



**DANNY KRAATZ**  
Safety Coordinator

## Danny, the Safety Guy

*“Safety means, to me, going home better than you came to work that day to the ones that are most important.”*

AT TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, WE ARE COMMITTED TO more than service and savings. We are committed to safety, both in and out of the workplace. One man responsible for delivering on that commitment is Danny Kraatz, TCEC safety coordinator. Also known as “the safety guy,” Kraatz instills safe practices among inside and outside employees, contractors and members.

This May, during National Electrical Safety Month, the safety guy celebrates 34 years at Tri-County EC. Kraatz has served in many positions while at the co-op. From digger operator to underground technician to service truck operator to labeling poles, and now as trees and safety coordinator. Kraatz has worn a lot of hats.

He’s also the tree guy. In this role, Kraatz supervises contracted tree-trimming crews, monitoring lines and deciding where to send crews. With over 8,500 miles of line, he relies on the help of lineworkers out on the job and members to let him know where trimming is needed.

“People call in and report that trees are in the lines and they need their services trimmed,” Kraatz said. “Then we make up tickets and send a tree-trimming crew out there to take care of the problem.”

Keeping trees out of lines is very important. Electricity travels the least resistant path to the ground, so limbs in the line could mean trouble. Trees are very good conductors, Kraatz said, especially during thunderstorms or rain, when they are damp.

If you notice trees encroaching on lines and in need of trimming, please give the co-op a call at (817) 444-3201.

### Father Figure

Tree trimming is just part of the safety guy’s job. Maintaining the integrity of TCEC’s safety program and ensuring the well-being of all employees is another component.

Kraatz is a father figure around the co-op, especially to the linemen. Throughout his years at Tri-County EC, he has built strong relationships with employees. They have completed jobs together and learned to live together.



“Most of them, I feel like they are my sons,” he said. “The older linemen came up underneath me on the digger, and we worked side by side for so long.”

Now, as safety coordinator, he takes each life into consideration. “It’s just like you’re dealing with your child,” Kraatz said. “You hate to see them do stuff you know is going to hurt them. You don’t want your kid to get hurt.”

The safety guy said he constantly thinks about how he can make the workplace safer for all employees. Each employee, whether working inside or out, is a priority, Kraatz said.

“It goes inside and outside and back again,” he said. “It just keeps going in circles.” 19900101

Kraatz said he often has more issues with inside employees. Steps, ice in the parking lot and floors changing from tile to carpet pose threats of slips, trips and falls. He joked about inside employees believing they can use knives at lunch or stand on chairs instead of using ladders.

### Saving Lives

As the safety coordinator, Kraatz delivers weekly training sessions to the line crews, which include lessons, reading rules from the manual and reviews of close calls and near-misses—potentially dangerous situations that employees walk away

*“I came for a job, but I got a family.  
I have the brotherhood of linemen. They are my kids.”*

from unscathed. Kraatz said it’s important to discuss these instances because it keeps workers safe in the field and raises awareness of what could have happened.

The safety guy works hard to bring a message to the linemen. Each week, he presents a new lesson on a multitude of topics and safety rules—something that he finds easy. The challenge, however, is getting the message to hit home.

“If I can see the guys are moving on things that I brought up,” Kraatz said, “that’s a big bonus right there.”

Kraatz strives to provide all possible information to employees to make sure they stay safe. Linework is one of the



most dangerous occupations in the world. Therefore, safety is a priority. We live in a world where fast is often considered best, but that is not true for lineworkers.

“We don’t have to be in a hurry to do this stuff anymore,” Kraatz said. “It is do it safe or don’t do it.”

The safety guy said the No. 1 hazard is guys thinking a line is dead and not taking the proper precautions. Tri-County EC is moving toward a zero-tolerance policy that enforces safety as a priority—a progressive method. Here at Tri-County EC, we value each one of our employees. The safety guy wants to make sure everyone makes it home to their loved ones.

“I don’t want to have to go to somebody’s house and talk to their wife about it,” he said. “I don’t want to talk to these guys about why it was such a blundering mistake that a guy made that we knew we shouldn’t make.”

