

TEXAS CO-OP POWER



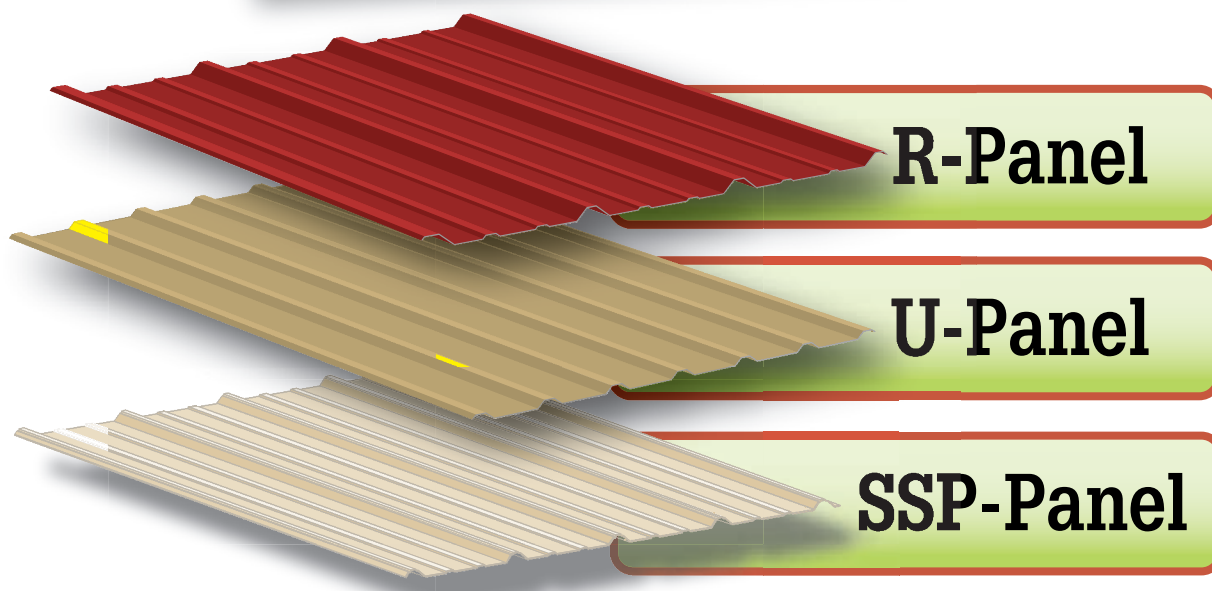
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Cowboys brand cattle at the XIT Ranch.

FEATURES

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By Gene Fowler

ON THE COVER Rattlesnakes are among the most commonly encountered snakes in the state. Illustration by David Danz

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A Tree's Trials

I'm a crape murderer—but not because I'm trying to restrict the height of them [*Crape Murder*, February 2020]. My crape myrtles border our driveway. They bloom beautifully and look great during the warm months.

However, once the first freeze occurs, they turn brown and become a bit of an eyesore. Even worse, left untrimmed, they drop dead leaves and seed pods onto my driveway throughout the winter, much of which is then blown into the garage. Foot traffic then brings them inside.

TOM MILLHOLLON | GRANBURY
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

I enjoyed Sheryl Smith-Rodgers' article, but it should have been titled Crape Assault and Battery because it's almost impossible to kill the average crape. Three years ago, I cut off a 6-inch diameter volunteer crape just above the ground (that was too close to the house), and it came roaring back.

I repeatedly cut it back and finally was able to kill it by pouring a thick layer of concrete over the stump. There's nothing delicate about a crape!

DUDLEY DOBIE | AUSTIN
FAYETTE EC

For all of my 50-year career in Texas horticulture, I have yet to hear even one valid reason for this practice. When author Sheryl Smith-Rodgers quoted Greg Grant, she went to one of Texas' finest resources. Indeed, we must "stop the madness."

NEIL SPERRY | MCKINNEY
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC



True Confession

I had never seen a crape myrtle before I moved to Texas [*Crape Murder*, February 2020]. There was a row of them along the property line of my lot in a mobile home park. My neighbor told me to cut them back. Soon afterward, I found out that was wrong. I've felt bad ever since. They were fairly tall.

LISA CULBERTSON | VIA FACEBOOK

Not a Flicker of Doubt

In Focus on Texas in February, you identified a bird as a woodpecker. The bird is a flicker.

MARYLIN DOW | SCROGGINS
WOOD COUNTY EC

Editor's Note: We checked with Clifford Shackelford, an ornithologist at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "It's a male red-bellied woodpecker," he said. "The flicker would never have that much red on the head."

Crawfish Crazy

I am crawfish crazy [*A Tale of Texas Crawfish*, February 2020]. It's a pastime, like baseball or fishing. Conversations over mudbugs and beer—can't beat it.

RYAN WAGNER | VIA FACEBOOK

You left out the best place along the coast in Calhoun County.

Bubba's Cajun Seafood has been serving up its own special seasoning on heaps of steaming crawfish for almost 10 years.

BECKEY BOYD GOODEN | SEADRIFT
VICTORIA EC

I call 'em what they are, crawfish, and the very best come out the Atchafalaya spillway, not farm raised.

DARYL RODRIGUEZ | VIA FACEBOOK

You can call them whatever you want. I call them good.

MICHAEL WOODARD | VIA FACEBOOK

I grew up in West Texas, and we called them crawdads. I never knew people ate them.

MARCIA HERALD | VIA FACEBOOK

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Texas Co-op Power



TEXAS CO-OP POWER VOLUME 76, NUMBER 10 (USPS 540-560). *Texas Co-op Power* is published monthly by Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC). Periodical postage paid at Austin, TX, and at additional offices. TEC is the statewide association representing 75 electric cooperatives. *Texas Co-op Power's* website is TexasCoopPower.com. Call (512) 454-0311 or email editor@TexasCoopPower.com. **SUBSCRIPTION PRICE** is \$4.20 per year for individual members of subscribing cooperatives and is paid from equity accruing to the member. If you are not a member of a subscribing cooperative, you can purchase an annual subscription at the nonmember rate of \$7.50. Individual copies and back issues are available for \$3 each. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Texas Co-op Power* (USPS 540-560), 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. Please enclose label from this copy of *Texas Co-op Power* showing old address and key numbers. **ADVERTISING:** Advertisers interested in buying display ad space in *Texas Co-op Power* and/or in our 30 sister publications in other states, contact Elaine Sproull at (512) 486-6251. Advertisements in *Texas Co-op Power* are paid solicitations. The publisher neither endorses nor guarantees in any manner any product or company included in this publication. Product satisfaction and delivery responsibility lie solely with the advertiser.

