

# Make the Roads Safe



MESSAGE FROM  
**EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
 AND GENERAL MANAGER DARRYL SCHRIVER**

**SAFETY IS, WAS AND ALWAYS WILL BE A PRIORITY AT TRI-COUNTY Electric Cooperative.** This includes the safety of you, our members, as well as that of our employees.

We are proud of our safety record and the measures that we put in place to safeguard those who work to bring you a steady supply of electricity. That especially goes for our lineworkers and support crews, who have some of the most dangerous jobs around.



BURWELL AND BURWELL PHOTOGRAPHY | ISTOCK

**While some of our crews' most dangerous work is high in the sky, distracted drivers on the ground also pose a significant risk.**

narrow roads that run through our service territory. It's in these situations that you can help keep your electric cooperative workers safe.

If you see utility vehicles and line crews working, give them and the road ahead all of your attention. 8003593702

Slow down and, if it is safe, move over to give crews as much space as possible.

Respect traffic cones, flashing lights and other signals. They could be the only thing between your car and workers or equipment.

With your cooperation, the dangers of line work don't have to be increased by traffic. There is much our crews can do to enhance their safety, but there's not much protection from a distracted driver.

Please be careful, be aware, slow down and help protect Tri-County EC's most valuable asset: our people.



SLOBODI | ISTOCK.COM

## Don't Hang That Sign!

**THERE ARE MORE THAN 130 MILLION** wooden utility poles in the United States, estimates the North American Wood Pole Council. That ample vertical real estate may look appealing when you need somewhere to hang your sign, deer stand, basketball hoop, clothesline or satellite dish. 800719306

Don't make that mistake. Attaching items to utility poles is not only illegal, it's dangerous, too.

It may seem innocent, but one pin-hole from a tack, nail or staple lodged in a pole can pierce a lineworker's glove, stripping away critical protection from thousands of volts of electricity. Obstructions also can impede lineworkers' ability to climb and inspect poles.

Anyone placing items on poles also risks exposing themselves to thousands of volts of electricity. This is especially true of structures anchored to poles. It's always wise to keep any structure at least 10 feet away from utility poles.

Please help Tri-County EC keep our linemen—and our community—safe. Don't attach unauthorized, dangerous items to our poles.



# Insulate To Feel Great

**DO YOU EVER FEEL A CHILL, CRANK UP THE HEAT, HEAR THE FURNACE KICK ON ...** then feel no warmer? Your home might need better insulation.

Heat flows from a warmer spot to a cooler one until there is no longer a temperature difference. This means that in winter, heat flows directly from heated living spaces in your home to an adjacent garage, unheated attic and outdoors.

Properly insulating your home decreases this flow by providing resistance. Unless your home was specially constructed for energy efficiency, you probably can reduce your energy bills by adding more insulation.

## Inspect and Evaluate

**To determine whether you should add insulation, find out:**

- ▶ Where your home is, isn't and should be insulated.
- ▶ What type (R-value and thickness) of insulation you already have.

Check the walls, floors and ceilings in unheated spaces such as the attic and garage. Structural elements usually are exposed in these areas, which makes it easy to see the type and thickness of surrounding insulation.

**To inspect exterior wall insulation through an electrical outlet:**

1. Turn off power to the outlet. 800681549
2. Remove the cover and shine a flashlight into the gap around the outlet box. You should be able to see if there is insulation in the wall and possibly how thick it is.
3. Pull out a small amount of insulation, if needed, to help determine its type.

Use this method to check outlets on all floors in old and new parts of your house. Just because you find insulation in one wall doesn't mean it's everywhere in the house.

## Choose the Right Insulation

Once you've figured out the type(s) and thickness of existing insulation, consult the U.S. Department of Energy's online insulation fact sheet at [energy.gov/energysaver/insulation](http://energy.gov/energysaver/insulation) to determine the corresponding R-values.

Once you find out the R-values of your existing insulation, you then can use the Home Energy Saver tool at [hes.lbl.gov](http://hes.lbl.gov) to determine how much insulation you need to add and where to add it for maximum energy efficiency.

Select the proper type of insulation for your home once you know where you'll be installing the new stuff and what R-value you want the installation to achieve.

## Tri-County Electric Cooperative

600 N.W. Parkway, Azle 76020

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## Contact Us

### CALL US

**(817) 444-3201**

### FIND US ON THE WEB

**[tcectexas.com](http://tcectexas.com)**

### COOPERATIVE OFFICES

#### Central Headquarters

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#### Southwest District Office

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(817) 279-7010

#### Northeast District Office

4900 Keller Hicks Road, Fort Worth 76244  
(817) 431-1541

#### B-K District Office

419 N. Main, Seymour 76380  
(940) 888-3441

### IT PAYS TO STAY INFORMED!

Find your account number in pages 18-25 of *Texas Co-op Power*, and you will receive a \$20 credit on your TCEC electric bill. Simply contact one of the offices listed above and make them aware of your discovery!

