

Cooperating for Privacy and Safety



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO DEBRA COLE

LATELY WE'VE BEEN HEARING disturbing stories about employees from different cooperatives being threatened when they come onto members' property to do work. Residents have even pointed guns at co-op employees—sometimes when the crews were there only to restore power after an outage.

We Work for Safety

These incidents are distressing because member and employee safety is every electric cooperative's top priority. Conflicts like these also threaten the trust that we at HILCO Electric Cooperative work so hard to build with our members. We want you to feel free to call us at 1-800-338-6425 if you have a question about co-op personnel being on your property, or anything else.

Many circumstances require the presence of co-op personnel on a member's property: restoring power, repairing and maintaining lines and equipment, checking meter readings or installing new meters, addressing bill payment issues, or trimming vegetation in rights-of-way.

"Co-op employees highly respect their members' private property and personal privacy," said Eric Craven, senior vice president of government relations and legal affairs for Texas Electric Cooperatives, "but there are times when cooperative personnel simply must go onto a member's land or knock on the door to do their job."

We Have the Right and Responsibility

Co-op personnel have a legal right and responsibility to enter a member's property for the limited purpose of ensuring that electric service, relied on by people to maintain their health, safety and well-being, is delivered safely and with as little interruption as possible. Not only do Texas laws protect electric cooperative employees from criminal trespass charges, but they also impose a stiff penalty on anyone who threatens a cooperative employee while on official co-op business. Anyone pointing a gun at a co-op worker could face a second-degree felony charge, punishable by two to 20 years' imprisonment and a possible fine of up to \$10,000.

"People need to know that in Texas, it is a felony to

threaten a co-op employee—or anyone else—with a deadly weapon. The safety of our personnel and our members is extremely important, and such threats are taken very seriously," Craven said.

When you became a HILCO member, you signed an agreement that spelled out your rights and responsibilities, as well as the cooperative's. Among those member responsibilities is allowing co-op personnel (and any contractors hired by the co-op) access to your property—whether easements underneath power lines, or the home or business where your meter is located. Landowners and members must comply with requirements mandated by state law and outlined in their co-op's application for membership, bylaws and right-of-way easement agreement.

We Need Your Help

We do understand that there may be reasons why members worry about people coming onto their property, so HILCO workers display the co-op's name and logo on their trucks and uniforms, and they provide notice of their activities whenever possible. However, if you don't recognize our crews—or you have concerns about the work they're doing—then we urge you to call 1-800-338-6425 immediately.

If you call us when you have a question or suspicion about co-op workers on your property, we can verify who they are and why they're there. A simple phone call can prevent a dangerous confrontation.

Our members are also our neighbors, and we deeply respect issues surrounding private property. HILCO employees do everything possible to minimize our need to access your property, but when it is necessary, we do our best to notify you before, during and after maintenance or repairs. We wear ID and provide all of our contractors with ID to display. We also show the greatest respect possible to members' property while we are on-site.

Working together, we can ensure that members are comfortable and co-op employees are safe whenever we must access private property. If you have a question about the presence of co-op personnel on your property, please call us immediately at 1-800-338-6425.



HILCO Electric Scholarship for Excellence

Application deadline is April 15.

Who can apply?

Graduating high school seniors who are dependents of HILCO members and meet eligibility requirements listed on the application.

For more information on our scholarship program, contact Kendra Markwardt at (254) 687-2331, ext. 1145, or visit hilco.coop.

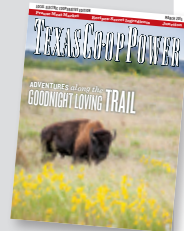


DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

BEGINS SUNDAY, MARCH 8. REMEMBER TO SPRING FORWARD!

Win a \$50 Bill Credit!

As you're reading your Texas Co-op Power, look for the "hidden" account number in the local HILCO pages in the center of the magazine. If it's YOUR electric account number, call us before the end of March—you have won a \$50 credit on your HILCO electric bill!



(254) 687-2331

or

1-800-338-6425



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FIND US ON THE WEB

hilco.coop

HILCO Electric Cooperative

Member Appreciation

Picnic!

- Two complimentary, delicious dinners from Michna's Bar-B-Q for each membership
- Live entertainment
- HILCO news and information
- Door prizes
- Great prize drawings

Thursday, March 26, 6 p.m.

Hill County Fairgrounds
303 Stadium Drive, Hillsboro

Gate opens at 5:30 p.m.

Reservation Deadline: March 19

Use the attached card to make
your reservation today!

Seating will be limited at the new facility and
will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.





Plan Ahead for a Safe Planting Season

FARMING IS PERENNIALY NEAR THE TOP OF THE LIST of the most dangerous jobs in the United States, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Electricity is one of the hazards farmworkers need to be cautious around, especially when they are feeling pressure to work quickly to get the crops in the ground or harvested. However, with proper planning and education, the risk of accidents involving electricity and the equipment that carries it to homes and businesses can be greatly reduced.

One critical part of safety around electricity is awareness. With the use of large equipment, farmers can easily find themselves in dangerous proximity to overhead lines. Being aware of the location of those wires can help reduce accidents.

HILCO Electric Cooperative urges farmers and farmworkers to remember these guidelines:

- ▶ Keep a 10-foot minimum distance around power lines. That means 10 feet above, below and to the sides of power lines.
- ▶ Use a spotter when moving machinery around the farm. It can be difficult to judge from the driver's seat how close a piece of machinery is to electric lines.
- ▶ Use caution when handling long items such as irrigation pipe, ladders and rods. Coming too close to a power line can cause electricity to arc, or "jump," to conducting material or objects.
- ▶ Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting tractors on trailer beds. Many tractors are now equipped with radios and communications systems with very tall antennas extending from the cab, which could make contact with power lines.
- ▶ Avoid raising the arms of planters, cultivators or truck beds near power lines.
- ▶ Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.
- ▶ Remember, even nonmetallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, tires, ropes and hay will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.
- ▶ If you hit a pole's guy wire and break it, call the cooperative to fix it. Do not do it yourself. Guy wires, used to stabilize utility poles, are grounded. However, when a guy wire is broken, it can cause an electric current disruption. This can make those neutral wires anything but harmless.

—SafeElectricity



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Power Tip

Seal air leaks with weatherstripping and caulking, and be sure your house is properly insulated. This could save you up to 20 percent on heating and cooling bills while increasing home comfort.

BILLING SCHEDULE

Payments are due by close of business at 5 p.m. on the due date.

CYCLE 1

Billing Date March 3
Due Date March 19

CYCLE 2

Billing Date March 10
Due Date March 26

CYCLE 3

Billing Date March 17
Due Date April 2

CYCLE 13

Billing Date March 18
Due Date April 2

CYCLE 4

Billing Date March 24
Due Date April 9

SAFELECTRICITY

Paying the Price of Power Theft

IT'S OFTEN AN "INVISIBLE" CRIME: Someone illegally hooks into a power supply, hooks up a line that has been disconnected, or tampers with a meter to avoid recording electricity use. Legitimate electricity consumers do not engage in these behaviors, so the impact of electricity theft—including the danger—is frequently unrecognized.



Power theft carries deadly risks. Many thieves pay for the power they steal with their lives. Electricity theft is not just dangerous for those who steal. If you are on the same power line as someone who steals electricity, you could pay the cost for their theft, too. The power line could become overloaded with electric energy, which could harm your electronics and appliances that are designed to receive a certain, steady amount of electricity. Electricity theft makes power service less reliable and lower quality for paying customers.

Electricity thieves may also unknowingly feed energy back into the power line. This is dangerous for linemen who may assume that the line they are working on is de-energized. 56500001

HILCO Electric Cooperative reminds you that everyone can help prevent and reduce power theft:

- ▶ Notify your electric cooperative immediately if you know of an illegally connected consumer.
- ▶ Do not cut the seal on your meter base or tamper with your own meter for any reason.
- ▶ Apply for a legal connection if you do not have one.
- ▶ Remain aware of your surroundings and report any suspicious activities to your electric cooperative.

Most electrical theft crimes occur through meter tampering, bypassing meters and tapping power lines. Other less frequent crimes include tapping into neighboring premises, using illegal lines after being disconnected, self-reconnection

without consent and electrifying fences. Possessing fraudulent electricity bills is also a federal crime and is punishable by law.

Everyone is affected by power theft, and detecting and reporting illegal activity will help reduce the price that everyone pays.

—SafeElectricity

RECIPE OF THE MONTH



© ISTOCK.COM | DRBOUZ

Cranberry-Orange Pork Roast

- 1 boneless pork loin roast (2½–3 pounds)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 can whole-berry cranberry sauce (14 ounces)
- ½ cup orange marmalade
- ¼ cup honey
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg

1. Cut roast in half and place in slow cooker. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.
2. Combine remaining ingredients and pour over roast.
3. Cover and cook on low 4 to 5 hours. Let stand 10 minutes before slicing.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 4 ounces. Per serving: 343 calories, 22.7 g protein, 14.3 g fat, 27.6 g carbohydrates, 0.5 g dietary fiber, 161 mg sodium, 68 mg cholesterol

Find this and more delicious recipes online at TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM

Cleaning Up a Broken CFL

DESPITE THEIR GROWING POPULARITY and presence in the market, compact fluorescent lamps are still a bit of a mystery for many. They look different and work differently from traditional bulbs, contain different elements and require different steps for disposal. This makes it especially daunting when a CFL breaks—but the steps included here can help you deal with the situation safely.

Why is it important to properly clean up a broken CFL?

CFLs and other fluorescent lightbulbs contain a small amount of mercury (less than 1 percent of the amount in a mercury thermometer) sealed within a coil of glass tubing. When a fluorescent bulb breaks, some of this mercury is released as harmful mercury vapor. To minimize exposure to mercury vapor, the Environmental Protection Agency recommends that residents follow specific steps for cleanup and disposal.

Why use CFLs if they contain mercury?

Small amounts of mercury can be released into the environment when CFLs break, or if they are improperly disposed of at the end of their useful lives. Despite these emissions, the use of CFLs actually helps reduce total mercury emissions in the U.S. because of their significant energy savings: Using energy-saving CFLs reduces demand for electricity, which in turn reduces the amount of coal burned by power plants, thus reducing emissions of mercury when coal is burned.

Cleanup tips

After a CFL is broken, have other people and pets leave the room. Air out the room for five to 10 minutes by opening a window or door to the outdoors. Shut off the central forced-air system, if you have one. Collect materials needed to clean up the broken bulb: stiff paper or cardboard; sticky tape; damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes (for hard surfaces); and a sealable plastic bag or a glass jar with tight-fitting lid.

Do not vacuum first. Vacuuming is not recommended unless broken glass remains after all other cleanup steps have been taken. Vacuuming first could spread mercury-containing powder or mercury vapor.

Be thorough in collecting broken glass and visible powder. Scoop up glass fragments and powder using stiff paper or cardboard. Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder. Place the used tape along with all cleanup materials in the sealable plastic bag or glass jar.

Place the sealed container holding all bulb debris and cleanup materials—as well as the vacuum cleaner bag, if you vacuumed afterward—outdoors in a trash container. Wash your hands thoroughly after cleanup.

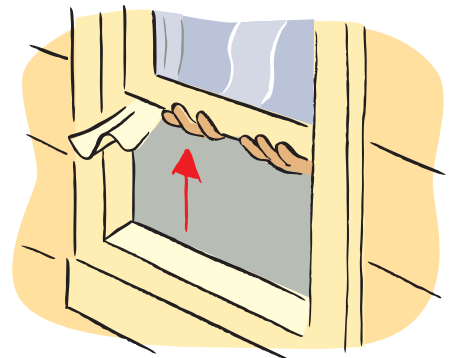
What if I can't follow all the recommended steps? Or what if I cleaned up a CFL, but didn't do it properly?

Don't be alarmed. These steps are only precautions that reflect the best practices for cleaning up a broken CFL. Keep in mind that CFLs contain an extremely small amount of mercury.

However, if you are concerned about your health after cleaning up a broken CFL, consult a local poison control center by calling 1-800-222-1222. This number reaches every poison control center in the United States. You can call your local center at this number any time you have questions or an emergency.

—Environmental Protection Agency

How to clean up a broken compact fluorescent lightbulb



1. Close off the room and ventilate it if possible, then wait five to 10 minutes.

2. Scoop up powder and glass fragments using stiff paper or cardboard. Place everything in a sealable plastic bag or jar.



3. Use duct tape to pick up remaining fragments or powder. Put used tape in bag or jar.

4. Seal bag or jar and immediately place in an outdoor trash container. Remember to wash your hands.





Don't Go Out on a Limb

Your safety is a top priority at your electric co-op. And it's even more important when it comes to our kids. They don't always know—or remember—what can be dangerous, so it's up to all of us to watch out for their safety.

Safety rules for power lines:

- ▶ Don't plant trees or install tall playground equipment under or near power lines.
- ▶ Don't build tree houses in trees near electric lines.
- ▶ Don't allow children to climb trees growing near electric lines.
- ▶ Teach your children to always look up to check for power lines before climbing trees or any tall objects.
- ▶ Keep children away from ladders, poles or work equipment that may be near power lines.

And the No. 1 safety rule for everyone to remember is this: Don't touch a power line or anything that's touching a power line. No one can tell simply by looking at a line whether it is energized or not, and contact with a power line can be deadly. Remember, electricity always seeks the easiest path to reach the ground, and, unfortunately, human beings are good conductors of electricity. Look up and live!



Stay Safe From Lightning

SPRING WEATHER can bring thunder and electrical storms. Fortunately, accidents involving lightning are avoidable. Safe Electricity marks Texas' Severe Weather Awareness Week, March 1-7 this year, with the following suggestions to stay safe from the dangers of lightning:

There is no safe place from lightning when you are outside. It is important to be aware of weather forecasts and watch for developing thunderstorms, which occur more often in spring and summer.

Lightning can strike many miles ahead of a storm front. Hearing thunder indicates that lightning is within 10 miles of you. Seek shelter immediately. Safe shelters include inside a building or in an enclosed, metal-topped vehicle.

If you are inside a building, the National Weather Service advises you to stay off corded telephones and away from any electrical device that could carry an electrical surge if lightning entered your home through wiring. Turn off or unplug such appliances. Do not depend on surge protectors to absorb a lightning strike. A house's plumbing can also act as a conductor, so avoid taking a shower or bath during a storm.

Authorities warn against outdoor activity until 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder is heard.

If a person near you is struck by lightning, call 911 and care for the victim immediately. You are not in danger of being shocked or electrocuted by the victim.

FACES OF HILCO

Meet the People Who Work for You



Kerry Upchurch has provided dedicated service to members of HILCO Electric Cooperative for more than 21 years. Kerry began his career as a meter reader in 1993 and works as a staking engineer technician. Kerry prides himself with helping members in the field and enjoys working with his co-workers in the Engineering Department at HILCO.

In his downtime, Kerry takes pleasure in hunting and spending quality time with his wife, Kim, and his three daughters.

Paula Farquhar has delivered exceptional accounting services to HILCO Electric Cooperative for more than 19 years. Paula began working part-time as the accounts payable clerk in 1996 and is now the assistant general manager—administration. Paula enjoys working and interacting with the employees of HILCO and says she really likes that she has the ability to help others operate the co-op effectively, efficiently and in a financially sound manner for our members.

Paula and her husband, Doug, enjoy snow skiing, rafting, riding UTVs and spending time with their children, grandchildren and friends.

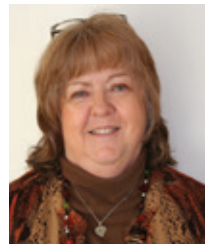


Travis Sanders joined the co-op more than 18 years ago as a meter reader. In 1999, Travis transitioned into the position of a first-class lineman, where he took pride in providing members with exceptional electric service. Today, Travis brings his knowledge and expertise to the office, where he serves as assistant director of operations. He enjoys his work and appreciates that his position allows him to work among different departments here at the co-op.

Travis lives in the Hill County area and is an avid outdoorsman. When he's away from the co-op, he enjoys hunting, fishing, team roping and spending time with friends and family.

Karla Clay has dedicated 18 years of her career to HILCO and its members. Karla began working part time as a member service representative in 1997, and in 1999 was promoted to general accounting clerk. Karla enjoys her position and says, "It's enjoyable when you work with a wonderful group of people."

In Karla's free time, when she's not with her husband watching high school basketball games, she enjoys church on Wednesdays and Sundays with family, listening to God's word. Karla also loves spending time with her two granddaughters.



Kent Smith has helped provide members with safe and reliable water since 1997. Originally Kent was hired as a water crewmember and was later promoted to water manager. Kent is now the administration coordinator, where he oversees special projects. Kent loves the diversity and challenges of his day-to-day job and says he looks forward to coming to work each morning and enjoys the camaraderie of fellow employees and members.

When Kent isn't working, golfing and spending time with his wife, Caroline, his children and grandchildren are what he cherishes most.