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The Cotton Current

A Publication of Cotton Electric Cooperative Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



“The Current - Informing Our Members Since 1957”

VOLUME 67

April 11, 2025

NUMBER 8

Be prepared and stay safe: Storm watches versus warnings

At any moment, 1,800 thunderstorms occur worldwide, according to the National Weather Service. That is 16 million storms a year.

Beyond the items in your preparedness kit, it is a good idea for you and your family to fully understand how dangerous storms can be and how to interpret weather alerts to help minimize risk.

Watch versus warning

When bad weather is approaching, people typically turn on the TV or pull up a weather app for information. If you see a severe weather watch or warning, something bad could be heading your way. However, many people do not consider the differences between the two.

A watch means there is a significant chance of a severe thunderstorm or tornado. Watch and wait for more information while taking precautionary measures, like unplugging electronics and checking the contents of your emergency preparedness kit.

A warning means that a severe thunderstorm or tornado has been spotted on radar. The moment you get a warning, take shelter in the safest part of your home, which is usually the basement or the most interior part.

Thunderstorms

Thunderstorms are some of the most common yet destructive weather events on Earth. Most of the damage comes from flooding caused by heavy rains, lightning strikes and high winds. Some storms also deliver hail and can even spawn tornadoes. Bad weather systems, such as those that cause thunderstorms, can cause broken windows, extreme water damage, fallen trees, downed power lines and more.

Do not ignore the potential hazards of thunderstorms:

- Keep flashlights or battery-operated lights well supplied with batteries, or charge them regularly.
- Keep a supply of nonperishable food and drinking water on hand.
- Turn off and unplug electronic equipment to protect it from power surges.
- Move valuables out of locations that may flood.

- If a power outage occurs, never use a portable generator in your home, enclosed structure or garage.
- Do not step into a flooded basement or other standing water. The water could be covering electrical outlets, appliances or cords. Never touch (or use) electrical appliances, cords, wires or switches while you are wet or standing in water.
- Never go near a downed power line, and warn others to stay away. If you see a downed line, call 911, and a crew will be dispatched to address the problem safely.
- If you encounter a downed power line while driving or after an auto accident, do not get out. Call 911 to report the downed line. If you must exit your vehicle after an accident because of a fire or smoke, make a solid, clean jump out, landing with both feet together. Then make solid hops with your feet together, hopping as far away as you can.
- If your home has been damaged by a flood, turn off the power to your house if it is safe to do so. (Do not turn power off at the breaker box while standing in water or in damp conditions.)

Tornadoes

The Great Plains have the perfect environment and climate for severe storm creation. While tornadoes can happen in any month, April, May and June have more than twice as many reported tornadoes as any other time of the year.

To stay safe during a tornado, be aware of weather conditions during thunderstorms that could breed tornadoes. Know the best place to shelter both indoors and out, and always protect your head, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Understanding severe thunderstorm and tornado watches and warnings can help keep you and your family safe. Do not underestimate the potential power of these weather systems. Take steps to protect yourselves and your property before a storm hits.

For more information about storm preparedness and electrical safety, visit www.cottonelectric.com/safety or www.safeelectricity.org.

STAYING SAFE DURING AN OUTAGE

We work hard to provide the most reliable service possible. Rest assured, if the power is out, we are on it!

The length of time it takes to restore your power depends on several factors, including the:




Extent of the storm's destruction



Severity of utility equipment damage



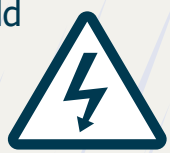
Number and extent of outages



Accessibility to damaged equipment

STAY SAFE UNTIL POWER IS RESTORED

- Stay far away and keep others away from downed power lines, which could be live and deadly.
- If you come across a downed line, immediately call 911 to report it.
- Never enter a flooded room; the water could be energized.
- If you are standing in water, do not turn on/off power or flip a switch.




Prepare for a storm by gathering these items:



Bottles of water




Nonperishable food




Portable phone charger



Prescriptions



Battery-operated radio




Flashlights




Extra batteries




Pet supplies




Blankets



Warm clothing




First aid kit



Hand sanitizer

Thank you for your patience during outages. When the lights go off, we are working safely and efficiently to restore power. The safety of our employees, as well as those we serve, is our top priority.



Power Cost Adjustment Calculated

The power cost adjustment now being applied to bills mailed after April 1, 2025, is \$0.00916 per kilowatt hour (kWh).

On a member's average bill of 1,300 kWh, this will amount to a charge of \$11.91 on the April bill.

March 2025 Temperature Extremes

Day	High	Low	Avg.	Day	High	Low	Avg.
1	76	41	59	16	66	30	48
2	70	43	57	17	86	35	61
3	73	49	61	18	87	48	68
4	65	45	55	19	70	46	58
5	61	34	48	20	64	29	47
6	65	33	49	21	73	41	57
7	80	42	61	22	83	36	60
8	48	40	44	23	71	42	57
9	64	39	52	24	79	34	57
10	76	34	55	25	87	44	66
11	82	33	58	26	81	59	70
12	82	36	59	27	83	54	69
13	81	38	60	28	77	59	68
14	71	52	62	29	87	60	74
15	62	35	49	30	67	48	58
Source: srh.noaa.gov/oun/				31	67	41	54
Average Daily High: 74				Average Daily Low: 42			


Did You Know?

Cotton Electric Cooperative HVAC Tune-Up rebate applications are open and must be received by June 30, 2025. Tune-ups must be completed between April 1 and June 20, 2025.

The next issue of *The Current* should arrive in mailboxes May 16, 2025.

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 TheCurrent@cottonelectric.com. You can also drop us a line at Cotton Electric Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572.



MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to safely deliver reliable and affordable power, provide excellent member service, and improve the quality of life in the communities we serve.

From the CEO

Red Flag Warnings protocol explained

Last month, the Cooperative and our members experienced extremely harsh conditions and elevated fire risk as Red Flag Warnings (RFWs) were issued throughout the state. On March 14, our crews battled dust storms, wind gusts and challenging conditions to restore outages to 13,576 meters and replaced 60 damaged poles. Several more RFWs were issued the following week.

