremely delicate | |
| 12. Utter obscenities | | |



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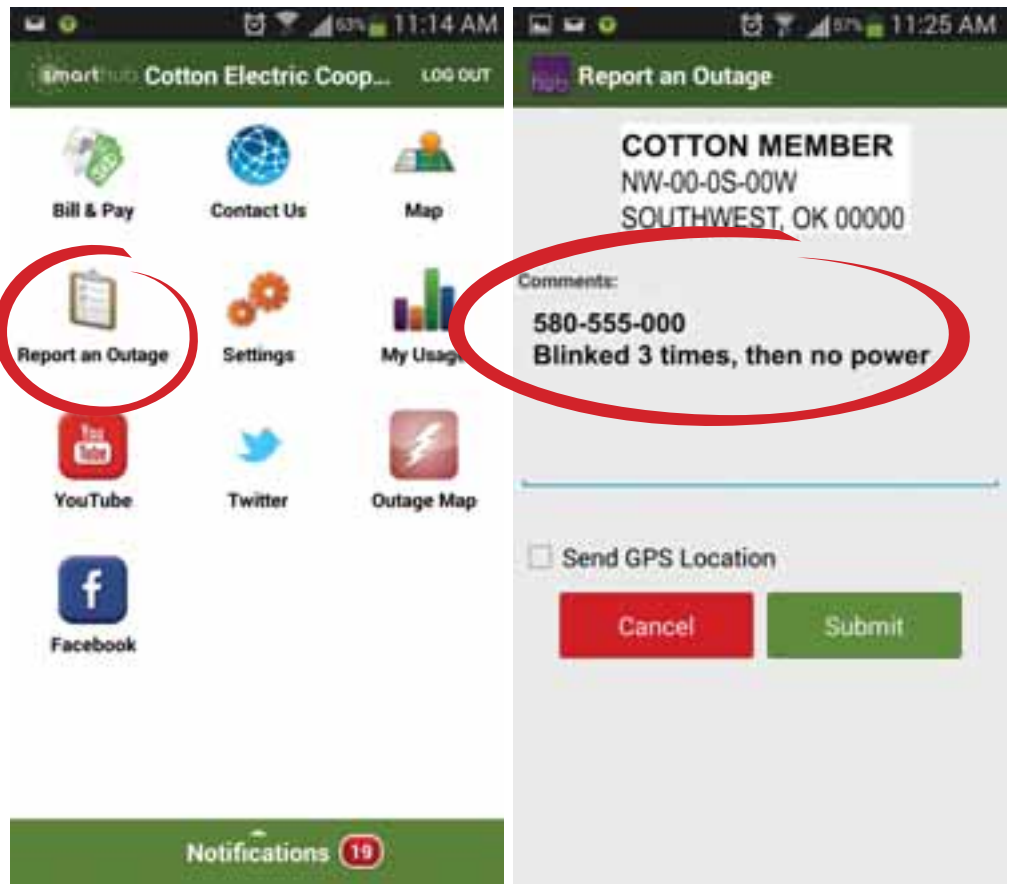
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When using the Report an Outage feature through CottonElectric.com, please remember to include a good call back phone number before submitting the outage report.



When using the Report an Outage feature through SmartHub on a mobile device, please remember to include a good call back phone number before submitting the outage report.

Skip busy signals; use SmartHub to report power outages

By Karen Kaley

Destructive storms moved through the Cotton Electric service territory in May, ripping branches from trees, peeling up metal carport roofs, tossing trampolines and snapping utility poles. At peak, about 5,000 Cotton Electric members were without power.

About 80 utility poles were broken, the majority in an area northeast of the Walters headquarters. Cotton Electric crews and three contract crews worked through the night and day to restore power.

Just as power was restored to nearly all members, the area was troubled with more torrential rains. Conditions deteriorated, making it impossible for crews to navigate the mud in order to restore power in some areas.

It was a long couple of days and nights for Cotton Electric employees and members.

When 5,000 members are without power, they are met with a particular frustration when trying to let us know about it. If only a tenth of them are trying to call us, the majority of them may get a busy signal.