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HAPPENINGS

School Launch Program

Brett Williams' push for a STEM-based curriculum at Fredericksburg High School in 1996 certainly took off. Williams found a fun way to teach students lessons in science, technology, engineering and math while building a model rocket, which they then launched.

He called his program SystemsGo, and it spread to other schools. Students design rockets to meet specific criteria, such as sending a 1-pound payload 1 mile high or exceeding the sound barrier.

This year, more than 80 high schools in four states will participate in **ROCKETS 2020** launches. The first event in Texas is **APRIL 24-25** in **JACKSBORO**. Launches in Stonewall and Anahuac will follow later in the spring, and Jal, New Mexico, will host an event.

Rockets will launch throughout the events, which are open to the public and free.

INFO ► (830) 997-3567, systemsgo.org

WEB EXTRAS
► Find more happenings online.

BY THE NUMBERS

20 MILLION

That's how many Americans demonstrated on behalf of the environment on the first Earth Day, April 22, 1970. Gaylord Nelson, a Wisconsin governor and U.S. senator, started the movement 50 years ago.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE



I never should have told my parents . . .

► **Tell us how** you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or post them on our Facebook page. Please include your city and co-op.

Below are some of the responses to our February prompt: **My most unforgettable first date was ...**

With two different boys. They both showed up at the same time. Awkward.

BARBARA TALIAFERRO | SPRINGTOWN TRI-COUNTY EC

With a girl who had to stop and go to the bathroom in the woods on the way home.

JIM MORROW | HIGHLAND VILLAGE | COSERV

The one that resulted in my lunch date and I being inseparable from that day forward.

CONNIE THOMAS | VIA FACEBOOK

To see more responses, read Currents on our website.

POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

Sharing Veterans' Voices

WHEN JAPAN'S ENVOYS signed the documents surrendering to the Allies on September 2, 1945, in Tokyo Bay, they could not know they were being watched by a sailor from Fayette County. Charlie Ripper, a shell man for the 16-inch guns on the USS Colorado, had an eye on the ceremony. "I was on lookout duty," Ripper said, "and from the lookout tower I could see them sign the papers."

Ripper and 62 other World War II veterans—men and women—some who remained stateside to support the war effort and others who slogged through muddy battlefields, told their stories to Fayette County Electric Cooperative member Elaine Thomas, who included each narrative in her book, *Veterans' Voices and Home Front Memories*.

"I have been a regular columnist for the *Fayette County Record* for more than a decade," Thomas said. "I was talking to Charlie Ripper and asked him if I could interview him for an article."

Ripper agreed on the condition that he not be called a hero. "The only heroes are the ones who didn't come home," Ripper said.

Thomas' stories about Ripper and others in the *Fayette County Record* drew raves from the community. They led to a special section in the paper and then the book.

Four hundred people turned out for the *Veterans' Voices* book signing in November 2018, and 17 veterans and three female civilians whose stories appear in the book were able to accept appreciation from the community for their service. Proceeds from the book, available on Amazon, support a scholarship at Blinn College's Schulenberg campus.



Elaine Thomas with World War II veteran Charlie Ripper of La Grange.

POWER OF OUR PEOPLE recognizes co-op members who improve their community's quality of life. Nominate someone by emailing people@texascooppower.com.

LIFESTYLE

MAKING CENTS

April 1 is National One Cent Day.

That's not an April Fool's Day joke. It's true.

A penny used to be worth something—enough to prompt the centuries-old saying, "A penny saved is a penny earned." In fact, some readers remember penny candy and corner stores, where, for just 1 cent, you could actually get something sweet.

The U.S. first issued a 1-cent coin in 1792. Because of inflation, what used to cost 1 cent then costs 27 cents today.



Though easily disregarded, the penny is the most abundant coin in the country, with about 7.8 billion produced by the U.S. Mint in 2018. But because pennies cost 2.06 cents each to produce, American taxpayers lost more than \$82 million that year minting them.

That's not a joke, either.

WORTH REPEATING

"What is the difference between a taxidermist and a tax collector? The taxidermist takes only your skin."

—MARK TWAIN

(With that, we remind you the tax collector comes calling April 15.)

A photograph of a snake with a brown and tan mottled pattern, coiled in a field of green grass and small red and yellow flowers. A corrugated metal pipe lies horizontally across the lower right portion of the frame. The text "A SNAKE" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font in the upper right area.

**A
SNAKE**

**TO
LOVE**

BY MIKE LEGGETT

FRIEND OR FOE?

What is your experience with rattlesnakes? Tell us at letters@texascooppower.com.

OUTDOORS JOURNALIST COMES TO ADMIRE RATTLESNAKES, WHICH ARE NOT THE EVIL BEINGS OF LEGEND AND MYTH IN TEXAS

I can trace my love affair with rattlesnakes back more than 60 years to a cool, misty October Saturday morning in the mid-1950s when somebody showed up at the little general store in DeBerry with a very large canebrake rattler in the back of a pickup.

I would have been 6 or 7 years old then, and there was no threatened status as there is now for these shy, somewhat gentle reptiles. In those days, when anybody encountered one, the snake invariably lost a war with a load of No. 6 squirrel shot. This one had succumbed to just such a blast, but it wasn't his missing head that fascinated me. It was the full-grown fox squirrel that lay in the slit-open belly of the snake. His last meal.

That rattlesnake was absolutely beautiful to me and kicked off a quest that has kept me fascinated for more than six decades. I loved that snake and hated that it had to die.

I wouldn't see another rattler for at least 30 years. By then I was the outdoors editor at the *Austin American-Statesman*. I

was looking for someone who kept rattlesnakes to allow me to check the efficacy of wading leggings designed to blunt the attacks of stingrays and rattlesnakes. A Texas Parks and

A western diamondback rattlesnake, found in the western two-thirds of the state and one of eight species of rattlesnakes native to Texas.