You may have seen our posts on social media notifying you that due to forecasted weather conditions, we would follow our Red Flag Warning Day (RFWD) operational protocols. So, what does that mean, and why did it take longer to restore outages?

Red Flag Warning Day defined

By the National Weather Service definition, Red Flag Warnings are issued “when warm temperatures, very low humidities, and stronger winds are expected to combine to produce an increased risk of fire danger.” When forecast conditions indi-

cate an increased risk of fire danger, we will follow operational protocols to mitigate risk. One of these protocols involves adjusting equipment settings on reclosers.

What is a recloser?

A recloser is a device that opens a circuit when a fault occurs and then automatically closes the circuit when the fault is cleared. Like a circuit breaker in your home, it shuts off electric power when trouble occurs. Where a household circuit breaker remains shut off until it is manually reset, a recloser under normal operation automatically tests the electric line to determine whether the trouble has been removed. If the problem was temporary, like lightning, a windblown tree branch, bird or an animal, a recloser operating under standard settings will attempt to reset itself. If the problem clears, power is restored. If it does not, an outage results.

When operating under RFWD protocols, the reclosers will be

set to an alternate mode, meaning that if a fault occurs, the recloser will remain open without attempting to automatically reclose, helping to mitigate fire risks in certain conditions.

Restoring power during RFWDs

Currently, Cotton Electric crews must manually adjust each distribution recloser in the field and drive to each location. If a fault occurs, CEC employees visually inspect the affected circuit before reenergizing the line, which can be a lengthy process. Some remote operation and pre-configured settings are options at the substation level. However, a visual inspection prior to reenergization is still required.

Outage restoration estimates

During a RFWD, it is extremely difficult to estimate outage restoration times. Much of our distribution system is located in rural and remote areas with difficult terrain. For poles and lines located off the road, the line must be checked on foot. If



Jennifer Meason, CEO

it’s dark, the job is even more difficult for our crews and is more time consuming regardless of where it’s located.

We encourage all of our members to have a plan in place should power be off for an extended period of time. Also, we would like to remind the public that for our crews’ safety as well as their own, do not attempt to operate the Cooperative’s equipment. If you see a downed power line, stay away as it may be energized, and call us at 875-3351 to report it.

Thank you

Thank you for your support during the recent storms. We will continue to learn and evolve to best serve our members. Please contact me with any questions or concerns you might have.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Turn your suds into savings. Lower your energy use in the laundry room by washing clothes with cold water whenever possible, as heating water accounts for most of the energy used in a laundry cycle. Wash full loads to make the most of energy savings, and use high-efficiency detergent designed for cold washes. For drying cycles, clean the lint filter before each load to improve airflow, and use dryer balls to reduce drying time.

Source: www.energy.gov

February 2025 Operating Stats

	2025	2024
Total Amount Billed/Accrued	\$7,233,415	\$6,035,858
Cost of Purchased Power	5,168,957	4,190,795
Taxes	160,522	153,529
Total Operating Expense per Mile	1,307	1,098
Average Farm and Residential Bill	193	144
Average Farm and Residential kWh	1,648	1,204
Total Meters Billed (Farm, Residential)	19,823	19,607
Miles Energized	5,284	5,269
Density per Mile	3.75	3.72
New Service Connects YTD	47	60
Services Retired	12	18

Upcoming Deadlines for *The Current*

May

Ad Sales	May 2
Classified	May 2
Publish	May 16

June

Ad Sales	May 30
Classified	May 30
Publish	June 13

TheCurrent

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Jennifer MeasonCEO
Shane Bowers..... Vice President
Zach YoungDirector
Carli Eubank Communications Specialist

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Energy Efficiency

Keeping your second story comfortable

Maintaining consistent temperatures in a two-story home can be a challenge. This common issue stems from a combination of physics — heat rises as denser cold air settles — and the limitations of HVAC system designs in these types of homes. Fortunately, with some strategic adjustments and efficiency measures, you can tame those temperature swings and create a comfortable upstairs environment year-round.

The root of the problem

The primary culprit behind uneven temperatures is heat’s natural tendency to rise, also known as the chimney effect. In both the summer and winter, the hot air in the home will tend to migrate to the upstairs spaces. Standard HVAC systems, often sized for the whole house rather than individual zones, can exaggerate this. Add in poor insulation, leaky ducts, or inadequate airflow, and you’ve got a recipe for discomfort. Addressing these issues requires a mix of HVAC optimization and home-efficiency upgrades.

HVAC solutions

If your HVAC unit is older or undersized, it may not have the power to push conditioned air effectively to the second story. A professional load calculation (using *Manual J* standards) can determine if your system is appropriately sized and balanced. Oversized units cool too quickly without dehumidifying, while undersized ones strain to keep up. Upgrading to a properly sized, high-efficiency unit — look for a SEER2 (Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio) rating of 17 or higher — can make a significant difference.

For better control, consider a zoned HVAC system. By installing dampers in the ductwork and using multiple thermostats (one per zone), you can direct airflow where it’s needed most. In summer, more cool air can flow upstairs; in winter, warm air can be prioritized to where you need it. Variable-speed air handlers are another upgrade worth exploring. Unlike single-speed systems that blast air at full tilt, variable-speed units adjust output based on demand, improving circulation and efficiency.

Ductwork deserves scrutiny too. Leaky or uninsulated ducts in attics or walls waste energy and reduce airflow to the second floor. Have a technician inspect and seal ducts and insulate them to prevent heat gain or loss. If ducts are poorly designed (undersized, inadequate return air, or overly long supply runs), reconfiguring them can balance airflow between floors.

A ductless mini-split system is another option to ask a HVAC professional about. These systems offer efficient, zoned cooling and heating without major ductwork retrofits. Mount a unit on an upstairs wall, and you’ve got precise control where it counts.

Efficiency measures

Beyond HVAC tweaks, boosting your home’s efficiency can lighten the load on your system. Insulation is a game changer. Many second-story rooms suffer from heat gain through poorly insulated attics or exterior walls. This is a typical problem with bonus rooms or areas where the ceiling matches the roofline. Often these spaces are insulated with traditional batt insulation and do not provide

adequate resistance to heat absorbed on the roofline. Spray foam insulation provides superior resistance and may be a worthwhile consideration. Ensure that second-story knee walls (vertical second-story walls exposed to the attic) are properly insulated as well.