# Scammers Ramping Up

*Slow them down with skepticism, vigilance*



**SCAMMERS ARE TARGETING UNSUSPECTING CITIZENS WITH** greater frequency—and increasing creativity. Crooks now threaten victims with everything from legal action involving the IRS to turning off power to your home. Or they pretend to help victims avoid complications with utility, cellphone, video streaming, bank or other accounts.

But there is good news: Scams are being recognized and reported more often. And all it takes to thwart one is awareness and vigilance.

## A Few Common Scams

Staying alert and cautious every day can help you avoid these common scams.

**The Utility Scam:** An individual poses as an employee of your electric cooperative, telling you that your power will be turned off for nonpayment of your bill. The scammer says you can avoid disconnection by giving them money via prepaid credit or debit card.

**The Something-for-Nothing Scam:** A con artist claims to represent a government program that helps pay utility bills. They say your bill can be paid with stimulus money; all you have to do is “verify” your bank account, credit card or Social Security number. No such government program exists. Sharing this information puts you at risk for identity theft and financial damage—and for electricity disconnection when the bill isn’t actually paid by the bogus program.

**The Netflix Scam:** This email scam targets subscribers of the Netflix video streaming service, warning that their account is

being canceled. The objective is to steal personal and credit card information. The professional-looking, personalized email often bears the subject line “Your suspension notification” and includes a link to a fake Netflix page, where you are prompted to enter your login information and credit card number.

## Avoid Being Scammed

Despite differing tactics, all scams share one objective: to get money or sensitive information from you. Never provide passwords or PINs, nor your Social Security, credit card, bank or other account numbers, unless you initiated the contact and trust the person with whom you are speaking. No legitimate business should ever contact you to ask for personal financial information.

► If someone comes to your home claiming to be a cooperative employee and demands to collect money or inspect parts of your property, note the person’s identification, then make them wait outside your locked door. Call the co-op immediately to verify whether the person is, in fact, an employee. If not, call local police and do not let the individual into your home.

► If you receive a call from someone who pressures you for immediate payment or personal information, do not respond to their requests. Instead, hang up. Call the company they claimed to represent, then local authorities.

► Think before you respond to an email. View with suspicion any emails that push you to click on links or otherwise act immediately. If you want to change settings for any account, never click on links in an email. Instead, independently navigate to the site in your browser. 800750039

## After a Scam

If you suspect you’ve already been the target of a scam:

**Be proactive.** If you already have provided financial information to someone you later suspect as fraudulent, immediately contact your bank.

**Report the incident.** Notify the organization that the scammer claimed to represent and the police. They might not be able to do anything, but every report helps build a body of information to identify and stop these scams in the future.

**Do not fall for a “recovery” scam.** Don’t give anybody any more money on the promise that they will get your lost money back. It’s just another scam.

**Inform others.** Share this information with friends and family so they do not fall prey to scams.





ANTONIOQUILLEN | ISTOCK.COM

# Four Steps To Stave Off Sick Building Syndrome

**RESEARCHERS FROM HARVARD AND SYRACUSE UNIVERSITIES MONITORED THE WORK-**place habits of two dozen office workers over two weeks in 2017. Unbeknownst to the workers, the scientists changed the air quality of their work environment, oscillating between accepted workplace standards and “optimized” conditions with more outdoor air and less of the odors that come from office supplies such as markers and cleaners.

Breathing better air was associated with significantly better decision-making among the participants. When they were exposed to increased ventilation rates, lower chemical levels and less carbon dioxide, the workers scored higher on tests that assessed nine cognitive functions. 800673874

With more people working from home than ever and with March’s cooler temperatures and shorter days keeping more of us indoors longer, it’s a good time to take a look at what your home is doing to keep you healthy.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration suggests the following steps to improve indoor spaces, productivity and health—all of which could positively affect your electric bill.

**1. Perform regular maintenance** on your heating, ventilation and air conditioning system. HVAC systems require annual tuneups. If you haven’t been performing the required maintenance, now is the time. A service technician can check to ensure that the system is operating at peak efficiency and not creating any emissions it shouldn’t. Once you have the equipment working efficiently, you should create and follow a regular maintenance schedule.

**2. Change filters regularly.** Changing filters improves the efficiency of your system and increases airflow.

**3. Open windows to improve natural air circulation.** Once spring starts to find its way back to Texas, consider opening your windows for at least part of the day to provide natural ventilation and a greater flow of fresh outdoor air.

**4. Choose interior materials carefully.** Many modern building materials and interior furnishings emit harmful substances for months or years after installation.

WHAT TO DO IF...

## You Encounter a Downed Power Line

**EVEN IF EVERY HOME IN YOUR NEIGH-**borhood loses electricity during a storm, a power line hanging loose could very well be “live” and electrocute you if you touch it.

Just because the electricity is out doesn’t mean power lines are dead. **So if you see one, follow these tips to stay safe:**

- ▶ Don’t touch a power line with your hand, body, a stick, a broom—not with anything. Stay as far away from it as possible.

- ▶ Call 911 and your electric cooperative.

- ▶ If your car or another person is touching a downed line, don’t touch your car or that person. The power could flow through them and into you.

- ▶ Don’t drive over a downed wire.

- ▶ If a line falls on your car while you’re in it, stay inside. The ground around your car could be energized, and if you touch it, you could be electrocuted. Warn others to stay away and call 911 for help.

- ▶ Teach children about the dangers of fallen power lines.



CHRISADOWSKI | ISTOCK.COM



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## Keep Kids and Sitter Safe

**IMAGINE THIS: IT'S VALENTINE'S DAY, AND YOU'RE PLANNING A NIGHT OUT. YOU'VE** reserved a table and booked a babysitter. You've gone over everything: instructions for the kids' routines, important contact information and where to find supplies.

But did you also prepare your home? With a little preparation, you can help ensure your children's safety, make your babysitter's life easier and secure a peaceful night out for yourself.

First, your home's electrical system should be in good working order. Looking for and repairing electrical problems well before your evening out is an important step in preventing electrical accidents. 800795460

Cracked outlet covers and discolored outlets and switches are indications of electrical problems. These problems can lead to fires and electric shocks. Contact a professional to have your home inspected and any problems repaired.

**These additional tips can help increase safety awareness, eliminate electrical hazards and put your mind at ease:**

- ▶ Repair or dispose of damaged electronics and cords.
- ▶ Keep cords out of sight so that children are not tempted to play with them.
- ▶ Use outlet covers or tamper-resistant receptacles. Small fingers can fit easily into sockets, and children may poke objects into outlets. Tamper-resistant outlets have a shutter system to keep them safe.
- ▶ Use ground-fault circuit interrupters to prevent shocks. GFCIs detect and prevent dangerous situations where an electric shock could occur. You should have GFCIs anywhere that water and electricity may meet, such as in bathrooms and kitchens.
- ▶ Have ready a fire extinguisher that is rated for electrical fires. Be sure your babysitter knows where it is and how to use it.
- ▶ Install smoke alarms, and be sure their batteries work.
- ▶ Be prepared for power outages. Have flashlights and spare batteries on hand, and let your babysitter know where they are.
- ▶ Post a list of emergency phone numbers that includes contact info for your electric cooperative.

With preparation, you can make sure that your children are in the safe comfort of home while you enjoy your night out.



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**WE LOVE OUR MEMBERS!**

Happy  
Valentine's Day  
February 14



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Happy  
Presidents Day!  
February 19

**FROM TRI-COUNTY EC**

# Think Ahead Before Winter Storms Strand You

## TEXAS WAS ONE OF NINE STATES PARTIALLY BURIED

when a blizzard of never-before-seen proportions swept across the Midwest and the Texas Panhandle in late March 1957. Many were caught unprepared as drifts buried roofs in 30 feet of snow. Travel became impossible for weeks, and 11 lives were lost.

Dangerous weather can strike our state at any time. Driving in such conditions is ill-advised at best and could be downright dangerous. Follow these tips to stay safe on the roads this winter.

**Check your car:** It's important to have a mechanic check the condition of the following vehicle systems before winter, when you could be heading out on treacherous roads.

**Brakes:** These should provide even and balanced braking. Also check that the brake fluid is at the proper level.

**Engine-cooling system:** Ensure a proper 50/50 mixture of antifreeze and water in the cooling system at the proper level.

**Electrical system:** Check the ignition system, and make sure the battery is fully charged and connections are clean. Verify that the alternator belt is in good condition with proper tension.

**Exhaust system:** Have a professional inspect the exhaust for leaks and that all connections, clamps and hangers are snug.

**Tires:** Check for proper tread depth and signs of damage or uneven wear. Inflate to proper levels.

**Oil:** Make sure the oil is at the proper level.

**Visibility:** Inspect all exterior lights, defrosters (windshield and rear window) and wipers. Install winter wiper blades.

