



NEC INSIGHT

Empowering Communities



Economic Participation

A message from your CEO,
Varzavand "Avan" Irani

Paying money to participate in a business might not seem like a privilege, but it is—when that business is an electric cooperative. The money you put in to become a member of Nueces Electric Cooperative not only helps us light your homes and businesses, but it also helps to improve the quality of life for everyone in our service area. The text below is from the International Cooperative Alliance's summary of the third cooperative principle, Members' Economic Participation:

"Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership."

So what do those words mean? Let's take a closer look. Chances are, when you joined NEC, you paid a membership fee of \$15. That fee is your part of the equity or your share of ownership. You also do some-

thing else every month that allows your co-op to keep the lights on: You pay your bill.

As a member, your paid-in share ensures that you have a say in co-op business through your elected board of directors. The board sets the strategic direction of the cooperative, then the management and staff put that direction into action.

At the end of the fiscal year, if the co-op has received more money from members than it needed to cover expenses, a portion is set aside for reserves—which is like a savings account for the co-op. If a storm or flood comes through, the co-op will have the funds to do the needed repairs. Any remaining amount is allocated to each member based on how much electricity they used during the year. Once the board decides the co-op is financially sound enough to release these allocated margins, members receive them as capital credits checks or credits on their bills.

This is just one way your co-op gives back to its communities. Although the safe, reliable and affordable provision of electricity is our primary mission, the co-op also values its members and finds many other ways to enrich the quality of life in our service area.

Our Seven Cooperative Principles guide us. And your economic participation helps us make sure our focus is always on you, the member-owner.

Energizing South Texas for the past 80 years. That's the Cooperative difference.





NEC employees visit the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Corpus Christi to deliver brand new gifts.

NEC Employees Bring Smiles To Children and Families this Holiday Season

Nueces Electric Cooperative is proud to impact lives. This holiday season, NEC employees donated brand new, unwrapped gifts to the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Corpus Christi.

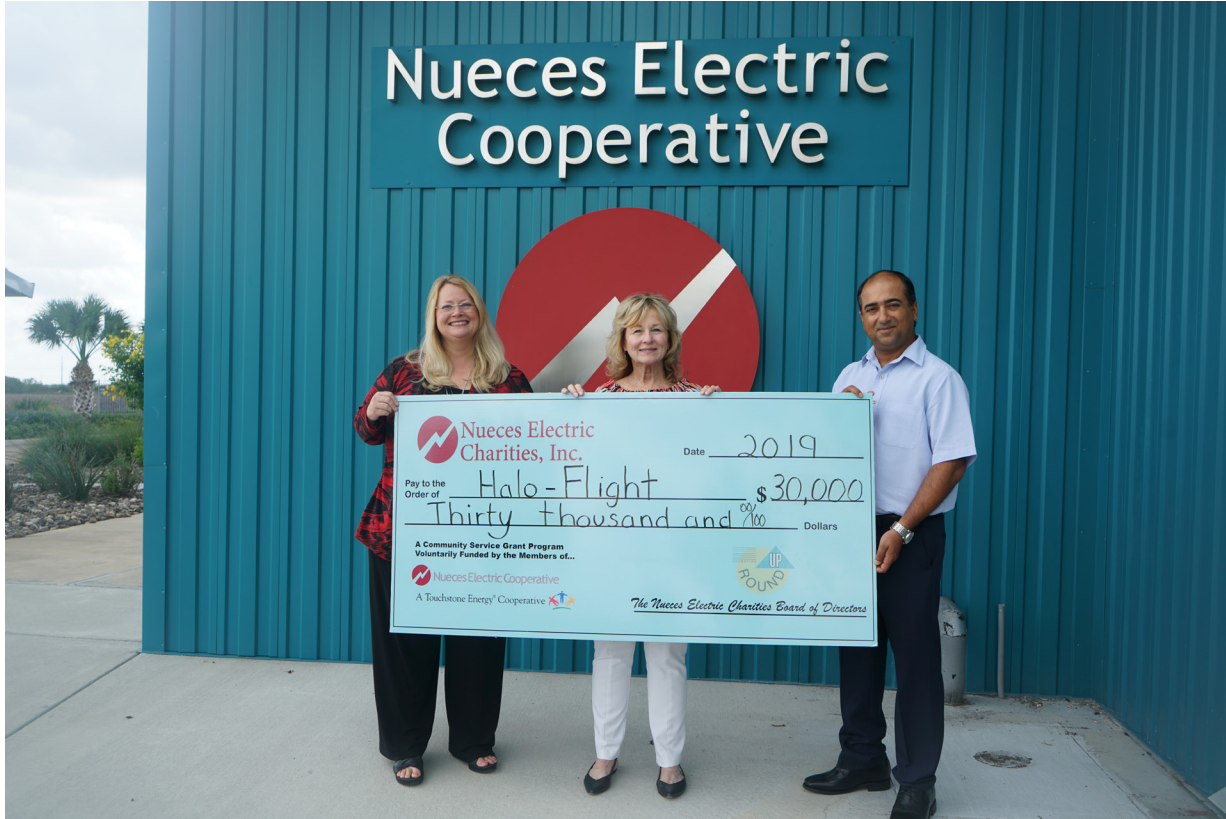
Following our cooperative principle of Concern for the Community, NEC has many out-reach initiatives such as grant awards through our charity organization, Nueces Electric Charities, Inc. and employee volunteer efforts, just to name a few.