Air sealing tackles invisible leaks that disrupt temperature control. Gaps around windows, doors, electrical outlets, and attics let conditioned air escape. Use caulk, weather stripping, or foam sealant to plug these holes. A blower door test, conducted by your cooperative’s energy efficiency coordinator, can pinpoint leaks you might miss.

Everyday habits and add-ons

Simple habits can complement these upgrades. In summer, run ceiling fans counterclockwise to push cool air down; in winter, reverse them to circulate warm air. If zoning or manual dampers are not an option, close vents slightly on the first floor (but not fully — over-restricting airflow strains your system) to force more air upstairs. A programmable thermostat lets you adjust temperatures based on occupancy — cool the second floor before bedtime, for instance.

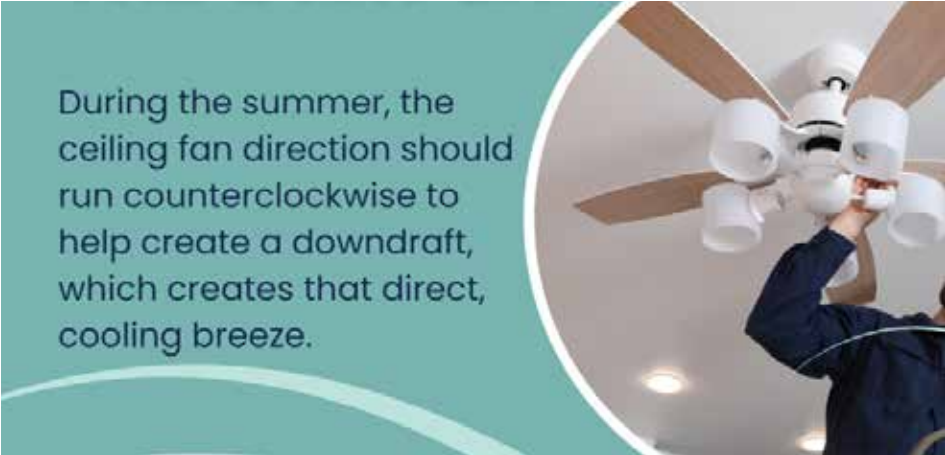


Heath Morgan,
Energy Efficiency
Coordinator

The payoff

Balancing temperatures in a two-story home isn’t just about comfort — it’s about efficiency. A well-tuned HVAC system paired with insulation, sealing, and smart habits can cut energy bills by 10%-30%, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Start with an HVAC checkup this spring, and take advantage of Cotton Electric’s HVAC Tune-Up Rebate. Move on to the DIY fixes, then scale up as your budget allows. With the right approach, your second story can finally feel like part of the same house.

For more information, visit www.cottonelectric.com/energy-efficiency or www.cottonelectric.com/hvac-tune-rebate.




During the summer, the ceiling fan direction should run counterclockwise to help create a downdraft, which creates that direct, cooling breeze.

Heating Degree Day and Cooling Degree Day Calendar

MARCH

HDD	YEAR	CDD
217	2025	20
282	2024	14
387	2023	7

Degree days measure how cold or warm a location is by comparing the average of the high and low (mean) of the outdoor temperatures recorded in that location to the standard U.S. temperature, which is 65 F. The assumption is that we don’t need heating or cooling to be comfortable when this is the outdoor temperature.



COTTON
ELECTRIC CO-OP

LOCALLY OWNED
BY OUR
MEMBERS





COTTON
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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation



A Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation (CECF) grant was awarded to the Town of Temple for LED lights for the nutrition center. Pictured left to right: Mayor of Temple Fritz Burrow, Public Works Director Billy Bruce, Cotton Electric CEO Jennifer Meason, CECF Vice President Carter Waid and Cotton Electric Vice President of Administration Shane Bowers. Photo by Carli Eubank.



The Stephens County Humane Society (SCHS) was awarded a CECF grant for spay/neuter services. Pictured left to right: (front row) SCHS Board Member Kathy Phillips, Chipper, SCHS shelter staff Kirsten Holmes, SCHS shelter staff Lilly Forte, SCHS shelter manager Courtney Myrme, SCHS shelter assistant manager Dylan Dennis, Axel, (back row) Board President John Losurdo, Cotton Electric Director of Communications Zach Young, SCHS Fundraising Chair Patti Whitaker, SCHS Board Member Michael Harris, SCHS shelter staff Gracee Jefferson, and SCHS Executive Director Kelly Nelson. Photo by Carli Eubank.



Chattanooga Fire and Rescue received a CECF grant for pumper engine equipment. Pictured left to right: Cotton Electric Director of Marketing and Communications Zach Young and Chattanooga Fire and Rescue member Adam Bohl. Photo by Carli Eubank.



EMAIL

ZYOUNG@COTTONELECTRIC.COM



MAIL

226 N. BROADWAY ST.,
WALTERS, OK 73572



WEBSITE

WWW.COTTONELECTRIC.COM/
GRANT-APPLICATIONS

SECOND-QUARTER APPLICATIONS DUE

MAY 13



WIRED UP FOR SAFETY

OKLAHOMA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Hosted by 

10 a.m. | Saturday, May 10

Cotton Electric Cooperative Community Center
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Utility scams in this age of AI: How to spot and avoid fraud

Someone calls you claiming to be from your utility company. They say your service will be cut off if you don't pay them immediately. Cotton Electric and other real utility companies don't do this. Scammers want to scare you into paying before you have time to confirm what they're telling you, and they are now using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to craft frauds that are difficult to detect.

Beware of these common scam tactics

- Disconnection threats: Scammers claim your service will be cut off without immediate payment. Cotton Electric never requests payment over the phone.
- Caller ID spoofing: Fraudsters use software to make calls appear legitimate.
- Overpayment claims: They may say you've overpaid and ask for personal or banking information to issue a refund.
- Smishing: Scammers send fake texts that seem to come from your co-op.
- Phishing attempts: Beware of emails that look like bills; always verify the sender's email before clicking links.