During widespread outages, we may “switch phones over to CRC.” Cooperative Response Center is a third party who assists with phone calls during major outages. They need your account number in order to post your outage to our system.

Sometimes a member just doesn’t have that information at their fingertips. That’s where SmartHub can help.

SmartHub is a free app that can be used on any mobile device. Once downloaded, a member uses their Cotton Electric account number to set up and personalize how the app will work.

From there on, the app remembers the account number. Members can use the app to report an outage.

Cotton Electric members using SmartHub on a mobile device should see an icon that looks like a tiny clipboard on the landing page. Labeled “Report an Outage,” it is a way to communicate with the co-op when you find yourself in the dark.

The SmartHub Report an Outage feature is intended for use only when there is a complete loss of power. Members having problems such as power blinks or security lights not working should use

the Contact Us feature. This will offer automatic links to visit the co-op website, send an email or give us a call.

Before using Report an Outage or any other method to report an outage, it is important to verify the power loss is a problem with our service.

First, check your breakers. Go to your breaker box – the one in your house and the one beneath your meter – and check to make sure none has been tripped.

Second, think about your account with Cotton Electric and ask yourself a question. If you have a traditional account and make monthly payments, is your account delinquent? If you have a MyChoice account and prepay for electricity, has your balance gone past zero? The time of day is a possible clue that could indicate power may have been disconnected for non-payment. The procedure is often automated and usually occurs mid-morning.

Considering those two steps before reporting an outage is important. It is costly to send a crew and truck to a location only to discover breakers are off or power has been disconnected for non-payment. It costs the co-op and you as a member-

owner. Controlling costs helps control rates.

When reporting an outage via SmartHub, please make use of the Comments box before sending. Put a good call back phone number in Comments and include information about what you heard or saw just as the power went out.

These two pieces of information are important. Co-op employees sometimes need to call to check on circumstances of the outage or to verify when power has been restored. In the age of landlines being disconnected and ever-changing cell phone numbers, the co-op often does not have an up-to-date phone number on file.

Knowing what happened when the power went out can give clues about the cause. This makes it easier to pinpoint the origin of the outage and restore power quickly.

Calling and using SmartHub are the best ways to report power outages.

If you prefer calling, the numbers are 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520. If there is a widespread outage, it may be hard to get through. That’s the time to use the SmartHub Report an Outage feature.

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Don't fall for the call

Scammers come up with new ways to trick victims daily



By Karen Kaley

Scammers are getting sneakier every day. In a recent round of phone calls, electric cooperative members were told they earned a "rebate" because of their good payment history. The caller then asked for sensitive information, using a ruse such as: "Instead of writing a check, we can just add the funds to your credit card. If you'll just verify that number ..."

The call seemed legitimate because the name of the utility came up on caller ID. But, think about it ... when was the last time any utility employee called to offer money?

A more common scam is a demand for immediate payment to avoid having a utility cut off. The caller is urgent and forceful, insisting on a particular form of payment made within a short period of time. Again, think about it ... when was the last time a utility employee called to demand payment?

How we contact members

"Most of our phone contact with members is incoming," Tonya Daniels said. "Members call us, not the other way around."

The billing supervisor said instances of the Billing Department calling members is very rare.

"We might contact members if their mail is being returned to our office and

we need a current address.

Daniels said, "Our main form of communication with members is through the U.S. Postal Service. We send bills and past-due notices in the mail. We sometimes insert additional co-op information in bills. We send capital credit distributions through the mail, too."

"But, we NEVER make live calls demanding payment."

If a member receives a call about an account needing payment, it will be a recording from an automated system. Automation plays a big role in member communication.

"We have an automated service that contacts members via email, text messages and phone calls," Daniels said.

These types of messages usually go to members using the MyChoice prepay plan. Through SmartHub, members can choose the type and frequency of communications about bills, account balances and payment confirmation.

A SmartHub account can be set up through the co-op website, CottonElectric.com, or by downloading the SmartHub app to a mobile device. Once established, members can use the SmartHub account to manage the types of messages and how they are delivered.

