



# NEC INSIGHT

Empowering Communities



## Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

A message from your CEO,  
Varzavand "Avan" Irani

Dramatic changes are transforming all aspects of the energy industry. Interest in renewable energy is at an all-time high, and consumers want greater control over their energy use and payment methods. The prevalence of smartphone apps and smart home technology is increasing, and consumers and businesses are showing greater interest in electric vehicles. There's no denying that electric utilities will have to make changes to the way they provide energy to accommodate these trends and evolving preferences.

Luckily, Nueces Electric Cooperative is uniquely positioned to meet these challenges because we are a member-owned co-op.

### Co-ops Are Community Led

Cooperatives are locally governed, looking out for the long-term needs of their consumer-members.

Electric cooperatives belong to the communities they serve. This heightened community focus allows us to adapt quickly to evolving consumer expectations. Our closeness to the community ensures a better response to these needs because we are led by the people we serve.

### Co-ops Are a Catalyst for Good

Electric co-ops such as Nueces Electric are a catalyst for good in their communities. Co-ops engage their consumer-members with services that might otherwise

be unobtainable, such as more than 80 years ago when electric co-ops brought power to areas where other utilities did not find it economically feasible to offer service. Today, it means supporting community outreach efforts and offering multiple payment, service and communications options for our members.

Electric cooperatives were formed and exist to meet a need in the community, and they strive continually to anticipate and plan for the future needs of their member-consumers.

Electric cooperatives often partner with local groups to bring economic opportunity to their communities. It is this facilitative role that is often a co-op's most valuable strength. Here in our service territory, we partner with community officials and leaders, schools, and civic and economic development entities to improve quality of life for all.

The co-op business model is unique. It's pragmatic and mission-oriented and puts people first as it has for 80 years and will continue to do. Co-ops work to be a trusted voice in their communities.

We are thankful to have earned your trust. While we're not perfect, we and other co-ops always have our members' best interests at heart and are determined to enrich the lives of those who live and work in the communities we serve—now and in the future.

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





“The best part of my job is working with all of the different departments here at NEC, bringing safety training to them and making sure that each and every employee makes it home safe.”

**Joe Huerta III**

**SAFETY AND LOSS CONTROL MANAGER**  
NUECES ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC

## NEC’S Safety and Loss Control Manager Becomes a Certified Loss Control Professional

Nueces Electric Cooperative’s (NEC) Safety and Loss Control Manager Joe Huerta III has completed an intensive program in the electric utility safety and loss control. The Loss Control Internship is a series of workshops offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in conjunction with the National Utility Training & Safety Education Association. The program is designed to instruct participants in many areas related to electric utility industry safety.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, nearly 4 million injuries occur annually in the workplace. One of the goals of a Certified Loss Control Professional is to help ensure a safe work environment for utility workers and the public in general. Avoiding workplace accidents avoids down time and can ultimately lead to lower utility rates.

Joe is one of only a few electric utility professionals in the country that will receive this certification this year. The program requires participants to complete a

rigorous series of seminars and tests, a 30-hour OSHA course, and a detailed final course project.

Loss Control participants go through four, week-long sessions that are designed to challenge and educate participants in new, innovative safety techniques. Participants must also maintain their certificate by attending courses every year in order to stay on top of changes in the industry.

Joe has worked in the electric utility industry for 17-years. He started as a Groundman in 2003 with Medina Electric Cooperative. In 2009 Joe came to NEC as an Apprentice III Lineman. Through hard work and dedication to serving the members of NEC, Joe was promoted to Journey Lineman in 2014, Operation Supervisor in 2015 and now Safety and Loss Control Manager, a position he’s held since 2017. His commitment to the safety of NEC employees and fulfilling the cooperative mission continues to display itself through his work ethic and desire to always keep learning.