Watch for the following red flags

- High-pressure tactics that demand urgent action
- Unusual payment method requests (wire transfer, gift card, cryptocurrency)
- Poor grammar, misspellings and suspicious email addresses

AI use enhances utility scams

- AI helps scammers craft convincing emails that appear to be from legitimate utility companies and include the use of company colors and logos.
- Scammers use AI to create realistic-looking utility company websites that are nearly indistinguishable from legitimate ones.
- AI technology can clone the voices of utility company representatives, making phone scams convincing.
- AI analyzes victims' online presence and social media to create highly personalized spam related to your utility services.
- Scammers create geographically targeted online ads that appear when users search for keywords related to their energy bills.
- Scammers use AI for large-scale utility scams quickly and efficiently.

Protect yourself

- Take your time: Don't rush into payments or action.
 - If you don't recognize a phone number, hang up and verify any communication by calling Cotton Electric directly using our main office numbers, 580-875-3351 or 800-522-3520.
 - Never share personal information. Cotton Electric and other legitimate companies won't ask for sensitive details over the phone.
 - If someone claims to be a utility worker, request official identification.
- If you suspect a scam, report it to your cooperative and the FTC at www.ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

Cotton Electric and other legitimate utilities will provide multiple notices before disconnection and will not pressure you for immediate payment. If you are in doubt about your electric service, let Cotton Electric know so we can take proactive measures to both protect you and others from becoming victims.


BEWARE OF SCAM CALLS



Do not provide any information or agree to immediate payment; instead hang up and check with your utility by using the phone number listed on your power bill.

ESTATE AUCTION

Personal Property
Friday May 16th & Saturday May 17th
Preview Thursday May 15th 1-6p.m.
Scroggin Auction Service has been commissioned to offer at public auction the estate of Mrs. Nova Parton
Location: 3024 Rocking Horse Ranch Road Duncan, OK 73533
Directions: From Hwy 81 and Plato Rd. go 4 miles East to Waterplant Rd. Turn North and go 1/4 mile to auction site
For photos log onto www.auctionzip.com
Enter auctioneer ID #17788
Lots more will be added as we are still working on this auction



Scroggin Auction Service

Auctioneer-Parker Scroggins (580) 656-4416

Find us on facebook- Scroggins Auction.

Firearms:
Ithaca 12 gauge double barrel side by side
Stevens .410 over and under model 240
Revelation .410 single shot model 3554
Winchester .22 model 67A
Remington speed master .22 semi-auto model 552R

antique cake machines, cream separators, antique tractor seats, antique carnival chalk animals, wahoo boards, bedroom furniture, 14k Halliburton service awards, Sentry safe, stained glass, antique wall phone, old marbles, Roy Rogers memorabilia, lightening rods, book shelves, old cookie jars, Red Ryder BB guns, antique ham radio, antique stamp dispenser, Coca Cola bicycle, yard art, horse drawn equipment, pitcher pumps, parking meter, concrete bull and horse, wagon wheels, antique Erie gas pump, Ford tractor (not running), several wash barrels, chamber pot, tractor seat bar stool, Exacto knife in wood box, dog grooming stand, iron bed, wood carpenter box, Coke wire crate, ice chests, old childs electric oven (not easy bake), old singer sewing machine in case, old slide projector & caddy (full), indian dolls, Coke memorabilia, quilts, large meat grinder, cranberry picker, brace & bits, Farrier tool caddy w/tools, wooden hopechest, zippo lighter collection, metal double tree, orange tool box with leather tools, side crank hand drill, 48" 1 man saw, glass blocks, 30" rolling wire shelf, scroll wire shelf, scroll saw, small anvil, old radio and record player, blankets, 25" saddle, Coke collectibles, shop vac, rocking horse chair, 2 battery chargers 1 on wheels, maytag dryer (commercial technology) pumpkin chiminea, carousel horse and cart, collection of Thomas F Clark figurines, collection of Chinese checker boards, collection of barbie dolls, stanley storage cabinet, 2 reel push mowers, old postal scale, 3 chrome wire rack shelves, cast iron lamps, Farrier chaps, weedeater brand weedeater, craftsman carryall metal toolbox, kerosene lanterns, old typewriters, 3 48" man saws, 2 man crosscut saws, 1/2 " drill with bits, 2 band saws, drill press, 3 railroad carts with wheels, 4 rolling tool boxes, cast iron bed with rails, 6' ladder, bag of duck decoys, 1953 Buick 4 door and much more to come....

Auctioneers Message:

This is an absolute auction. Announcements made day of sale supersede any previous advertisements. Everything sells AS IS, WHERE IS.

Terms & conditions of Sale:

Cash, Personal Check and Company Check accepted with positive ID Buyers MUST provide a copy of Sales Tax Permit day of sale to avoid sales tax.

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Tyler Dennis - (580) 641-0137

STORM PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST:

- ☒ FLASHLIGHT
- ☒ BATTERIES
- ☒ GENERAC WHOLE-HOME GENERATOR

Exclusive to co-op members

Contact Heath Morgan for details at 580-875-3351





Electric co-ops contribute more than \$2.7M to area schools

The membership of Cotton Electric makes a substantial impact on local schools in several ways. For example, electric cooperatives in Oklahoma are levied a 2% gross receipts tax on the revenue at both the wholesale and retail level in lieu of an ad valorem tax.

When Cotton Electric members pay electric bills, the cooperative remits the 2% gross receipts tax to the state, and 95% of those funds go directly back to local school districts. During 2024, \$2,787,335.28 was apportioned back to the 30 school districts in our service area.

On a percentage basis, electric cooperatives contribute more tax dollars to local school districts than other utilities. In Oklahoma, investor-owned utilities pay ad valorem taxes instead of gross receipts tax, and only 58% of these tax monies go to school districts within which investor-owned utilities own

property. Municipal utilities contribute no tax money to public schools.