Wildlife Department employee offered a 3-footer, and I placed my right boot down next to the snake. The strike was surprisingly fast, not even registering as a blow against my calf. There were golden droplets of venom hanging off the ballistic cloth of the leggings.

I went several more years without crossing paths with another rattlesnake, but once I hit my stride, I began to see them and hear them more often. I would catch them when I could and pose them for photos in the wild.

I've seen them during spring turkey season especially, usually crossing a road or *sendero* and trying to go on about their business. I've literally stepped on rattlers, stepped over them and walked within inches of them as they hid in the brush, usually under a guayacan or other shrubby kind of South Texas bush. Only one of those tried to bite me, a big snake—more than 5 feet long—that fired off from under a bush in South Texas one day. I killed it with a deer rifle, something I've always regretted.

Most of the time, rattlesnakes try to stay hidden or move to a hiding place and avoid any contact with humans. In the course of daily life in Central Texas, if you encounter a snake, odds are it will be a western diamondback rattlesnake or a Texas rat snake. But rattlesnakes are not the evil beings of legend and myth in Texas.

RESPECT THEIR LETHAL POWERS

We are too big for rattlers to eat, and they know that. But they will bite if pressured or frightened, and anyone who suffers a bite from a rattler is in for a tough time.

On average, one to two people per year die from snakebites in Texas, according to the Department of State Health Services, and often, those individuals were handling the snake in some way, either by trying to pick it up or fool with it. Most snakebites in Texas are by western diamondbacks, the most common venomous snake in the state.



WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BITTEN BY A RATTLESNAKE

Here are some steps that could help lessen the nasty effects of the snake's venom.

Don't panic. Head straight for a doctor or hospital. Doctors will have access to anti-venom drugs that can help save lives and limbs.

Throw out those old tales about cutting an X above the fang mark or sucking out the venom. You'll probably do more harm than good.

Remain still. Movements help distribute the venom throughout the body.

Remove jewelry or tight clothing around the bite.

Keep the bite area below the level of the heart to keep the venom from spreading.

DO NOT apply a tourniquet or ice to the bite. And no steroids should be used in treatment.

There is a vaccine for dogs and cats that, with an annual injection, can help reduce the effects of rattlesnake bites. Veterinarians typically keep it in stock.

Except for the big timber areas of East Texas, western diamondbacks are the most widespread of venomous snakes, with a range covering the area along either side of Interstate 35 and on into the mountains of West Texas. The South Texas desert and the coastal plains are home to very large diamondbacks, 6–7 feet long. Prairie rattlers show up in the grasslands and scrub brush of the Texas Panhandle.

There are no regional differences in aggressiveness or venomous status of the local snakes, which all have the equipment to bite and injure or kill humans.

University of Texas herpetologist Travis Laduc has spent lots of time studying rattlesnakes and the way they bite. Capturing many hours of footage with ultrahigh-speed cameras, he's learned that the bite itself, from coiled position to contact and back to coiled position, takes but half a second. In that half-second, the rattlesnake can deliver a load of hemotoxic venom that works through the bloodstream.

THEIR ROLE IN THE ECOSYSTEM

Rattlesnakes are abundant in most of their natural range, and they are there for a reason. Rats and mice might be stacked a foot deep without rattlesnakes around to eat a few from time to time.

However, I'm not saying you should ignore a rattler in your yard or close to your house where kids or pets might be in danger. I've lost two Labs to rattlesnakes over the years myself.

My wife and I came home one night. As we walked up onto the front porch in the dark and I was trying to get the key into the lock, we were shaken by the loudest buzzing I've ever heard—so loud up under the porch I thought it had to be cicadas. However, Rana wasn't fooled. She was back in the truck in seconds and yelling for me to get in as well.

I climbed into the cab and turned the lights on to illuminate a large rattlesnake lying on the doormat, just inches from where I had been standing moments before. We had cats then, and as outdoor cats tend to do, they had choused that snake until he couldn't get away and was cornered against the front door.

I had no choice but to do away with the snake. That's one rule I don't break: No snakes around the house.

In Central Texas, where I live and where a generous portion of Texas rattlesnakes live, that is kind of a classic encounter. Maybe you find one hiding in your flower bed one morning or crawling through your corral. We should be thankful for them and for what they do to keep vermin under control.

Here's a challenge for anyone who comes across a rattlesnake: Let it stay in its hiding place or just crawl away into the brush. If it's hiding, rattle or not, it's just hoping you'll go on by and leave it to hunt in peace.

Mike Leggett was outdoors editor for the *Austin American-Statesman* from 1985 to 2013. He has a lifelong fascination with rattlesnakes and is currently writing a book about rattlers, due out in 2021. He lives in Burnet and is a member of Pedernales EC.

WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to learn more rattlesnake facts.



COTTONMOUTH



COPPERHEAD



CORAL SNAKE



TEXAS RAT SNAKE

COMMON SNAKES OF TEXAS

VENOMOUS

Rattlesnakes are not the only venomous snakes in Texas, though they are by far the most common and tend to strike the most fear in Texans' hearts.

Next on the list of most feared snakes is the **cottonmouth**, or **water moccasin**. Ranging in color from a splotchy gray to nearly black, it is commonly found around swampy, slow-water terrain and habitat.

The **copperhead** is a small, beautifully colored and patterned snake found mostly in yards and wooded areas of East Texas but also Central Texas. It is common in cities and towns and is known to deliver bites to children playing outside or adults walking on the lawn.

Coral snakes, which deliver neurotoxic venom, are found throughout the eastern half of the state, including Central Texas. They are small, slender snakes and must literally chew on a person to get their venom into the bite.

NONVENOMOUS

Texas rat snake Maybe the most common snake in Texas, this acrobatic climber feeds on rats and mice, birds and birds' eggs. It can grow to be quite large but is not dangerous to humans. It will bite, though, and protect itself with an obnoxious musk.

Coachwhip A slender, mostly light brown to tan snake that will kill and eat rattlesnakes, it doesn't attack people by whipping their legs, as folklore suggests. It eats birds, small reptiles and almost anything else it can catch and swallow. The Central Texas whipsnake, a member of this family, has a black head and a black-and-white pattern on the rest of its body.

Hog-nosed snake Most common in East Texas, this little snake has an upturned nose and feeds on insects. It will play dead if threatened. It has a brownish to gray body with broken patterns of brown and black on its back.