# 2020 Christmas Card Contest

**EXTENDED!**

## RULES:

Entries must be hand-drawn and follow the contest theme of combining electricity or lineworkers with a Christmas or holiday component. All entries must be received by ~~5 p.m. on Thursday, January 23, 2020.~~  
**DEADLINE EXTENDED to 5pm on Wednesday, July 8, 2020!**

All submitted works must be an original concept and not a copy of anyone else's copyrighted material. If your image infringes upon another's copyright, it will be disqualified. Upon submitting your work to NEC for this contest, you are solely responsible for any infringement on copyrighted materials. Artwork must be delivered to the NEC offices or emailed in a JPG format that does not exceed 1MB. A one-page submission form found at [www.nueceselectric.org](http://www.nueceselectric.org) must also be completed and returned with the artwork submission to be considered a complete entry. All artists must be dependents of a current member of Nueces Electric Cooperative. Children 17 and under are eligible to participate. One grand prize winner and one runner up will be determined in each of the three age categories, listed below. Winners will be announced in the August 2020 edition of Texas Co-op Power magazine. The three grand prize winners will each receive a \$100 electric bill credit and a \$100 Wal-Mart gift card. The three runner ups will each receive a \$50 electric bill credit and a \$50 Wal-Mart gift card. NEC will also determine which of the winners' artwork will be featured on the 2020 NEC Christmas Cards.

## Christmas Card Categories

**8 & Under**

**9 - 13**

**14 - 17**



M.P.





## Add Safety to Your Spring Cleaning Checklist

As you give your house a good cleaning this spring, don't overlook appliances, fixtures and emergency supplies.

Here are 10 things you might not have thought to check:

1. The stove's exhaust hood. A year's worth of home cooking—especially after the holidays, when your home might have hosted company—can leave grime and grease buildup on the hood. That buildup, which also includes food particles and dust, can catch on fire. Remove the hood and clean the filter and all surfaces.

2. The back of the refrigerator. When is the last time you pulled the fridge away from the wall and vacuumed the coils? A rule of thumb: Do that every two or three months. Dust on the coils prevents the appliance from operating efficiently. Once they're clean, push the fridge back toward the wall, but don't let it touch. Air needs to circulate around those coils.

3. The dryer vent. The lint that collects in the dryer duct presents a fire hazard. Snake it out at least twice a year and clean the lint trap after every dryer cycle.

4. Ceiling fans. It's easy to overlook dirt and dust that you can't see. Use a small ladder so you can climb high enough to wipe down the tops of the blades. If your fan has a built-in light, remove the decorative cover and rinse out the dust and dead bugs. Let it dry completely before replacing it.

5. Cord clutter. Are tangled cords a hazard in your home? Tangled cords can become damaged or frayed, increasing the risk of electrical shock or fire. A tangled mess increases the chance of damaging electrical equipment by inducing power loss or by accidentally pulling out one cord while working with another. Keep your wires neat and organized with cable ties or clips and make sure they are in good repair.

6. Power tools. Inspect power tools and outdoor



GREGORY\_DUBUS | ISTOCK.COM

appliances before using them. The long winter months could have left dirt buildup and some wear and tear. The risk of electrical danger is too high to not take a few minutes to clean them up and check for damage.

7. Smoke detectors. Although they may look clean from the outside, dust can accumulate inside the cover of smoke detectors and cause them to malfunction. Gently vacuum them with a soft brush to avoid false alarms, then check to ensure that the battery is operational. The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends replacing smoke detectors every 10 years.

8. Outdoor lighting. Winter's damp air can corrode the metal fixtures of outdoor lights, so check each one carefully. Check metal sockets for signs of corrosion. If you find rust that has eaten into the metal socket, contact an electrician to install a new one.

# CFL or LED?

Compact fluorescent lightbulbs may soon become history, like incandescents before



Incandescent lightbulbs—the ones that we installed in table lamps and overhead fixtures since the beginning of electricity—have become relics since the U.S. government ordered that manufacturers stop making most of them in 2014. Is the compact fluorescent lightbulb next?