The Oklahoma Tax Commission oversees the apportionment of the gross receipts tax. The amount paid to each school is based upon the number of miles of power lines that Cotton Electric and Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) have in each school district. WFEC, Oklahoma’s largest locally owned power supply system, is a generation and transmission cooperative owned by 21 distribution cooperatives, including Cotton Electric.

The table shows the miles of line serving each district and an estimation of amounts contributed through the 2024 gross receipts tax.

Supporting area schools has always been a priority for Cotton Electric Cooperative. It is our privilege to provide educational presentations, sponsorships and assistance when needed.

2024 Gross Receipts Tax by School Districts

	Cotton & WFEC Taxes	Cotton Miles of Line
District		
Apache	\$4,254.88	1.20
Big Pasture	\$95,809.96	238.38
Bishop	\$335.77	1.27
Bray-Doyle	\$115,942.92	142.61
Cache	\$127,724.82	226.93
Central	\$109,014.82	242.76
Chattanooga	\$163,272.10	323.15
Comanche	\$245,918.26	301.23
Davidson	\$27,573.65	33.45
Duncan	\$102,474.52	200.10
Elgin	\$112,861.19	346.57
Empire	\$98,382.25	246.63
Fletcher	\$46,514.76	26.94
Flower Mound	\$380.68	1.44
Fox	\$4,502.35	17.03
Frederick	\$43,521.33	6.20
Geronimo	\$59,584.51	171.23
Grandfield	\$54,489.60	163.26
Grandview	\$59,520.61	115.12
Indianoma	\$79,860.63	163.67
Lawton	\$49,216.87	126.92
Marlow	\$63,543.31	242.38
Ringling	\$63,079.42	23.51
Rush Springs	\$160,597.95	155.70
Ryan	\$66,178.28	127.35
Sterling	\$76,081.90	172.36
Temple	\$64,263.44	230.43
Velma	\$345,570.50	528.59
Walters	\$230,495.49	299.10
Waurika	\$116,368.51	248.41
Totals	\$2,787,335.28	5,123.92

UNCOMFORTABLE?

Does your home have any of these symptoms?

- ☐ Rooms that get too hot or too cold?
- ☐ High utility bills?
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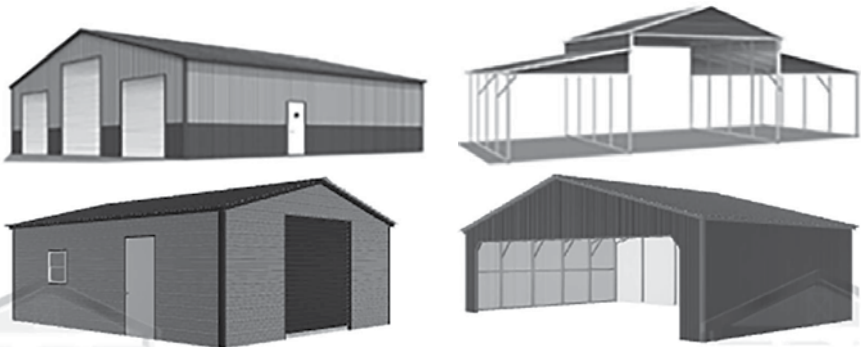
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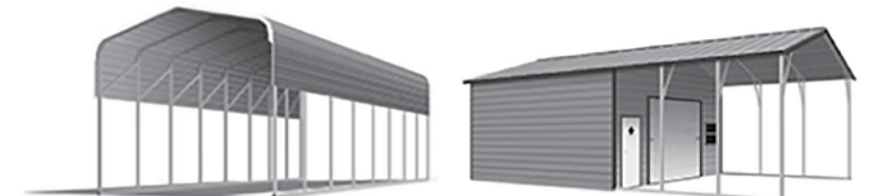
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COTTON
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Local volunteers embrace veterans with comfort and honor

By Carli Eubank

Cotton Electric Charitable Foundation (CECF) grants, made possible by our members’ participation in Operation Round Up, invest in local organizations to help them further their mission in our communities. A recent CECF grant to the Southwest Oklahoma Quilts of Valor quilters is helping the group bring recognition and comfort to local veterans, stitch by stitch.

The Southwest Oklahoma Quilts of Valor quilters is one of the newer groups to join the nationwide Quilts of Valor Foundation, which began in 2003. The foundation was born from a dream of its founder, Catherine Roberts, whose son was deployed to Iraq at the time.

According to the foundation’s website, Roberts recalled in her dream seeing a young man sitting on the side of his bed in the middle of the night, hunched over with a permeating feeling of utter despair. She could see his war demons clustered around, dragging him down into an emotional gutter. Then, she saw him wrapped in a quilt, and his whole demeanor changed from one of despair to one of hope, well-being and healing. Today, volunteer groups across the country follow Roberts’ vision in creating quality-made Quilts of Valor to recognize, honor and thank more than 400,000 veterans.

The Southwest Oklahoma Quilts of Valor group was formed when two individuals with military ties were brought together in a time of need. Last year, Dolores Chesser, a member of the quilting group, visited the AMVETS Post 11 office in Duncan for help with funding and paperwork, following the passing of her husband, a Vietnam veteran.

While there, she visited with AMVETS Post 11 Commander Kenneth Youngblood, who had recently received a Quilt of Valor for his own military service. Youngblood knew of Chesser’s background in quilting and asked if she would be interested in starting a Quilts of Valor group in southwest Oklahoma. Chesser jumped on the idea and reached out to several friends, who have built a community dedicated to honoring local veterans.

“My husband served in Vietnam, and when soldiers would come back, they couldn’t wear their uniforms because they were spit on, degraded and not welcomed at all. It was such a hard time, and I remember that very strongly,” Dolores said. “This group of ladies has been a lifesaver.”

Each member of the Southwest Oklahoma Quilts of Valor group has a personal connection to the military, whether through the service of a spouse, parent, child, sibling or friend. This shared, special bond strengthens



Pictured left to right: Members of the Southwest Oklahoma Quilts of Valor group include (back row) Cindy Merchant, Mary Youngblood, Lizi Blacker, Susan Taylor, (front row) Dolores Chesser, Nina Morris, Bobbie Taylor and Jo Nolen. Photo by Carli Eubank.

their time invested into the quilts, the veterans and each other.