Diamondback water snake A brownish snake with yellowish belly, it is common in lakes and ponds through much of Texas, especially the damper eastern half of the state. It eats fish, frogs and other aquatic fauna. It is often mistaken for a water moccasin and killed.

Speckled king snake A large snake, it's commonly known as a chicken snake for its habit of sneaking into hen houses and devouring eggs and baby chicks—though the rat snake is more likely the culprit in those raids.

MIKE LEGGETT



COACHWHIP



HOG-NOSED SNAKE



DIAMONDBACK WATER SNAKE



SPECKLED KING SNAKE



XIT

THE RANCH
THAT BUILT THE CAPITOL



JOHN A. WILSON

THE SHORT-LIVED XIT RANCH, THE WORLD'S LARGEST, LEFT BEHIND MYTHS AS LASTING AS THE EDIFICE IT FUNDED

WHEN SAM HOUSTON'S youngest son, Temple, spoke at the state Capitol dedication in 1888, he waxed eloquent about the grand building. "Texas stands peerless amid the mighty, and her brow is crowned with bewildering magnificence!" he said. "This building fires the heart and excites reflection in the minds of all."

Houston also commented on the logistics required to manifest this structure, which started with the creation of the 3 million-acre XIT Ranch and included the construction of the Austin and Northwestern Railroad to deliver red granite for the Capitol from Marble Falls to Austin.

"The XIT looms large in Texas mythology and ranching history because it was the largest fenced ranch in the world during its heyday," says Nick Olson, director of the XIT Museum in Dalhart, which preserves images, stories, saddles and artifacts associated with the XIT. "And it's the ranch that built the largest state Capitol in the country." At the time of its dedication, the Texas Capitol was the seventh-largest building in the world.

Neither the XIT Ranch nor the special, narrow-gauge railroad tracks exist today. The XIT lives on as a carefully tended legend, and the reality of the ranch is difficult to separate from the myths. Capitol and XIT historian Bill Green says the ranch's legacy can be seen as a branding tool because businesses in Dalhart and around the Panhandle adopt the name: XIT Roofing, XIT Real Estate, XIT Feeders, and XIT car dealerships and communications companies. Thousands of area residents own small patches of the fabled ranch. Cattle outfits operate on lands purchased from the original XIT acreage.

Moreover, the XIT legacy looms globally. "I was curator of history at the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum for 17 years," Green explains, "and we had visitors from all over the world. They all knew two things about Texas: the Alamo and the XIT."

BUILDING THE CAPITOL

STATE LEGISLATORS realized they needed to plan for a new Capitol in the 1870s, and the Texas Constitution of 1876 set aside 3 million acres of land along the western border of the Panhandle to fund its construction. Even though they allocated the land, they did not articulate a procedure for how to survey the land and execute the legal agreements required to construct the building itself. In 1879, the Legislature approved a process for surveying the land and moving forward with a working plan. Not long after the existing Capitol burned in 1881, the newly appointed Capitol Board, including the governor, treasurer, attorney general and land commissioner, solicited bids.

In 1882, the contract to construct the edifice went to four Illinoisans: brothers John and Charles Farwell, Amos C. Babcock and Abner Taylor, who formed the Capitol Syndicate. Taylor

then hired a 27-year-old German immigrant named Gustav Wilke to serve as contractor. In 1885, the syndicate made an agreement by which it could occupy and ranch on the XIT land even though it did not yet have the title to it. Once the Capitol was complete, the legal title would be conveyed from the state to the syndicate.

To finance the cattle ranching, John Farwell formed the Capitol Freehold Land and Investment Company of London. He and his partners raised about \$5 million to keep the ranch running until it could be broken up and sold to individual ranchers and homesteaders. Back in Austin, construction started on the Capitol, with the Farwells paying for the initial stages from their own funds.

As Green points out, Europeans of the time had a rather romantic view of Texas ranching, and British investors had bankrolled several large Texas ranches, including Charles Goodnight's JA Ranch. The British Empire enjoyed global reach, and there was little opportunity to pursue the promise of such lucrative investments at home.

OPERATING THE RANCH

THE FIRST LONGHORNS arrived on the XIT range in 1885, delivered by a team of drovers led by Ab Blocker. J. Frank Dobie wrote that Blocker was “the most original-natured trail boss I have known.” At the third XIT Reunion in 1938, where aging cowpokes gathered to swap tall tales and reminisce, Blocker told Lewis Nurdyke, author of the 1949 XIT volume, *Cattle Empire*, that he sketched the XIT brand in the sod with his boot heel for the ranch’s manager at the time, B. H. “Barbecue” Campbell. Blocker demonstrated for Campbell that the brand could be accomplished with five applications of a straight-line branding iron and would be nearly impossible for rustlers to alter. XIT it was.

In his 1929 book, *The XIT Ranch of Texas*, J. Evetts Haley explained that managing the sprawling ranch posed huge challenges for Campbell. “Barbecue exercised slight control over his men and allowed the ranch to become a rendezvous for rustlers, outlaws, and hard cases of all kinds,” Haley wrote.

Ranch operations improved when Albert G. Boyce, described by Haley as “a frontier cowman of commanding presence and vast experience,” became manager of the XIT in 1888. When Boyce took over, he fired and replaced most of the ranch’s 150 cowboys. At the same time, John Farwell improved profitability by replacing the ranch’s longhorn herds with Hereford, Angus and other purebred stock.

To further streamline the XIT’s business, Boyce divided the massive ranch into eight sections, each with a separate function, and established ranch headquarters in the town of Channing, where he built a house. The northernmost section was named Buffalo Springs. The others included Middle Water, Ojo Bravo, Alamasitas, Rita Blanca, Escarbada and Spring Lake. The southernmost division was Yellow Houses, named for nearby limestone formations called *las casas amarillas*.

Cowpunchers, well drillers, windmill toilers



Above: Bronco busting at the Yellow Houses division of the XIT Ranch in 1904. Below: The Capitol in Austin in the late 19th century.



and freighters—who kept the ranch’s remote outposts equipped with necessities—came from all walks of life. One cowpoke was even said to have a special love for the poetry of John Keats. When Boyce’s daughter Bessie opened a letter from a farm boy in Maryland who professed to love horses, she hired him by return mail. A hand named Blue Stevens later recalled that he gathered cow chips—used as fuel—for 21 days straight, picking up enough chips “to heat branding irons for every cow in the U.S.A.”

