



Technology on Display at Tri-County EC Annual Meeting

AS DUSK APPROACHED, A TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE lineman—armored by a face shield and rubber gloves—extended a long, yellow rod toward a power line in the parking lot of the Church of God Campgrounds in Weatherford. Clamped to the end of the rod was a small tree branch that the lineman let rest against the electrified line. A series of loud crackles sizzled through the air, followed by a burst of sound akin to the unsheathing of a lightsaber, and a curving flash of white-hot electricity jumped from the line to the tip of the pole.

“This is the reason we trim trees,” Kevin Helton, another Tri-County EC lineman nearby, told the crowd of onlookers. “We want to keep them off the lines. We want to keep the power on and to keep things safe.”

This dazzling display—a demonstration of a phenomenon called arcing—was among about 10 other informational booths that co-op members visited as part of Tri-County EC’s 79th Annual Meeting on October 2. Inside the church build-

ing, members met with the co-op’s member services representatives, learned about services offered by Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital Azle and heard lineworker Jeremy Choate describe the various types of overhead and underground lines. 800825077

On almost any other day, Choate would be out with his crew, building lines, repairing transformers and carrying out the work it takes to keep the electricity flowing, driving as many as 1,500 miles in a week to keep the lights on.

“People will call us with flickering lights or outages, and no matter what time, day or night, we get up, we leave our families, we go out and restore their power,” he said. “And just getting to meet them and fixing their problems, it’s a good feeling.”

That’s part of the reason Choate enjoys the Annual Meeting: It’s another opportunity to meet the members he serves—and on this early autumn evening, he had the chance to meet quite a few.



1. Apprentice lineman Mike Whitt reaches for a high-five from a future member.

2. Whitt demonstrates the dangers of electric arcing.

3. Darryl Schriver, Tri-County EC general manager and CEO, chats with members.

4. A Tri-County EC member tests her skills at one of many informational booths.

5. Safety specialist Brian Fink teaches members about electrical hazards.

6. Tri-County EC employee Jennifer Stegall helps serve a barbecue meal to members.



More than 980 Tri-County EC members—and as many family members and guests—showed up to partake in the barbecue dinner, hear updates on the business of the cooperative, vote on their board of directors and enjoy the fellowship of their community.

This year, the members voted to re-elect three directors to the board: Jordan Wood, District 3; John Killough, District 6; and Jarrett Armstrong, District 8.

“As an electric consumer of the cooperative, you are a member and an owner of this cooperative,” said Wood, board president, to the audience. “Your board is elected by the membership to govern the cooperative and to look after your cooperative.”

Such elections are an integral part of the cooperative business model and are the embodiment of Democratic Member Control, one of the Seven Cooperative Principles that Darryl Schriver, Tri-County EC general manager and CEO, outlined in his address to meeting attendees.

Schriver, who recently completed his first year with Tri-County EC, highlighted the co-op’s commitment to Concern for Community, another cooperative principle, by describing

its involvement in the Government-in-Action Youth Tour. Next year marks the first time in about a quarter-century that Tri-County EC will send students on the 10-day trip to Austin and Washington, D.C., to join some 150 other young people from across Texas to learn about government and rural electrification. The co-op plans to send six students on the 2019 trip, Schriver said, and each will receive a \$2,000 scholarship toward their college educations. 46818001

While Tri-County EC is dedicated to empowering its community, the co-op’s primary mission remains delivering affordable electricity safely and reliably while keeping abreast of the latest technological developments in the industry—and that was a key thrust of Schriver’s update to members. He addressed Tri-County EC’s dramatic growth, especially in suburban areas of the Metroplex; technological challenges at the co-op, such as the need to update communications systems and refine cybersecurity measures; and the routine responsibilities of maintaining an electric cooperative, including right-of-way maintenance and securing reliable and affordable power supply sources. 800760382

The ice storm that hit the service territory in February



served as a major reminder of those challenges, Schriver said.