This past December, NEC employees visited the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Corpus Christi and donated brand-new gifts to children and families in our community. Nearly one-hundred brand new gifts total were donated by NEC. The donated gifts included diapers, dolls, action figures, coloring books, bicycles and

many other toys that brought joy and excitement to the children and families of the Ronald McDonald House, just in time for Christmas.

The Ronald McDonald House Charities of Corpus Christi helps families stay together through the biggest challenges of their lives. More than just a house, the community sponsored organization provides comfort, support and resources for families with sick children just minutes away from Driscoll Children's Hospital.

Donating gifts to the Ronald McDonald House is just one of the many ways NEC continues to impact lives and fulfill the cooperative mission. NEC is proud to follow our cooperative principles and make a difference in the communities we serve.



Pictured from left to right: Sarah Fisher (NEC), Jane Haas (Halo-Flight) and Varzavand Irani (NEC).

Operation Round Up Funds Add Up To Big Things

When you become a member of Nueces Electric Cooperative, you aren't just joining the electric co-op that has energized South Texas for the past 80-years. Your NEC membership has a direct impact in the well-being of local communities through participation in Operation Round-Up.

Through Operation Round-Up, Nueces Electric Cooperative members volunteer to "round up" their electric bills to the next dollar. All of the additional change goes to a non-profit foundation developed by NEC called Nueces Electric Charities, Inc. The money adds up each year and Nueces Electric Charities (on behalf of all participating NEC members) gives a check to various worthy community projects like the HALO-Flight air ambulance service. The monthly donation by a member, per account, never exceeds 99 cents per month, can be as low as a penny, and averages just \$6 per year.

Since 1997, Operation Round-up raised over \$1.5 million! Because of the generous donations of our members, Nueces Electric Charities grants awards each year to worthy charitable organizations in our member communities. Nueces Electric Charities is a financial supporter whose giving is meant to help non-



profit organizations address and positively impact community life for Nueces Electric Cooperative members. One-hundred percent (100%) of the funds donated are returned to the community.

In 2019, NEC granted \$30,000 to HALO-Flight thanks to the generosity of NEC members who donated through the Operation Round Up program.

Operation Round-Up was originally created in 1997 to help provide funds to Halo-Flight after the organization battled financial troubles. The start of Operation Round-Up and its donations greatly benefited the life-saving organization during their early days. “Thanks to the generosity of NEC members, the future of air ambulance services to South Texans provided by HALO-Flight has never been brighter,” said HALO-Flight Executive Director Tom Klassen. Through Operation Round up, Nueces Electric Cooperative members have generously donated over \$500,000 to HALO-Flight since 1997.