“We had a meeting and decided to form a Quilts of Valor quilting group because we wanted to assist and award something meaningful to people who have earned the valor and honor during their service,” said Cindy Merchant, a member of the quilting group, “especially those who don’t have visitors or support around them. These ladies are all about recognizing and honoring these individuals.”

Mary Youngblood, a member of the quilting group, shared that veterans are often overwhelmed with emotion when presented their Quilt of Valor.

“I think particularly with quilts, because you can touch them and use them, the hug analogy is a really good description of the impact these quilts

have on veterans,” said Nina Morris, a member of the quilting group. “Each quilt, just like each veteran, is uniquely created.”

When they come together, members of the Southwest Oklahoma Quilts of Valor pour their time, heart and experience into each quilt, knowing that each veteran they honor stays with them in spirit throughout the process. With every quilt, it is not just a piece of art but a lasting tribute to the bravery and sacrifices made by our local heroes.

For anyone looking to volunteer or donate to Southwest Oklahoma Quilts of Valor, email swoklahomaquiltsvalor@gmail.com. For more information or to nominate a service member, visit www.qovf.org.



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Co-op receives more than 200 submissions for coloring contest

After working through 250 submissions, we are happy to announce the winners of this year's National Lineworker Appreciation Coloring Contest:

- Pre-K and kindergarten: Bentley Anderson
- First grade and Second grade: Britton Dobbs
- Third grade and Fourth grade: Emma King
- Fifth grade and Sixth grade: Lola Epperson

Submissions were reviewed for overall appeal, accuracy and creativity.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the coloring contest and helped show appreciation to our lineworkers.

Congratulations to our winners!

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July 11-13
August 8-10
September 5-7
October 10-12
November 7-9
December 5-7

Planning a yard project? Don't just dig in

April is National Safe Digging Month. It reminds us all that as we begin beautifying our yards, we shouldn't just dig in. According to 811, the "Call Before You Dig" national hotline, an underground utility is damaged every nine minutes because someone didn't call before digging.

Whether it is a DIY project or you are hiring a professional, call 811 or submit a ticket online at www.okie811.org at least three business days prior to starting any digging project to request that all underground utilities be marked. The service is free.

You may think it won't hurt anything to dig in an unmarked yard when landscaping, installing a fence, deck or mailbox, or even "just" planting a small flower bed or bush, but damaging an underground cable can have serious consequences.

Hitting a line could result in serious injuries and disrupted service for you and your neighbors. It could also make a dent in your wallet for repair fees or other fines.

The 811 hotline points out that there is more than one football field's length of buried utilities for every man, woman, and child in the U.S.

Before digging:

- Notify your state's one-call center by calling 811 or requesting an online ticket at least 3 business days before work begins.
 - Wait the required amount of time for affected utility operators to respond to your request and validate your ticket.
 - Confirm that all affected utility operators have responded to your request and marked underground utilities.
 - Dig carefully around the marks with care.
- Remember that privately owned underground lines will not be marked by location flaggers. Examples of private lines or equipment include well and septic, underground sprinkler systems, invisible fencing, gas or electric lines that serve a detached



building, as well as any lines (electric, water, sewer) from the meter to your home.

For more information about safe digging, visit www.okie811.org. For more information about electrical safety, visit www.cottonelectric.com/safety or www.safeelectricity.org.


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Always on call for you

By Carli Eubank

Imagine waking up to a phone call in the middle of the night, leaving your family behind to do your job and braving a list of unpredictable weather conditions outside. Or picture leaving your child’s birthday party early because you’re called out for work. For lineworkers at Cotton Electric and electric cooperatives across the nation, these situations are a reality.

Lineworker Appreciation Day falls on April 14 this year, but any day is a good day to show your appreciation.

Going through the lineworker program is no easy course. Crewmen enter the lineworker apprentice program after being on the job a minimum of six months. Then, they spend three years studying, taking tests and receiving on-the-job training before officially becoming a lineworker. After an additional year in the field, a lineworker may be considered for a journeyman position.

Being a lineworker is ranked one of the most dangerous professions in the country, involving at least 7,000 hours of train-

ing for each individual, maintaining lines in eight counties and being on call 24/7, 365 days a year. Each day is different for a lineworker, filled with work orders that include maintaining more than 5,200 miles of line, trimming trees, following up on light orders, responding to outages, building new service and installing equipment to improve our electrical system. These are just a few statistics that represent Cotton Electric Co-operative lineworkers, not including the immeasurable heart and determination to their main goal: to serve our members and keep the lights on in our local communities.

Whether it’s a severe thunderstorm or a beautiful spring day, if a lineworker receives an outage call, all attention is given to the members in the dark. If you report an outage to your cooperative, our dispatcher gathers and analyzes the details reported and immediately notifies a lineworker to respond.

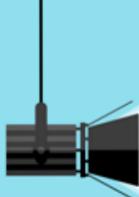
The job of a lineworker takes respect, grit and something special inside someone to be

able to push through long days working in snow, ice, wind and rain to power our communities. Restoring power safely takes great responsibility in working with physical and mental strength and trusting to have one another’s back. Many lineworkers say that their greatest sense of accomplishment is seeing the lights come back on while serving their local communities.

Each lineworker on this page has their own story, experience and devotion to keeping the lights on. Even though Lineworker Appreciation Day is recognized on April 14, let us remember to thank lineworkers beyond this one day.

Thank you, lineworkers.





Community
Spotlight

If you would like your community event listed in the May issue, please submit information by calling 580-875-3351 or sending an email to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com by May 2. Only events occurring after May 16 will be published in the next issue.

Editor's Note: We recommend checking for cancellations with local sources before attending any event.

Geronimo Volunteer Fire Department fundraiser

Show your support by grabbing a meal at the Geronimo Volunteer Fire Department's fish fry fundraiser. Menu includes fish, hushpuppies, coleslaw, rice and beans, and a drink. Meals are donations only, and all proceeds go to support the Geronimo Volunteer Fire Department. This event is set from noon to 3 p.m. April 12 at the Geronimo Nutrition Center.