How we collect payments

With the exception of handling checks

sent through the mail and accepting in-person payments at the offices in Walters and Duncan, all payment processes are automated. Credit or debit card payments at the offices must be made by the member using devices in the lobbies or the kiosk in Duncan.

Payments also can be made by phone, bank draft or Moneygram. Electronic check and credit or debit card payments can be made through SmartHub.

All of those transactions are initiated and controlled by the member. Using automation protects the member and the employee.

"Cotton Electric employees do not have access to payment information," Daniels said. "We never take payments over the phone personally. Those calls are always directed to an interactive voice response (IVR) system."

How we protect information

The automated systems put control of personal information in the hands of the member. Once a member sets up through SmartHub or IVR, they have access to information specific to the account.

With passwords known only to the member, a SmartHub account will provide energy use history for the past few days, weeks and 13 months. The IVR system will recognize a phone number and provide a member with account balances

and due dates. The kiosk at the Duncan office can read the barcode on a bill to grant access to much of the same information.

The Billing Department will answer questions when called, provided the caller identifies themselves.

"We protect member information by insisting callers provide certain identifying information," Daniels said.

"Also, we do not have access to a member's passwords."

How to protect yourself

Keep in mind that Cotton Electric does not call members to demand payment and offers a variety of ways to pay. Remember that crooks can manipulate caller ID. An incoming call that says it is from Cotton Electric may not really be from us.

If you receive a call that seems unusual, simply hang up and call us back using only these numbers: 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520. Program those numbers into your phone and always call using those numbers.

Remember that scammers try to control what number you call, who you talk to, or how to make a payment.

Don't forget that scammers change their tactics every day.

Think about it ... and don't fall for the call.

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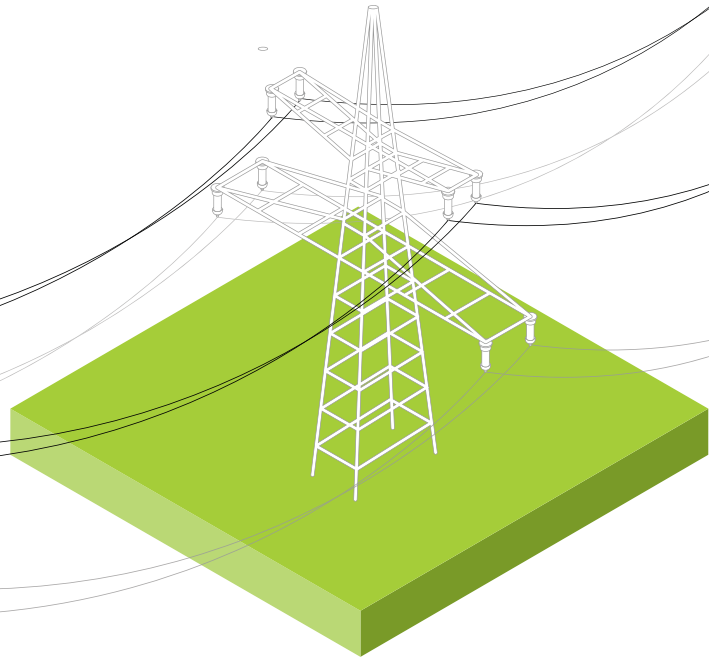
A Field Guide to Overhead Power Lines

High-voltage transmission lines are used to deliver electricity from generation plants to consumers.

HIGH-VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION LINES

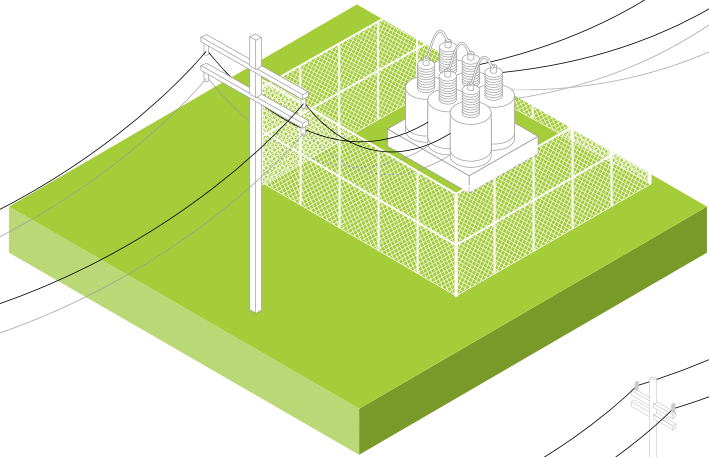
Large amounts of power, measured by watts, are delivered by transmission lines. These lines are energized with very high voltage in order to move the power long distances with minimal losses. Insulators on the towers prevent the power from flowing to the towers or the ground.