“Giving back to the community we serve is one of our founding cooperative principles,” says Chief Executive Officer Varzavand “Avan” Irani, “Thanks to the generous donations of NEC members, Nueces

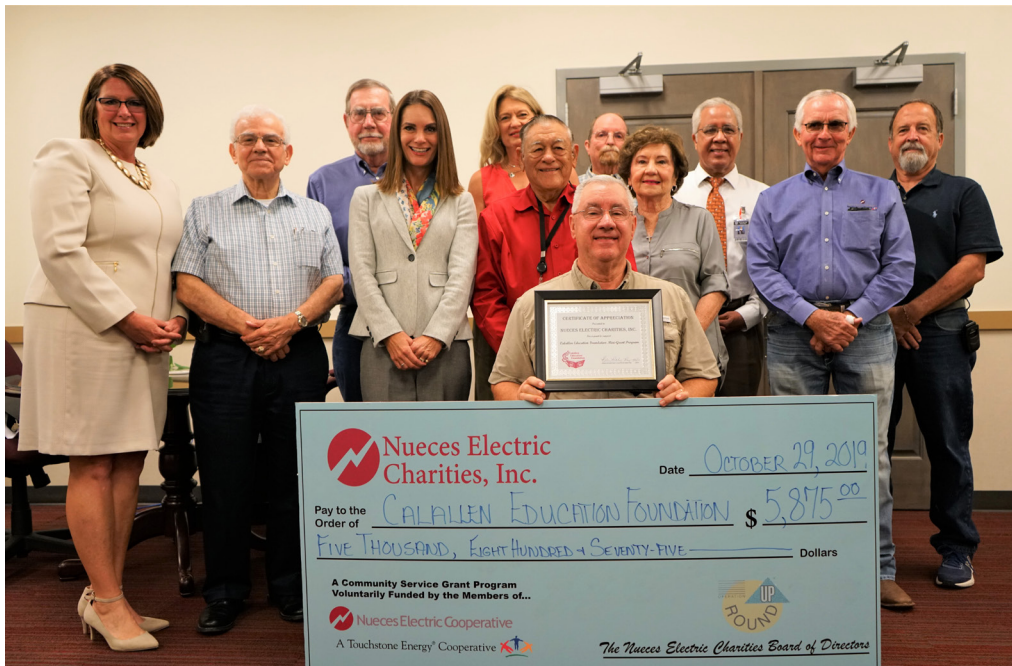
Electric Charities is proud to provide grant opportunities to various worthy non-profit organizations in our community.” Nueces Electric Charities has supported a variety of organiza-

tions including South Texas Light House for the Blind, United Way of the Coastal Bend, Driscoll Children’s Hospital and many more. Recent 2019 grants totaling \$110,000 have gone Mission of Mercy, Inc., Children’s Advocacy Center of the Coastal Bend, Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi Foundation Inc., Education Service Center Region 2, Corpus Christi Hope House, Inc., just to name a few.

Grant projects/programs that address these areas of needs receive priority consideration:

- Cultural
- Education
- Recreation
- Human Services
- Health and Medical
- Community Development
- Environmental Awareness

Applications are due Jan. 1 and July 1 of every year and can be found at www.nuecescharities.org.



In 2019, the Calallen Education Foundation (CEF) visited the NEC Board of Directors and presented them with a certificate of appreciation. Through Operation Round-Up, Nueces Electric Charities Inc, helped fund the CEF Mini-Grant Program for educators and their students within Calallen ISD.

Steer Clear of Driving in Bad Weather

Though they may make for a pretty seasonal backdrop, snow and ice can complicate even modest travel plans. It's unsafe to drive when visibility is vastly reduced or when you can't fully control your car. According to AAA, wintry weather and its byproduct—hazardous road conditions—are a factor in nearly a half-million crashes and more than 2,000 road deaths each year. With those figures in mind, here are some tips to minimize the risk to yourself and other motorists during winter weather.



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Don't drive unless you must. It really isn't worth the risk to your safety and that of others to venture out onto potentially unsafe roads for any circumstance that isn't urgent. Pay attention to weather reports so you can run any time-sensitive errands and stock up on supplies before adverse conditions arrive. If you must drive to work, that's one thing. But don't tempt fate if you can help it.

If you have to drive, eliminate distractions. Keep your phone out of

reach or set it to airplane mode—a good practice year-round but especially important when roads are dicey.

Keep a bundle of cold-weather gear in your car, including water, nonperishable food, warm clothing, a flashlight, glass scraper, blankets and medications.

Before you set out, alert others to your route, destination and estimated time of arrival.

Make sure your tires are properly inflated and have plenty of tread.

Keep your car's gas tank at least half full to prevent a frozen fuel line, which could leave you stranded.