It takes a special person to act as safety coordinator, and Kraatz embraces the calling.

“The reason I really care about my job is trying to save somebody from messing up and being able to go home to the ones that matter,” he said.

### Taking It Home

At work, employees follow safe practices to make it home, so

why should safety stop when you get home to your loved ones? Follow the lead of the safety guy—take safety home.

“[When] I mow my yard, I put my safety glasses on,” he said. “I want to do yard work, I put my gloves on. If I’m going to be out there and I know I am going to be lifting stuff, I put my steel-toed shoes on.”

Kraatz works to practice what he teaches at TCEC. After becoming safety coordinator, he said, he met men in the industry who pushed him toward a mindset that safety starts at home.

“What they told me has sunk into my heart, and I started following it [as a] rule,” he said.



*“You’ve got to live what you preach,  
because if you don’t live what you preach,  
then it is no good.”*

Kraatz said he used to take shortcuts around the house himself, but he now makes safety a habit. While this is easier said than done, he takes safety to heart for one reason: the love of his wife. 800705885

“I don’t know what to say what is right here,” Kraatz said as he placed his hand over his heart. “To put it into words that people could really understand it. I used to be a loose cannon, but I have changed.”

The safety guy said his great loves are his wife, sons and grandkids, and he practices safety at home to ensure he can be there for them. He preaches safety at work so employees can make it home to those who matter most to them.

Please join us as TCEC recognizes electrical safety this month. Throughout May, we will post safety tips from Kraatz, the safety guy, on our Facebook page at [facebook.com/TCECTexas](https://facebook.com/TCECTexas). Show us your safe practices by tagging us or using the hashtag #ElectricalSafety.





## Memorial Day

Monday, May 28

Tri-County EC will be closed  
in observance of the holiday.

# Make Your Yard Work for You

**“LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION” IS A MANTRA OF REAL ESTATE, BUT IT ALSO APPLIES** to shading your home. Positioning the right combination of plants and trees strategically can yield shade and unearth energy savings.

The U.S. Department of Energy determined that proper placement of just three trees on a property can save an average household \$100–\$250 in yearly energy costs.

- ▶ Use trees and plants to shade a window air conditioner to increase its efficiency by as much as 10 percent. But keep the plants at least 3 feet from the air conditioner.

- ▶ Shrubs and trees can form windbreaks or protective walls that keep wind chill away from a home. Evergreens, especially when combined with a fence to deflect or even lift wind over a home, are particularly effective. Leave two to five times the mature height of the trees or shrubs between the windbreak and your home.

- ▶ When selecting shade trees, keep in mind the mature height of the tree and the shape of its canopy in relation to your home’s height. These factors are important because they influence how far from the house you decide to plant a tree. Shade trees can drop the surrounding air temperature by as much as 9 degrees.

- ▶ Shading takes time—a 6- to 8-foot deciduous tree planted near a house will begin shading windows in a year, but it may take 5–10 years to shade the roof.

- ▶ Make planting shade trees due west of west-facing windows your first priority.

- ▶ Select a tree that can be planted within 20 feet of the window and that will grow at least 10 feet taller than that window. If you have the space, use as many trees as needed to create a continuous row along all major west- and east-facing windows.

- ▶ To block summer heat while letting sun filter through in the winter months, use deciduous trees, or those that lose their leaves seasonally. Evergreens and shrubs are ideal for providing continuous shade and blocking heavy winds.

Start planting savings and let your yard do all the work—but remember to always avoid planting near underground and overhead utility lines. 128002



## Happy Mother’s Day

Sunday, May 13

“All that I am, or hope to be,  
I owe to my angel mother.”

—Abraham Lincoln





Plan ahead to keep home additions like swimming pools away from power lines.