Noted ranching photographer Ray Rector cowboyed on the XIT as a youth. According to the 1995 volume *The Papers of Will Rogers*, the cowboy philosopher worked on the XIT around 1901. A photograph of Yellow Houses’ chuck wagon dining includes an hombre identified as Rogers, who later recalled the Plains as “the prettiest country I ever saw in my life.”

Operating under threat of receivership by British investors for most of its existence, the XIT began selling off its acreage in 1901. The last cattle left the ranch in 1912. In 1936, the first XIT Reunion drew a crowd to Dalhart, and the annual event is now known internationally as “the world’s largest free barbecue.”

The Escarbada division headquarters building—deconstructed, moved, reconstructed and restored—can be seen today at the National Ranching Heritage Center in Lubbock. The XIT general office and manager’s residence still stand in Channing, where an annual Christmas in July event began in 2018. (The 2020 event will be July 25.) The Capitol Visitors Center in Austin features a display on the XIT story.

Was the XIT too sprawling and massive to be a successful ranching operation? Manager Boyce thought so. But Andy Wilkinson, playwright of *Charlie Goodnight’s Last Night*, takes a longer view. “When you let all the big windies about the fabled ranch drift off into the sunset,” muses Wilkinson, “what still remains is a spread of 3 million acres, 1,500 miles of barbed wire, tens of thousands of cattle, and enough outlaws and heroes and honest-to-goodness cowhands to populate all the rangeland myths of the American West.”

Writer and author **Gene Fowler** specializes in art and history.

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OWN A LEGEND

The White Buffalo stone is as rare as its namesake, and we've given it an even rarer price.

To Native Americans, the buffalo was a symbol of sacred life and abundance, inspiring a legend of a white buffalo calf appearing during difficult times to usher in a new age of hope and peace. So sacred is this prophecy, that the Lakota tribe has named a rare and beautiful stone after the white buffalo calf.

To say this stone is as rare as a white buffalo is an understatement. There are a lot of imitations in the market, but don't be fooled. You want the real thing. And, we have it. White Buffalo is found in only one mine worldwide, the Otteson Mine located in Tonopah, Nevada. Which is where we went. The family-owned and operated mine is located near the Yomba Shoshone Tribe of the Yomba Reservation and is roughly 200 miles from Battle Mountain.

We were able to secure these authentic desert gems for a remarkable price. You could easily spend as much as \$900 for a White Buffalo pendant in sterling silver. But, our philosophy is to pass our good fortune on to our customers, which is why you can own a piece of Native American history for under \$100.

The **White Buffalo Collection** celebrates the unique and rare beauty of this legendary stone. Generous cabochons of White Buffalo are set in filigreed sterling silver settings with an antiqued finish that beautifully complements this stone's distinctive white background and black matrix.

100% Satisfaction Guaranteed. Experience the bold and captivating beauty of the White Buffalo. If you aren't completely happy, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

LIMITED RESERVES. This collection is so much more than beautiful jewelry. Each piece is a Native American artifact steeped in meaning and history. It's time you owned a legend.

• Authentic White Buffalo • Antiqued-finish .925 sterling silver settings • Ring: whole sizes 5-10

White Buffalo Collection

A. Ring (20 carats)	\$395	\$99* Save \$296
B. Pendant (35 carats)	\$395	\$99* Save \$296
C. 18" Bali Naga Woven Silver Chain		\$149
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Pendant, Chain & Earrings	\$939	\$299 Save \$640 BEST BUY

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A.



Set in .925 sterling silver

D.



C.

B.



The rare White Buffalo stone is only found in one place on earth.

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On the Line

Keeping the lights on in all weather, all year long



MESSAGE FROM CEO MARK ROLLANS

IT IS AS EASY AS FLIPPING A SWITCH. That is how it may seem.

But working in the industry for all these years, I know it isn't that easy. A lot of hard work goes in to making sure

that power keeps flowing across more than 9,000 miles of electric lines each day, through sunny weather and storms.

This month, we recognize a special group of employees, the linemen. April 13 is recognized as National Lineman Appreciation Day by cooperatives across the country. Medina EC's 53 linemen are always on the line ensuring that power keeps flowing. With a job description that includes being comfortable working 40 feet in the air for long hours in all types of weather and dangerous conditions while providing excellent customer service, I think it is fitting that linemen have a day of recognition separate from other employees.

Fortunately for Medina EC members, our team of linemen embrace the challenges the job brings. They know it is not *if* there will be an outage but *when*. And normally that *when* occurs in bad weather, with their family dinner about to be put on the table or not long after they arrived home and drifted back to sleep after being called out for a different outage.

Perhaps you've seen them working during a storm and thanked them. Perhaps you've woken up one morning to realize you had an outage during the night.

It's the linemen that often miss out on sleep or important moments with their families while they work in bad weather to make sure you have power. They are the unsung heroes who stand at the ready to respond to outages caused by storms, vehicle accidents, rogue animals and anything else that may knock out power.

And for that, it's all of us who say thank you.