The twisty CFL bulbs, which can last up to five years and are much more energy efficient than the old incandescents, were once hailed as the latest and greatest energy and money saver for household lighting. But LEDs—which are often built right into light fixtures, so you'll never have to change a bulb again—have proved to be a better energy value.

Both CFLs and LEDs use up to 75% less energy than incandescents. But LEDs last much longer than CFLs—up to 25,000 hours compared with 10,000 or so.

Here's why LEDs are quickly becoming America's favorite lightbulb:

- LEDs don't get hot to the touch while they're on. Incandescents release about 90% of their energy as heat, while CFLs release about 80% of their energy as heat and LEDs release almost no heat at all, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.
- Unlike CFLs, LEDs contain no mercury, so their environmental impact is minimal.
- With an LED fixture that has the lighting element built right into it, no bulb is visible and no bulb will ever need changing.
- LEDs come in a wide range of wattages, styles and hues, and many are compatible with dimmer switches.
- LEDs are made with very sturdy materials and components that can stand up to harsh weather, shocks, vibrations and abrasion—one reason they're increasingly adopted for roadside applications.
- The price of LED bulbs has dropped from about \$100 a bulb five years ago to around \$3 or less today.

## Northwest Rotary Club

Calallen/Robstown/Interact Clubs

### 15th Annual

### Fish Fry

Friday, March 27, 2020

Providing College Scholarships  
for Graduating seniors at both  
Calallen & Robstown  
High Schools

## National Vietnam Veterans Day

March 29, 2020, is National Vietnam War Veterans Day. The national holiday, officially introduced by President Trump in 2017, honors the brave veterans who served in the Vietnam War. Nueces Electric Cooperative thanks these brave men and women for their service.





# TAME YOUR Trees

We love our trees, but when branches are too close to power lines, they can cause power outages, fire hazards and other safety concerns. Here are some rules to follow:

If a tree or a large branch is touching—or falls on—an electric line, call your electric cooperative immediately.

Never trim trees that grow close to power lines; that's a job for professionals. Call your electric cooperative for assistance and guidance.

Use extreme caution when doing any overhead trimming. Branches often fall in unexpected places.

Don't allow children to climb trees or build treehouses close to power lines.

Plant appropriate distances from all power lines.

When planting a tree, consider how tall the tree will grow. At maturity, trees should be at least 10 feet away from power lines.

Nueces Electric Cooperative encourages you to always practice safety.

## Public Cellphone Charging Ports Invite Hackers

You might want to get in the habit of making sure your phone is fully charged before your next visit to the airport—because it turns out that public cellphone charging ports can put your information at risk.

According to findings from forensics experts, when you plug your phone into a USB charging hub at an airport, shopping mall or other public place, hackers may be able to access your device's data. Those convenient chargers are an easy target for criminals.

To protect yourself and your data, invest in your own charger and carry it with you when you're away from home.

The same goes for plugging in while riding in a taxi or with a ride-hailing service. Ports in some cars automatically sync with Bluetooth, which means the car could download your data—from playlists to financial records.

In cars with a hard drive or data storage mechanism, hackers could steal more than playlists—they could steal your identity with the information they collect from your phone.

Connecting to public Wi-Fi is risky as well because anyone who is on the same network could gain access to your data.



AZMAN | ISTOCK.COM

# Springtime Savings

even though it seems like it was just Christmas, spring is already here.

As the weather warms up and the days get longer, it's a good time for homeowners to take a few steps that could save energy—and money—throughout the spring and summer.

1. Tune up your air conditioner. AC weather is likely still a couple of months away, but if you put off having your equipment serviced until it's hot outside, you run the risk of a breakdown on a sweltering summer day. A qualified technician can replace your central air conditioning system's filters, make sure it has enough refrigerant and clean its evaporator coils. A pro also can spot problems in the making and recommend repairs so



OLEKSANDRA MYKHAIUTSA | ISTOCK.COM

they don't put your unit out of commission.

2. Open your windows. Natural ventilation costs nothing. On warm spring days, invite spring breezes and sunshine in. It's a great way to air out the house as you begin your annual spring cleaning.