Plant swap in Duncan

The Stephens County Oklahoma Home and Community Education clubs will sponsor a plant swap in Duncan. Attendees should bring at least one of the following (pest-free and tagged): plant, roots, cuttings or seeds. The purpose is to share extras and nourish a love of plants. The event is from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Saturday, April 26 in the Heritage Room at the Stephens County Fairgrounds, 1618 S. 13th St. in Duncan. For more information, call 580-255-3460.

Hulen Volunteer Fire Department fundraiser

The Hulen Volunteer Fire Department will be hosting the Second Annual Red Line Poker Run and Rally. The day will be filled with approximately silent auction items, prizes, a homemade dessert auction, local vendors and 100 miles of scenic routes. Breakfast and lunch will be available

to buy. Registration costs vary. Registration begins before the event at 7:30 a.m. April 27, at the Hulen Volunteer Fire Department, 13702 SE Baseline Rd. in Walters. For more information, visit their Facebook page or call 580-351-8400 or 580-678-8737.

SCHS hosts fundraiser

Support Stephens County Humane Society (SCHS) by watching more than 1,000 golf balls drop for a chance to win \$1,000, sponsored by BEH Properties, LLC. Participants can buy a golf ball for \$10 and watch as a cherry picker drops all numbered golf balls onto the fairway. The ball closest to the pin wins a \$1,000 cash prize. You do not have to be present to win. The event is set to start at 3 p.m. on May 10 at the Duncan Golf and Tennis Club. For more information or to buy your golf ball, call 580-641-0067 or visit the SCHS Facebook page.

Food pantry open once monthly

Walters Community Food Pantry is open from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month. The pantry is in the old City Hall, 131 1/2 W. California St. Pantry organizers try to provide a two-week supply of basic staples to anyone with identification and proof of Cotton County residency. Monetary donations may be sent to Food Pantry, c/o Paul Metcalfe, 211 E. Colorado St., Walters, OK 73572. For information, call Roger Noland at 580-591-6826.

Blessings Boutique open monthly

Marlow First United Methodist Church opens its Blessings Boutique from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. every first and third Tuesday of the month. Clothing donation drop-off days are Tuesdays, or donors can call the church at 580-658-2765 to make other arrangements.


PHOTO
OF THE
MONTH



Cotton Electric member Jeff Jones snapped this photo of his friend fishing on the Blue River near Tishomingo at sunset.

Enter your “best shot” in our Photo of the Month contest. The theme for May is Splash of Color! Entries can be emailed to TheCurrent@CottonElectric.com or mailed to The Current, 226 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572. Winners will receive a Cotton Electric prize.

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Stress and food: April is Stress Awareness Month



Kim Bandelier, MPH, RD, LD

Food For THOUGHT

April is Stress Awareness Month. Dietary choices can be affected by stress, and the food environment can cause stress. The relationship is complex, but given our need for food to function, food-related stress can be a big contributor to our overall life stress. Our constant access to food-related information, good and bad information, also contributes to food-related stress. Keeping things simple, making a plan, and keeping up with annual health checks can all help decrease food-related stress. A healthy diet can also decrease stress.

Stress triggers the release of hormones that can impact food choices. Stress causes the release of cortisol, a hormone that

can increase appetite for foods high in sugar, salt, and fat. It can also affect other hormones in the body that increase appetite (ghrelin) and decrease appetite (leptin).

The effect of stress on food intake is individualized, but it is important to be aware of. In times of stress do you lose your appetite? Do you tend to eat more? If you eat more, what types of foods do you consume? Since there is a hormonal component, and hormones are hard to fight, it might be easier to focus on managing the stress than micromanaging the food choice.

Lack of access to food is stressful. It is estimated that 18 million households in the U.S. experienced food insecurity at some time during 2023. Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of safe and nutritionally adequate food or the ability to acquire food in socially acceptable ways. Government programs exist to help fill this nutrition gap (for example, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infant, and Children program, National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, etc.), but they are supplemental. Many people are reliant upon local food pantries and food banks. Food insecurity is linked to chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease. If you have plenty of food, consider engaging in local programs to help combat food insecurity.



Stress can affect individuals' dietary choices, making it important to be aware of how your food intake responds to stress. Photo courtesy of MetroCreative.

Research indicates volunteering can decrease stress levels, as well.

For many, the act of obtaining and providing food is stressful. This type of food stress is present if you are just cooking for one or for a household. Working parents are especially subjected to stress around providing food for a family due to time constraints, financial strains, and nutritional concerns. Tack on a food allergy, chronic disease or conflicting nutrition advice from media and well-meaning friends, and the stress increases.

Here are some basic ways to decrease food stress related to eating at home:

- Offer a lean protein, fruit, vegetable, whole grain, and source of calcium for meals eaten at home.
- Don't stress if kids refuse something; keep exposing them to the different food groups.
- Let the grocery store do some of the work for you if can afford it; many grocery stores are prepackaging very healthy options that are quick and easy to prepare at home.

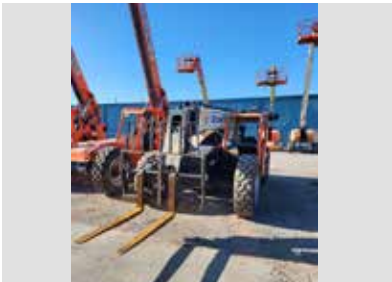
• Paying attention to portion size and fullness are key to making whatever food you are eating fit into a healthy dietary pattern (this is especially important when dining away from home).

The media (social, legacy, etc) is riddled with food misinformation. Even when the headlines report the latest study on certain food, the essential context of "further study needed" is never in the headlines but almost always present in the actual study. *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the MyPlate website are still the best starting point for daily, healthy eating. And let's not forget about exercise, which can also greatly reduce stress.