Electric cooperatives own and maintain 65,000 miles (6 percent) of the nation's transmission lines.



SUBSTATIONS AND SUB-TRANSMISSION LINES

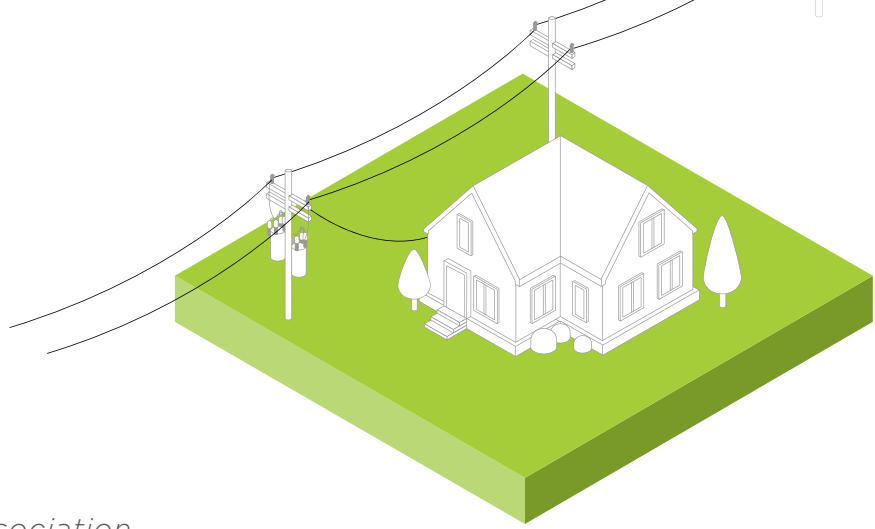
Transformers at transmission substations reduce the voltage from transmission levels to sub-transmission levels, typically ranging from 115,000 volts to 34,500 volts. Sub-transmission lines deliver power over shorter distances to distribution substations and large industrial sites. At distribution substations and large industrial sites, transformers reduce the voltage to a lower level, typically 7,200 volts or 14,400 volts.



DISTRIBUTION LINES

The lines typically seen along rural roads and next to homes are generally single phase distribution line, energized at 7,200 or 14,400 volts. Transformers on the utility poles lower the voltage to between 120 and 480 volts to serve residential homes and small businesses.

Electric cooperatives own and maintain 2.6 million miles (42 percent) of the nation's distribution lines.



Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

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Athletes, volunteers turn out for 2017 Special Olympics

Stormy weather cuts games short on final day

By Karen Kaley

This installment of Cotton Cares could also be called Oklahoma Co-ops Care. Every year, Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives (OAEC) calls for volunteers to help with the Special Olympics Oklahoma (SOOK) – State Games in Stillwater. Dozens of co-op employees – and at least one former employee – answered the call in 2017, some for the first time, some for the 28th time.

“OAEC started recruiting co-op volunteers in May of 1989,” said Sid Sperry, the statewide organization’s director of

public relations, communications and research.

“Don Crabbe, who was director of cooperative services, was the principal organizer at that time. Don is now CEO at First Electric Cooperative in Arkansas – and is a former Cotton Electric Cooperative employee!”

Speaking of which, the 2017 Cotton Electric volunteers included Warren Langford, who has been retired from the co-op for two years. Ty Logan and Jennifer Kriz returned to SOOK for the fifth and seventh times, respectively. Karen



Cotton Electric volunteers cheer on competitors at Special Olympics Oklahoma.

Kaley was a first-time volunteer.