3. Turn off the heat. And delay your use of the air conditioner. Unless March and April are especially warm this year, enjoy the fresh spring air for as long as you can.

4. Seal cracks in the drywall on the indoor side of your exterior walls. You'll find them around electrical outlets, cable lines, windows and doors. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that you can save up to 30% on your energy bills by sealing air leaks around

your house.

5. Service your large appliances. The refrigerator is one of your home's biggest users of energy. Keep it clean on the inside and out—including the back of it, where coils collect dust and sap the unit's efficiency. Clean the lint out of your dryer's vent.

6. Bring in sunlight. During daylight hours, switch off artificial lights and use windows and skylights to brighten your home.

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH



LILECHKA75 | ISTOCK.COM

## Spinach and Mushroom Frittata

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 12 eggs
- ¼ cup half-and-half
- ½ cup finely chopped onion
- 4 ounces baby portobello mushrooms, stemmed and thinly sliced
- 6 ounces fresh spinach, stemmed and coarsely chopped
- 4 ounces shredded Swiss cheese
- ¼ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- ½ teaspoon sea salt

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with olive oil.

2. Whisk the eggs and half-and-half together in a large mixing bowl. Add the remaining ingredients. Stir to combine, then pour into the prepared baking dish.

3. Bake 45–50 minutes, or until eggs have set and top is lightly browned.

a Serves 4–6.

**COOK'S TIP** For the best flavor and texture, allow the frittata to rest 10 minutes before serving. Serve with your favorite fresh salsa for an extra kick.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at  
**TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM**



## Payment Options:



### Pay Online

www.nueceselectric.org

Access your account 24 hours a day from any computer to view usage, make payments or manage your account. Just click on "Pay Your Bill", on the left side of our Homepage and it will take you to the SmartHub account portal.



### Pay With Your Smart Device

Download the SmartHub app to your iPhone or Android device. View usage, weather impacts, make payments and manage your account any time of the day.



### Auto Draft:

Sign up to have your bank account or credit card drafted for your monthly bill. You can sign-up via your SmartHub online account.



### Equal Payment Plan

Through this payment program, a member's usage is averaged for the year and the member makes equal payments each month. See more information and sign up online under the Member Services ->Payment Options menu tab, or call the office.



### Pay by Phone:

800-NEC-WATT (800-632-9288)



### Pay in Person:

Pay your bill at any one of our Customer Service centers located in Calallen, Ben Bolt, Ricardo or Orange Grove.



### Pay by Mail:

P.O. Box 659821, San Antonio, TX 78265



### Pay at the Payment Kiosk

Quick, easy, and accessible 24 hours a day, the Kiosk is located at the Calallen office. Payments post immediately to your account.



### Payment Services

Pay using any Fidelity Express Pay Stations or for an additional \$1.50 service charge. Search online to find a payment station near you.



## Nueces Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Find us on the web at:  
www.nueceselectric.org

Call us at:  
361-387-2581 or 1-800-632-9288

### Your Elected Board of Directors:

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Orange Grove Service Center:  
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T-Th 9 - 12 / 1 - 4  
(FM 624 & Hwy 281)

Use the NEC Outage Viewer to view outages 24-hours a day with any device. The Outage Viewer is located on the homepage our website.

## NEC Power Providers

PLEASE NOTE: The (CRs) listed below have completed the process to qualify and are currently serving NEC area members. This provider list is subject to change. For the most up-to-date list of providers, please monitor our website nueceselectric.org or you can obtain a list from any NEC office.

AP GAS & ELECTRIC  
APOLLO POWER & LIGHT  
BLUESTAR ENERGY  
CHAMPION ENERGY SERVICES  
CONSTELLATION ENERGY  
CORAL POWER SOLUTIONS  
DYNEGY  
ENERGY TRANSFER  
ENERTRADE ELECTRIC  
HINO ELECTRIC  
MPOWER /MP2  
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STARTEX POWER  
SOURCE POWER & GAS  
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