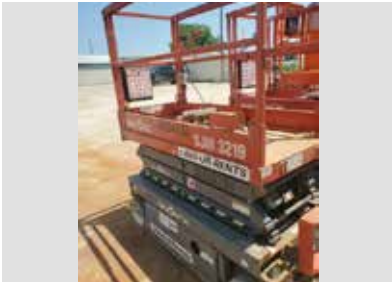
If you have a chronic disease, seeking food advice from a health care professional, especially a registered dietitian nutritionist, will help modify your diet based on your chronic disease, lifestyle, and economic status and potentially take a lot of stress out of your relationship with food.

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Easter apps made easy

(Family Features) If you'll be hosting friends and family for Easter this year, creating the perfect spread doesn't have to be hard. Make your gathering as simple as it is delicious by serving dishes that can be made ahead of time then easily put together on the big day.

Opting for an array of appetizers can help keep hungry people out of the kitchen until the main course is ready. Featuring easy prep and short cook times, these apps from "Cookin' Savvy" can let you spend more time creating memories with loved ones

Whether you're celebrating with your nearest and dearest or hosting a larger crowd, these Deviled Eggs, Pimento Cheese Bites and Spinach Bites recipes can be halved or doubled to fit your needs. Plus, they feature many ingredients you may already have on-hand, making them easy to prep ahead of time to avoid spending too much time in the kitchen while trying to host.

Find more recipe inspiration to make your Easter celebration extraordinary at Culinary.net.



Spinach bites

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"
Yield: 24 deviled eggs

- Ingredients:
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened

1/2 cup mayonnaise

1/2 cup sour cream

1 cup thawed frozen spinach

1/2 cup Parmesan cheese

1/2 cup mozzarella cheese

1 package (2 1/2 ounces) real bacon pieces

1 teaspoon garlic powder

2 teaspoons onion powder

salt, to taste

pepper, to taste

1 package (2 sheets) frozen puff pastry

Directions:

With hand mixer, blend cream cheese, mayonnaise, sour cream, spinach, Parmesan cheese, mozzarella, bacon pieces, garlic powder, onion powder and salt and pepper, to taste.

Heat oven to 400 F.

Thaw and roll out puff pastry sheets. Cut each sheet into 12 squares. Place each puff pastry square into hole in muffin pan then spoon spinach mixture into each square and pinch corners together. Bake 15 minutes and serve warm.

Notes: Spinach mixture can be made in advance and kept in refrigerator up to 5 days before using. Recipe can be halved or doubled depending on needs.



Pimento cheese bites

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"
Yield: 12 shells and 12 tops

- Ingredients:
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

8 ounces cream cheese, softened

1/2 cup mayonnaise

1 jar (4 ounces) pimentos, drained

1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

1/2 teaspoon onion powder

1 package (2 1/2 ounces) real bacon pieces

salt, to taste

pepper, to taste

2 packages frozen puff pastry shells

Directions:

With hand mixer, blend cheddar cheese, cream cheese, mayonnaise, pimentos, garlic powder, onion powder, bacon pieces and salt and pepper, to taste, until smooth; set aside.

Heat oven to 400 F.

Thaw then bake pastry shells 15 minutes.

Remove tops and set aside. Spoon pimento cheese mixture into each shell.

Place dab of pimento cheese mixture on tops for smaller appetizers.

Notes: Pimento cheese mixture can be made in advance and kept in refrigerator up to 5 days before using. Recipe can be halved or doubled depending on needs.



Deviled eggs

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"
Yield: 16 deviled eggs

- Ingredients:
- 8 boiled eggs

1/2-3/4 cup mayonnaise

2 tablespoons mustard

2 tablespoons dill pickle juice

1 package (2 1/2 ounces) real bacon pieces

1 teaspoon garlic powder

2 teaspoons onion powder

salt, to taste

pepper, to taste

smoked paprika, for garnish (optional)

Directions:

Slice each egg and place whites on plate and yolks in bowl.

In bowl of yolks, add 1/2 cup mayonnaise, mustard, pickle juice, bacon pieces, garlic powder, onion powder and salt and pepper, to taste. With fork or hand mixer, blend until smooth. Add more mayonnaise until mixture reaches desired smoothness.

Spoon or pipe mixture into egg whites. Garish with smoked paprika, if desired.

Note: Deviled eggs can be made day before and kept covered in refrigerator until needed.



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SPRING EFFICIENCY WORD SEARCH

Did you know there are several ways to save energy during spring months? Read the energy-saving tips below to learn more, then find the bolded words in the puzzle below.

E	S	W	Z	S	V	M	P	A	S	M	M	E	Z	R
Y	C	T	Z	I	T	I	B	S	R	D	N	O	L	A
F	K	J	H	Y	N	X	S	U	E	X	U	N	P	I
P	R	K	N	G	R	E	N	F	G	Q	L	J	T	Z
G	Z	I	K	D	I	M	P	E	R	E	X	W	A	S
Q	L	X	L	F	Y	L	P	I	A	Z	Q	C	E	D
F	V	Z	N	X	S	F	D	G	H	U	Z	E	G	X
E	N	E	R	G	Y	M	I	E	C	K	R	N	F	G
B	H	V	J	E	O	F	E	I	L	T	I	C	Q	S
K	P	T	Q	J	J	C	D	L	E	H	G	C	V	I
Q	Z	N	N	C	S	V	Q	D	D	W	P	N	E	M
T	P	T	T	V	L	I	A	U	P	W	X	P	I	F
L	D	R	O	J	A	H	H	I	Q	B	F	F	U	F
C	T	G	B	G	S	P	P	T	G	I	W	K	M	Y
S	W	O	D	N	I	W	R	S	K	M	W	Y	U	K

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- Plant **shade trees** around your home to block unwanted heat from the sun.
- Unplug devices and electronics that consume energy when they're not in use, like phone **chargers**.
- Seal air leaks around exterior doors and **windows** to save energy and keep your home comfortable.
- Ceiling fans cool people, not rooms. To save **energy**, turn them off when you leave the room.

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	1				3	7		
						5		
				4			1	3
	3	9						8
			8	2			4	
		8				1		2
4			6		1			
	5			8				
	7	2	5	9				

Level: Advanced

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Parting Shot



(pictured left to right) Gavin Waller and Major Fleetwood received a scholarship from Cotton Electric while attending the 2025 Leadership Summit. Photo courtesy of Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives.

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