PANWELD | ISTOCK.COM

# Expanding Your Home?

## *Steer clear of power lines*

**YOU'VE HAD AN EYE ON THE PERFECT SPOT FOR YOUR GETAWAY CABIN. THE VIEW—**well, it's breathtaking! But if you try to build your dream home too close to a power line, you may not live long enough to enjoy it. 800607380

Electric co-ops have found new homes where the roof came within 8 feet of an existing power line, or where a swimming pool or barn was built beneath a line. When you think about hauling in materials and working in those areas and folks using the pool or getting too close to the roof, it's pretty scary.

Whether you're a contractor or a do-it-yourselfer, always use caution when working near power lines. Never get closer than 10 feet to an overhead line.

Electricity flows through metal, wood, water and many other conductive materials, including human beings—all in an effort to reach the ground. Small birds can sit on power lines unhurt because they don't create a path to the ground. But you and your ladder do.

A line doesn't have to be touched to spark danger—electricity can jump, or arc, from a power line to a person or equipment that gets too close. When equipment comes into contact with power lines, it becomes energized and dangerous.

If an object, such as a scaffold, must be moved near overhead power lines, have someone specifically watching to make sure a minimum 10-foot clearance is maintained between the power lines and the object.

If your vehicle comes into contact with an overhead power line, don't leave the vehicle. As long as you stay inside and avoid touching outside metal, you should avoid an electrical hazard. Warn others to stay away and call for help. If you need to exit the vehicle to summon help or because of fire, jump out without touching any wires or the exterior of the vehicle, keep your feet together and hop to safety.

Overhead power lines are not insulated. Touching a power line or an object in contact with one can result in serious injury—even death. Please contact Tri-County Electric Cooperative if you need to work near power lines so that we can help you stay safe.

# Managing Rights-of-Way the Right Way

**AT TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE,** our goal is to provide safe, reliable and economical electric service to our members. Managing trees and other vegetation around our facilities and in rights-of-way is key to achieving that goal.

Trees may seem harmless on a calm, sunny day. But add a bit of wind on a stormy night and those towering pillars might threaten your home's electric supply. We perform routine maintenance of trees and other vegetation throughout the system to help prevent outages.

Maintenance includes pruning trees, removing hazardous trees, mowing and cutting brush, and applying herbicides. These activities all are designed to minimize adverse environmental impacts and fully comply with applicable laws and regulations. They are essential to maintaining reliable electric service for our members and to provide for the safety of both your family and the general public.

A clear right-of-way is so important that tree-trimming and rights-of-way maintenance programs are required for a cooperative to receive safety accreditation from our national association.

Tri-County EC is committed to providing safe and reliable power, and our vegetation management program is key to fulfilling that promise.



NRECA

# Prepare for Twister Season



**THANKS TO THE WIZARD OF OZ, KANSAS HAS BEEN IMMORTALIZED** as the land of tornadoes.

In reality, Texas is first in the U.S. when it comes to twister touchdowns, averaging 155 each year. For most of the state, peak tornado time is April–June, but in South Texas, activity typically peaks in November. Regardless of the location, most tornadoes occur between 3 and 9 p.m.

Last year's tornado count of 1,406 surpassed the national average of 1,253 and was well above the 2016 count of 971. Texans saw 176 tornadoes in 2017, 21 more than average.

No one knows yet what the 2018 season holds, but being prepared is smart.

## Before a Tornado

Determine the safest place in your home and at work so you can go there quickly if there is a tornado warning. A small, interior, windowless room, closet or hallway on the lowest level is best. Stay away from windows, doors and outside walls. Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside. Do not open windows. Get under a sturdy table and cover your body as best you can with blankets or pillows. Mobile homes, even if tied down, do not offer protection from tornadoes.

As in any emergency, be sure to have an emergency kit that contains survival basics. Visit [ready.gov](http://ready.gov) for details.

Be alert to changing weather conditions. Listen to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio or television newscasts for the latest information.

## Look for These Danger Signs:

- ▶ Dark, often greenish sky.
- ▶ Large hail.
- ▶ A large, dark, low-lying cloud (particularly if rotating).
- ▶ A loud roar, similar to a freight train.

If you see approaching storms or any of the danger signs, be prepared to take shelter immediately.