“We lost our phone system, our outage management system—pretty much everything we could,” he said. “We were communicating via Facebook, and we had about 19,000 members out at once. And these folks in this room answered the call, and as quick as we could, we got everybody back on.”

Tri-County EC’s meter system plays a big role in managing major outages. According to Schriver, the co-op is looking to convert its system from automatic meter reading to advanced metering infrastructure over the next few years. “We’re going to tie fiber optics to it so that we can read our meters a little bit faster, and that information we can use [to respond to outages] from the field.”

Other aspects of Tri-County EC’s technology road map for the future include its smartphone app, staking software, and digital mapping and staking. The co-op also is keeping a close eye on natural gas prices, developments in renewable energy

and advances in battery storage, Schriver said. “The technology is starting to evolve. We’ll eventually take solar, we’ll take wind, and we’ll put a battery together,” he said. “That will be the way at some point, but we’re still way early in technology.”

Schriver also reaffirmed the co-op’s dedication to safety, particularly that of its lineworkers, who engage in one of the most dangerous occupations in the country. “So we take that pretty seriously—taking care of our linemen to make sure they go home to their families.”

He asked members at the meeting to join him in recognizing the hard work of all Tri-County EC employees. “These are your employees, the employees of our co-op, our linemen that go out at night, the folks that answer the phones for you, the people that really work for you,” he said. “These folks here work tirelessly. They love working for the co-op, and they love being a part of Tri-County Electric Co-op.”

Of course, Tri-County EC wouldn’t be a cooperative with-



1. **Jorden Wood, board president, addresses the membership at Tri-County EC's Annual Meeting.**
2. **A lucky member wins a cooler in the door prize drawings.**
3. **Tri-County EC employee Lauren Baccus tells young meeting attendees about Youth Tour.**
4. **A member shows off her door prize.**
5. **Reene Parkhurst and Yesenia Verduzco register a member for the Annual Meeting.**



out Members' Economic Participation—another cooperative principle. Members are owners of the cooperative, and capital credits represent each member's share in the cooperative's margins. When any margins are left over after all expenses have been paid, the co-op's board can decide to return that money to members. This year, Tri-County EC's board approved a \$4 million retirement of capital credits.

"Many of you either received credit on your bill or received a check," said Todd Smith, board secretary-treasurer, to members. "So, we hope that you appreciated that, and we appreciate your membership."

The co-op also showed its appreciation for members by giving away nearly 200 prizes to those in attendance. Four members won \$500 credits toward their electric bills; another won free electricity through end of year; and among those who visited the informational booths, one member went home with a brand-new iPad.

The giveaways are another way of saying thanks.

"I'm always going to try to say thanks for being a member of the co-op," Schriver said. "Thanks for being a member of Tri-County, thank you for the opportunity to work for you, thank you for the opportunity to be a part of the co-op family."



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Merry Christmas

Tri-County Electric Cooperative will be closed Monday–Tuesday, December 24–25, for Christmas and Tuesday, January 1, for New Year's.

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Busting Myths About AMI

BY NOW, MOST AMERICANS LIKELY HAVE HEARD THE TERM “SMART grid.” It’s being used to describe the computerization of America’s electrical infrastructure. The purpose of this computerization is to improve the reliability, efficiency, resiliency and security of the electric grid.

A key component of the smart grid is advanced metering infrastructure, known as AMI in the utility world. AMI systems utilize digital meters and computer technology to measure electric use at homes and businesses more precisely than

ing your information—including details of your electricity use—private. The only people who see that data are co-op employees and you. Your co-op will not release this information to anyone else without your specific permission. Still, concerns about privacy persist because of the myths that smart reader data can reveal when you are home or away and exactly what you are doing when you are there and that this data is being given to the government. Naturally, the data can show when you are home because, for most families, energy consumption is higher then. But current

advanced meters cannot identify what activities are taking place or which appliances are in use. This myth is simply unfounded.