Cooperative volunteers work the track events held at Stillwater High School Stadium. First-time co-op volunteers brought enthusiasm and plenty of sunscreen for the outdoor activity. Veteran volunteers brought enthusiasm and lawn chairs for the long waits between heats.

The athletes compete by walking, running or maneuvering a wheelchair over varying distances. The volunteers get them sorted and lined up at the starting line, send them off and cheer them on. More volunteers whoop and holler and make note of the order in which the athletes cross the finish line. The order is recorded and athletes are sent off to collect awards.

This year’s event had a record number of athletes registered, more than 5,000 forming 351 teams. It looked to be a record-setter, but something apparently unusual happened.

Langford, who has volunteered at SOOK 15 times, said he has done so in high heat, blustery cold and dreary rain. This was the first time he saw the weather shut down the games.

About an hour into the final day of competition, lightning had been observed in the area. Safety rules dictate moving to safety for 30 minutes after

lightning is seen within 15 miles of the venue. Each new strike of lightning resets the clock.

All athletes, coaches, volunteers and officials gathered in a safe place to wait out the storm. After about 90 minutes of thunder, it was determined that another storm was following and we would spend more time in shelter than we would at competition.

So, we all packed up and went home.

Observation from this first-time volunteer: The event is special because it provides an opportunity for individuals whose disabilities keep them out of other competitions. The athletes are remarkable because they compete despite their additional hurdles.

But the competitors at Special Olympics are also just like you and me.

They put all they have into the race and don’t give up.

These athletes want to cross the finish line. They want to cross it first and will argue if it is a close finish.

They are disappointed if they don’t get to compete.

And, like any Olympian, these athletes are a source of inspiration for anyone who has ever doubted their ability to succeed when faced with special circumstances.



Cotton Electric volunteers at the 2017 Special Olympics Oklahoma included former CEO Warren Langford, warehouseman Ty Logan, marketing representative Jennifer Kriz and communication specialist Karen Kaley.

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Teas can be refreshing *and* healthy

A news article reporting that tea influences gene expression in women piqued my interest this week. The discussed study was only able to show that tea had an effect on gene expression in women but could not conclude whether the effect was good or bad. It ended with the frequent conclusion: More studies needed.

There is a lot of misinformation on the internet, but tea has been around for a long time and has been used in many cultures for treatment and healing. Science has yet to figure out all the secrets of tea, but anecdotal evidence points to tea as a healthy beverage option.

We do know that tea has bioactive compounds such as flavonoids, amino acids and caffeine. Flavonoids account for more than a third of the bioactive compounds in tea, and have a positive impact on inflammation and the immune system. Amino acids are the building blocks of protein and are responsible for cell structure and function. Caffeine is a stimulant; its health benefits continue to be researched and debated.

Otherwise, tea without additional ingredients has miniscule amounts of calories, sodium, potassium, carbohydrates, and plant-based fatty acids.

All types of tea come from the same plant, *Camellia Sinensis*. The different varieties are forged from variations in processing, growing and geography.

The two most common varieties are black tea and green tea; the main difference past taste being that black



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

Food For THOUGHT

tea contains caffeine, and green tea has very little caffeine.

Marketing will tell you one is better than the other, but science has not necessarily backed up those claims. If you are trying to avoid caffeine, green tea is your choice.

Matcha is a variety of green tea gaining popularity in the U.S. It is shade-grown for three weeks before processing, and this results in a higher caffeine green tea. It is then ground into a powder and can be used in cooking as well as drinking.

There are other teas which are not as common as green or black: Oolong, dark and white.

Herbal teas are not really tea unless they contain leaves from the *Camellia Sinensis* plant. As research increasingly shows that herbal remedies are effective in treating symptoms of the common cold, the medicinal herbal tea market is exploding to offer mixes of herbs

(not actual tea) that have a pharmacological effect. For example, some teas claim to help with a sore throat or cough.

If you are curious and want to learn more about herbs on your own, check out the American Botanical Council. If you have any type of chronic disease or are taking prescription medications, you must discuss the introduction of herbal teas with your health care providers.