Don't use cruise control when driving on any slippery surface.

Drive slowly. Reduce your speed to counteract the lower traction that accompanies snow and ice.

Accelerate and decelerate slowly. Applying the gas slowly can help maintain traction and avoid skids. Since it takes longer to slow down on icy roads, take your time to slow down for a stop sign or light.

Increase your following distance to five to six seconds to act as a buffer against the longer distance you'll need to stop.

If possible, don't stop when going uphill.

A final note for winter driving: Never warm up a vehicle in an enclosed area such as a garage.

Exercise a little caution and good judgment to stay safe as you negotiate whatever conditions the last snap of winter brings this year.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH



DARREN BAKER | ISTOCK.COM

Chocolate Strawberries Romanoff

½ cup sour cream
3 tablespoons brown sugar
¼ cup chocolate syrup
1 tablespoon cognac
½ cup heavy cream
3 tablespoons sugar
4 cups (2 pints) strawberries

1. Mix sour cream, brown sugar, chocolate syrup and cognac in a medium bowl.
2. In a separate bowl, whip the heavy cream until it starts to thicken. Add sugar and whip until thick.
3. Fold whipped cream into the sour cream mixture until well blended.
4. Clean and core the strawberries. Put about ½ cup of berries each into 8 wine glasses. Divide sauce equally among glasses.
 - Serves 8.

COOK'S TIP You can substitute vanilla extract for the cognac.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at
TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM



The Amazon Echo Plus is one of the most popular smart speakers on the market today.

Is Your Digital Assistant Draining Your Energy Bill?

Have you ever wanted to turn off the lights or listen to the news by simply using your voice? That's the power a digital assistant can provide. These handy products have made their way into homes across the country since the first smart speaker became available in late 2014. At the end of 2018, there were 66.4 million users of smart home assistants or smart home speakers in the U.S.

Today, 1 in 4 Americans own a smart speaker, and 40% of those folks also have more than one smart speaker at home. The most popular of these devices is the Amazon Echo, although Google Home products are selling at a rapid rate. Other top brands include Apple's HomePod, the Sonos One and the JBL Link 10.

Google Home starts at about \$129, and the Amazon Echo starts at about \$180. However, there are smaller, more basic versions that can be purchased for \$100 less—the Amazon Echo Dot and Google Home Mini. These smart speakers can help you set reminders, inform you of today's top news stories, help you order products online, play music and even tell jokes!

As smart speakers become more prevalent, you may be wondering how these products affect your energy bills: Turns out, not a lot.

Tests have shown that the Amazon Echo uses 3 watts of electricity while on standby mode, which means that if the Echo were left on standby mode for one year, it would consume about \$3.15 in electricity. While moderately active (like telling a joke or playing music at a medium volume), the Echo uses 4 watts. At its highest power use (like playing music at full volume), it uses 6.6 watts; if used consistently at this level, it would consume about \$6.93 of electricity over the course of a year. For comparison, the Google Home uses slightly less energy than the Echo at 2 watts while in standby mode, saving about \$1 a year in total energy costs.

There are plenty of reasons to buy a smart speaker; don't let the additional cost to your energy bill stop you from adding one to your home.

Keep Warm, Save Energy

February can be hard on energy bills, but cold winter weather is no match for a home that is prepared to fight it. Address these common winter culprits throughout your house:

Drafty doors and windows. An easy fix with a big payback is weatherstripping. Caulk or apply weatherstripping around all window and door seams, especially those leading to the attic. Weatherstrip your attic access door.

Dirty filters. Dirty filters make your heating system work harder to warm the air. Aim to change the filter every three months, or more often if it is especially dirty.

Leaky ducts. A contractor can test your ducts for leakage and repair any problems. Repair visible or accessible leaks with metal tape—not duct tape.

Chilly water heater. If your water heater is older or not well insulated, wrap it in an insulating jacket.

Wood fireplace. Traditional fireplaces pull heated air out of the house. When not in use, check that the damper is completely closed.



Writing the date you change it on the filter can help keep track of when it should be changed again.

Three DIY Efficiency Projects To Tackle Today

You may think energy efficiency upgrades require a great deal of time and expense, but that's not always the case. If you're interested in making your home more efficient but don't want to break the bank, there are several do-it-yourself projects you can tackle to increase energy savings. Let's take a look at three inexpensive upgrades that can save energy throughout the year.