What about the myth that these meters actually make the electric grid less secure by providing an avenue for hackers to break into systems through the meter and wreak havoc? While hackers continually attempt to break into electric systems, their focus is at higher levels in the operation. Hacking a meter is unlikely for a variety of reasons. For one, hackers work remotely via the internet, and AMI does not offer that connectivity. Radio-based advanced meters require the hacker to be nearby to catch the weak communication signal, break the proprietary communication protocol and be there for extended periods of time to collect the short bursts of data sent. Therefore, meters are an unlikely and unprofitable target for hackers.

Finally, there are myths surrounding AMI and its effects on health. These concerns state that having a radio-based meter is equivalent to having a cell tower attached to the side of your home. Again, this concern is unfounded. Advanced meters communicate intermittently for as few as five minutes a day. These devices are regulated by the Federal Communications Commission, and their output is well below the levels the agency sets. As one doctor observed, the radio waves emitted are more like those of a cordless phone or wireless router. Radio waves emitted by advanced meters are much weaker and less frequent than other sources we use on a daily basis.

We all will benefit from the continued development of America’s smart grid and can rest easy with the knowledge that the rumors surrounding radio-based advanced meters don’t hold water.

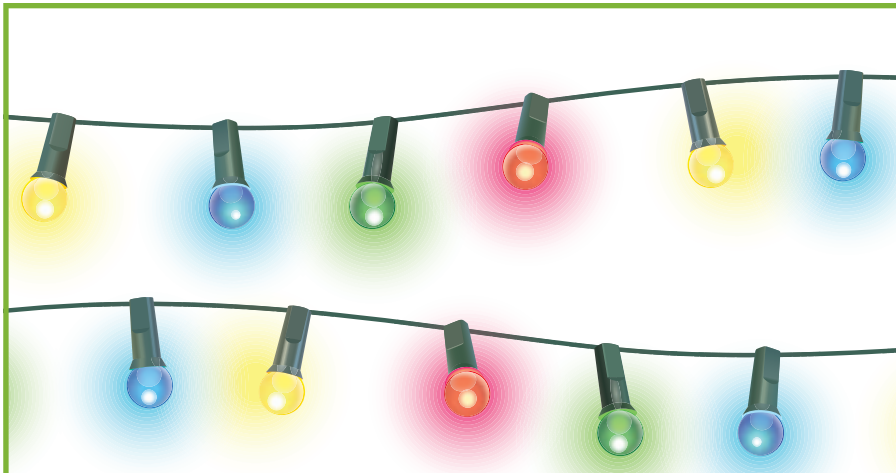
was possible with analog meters. Digital meters communicate via radio waves or existing power lines. Compared to manual meter reading, AMI benefits electric co-op members by providing greater accuracy in billing, faster outage restoration, operational savings and detailed data that you and your co-op can use to manage electric use much more accurately.

Unfortunately, a number of myths about smart meters have developed over the years. These myths can be classified into three categories: privacy concerns, security issues and health effects. Let’s take a look at each. 800657484

Tri-County Electric Cooperative takes great pride in keep-



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MERRY, BRIGHT AND EFFICIENT HOLIDAY LIGHTING

Decking the halls doesn't have to take a toll on your energy bill! Keep your holiday lighting merry, bright and energy efficient with LED light strands.

- Consider replacing older light strands with new ENERGY STAR LED® lights. LED strands are 70 percent more efficient and last 10 times longer than the age-old standard bulbs.
- You can get the look of cozy lighting with LEDs. Just look for “warm white” on the label.
- Unlike older light strands, LED lights give off virtually no heat, making them safer for kids and pets (and reindeer).
- Save energy by setting a timer for outdoor lighting and decorations. Program the timer so the lights turn on in the evening and turn off later at night when you typically go to sleep.

Source: Dept. of Energy



Creative Ways To Save

WHILE WE MAY NOT ALWAYS PRACTICE them, most of us know many of the standard ways to conserve electricity. Here are some ideas for those who want to save outside the box.

Make it a competition with your neighbor: Whoever uses the most electricity over a given period makes dinner for the winning family.

Recruit the whole family to help save. Identify some key opportunities for savings, then use the money saved for a special treat for the family—or keep the savings going and use it to buy a big treat.

Have a regular date or family night once a week: Turn off all electronic devices and only eat food that doesn't require cooking. It's a perfect way to save electricity as well as to create lasting memories with your family.

Install a shower radio and have a rule that anyone in the shower can listen to only two full songs. After that, they have to get out—a fun way to manage shower times and hot-water costs.

If you have teenagers, “fine” them for leaving lights, TVs and game systems on when they aren't being used. Use the money to help pay the electric bill.

Get a group of friends together and rotate nights at one another's homes for dinner and a couple hours of fun—saving electricity by giving the other homes a night off. 27938001

Staying Warm and Safe This Winter



tuck it into other blankets while in use because it could overheat and cause a fire. Don't place anything on top of a heating pad or electric blanket, as this also increases the chances of overheating. Be sure to inspect the electric cords to look for cracks and fraying. 8000265602

Candles

Did you know December is the peak time of year for home candle fires? Never leave candles unattended or near any items that are flammable.

Roughly one-third of home candle fires start in the bedroom, so you also should avoid placing candles in your bedroom or anywhere you could fall asleep. The top three days for home candle fires are Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Consider using battery-operated candles to avoid the risk altogether.

Cords and Outlets

Plugging too many appliances into a single outlet or extension cord can cause overheating that could lead to a fire. Be mindful of how many appliances and devices you connect to an extension cord. 800707908

Do not hide electric cords or power strips behind furniture or under rugs because they could spark and start a fire. Never place electric cords within a child's reach. You also should use plastic safety caps to cover outlets to keep children from sticking their fingers or other objects inside. Keep dogs and cats away from electric cords, too, to make sure they do not chew on them and cause a short or shock.

IT SEEMS INTUITIVE THAT ELECTRICITY USE INCREASES DURING winter, when sunlight is limited, days are shorter and temperatures much lower. You're surely aware of the battle to keep your home a decent temperature during those colder months, but you also should be aware of some of the potential electrical safety risks.

More home fires occur during colder months than at any other time of the year. Help ensure safety for you and your loved ones this winter by following these tips and minimizing your home's hazards.

Electric Blankets and Heating Pads

Did you know electric blankets and heating pads cause almost 500 fires each year in the U.S.? According to Electrical Safety Foundation International, the majority of those fires were caused by electric blankets that were more than 10 years old.

Experts say you should never fold an electric blanket or

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

A carbon monoxide detector can alert you and your loved ones to the presence of the deadly, odorless, colorless gas in your home. Smoke detectors should be on every level of your home and outside each sleeping area. Check the batteries in both of these lifesaving devices regularly. Make sure to test your smoke and CO alarms monthly to ensure they're working properly.

Space Heaters

Your space heater should be kept at least 3 feet away from anything that's flammable, such as rugs, blankets and curtains. Placing a heater too close to upholstered furniture, clothing, a mattress or bedding is the leading factor contributing to fatal home fires. Don't leave your space heater unattended, and unplug it when it's not in use. Consider getting a space heater that has an automatic shut-off.

Christmas Shortbread Bites

MARILYN CRUMP | KELLER

- 1 cup (2 sticks) cold butter, diced
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 2 1/4 cups flour
- 2 1/2 tablespoons sprinkles



- Mix together butter, sugar, almond extract and flour until crumbly. Add in sprinkles and mix again. Mixture will remain crumbly.
- Place dough in a 13-by-9-inch pan lined with parchment. Press into an even layer. Chill in refrigerator 30 minutes. 800764353
- Remove dough from pan using the parchment. Cut into 1/2-inch squares. Sprinkle tops with more sprinkles and gently press into the tops. Transfer bites to unbuttered baking sheet.
- Bake 8-12 minutes at 350 degrees. Enjoy!



Tri-County EC Member Recipe Submission Form

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.

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

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