Ready-to-drink tea continues to grow in popularity in the United States. It can be a better option than soda, but only if you look for tea with minimal additional ingredients. The tea aisle at the grocery store has exploded over the last five years with hundreds of options for black and green tea flavored with herbs, fruits and vegetables.

If you enjoy flavored teas, a healthier option is choosing tea bags with natural fruit and vegetable pieces added to the tea bag, and brew it at home. For the summer, just pour it over ice and take it to go.

Overall, tea, whether hot or cold, is a healthy beverage. It hydrates the body without significant addition of ingredients that do not fit in your health goals. It contains compounds that are suspected to promote health. Thanks to the ingenuity of tea manufacturers, you can now find a multitude of flavors, with caffeine or without caffeine, that do not add additional calories to your diet.

This summer when you are contemplating your next ice-cold beverage, give tea a try.



10 hot tips for green summer cooking

Keep your cool this summer when preparing meals. You can save money and reduce your carbon footprint with these 10 easy tips for going green when cooking summer meals (and year round, for that matter).

1. Cook outdoors when possible to reduce the load on your air conditioner. Try a solar cooker or oven. Solar cookers and ovens are by far the most energy-efficient cooking appliances. They require no fuel, reduce unwanted summer heat in your home by taking cooking outside, and can accommodate any food a slow cooker can. Some solar ovens can reach 500 degrees. To learn more, visit www.solarcooking.org.
2. Toaster ovens, convection ovens, and slow cookers get the job done with less energy than conventional stovetops or ovens, especially when preparing smaller meals.
3. Use as small a pan, as little water, and as little preheating time as possible.
4. Bake in glass or ceramic ovenware instead of metal. You can turn the temperature down by 25 degrees, and foods will cook in the same amount of time.
5. Avoid thawing food in the microwave. Thawing food in the fridge is far more energy efficient, contributes to the fridge's cooling, and is safer than thawing food on the countertop or in the sink.
6. Don't open the door and peek in the oven. Use the

- oven window instead.
7. Clean burner pans (the pans under the burners that catch grease) regularly. They'll more effectively reflect heat to the cookware. Dirty burner pans absorb heat and reduce efficiency.
8. Use flat-bottom cookware that rests evenly on the surface of electric coil burners, solid-disk elements, or radiant elements under smooth-top ceramic glass.
9. Use residual heat. Turn the stove or oven off before cooking is done to allow cooking to continue while reducing energy use. An electric burner element can be turned off two minutes before removing the cookware, since it remains hot. Ovens can be turned off 20 minutes before cooking's done.
10. Consider substituting one or more stovetop burners with an induction cooker. The typical efficiency of an induction cooker is 84 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. What's more, induction cookers (which require magnetic cookware such as cast iron or enameled steel) produce as much heat as gas and are less costly to operate than a conventional electric burner. Visit www.theinductionsite.com to learn more.

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, Solar Cookers International, American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy

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Serve Up a Sundae Bar

The only thing better than a dish of cold ice cream on a hot summer day is the chance to make it all your own. Let guests create their own dishes of deliciousness with a DIY sundae bar. Start with a healthy supply of cups, spoons and towels to mop up inevitable drips then fill the bar with irresistible options like these:

- A sampling of ice creams, like vanilla, chocolate and strawberry
- Fresh sliced fruit
- Crushed candies and cookies
- Sauces (chocolate, caramel and something fruity, too)
- Assorted nuts
- Crunchy favorites like crumbled cones or salty pretzels
- Coconut (raw and toasted)
- Whipped cream
- Sprinkles

ADD SIZZLE TO YOUR FOURTH

A dazzling fireworks display may be the grand finale for your celebration, but you can make your mouthwatering menu a close second with these ideas to light up your Fourth of July. From bold burgers to crisp salads and sweet sides, give your guests plenty of reason to feel festive all day long. And don't forget to add a little indulgence for all ages with a DIY dessert bar. Find more recipes perfect for the Fourth of July at culinary.net.

Photo courtesy of Getty Images



From left, Grilled Hawaiian Chicken and Tropical Coleslaw; Honey Baked Beans; and Bold Honey Barbecue Burger. Recipes on Page 16.

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