TRIM DRYER VENT HOSE

Level of difficulty: easy.

Supplies needed: tin snips, gloves, measuring tape and masking tape.

Estimated cost: about \$25 depending on the supplies you already have.

If your dryer vent hose is too long, your dryer is working harder than it has to and using more energy than necessary. The vent hose should be long enough for you to pull the dryer out a couple feet from the wall and should form a line—it should not have a lot of slack, twists or curves. A shorter, unobstructed vent hose increases the efficiency of your dryer, allows for faster drying and reduces the buildup of lint, which is a potential fire hazard.

Simply measure, mark and trim the hose to the desired length, then reattach the hose to your dryer and exterior vent.

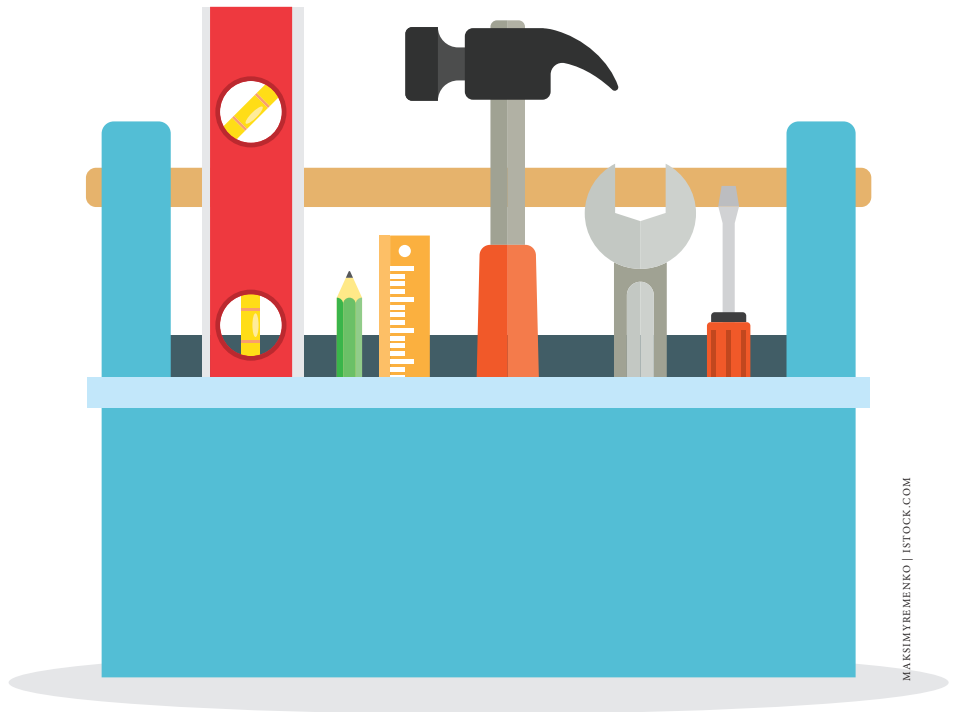
SEAL AIR LEAKS

Level of difficulty: moderate.

Supplies needed: caulk and caulk gun, weatherstripping, gloves, putty knife, and paper towels.

Estimated cost: \$25–\$50 depending on the materials you purchase.

Sealing air leaks in your home can help you save 10%–20% on heating and cooling bills. Apply caulk around windows, doors, electrical wiring and plumbing to seal in conditioned air. You should also add weatherstripping around exterior doors, which can keep out drafts and help you control energy costs. Types of caulking and weatherstripping materials vary; ask your local hardware or home store for assistance if you're unsure about the supplies you need. For more information, the U.S. Department of Energy provides step-by-step instructions



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for caulking and weatherstripping online at bit.ly/howtoseal.

INSULATE ATTIC STAIRS OPENING

Level of difficulty: moderate.

Supplies needed: rigid foam board, faced blanket insulation, tape for foam board, measuring tape, utility knife, caulk and caulk gun, and plywood.

Estimated cost: \$50–\$100.

A properly insulated attic is one of the best ways to optimize energy savings and comfort in your home, but many homeowners don't consider insulating the attic stairs or the opening to your attic space. Even a well-insulated attic can leak air through the stairs opening. Luckily, there's an easy fix.