**Be prepared:** The National Safety Council recommends having these items in your car for winter driving:

- Properly inflated spare tire, wheel wrench and tripod jack
- Snow shovel
- Jumper cables
- Tow and tire chains
- Bag of salt or cat litter for better tire traction or to melt snow
- Toolkit
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Reflective triangles or flares
- Compass
- First-aid kit
- Windshield cleaner
- Ice scraper and snow brush
- Matches in a waterproof container



- Scissors and string or cord
- Nonperishable, high-energy foods like unsalted nuts, dried fruits and hard candy
- Blankets, mittens, socks and hats 8115002

**Avoid a crash:** If visibility is severely limited due to a white-out, pull off the road and don't attempt to drive farther until conditions improve.

### AAA offers more winter driving tips:

- ▶ Never mix radials with other types of tires.
- ▶ If possible, avoid using your parking brake in cold, rainy or snowy weather.
- ▶ Do not use cruise control in wintry conditions.
- ▶ Look and steer in the direction you want to go.
- ▶ Accelerate and decelerate slowly.
- ▶ Increase following distance to 8–10 seconds.
- ▶ Know whether you have antilock brakes, which will “pump” the brakes for you in a skid.
- ▶ If possible, don't stop when going uphill.
- ▶ Keep your gas tank at least half full.
- ▶ If you do get stranded, don't try to push your vehicle out of the snow.
- ▶ Signal distress with a brightly colored cloth tied to the antenna or in a rolled-up window.





# To Repair or Replace?

*That is the appliance question*

**AS HOMEOWNERS WITH BILLS TO PAY, OUR TENDENCY IS TO BUY AN APPLIANCE AND** keep it running as long as possible—but this may not be the greatest strategy for energy efficiency. Old, inefficient appliances bloat electric bills because they eat up more energy than they're worth.

To figure out how much energy your appliances use, check for an energy efficiency label. The amount of energy typically used per year is listed in kilowatt-hours. If a label is not available, a home inspector can estimate energy use by determining the age of the appliances in the house and assessing their operation by checking for signs of wear and damage.

To translate this energy use into electric expense, check your utility bill to find out the kilowatt-hour rate, then multiply the rate by the number of kilowatt-hours your appliance uses per year to figure out the annual cost it takes to operate the appliance. By adding this figure to the initial purchase and repair costs of the appliance, you then have a comparison level to decide whether your appliance would cost you more or less to run than a new one.

If your appliance is nearing the end of its life span, it's time to calculate whether repairing it or replacing it will cost more. **Here are some typical life spans of appliances:**

- Dishwasher**, 13 years
- Air conditioner**, 15 years
- Microwave**, 15 years
- Refrigerator**, 15 years

- Washer/dryer**, 16 years
- Furnace**, 17 years
- Range**, 18 years

Consider improvements to some of the biggest energy-using appliances in the household. A new refrigerator uses about 50 percent less energy than older models and can feature a CFC-free, sealed system, more storage and easier cleaning.

A new washer or dryer unit uses 30 percent less energy than older models and features greater capacity, better cleaning, quieter operation, preprogrammed cycle selections, reduced water usage and dryness sensors. 800751373

As a result of technological improvements made by appliance manufacturers, newer machines not only use less electricity but also have more operational features and are made to last longer than counterparts produced within even the last decade.

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH



VIENNETA | ISTOCK.COM

# Chocolate Pots de Crème

- 6 egg yolks
- 6 ounces dark chocolate chips
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 cups heavy cream

- 1.** Combine egg yolks, chocolate and sugar in a blender and pulse a few times.
- 2.** Heat cream to simmering, then pour over top of chocolate mixture and blend immediately on high 1–2 minutes, until chocolate has melted.
- 3.** Pour into individual serving dishes or one large dish and cover with plastic wrap placed directly on surface of custard. This will prevent a skin from forming on top.
- 4.** Chill at least one hour in refrigerator.

**OPTIONAL:** Add 1 teaspoon grated orange zest and ¼ cup orange juice to blender before adding hot cream. Sprinkle dash of sea salt on top before covering.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at  
**TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM**

# 10 Quick Tips To Avoid High Winter Bills

Looking to lower your bills this winter? Use the 10 tips below to conserve energy.

1



Seal air leaks and insulate well to prevent heat from escaping and cold air from entering your home.

2



Reduce waste heat by installing a programmable thermostat.

3



Turn off lights when not in use.

4



Lower your water heater temperature. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends using the warm setting (120 degrees) during fall and winter months.

5



Unplug electronics like kitchen appliances and TVs when you're away.

6



Open blinds and curtains during the day to allow sunlight in to warm your home.

7



Close blinds and curtains at night to keep cold, drafty air out.

8



Use power strips for multiple appliances, and turn off the main switch when you're away from home.

9



Wash clothes in cold water, and use cold-water detergent whenever possible.

10



Replace incandescent lightbulbs with LEDs, which use at least 75 percent less energy.