Hard hats off to linemen around the country and to the linemen of Medina EC,

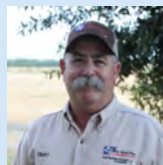
Mark Rollans

Medina EC Linemen

Shown in order of hire date



Allen Boehme
Hondo - 43 years



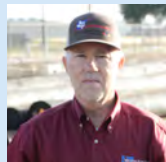
Ricky Falcon
RGC - 41 years



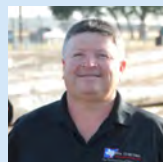
Kerry Baxter
Uvalde - 37 years



Ace Gaucin
Hondo - 34.5 years



Greg Robinson
Uvalde - 32 years



Seb Suarez
Uvalde - 28 years



Joe Flores
Uvalde - 27 years



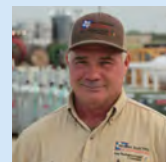
Scott Schulte
Hondo - 26.5 years



Norby Salazar
Dilley - 26.5 years



Ricardo Garza
RGC - 26 years



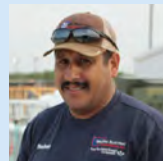
Edward Varnador
Dilley - 25 years



Jack Hagan
Hondo - 24.5 years



Jason Cunningham
Hondo - 21.5 years



Reuben Ayala
Dilley - 18.5 years



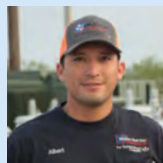
Raymond Schawe
Hondo - 17.5 years



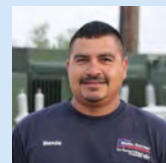
Pat Garza
RGC - 17 years



Raymond Sendejo
Uvalde - 15.5 years



Albert Vela
Bruni - 15.5 years



Armando Castillo
Bruni - 15.5 years



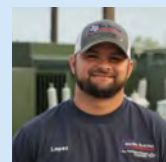
Chris Mvunnink
Hondo - 15.5 years



Jorge Zapata
RGC - 13 years



Raul Portillo
RGC - 13 years



Mario Lopez
Bruni - 12 years



Jason Gomez
Uvalde - 11.5 years

By the Numbers

Here are a few numbers that show part of what our linemen manage to ensure members have the power they need.

Miles Driven in 2019

613,104

Miles of Line

9,696
(183 per lineman in the field)

Hours Worked in 2019

123,479

Weight of Climbing

Gear and Tools - Pounds

44

Years of Experience

669

Meters (609 per
lineman in the field)

32,256

Square Miles of Service Area
(203 per lineman in the field)

10,750



Serapio Guzman
Uvalde - 9 years



Ben Garcia
Uvalde - 8.5 years



John Rodriguez
RGC - 8.5 years



Luis Hinojosa
RGC - 8 years



Elias Tobias
Laredo - 8 years



Mario Molina
Dilley - 7.5 years



Josh Perez
Bruni - 7 years



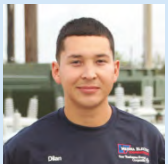
Taylor Stacy
Hondo - 6 years



Eric Hinojosa
RGC - 6 years



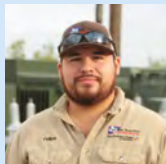
Tony Banda Jr.
Dilley - 5.5 years



Dilan Santillan
Bruni - 5 years



Martin Gonzales
Dilley - 5 years



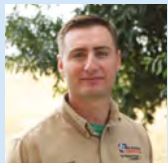
Felipe Moreno
Laredo - 5 years



Marcus Cortez
Dilley - 3 years



David Hernandez
Dilley - 2.5 years



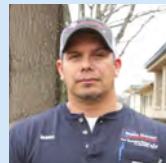
Ben Falcon
RGC - 2.5 years



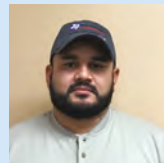
Baldo Solis
RGC - 2.5 years



Joe Stone
Dilley - 2 years



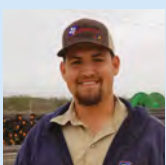
Isaac Solis
Hondo - 2 years



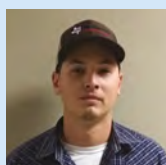
Mario Factor
Laredo - 1.5 years



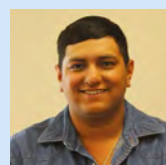
Joselito Morales
Dilley - 1.5 years



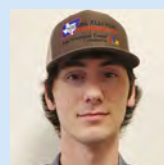
Justin Cortez
Bruni - 1 year



Juan Rosa
RGC - 1 year



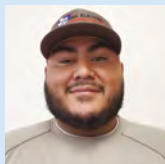
Reynold Munoz
Hondo - 1 year



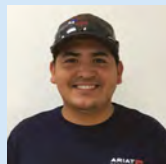
Lee Applewhite
Hondo - <1 year



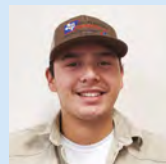
Erick Lopez
Uvalde - <1 year



Johnny Garza
Uvalde - <1 year



Gabriel Guerra
Bruni - <1 year



Ezra Sendejo
Hondo - <1 year

Management Team

These former linemen now oversee crews in all offices.



Mark
Howard
36 years



Oscar
Chapa
32 years



Leonard
Geyer
26 years

Former Linemen

These are former linemen who now use their experience in other areas within the cooperative.

Chris Groff

Derly Carrizales

Eduardo Chapa

Fernando Rangel

Fidel Aranda

Israel Bazan

Joel Gonzales

Michael Harkins

Oscar Reyes

Ricky Cerna

Ruben Ybarra

Operation Round Up Deadline: Apply by May 1

OPERATION ROUND UP has awarded over \$145,000 to various causes since it began making donations in 2006.

Applications are being accepted for the next round of donations. The funds can be used to help individuals pay for medical bills, better their lives, recover after home fires and more.

If you know of someone who could use assistance, consider submitting an application on their behalf. Applicants do not need to be a member of Medina EC, but they must live in one of the 17 counties served by Medina EC. Apply at MedinaEC.org/ORU.



Medina EC's Danielle Bendele presents the Smith family with a donation in November. The donation helped the family with groceries while Jason was out of work due to a knee injury.



Medina Electric Cooperative

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

VOTING DISTRICT 1

Larry Huesser, (830) 363-7651
Wayne W. Scholtz, (830) 426-1328
Ken Weynand, (830) 426-0762

VOTING DISTRICT 2

Jimmie Raines, (830) 591-8437
Chris Surles, (830) 965-5538
Kenneth White, (830) 232-6541

VOTING DISTRICT 3

Annette Sorrells, (361) 231-0173
J. L. Gonzalez, (956) 286-1863
Rodolfo H. Rodriguez, (210) 846-1092

CEO

Mark Rollans, 1-866-MEC-ELEC, ext. 1045

COOPERATIVE OFFICES

Headquarters

2308 18th St., Hondo 78861

Area Offices

Hondo Office
237 Hwy. 173 N., Hondo 78861

Dilley Office
1718 W. FM 117, Dilley 78017

Rio Grande City Office
601 N. FM 3167, Rio Grande City 78582

Uvalde Office
2604 Hwy. 90 E., Uvalde 78801

Bruni Office
1300 FM 2050 N., Bruni 78344

CONTACT US

CALL US

1-866-MEC-ELEC (632-3532)

Option 2: Report an outage

Option 3: Pay bill, get account balance

Option 5: Speak to a representative

EMAIL


Info@MedinaEC.org

FIND US ONLINE AT

MedinaEC.org

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 [Twitter.com/MedinaECTalks](https://twitter.com/MedinaECTalks)

 Instagram: @OurMEC

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Información sobre todos los programas y servicios que ofrece Medina Electric Cooperative están disponibles en Español al llamarnos al 1-866-MEC-ELEC o visitando una de nuestras oficinas.

VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS: WE HAVE A TRUCK FOR YOU!

MEDINA EC IS DONATING A RETIRED
2010 FORD F-150 4WD, 1/2-TON
SERVICE TRUCK TO AN AREA VFD.



DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY, JULY 1
ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION:
MEDINAEC.ORG/VEHDONATION



Cars drive by as a Medina EC crew works at a location on the outskirts of Laredo.

Drive With Care Through Work Zones

IN OCTOBER 2018, THREE LINEMEN WERE KILLED while working in Florida to restore electricity in an area that had been ravaged by Hurricane Michael a few weeks prior.

Electricity is a dangerous thing to work with, but none of these men were killed by an electrical contact. Instead, they were killed when they were hit by a drunk driver as they made repairs on power poles along the roadside.

Their deaths were a sad reminder of another peril lineworkers face: distracted and dangerous driving.

Work Zone Awareness Week is April 20-24 this year, when we encourage members to be especially mindful when driving through work zones. Avoid distractions, slow down and give workers space. Crews take precautions to make their workplace safer; drivers should do the same as they drive by.

We all know our focus should be on the road when we are driving—there should be no phones, no stereo adjustments and no substances that could impair our judgement. Unfortunately, distractions often enter the picture. These distractions don't only endanger the lives of the driver and their passengers but also the lives of other drivers on the road and any crews who may be working in the area.

Take steps to minimize distractions every time you drive. Avoid adjusting the stereo system. Set your phone to do not disturb mode, and put it in the backseat so you are not even tempted to look at it.

Follow the “move over” law when you see something or someone on the side of the road. Originally passed in 2003, it requires motorists to move over a lane, or slow down, when certain vehicles—including police, fire, TxDOT and tow trucks—are stopped on the side of the road with emergency lights activated. As of 2019, utility crews are also covered under this law.

Together, we can all make our communities safer.

Cones ✓

Vest ✓

Hard Hat ✓

Boots ✓

We'll bring the safety gear.

You bring the safe driving.

**WORK ZONE
AWARENESS WEEK
IS APRIL 20-24.**



MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Linemen train to climb utility poles **NOT BULLETIN BOARDS**

Help us keep our linemen safe.

Utility poles are there to support the equipment and lines that bring electricity to communities. They aren't there to advertise what is happening in the community or to serve as a community hot spot. Yard sale signs, basketball hoops, deer stands, satellite dishes, lights and birdhouses are all no-nos.

These obstructions are dangerous for our crews. Unwelcome clutter on utility poles compromises our linemen's safety equipment, leaving them vulnerable to electrocution or injuries.

Anyone posting items on utility poles is also at risk of exposure to thousands of volts of electricity pulsing overhead. Always stay at least 10 feet away from utility lines.

Think before you post that sign!



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Always practice safety.

Call Before You Dig

If you're getting ready to knock out spring projects, be sure you are prepared to do so safely. If your outdoor projects require any digging, be cautious of underground utility lines. Underground lines may include electric, oil and gas, telecom, water and sewer lines. Unsafe digging can be dangerous and cause damage.

Follow these steps for safe digging:

1. **NOTIFY** 811 at least two to three days before your work begins.
2. **WAIT** for the locator to visit your property and to mark lines.
3. **CONFIRM** that all affected utilities have responded.
4. **DIG** carefully, avoiding the marked areas.



Board Approves Tariff Changes: Minimum of \$35 for General Service Accounts

AT THEIR SEPTEMBER 2019 MEETING, the Medina EC board of directors approved changes to the Medina EC tariff that go into effect May 1.

These changes will place a \$35 minimum bill on the General Service rate class. This means that for any members within the General Service rate class who would have received a bill for less than \$35, the bill will now be rounded up to \$35. Based on members' use in prior years, this change will impact about 4,500 members who generally use 50 kilowatt-hours or less per month.

This rate change is the result of a 2018 cost-of-service study performed by Guernsey, a consulting company based in Oklahoma. In cost-of-service studies, which the cooperative has historically undergone every two to three years, an outside firm reviews the cooperative's financials and looks at the costs associated with serving each rate class. They then determine rates for each class based on the cooperative's revenue requirements and financial goals set by the board.

This cost-of-service study revealed that there is an under-recovery of fixed costs for low-use accounts—or those that use less than 50 kWh per month—on the General Service rate. In other words, accounts with very low kWh use are not being billed enough to cover the costs incurred in serving them.

Our goal in setting rates is to make them as fair as possible for all groups of members and to ensure they are based on the costs to serve that group. This \$35 minimum will ensure members who use very little power are not being subsidized by members who use more power.

As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, our rates are set to continue efficient operation of the cooperative, not to make profits to line the pockets of any investors. Delivering reliable electricity is a capital—and labor-intensive business, with many fixed costs involved. It requires employees, equipment and technology to maintain the power lines that serve your home and to run the business behind the scenes, regardless of how much electricity you use.

This change to the bill minimum does not impact the Member Charge, which is currently set at \$29, or the energy charge, which is applied per kWh used. Both those charges will remain the same.

You can read Medina EC's current tariff and view other important cooperative documents at MedinaEC.org/CorpDoc. Rates for all rate classes can be viewed at MedinaEC.org/Rates.

If you have questions on if these tariff changes could impact you, please contact us at 1-866-MEC-ELEC or Info@MedinaEC.org.



Celebrate Earth Day

TO CELEBRATE EARTH DAY, APRIL 22, here are a few green strategies to explore at your home.

Rainwater harvesting is the capture, diversion and storage of rainwater for daily use. It leverages a free resource, courtesy of nature—reducing your reliance on municipal or well water—and the collected water is ideal for container plants and your home's landscape or garden. The simplest way to begin harvesting rainwater is to use a rain barrel, annually exempt from tax in Texas during the Memorial Day weekend energy- and water-efficient products sales tax holiday, May 23–25 this year.

Another water-saving technique is xeriscaping—the practice of planning and designing landscapes to reduce the need for irrigation. One quick and easy way to incorporate xeriscape principles into your garden is to mulch. A thick layer of mulch around your plants helps maintain consistent soil moisture by minimizing evaporation.