An insulated cover box can seal and insulate the attic stairs opening. You can build your own insulated cover box or purchase a prebuilt box or kit from a local home improvement store for about \$60. If you decide to build your own, check out step-by-step instructions from the Department of Energy online at bit.ly/atticstairscover. If your attic opening is located in a garage that you do not heat and cool, this upgrade will not be as effective.



Radio's Reach

You've probably never heard of World Radio Day, February 13. Celebrated annually since 2012, it was established to commemorate the anniversary of United Nations Radio, an international broadcasting service.

As technology more deeply permeates our lives, radio remains a free and vital tool for communication, even as it adapts to the digital landscape and embraces new platforms. Its widespread accessibility and often hyperlocal nature dovetail with the democratic nature of Nueces Electric Cooperative and our focus on community priorities and concerns.

In areas with spotty high-speed internet service, radio broadcasts can play an important role in fostering a sense of community by sharing local history, events and activities. And as an often unscripted medium, radio programming provides a spontaneity that other news sources may lack.

A critical function of radio is disseminating potentially lifesaving information during emergencies and disaster relief efforts. A key player in any emergency kit, weather radios come in a range of prices, with many models operating on a variety of nonelectric power sources to ensure their usability during electrical outages.

It's not the next new thing—which might be part of its charm—but radio occupies a crucial space as an equalizing source of information, with no streaming fees or expensive gadgetry required.



ENIS AKSOY | ISTOCK.COM

Don't Ignore Flickering Lights

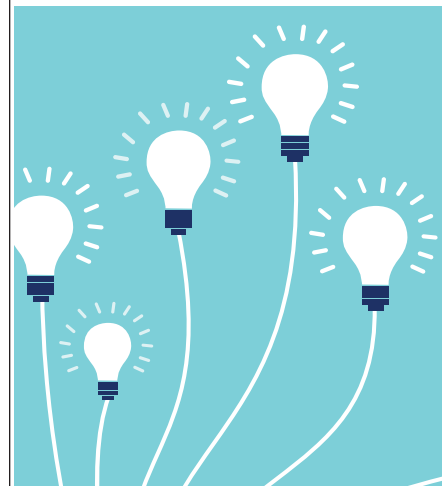
Just as an ambulance's flashing lights alert you to an emergency, so should a flickering lightbulb get your attention.

It may be that the bulb is simply about to burn out. But sometimes a flickering bulb is a sign that the light fixture is damaged or the electrical connection is faulty. Don't ignore these signs!

Turn off the power immediately and check the connection to the fixture and its internal wiring. If you're not confident in your abilities, call an electrician. Leaving a flickering light on could present a risk of electrical fire.

The same is true for a lamp that burns too hot. You may have installed the wrong wattage lightbulb. If the wattage is too high, the heat builds up and cannot escape. Check the rating on your lamps and light fixtures to make sure you're using the right size and kind of bulb.

You should be especially concerned about warm or hot bulbs if you've made the smart move to energy-efficient LED or CFL bulbs, which typically produce very little, if any, heat when in use.



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Competitive Retailers

Regardless of the company you choose as your power supplier, remember your energy delivery and meter maintenance will always be the responsibility of Nueces Electric Cooperative (NEC) and you have the right to contact us with questions regarding your electricity needs at any time. PLEASE NOTE: The (CRs) listed below have completed the process to qualify to serve NEC area members. Some of these providers do NOT serve residential services. This provider list is subject to change. For the most up-to-date list of providers, please monitor our website www.nueceselectric.org or you can obtain a list from any NEC office.

Retail Power Provider	Phone Number	Type of Service
NEC CO-OP ENERGY	1-855-632-7348	COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL
SUMMER ENERGY LLC	1-713-375-2790	COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL
MP2	845-366-3664	COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL
AFFORDABLE	713-337-2828	COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL
CALPINE	1-877-273-6772	COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL
CHAMPION	877-653-5090	COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL
CHAMPION_INDUSTRIAL_3	877-653-5090	COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL
CONSTELLATION	1-866-577-4700	COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL
EDF INDUSTRIAL POWER SERVICES	855-366-3664	COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL
EDF TRANSFER RETAIL POWER	214-981-0700	COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL