

We Give You Our Best, Each Day, Every Day

As you've already been privy to, September brings forth the annual Best of Co-op Country edition of *Texas Co-op Power*. And with that, we decided to use this forum to also feature a "best of." The best of Wood County Electric Cooperative, that is. Some of these things you may already know, and others may surprise you.

The Best Employees

Service is one of our top priorities, and our 94 employees embody the can-do spirit and the commitment to providing reliable and affordable electricity. Approximately 40 operations folks—linemen, servicemen and right-of-way crewmen, make up the backbone of our force, supported by Member Services, Engineering and ancillary services. Whether you have an outage, are calling to request energy-saving tips, or are simply stopping by to pay a bill, you'll be greeted by helpful and knowledgeable workers.

The Best Service

Continuously, we're making it easier to serve our member-customers. If the main office in Quitman is off your beaten path, one day a week our fully equipped Mobile Convenience Center

is stationed in your territory from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. On Monday, it's in Van at the First United Methodist Church; Tuesday, it's in Mount Vernon at Alco; Wednesday, it's in Hawkins at City National Bank; Thursday, it's in Winnsboro at Brookshire's; and Friday, it's in Grand Saline at Economy Drug.

Our SmartPower consumers also have added convenience in revaluing their prepaid cards, with transaction

kiosks located in Grand Saline, Hawkins, Lindale, Mineola, Mount Vernon, Quitman, Van, Winnsboro, Yantis and, of course, the WCEC Mobile Convenience Center.

For those who want no-fuss options, automatic bill pay is available. Or, if preferred, online bill pay is available 24/7 at www.wcec.org. And, we can always be reached by phone at (903) 763-2203 or 1-800-762-2203, or by e-mailing at info@wcec.org.



The line crews are out and about every day. If you see them on the road, give them a friendly wave, because they are working hard for you.



Our Mobile Unit travels five days a week bringing full service and smiles to five communities.



As part of our commitment to the communities we serve, our pros travel to various schools to give safety demonstrations.

The Best in Giving Back

Over the past 20 years, WCEC has returned more than \$17 million in capital credits to members. We know our members work hard for their money, so we use it responsibly to build, repair and maintain services. Each year, there is a careful analysis by the board of directors to determine whether it's possible to return some of that to the members, and as past practice has shown, we always strive to do that.

The Best in Education, Information and Community Support

Every year, WCEC awards more than \$10,000 in college scholarships while also providing support for a wide variety of community events, from school programs on using electricity safely to the National Child Identification Program to the East Texas Rural Electric Youth Seminar, FHA and FFA. The primary purpose of the speaker and demonstration programs is to inform charitable, educational and civic organizations about electrical safety, our organization and the services we provide. WCEC also assists a wide range of charitable and nonprofit organizations throughout the nine-county service area with monetary donations and by directly participating in fundraising activities.

The Best in Going the Extra Mile

The board of directors and the employees at WCEC seek ways to remain at the forefront in offering reliable and safe service. To do so, they continuously participate in industry educational forums that keep skills and knowledge current and relevant. In addition to learning about new technologies, every Monday morning, rain or shine, there is a safety meeting that focuses on best industry practices. The diligence paid to this important topic has resulted in employees going almost three years without a lost-time accident, and they are still counting.

We Mean Business!

As you have been hearing about in the news, elevated scrap metal prices have led to notable increases in the theft of copper wire from various types of construction sites, as well as from electrical distribution lines.

To date, WCEC has incurred losses of almost 20 miles of line, and damage to nine distribution transformers at three different substations—to the tune of half a million dollars in replacement cost.

These thieves are putting public safety at risk because they leave behind dangerous conditions for innocent passersby and our linemen. What's more, the removal of copper wiring has an adverse effect on the reliability of electric service, making outages more likely.

The repairs to lines are costly, and for nonprofit cooperatives like WCEC, you, the members, are paying for those cost increases. That's why we're doing everything we can to combat this problem.

In mid-July, we formed a coalition of East Texas utilities and cooperatives that includes members from AEP SWEPCO and Farmers, Rusk County, and Upshur Rural electric co-ops.

At that first meeting, the various parties shared ideas on ways to jointly address this epidemic problem. Groups were formed to attack the problem at different levels in public forums, with the law enforcement community and in state government. Together, these pooled resources and talents should send a message to the perpetrators that we mean business,



On the right of this pole, the neutral wire is missing—stolen by thieves. The replacement cost for all of their damage is estimated at more than \$15,000. The crooks also left dangerous conditions, as their activity sparked a fire at the base of the pole.

and we plan to eliminate this harmful and costly criminal activity.

And you can help. Public vigilance is an important component of catching these thieves. If you observe suspicious activity around substations or power lines, especially at night, or if you see missing sections of power line, cut fencing leading to power lines or dangling power lines, call Wood County Electric at 1-800-762-2203. All calls may remain anonymous.

Importantly, if you have information that leads to the arrest and conviction of a thief, it's pretty lucrative. Crime Stoppers will pay up to \$5,000 for information leading to an arrest and conviction in copper thefts.