## Know the Terms

**Tornado Watch:** Tornadoes are possible. When there is a watch, move near enough to a shelter to be able to get there quickly if you see signs of a tornado approaching. Remain alert for approaching storms.

**Tornado Warning:** A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately. 800695412

## Tornado Facts

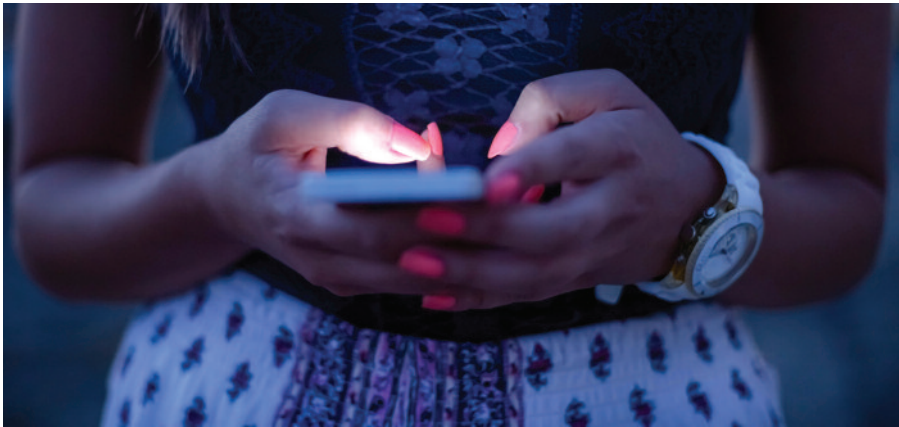
Wind from tornadoes can reach more than 300 mph with damage paths more than 1 mile wide and 50 miles long.

They may strike quickly, with little or no warning.

They may appear nearly transparent until dust and debris are picked up or a cloud forms in the funnel.

If you are under a tornado warning, seek shelter immediately! Most injuries associated with high winds are from flying debris, so remember to protect your head.





BARBOSZ LUCZAK | ISTOCK.COM

# Stay Connected by Updating Your Contact Information

IN THE UTILITY BUSINESS, WE KNOW ROUGH WEATHER WILL OCCUR, AND SOMETIMES power outages simply can't be avoided. But did you know there are steps you can take to ensure your electricity is restored as quickly and safely as possible? By keeping your contact information up to date, you can help get the power on faster and take full advantage of the services Tri-County Electric Cooperative offers.

Not having the correct phone number linked to your home address makes it much more difficult for you to report an outage and for us to find you when you do.

Remember when you had to speak to a customer service representative to report a power outage? Waiting on hold can be frustrating and time-consuming. Today, with the press of a button, you can easily report an outage. If you call us to report an outage, our automated system instantly recognizes your phone number and can determine the particular service address for which you are reporting an outage. Once you give our system a response, your outage is recorded. But remember—this only works if your current phone number is linked to your service address.

Visit [tcectexas.com](http://tcectexas.com), email [pr@tcectexas.com](mailto:pr@tcectexas.com), call (817) 444-3201 or return the form below to Tri-County EC to make sure your information is up to date. 40492001

## Tri-County Electric Cooperative

600 NW Parkway, Azle 76020

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## Contact Us

### CALL US

(817) 444-3201

### FIND US ON THE WEB

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

### EMAIL US

[pr@tcectexas.com](mailto:pr@tcectexas.com)

### COOPERATIVE OFFICES

#### Central Headquarters

600 NW Parkway, Azle, TX 76020  
(817) 444-3201

#### Southwest District Office

1623 Weatherford Highway, Granbury 76048  
(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!

 Find us on Facebook

[facebook.com/TCECTexas](https://facebook.com/TCECTexas)

### TRI-COUNTY EC INFORMATION UPDATE

Email info to [pr@tcectexas.com](mailto:pr@tcectexas.com)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, STATE, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_



## Do I Really Need To Call?

**YES! DON'T MAKE A JUDGMENT CALL; MAKE AN 811 CALL. HOMEOWNERS OFTEN MAKE** risky assumptions about whether or not they should get their utility lines marked, but every digging job requires a phone call—even small projects.

**I am only planting a small flower bed or bush.**

Did you know that many utilities are buried just a few inches below ground? You can easily hit a line when digging for simple gardening projects, like planting flowers or small shrubs. Make the call to 811 anytime you're putting a shovel in the ground to keep yourself and your community safe.

**I am just installing a mailbox.**

Buried utility lines are everywhere. Installing mailboxes and fences are examples of projects that absolutely require a call to 811 to know what's below before digging. Hitting a line can knock out service to your home and neighborhood or result in fines, damage and serious injury. Don't make a judgment call—make the call to 811 every time you dig.

**I am digging in a spot that was previously marked.**

Erosion and root system growth can alter the depth and location of buried lines, or your utility companies might have completed work on their lines since the last time you dug—so you must call 811 before you dig—each and every time.

**I hired a contractor or landscaper to do the digging project.**

Be sure to check with your contractor or landscaper to make sure the call to 811 gets made before digging begins—whether it means you making the call or your contractor doing so. Never let digging work begin without the call to 811. It's not worth the risk. 800667296

**I am only digging in a small area and don't want my entire yard marked.**

If you are planning to dig only in a small portion of your yard, you can outline the area in white paint or white flags available at home improvement stores to ensure that only the utilities in that part of your yard will be located and marked. Be sure to let your 811 operator know about your plans, and he or she will help ensure the proper area is marked by utility locators.

## Mark Your Calendar for Savings

**NEED A NEW, MORE ENERGY-EFFICIENT** dishwasher or refrigerator? If you time it right, you can enjoy a tax-free purchase on qualifying appliances soon. The statewide Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday takes place Memorial Day weekend. This year, it begins Saturday, May 26, at 12:01 a.m. and concludes Monday, May 28, at 11:59 p.m.

Eligible tax-free appliances include:

- ▶ Air conditioners (models priced at \$6,000 or less)
- ▶ Refrigerators (models priced at \$2,000 or less)
- ▶ Ceiling fans
- ▶ Incandescent and fluorescent lightbulbs
- ▶ Clothes washers
- ▶ Dishwashers
- ▶ Dehumidifiers
- ▶ Programmable thermostats

Keep in mind that appliances purchased for just a few dollars over the allowable amounts will be fully taxed. For example, a refrigerator that costs \$2,050 will be taxed on the entire purchase price, not just the \$50 in excess of the limit. Similarly, if an item's sale price is within the price cap but an additional delivery fee pushes it over the limit, the entire purchase is taxable.

Start researching now so you can take advantage of savings on items that will likely lower your energy bills.



# Karen's No-Crust Coconut Pie

SUBMITTED BY MONA HANNAH | AZLE

- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ cup Bisquick
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups milk
- 1 cup coconut flakes

1. Mix all ingredients in a blender on low speed for 3 minutes.
2. Pour mixture into a greased 9-inch pie dish.
3. Let stand 5–8 minutes before baking. Sprinkle coconut flakes on top.
4. Cook at 350 degrees for 40 minutes. Enjoy!



## Tri-County EC Member Recipe Submission Form



**THE RECIPE SUBMISSION IS A FREE AND** voluntary service provided by Tri-County Electric Cooperative. As we have more than 100,000 members, we may receive a high volume of submissions. Recipes must be submitted before the 20th of each month to be considered for the next issue of *Texas Co-op Power* (i.e., May 20 for the July issue). We reserve the right to refuse any recipe. Please submit recipes through the U.S. Postal Service or email and not on the back of your payment stub. Those stubs are processed automatically because we receive hundreds daily. 36198001

NAME

CITY

EMAIL or PHONE NUMBER

RECIPE NAME

**Please return to:**

**Email:** Please include the above information with your recipe and send to [pr@tcectexas.com](mailto:pr@tcectexas.com).

**Mail:** Please detach and submit this form with your recipe and mail to:  
Tri-County Electric Cooperative  
Attn: Recipe Submission  
600 NW Parkway  
Azle, TX 76020.