When you have enough time to prepare a meal in a slow cooker but want to forgo electricity, try a solar oven. Lightweight, flameless and relatively portable, solar ovens harness abundant sunlight to bake fish and chicken, steam vegetables, and cook rice, beans and pasta. Tote one along on your next camping trip.



MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

WIN \$150!

Have you noticed Medina EC water bottles at a local event?
We give them to organizations to help with important
community events and fundraisers.

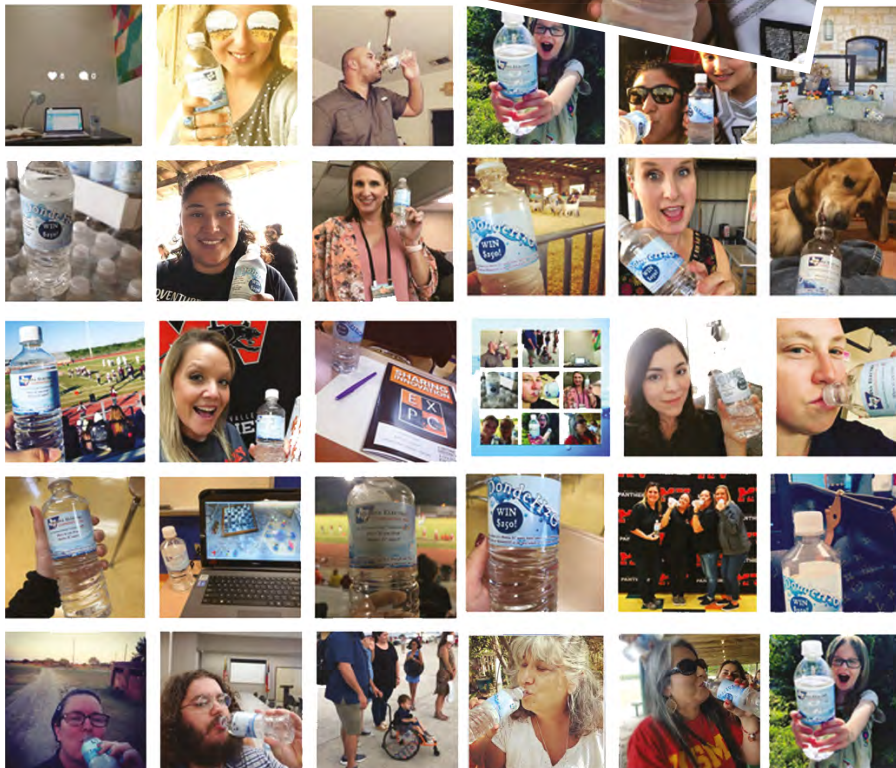
Now you can win \$150 just by showing us where you spot
Medina EC water!

Read the water bottle
for entry instructions.
Full rules and eligibility
at MedinaEC.org/DondeH2O.

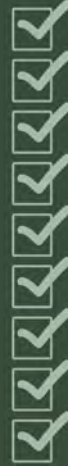


**MEDINA ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE



2

DEMOCRATIC
MEMBER
CONTROL

LAST CHANCE:

MEMBERS INTERESTED IN
SERVING ON THE BOARD OF
DIRECTORS CAN SUBMIT A
PETITION TO BE PLACED ON
THE BALLOT.

PETITION DEADLINES

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Thinking About Solar? Here are Things To Know



BY THE TIME YOU FINISH READING THIS ARTICLE, a new solar power project will go online somewhere in the U.S. With the increasing financial and technological accessibility of solar, or photovoltaic, systems, it's important to have a good understanding of what's involved in maintaining a system. **Here are some questions to ask before you spend money on solar panels.**

What is the life expectancy of a photovoltaic system?

The life span of a PV system depends on the panels and on the inverter. Solar panels typically have a life expectancy of 30 years, but the power rating—or efficiency—of panels tends to degrade slowly over time due to factors including extreme heat and the aging of materials. For crystalline silicon panels, the loss in power is typically 0.5%–1% per year. Inverters have a life expectancy of about 15 years but occasionally must be repaired or replaced sooner. The life expectancy of a given PV system is also greatly affected by the initial quality of the products and installation.

How reliable are PV systems?

Certified solar power products and systems generally are reliable. Manufacturers test panels for hail impact, high wind and freeze-thaw cycles that approximate year-round weather conditions.

Unless your PV system uses a tracking device, it has no moving parts, but be sure to pay attention to the warranty. Many manufacturers offer 25-year warranties for their panels, and most offer at least a 20-year warranty. Invert-

ers usually have warranties of between five and 10 years, with extended warranties of 15–20 years available at an extra cost. The warranty should cover all parts and labor, including the cost of removing any defective components, shipping them to the manufacturer, and reinstalling the components after they are repaired or replaced.

What kind of maintenance is required?

In most regions, solar power modules require little maintenance. If regular rainfall is not sufficient to eliminate accumulated dirt, owners may occasionally need to rinse the modules off with water. In

some conditions, such as the dry areas of West Texas, soil accumulation on the module surface has been observed to reduce energy generation by up to 25%, but in most locations, the effect will be much smaller.

Experts suggest periodic maintenance checks of system components (such as tightening physical connections) and completion of any preventive maintenance as needed. Talk with your installer about maintenance requirements.

Although inverter reliability has improved dramatically since the 1990s, inverters still require more frequent maintenance and have a shorter projected life span than solar panels. Microinverters—a new style of inverter so named because there is one on every module, instead of one inverter for the whole system—typically have a longer life span and warranties of 20–25 years.

Although some fault modes can be cleared by simply cycling the AC power to the inverter, maintenance usually requires the services of a trained electrician and involves replacement or repair at an authorized service facility. This limits the maintenance role of the system owner to regularly monitoring the status indicators on the inverter or identifying a sharp decline in system output. Several software packages are available that allow homeowners to monitor their system's output and identify problems.

Solar can be a great way to help the environment and possibly reduce your monthly energy bill but be aware of the costs and responsibilities involved. Recouping the initial installation expense in energy savings will likely take the life of the system, or longer.



For more information on Solar by Medina EC: MedinaEC.org/Solar

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Death on Tiny Wings

Mosquito-borne yellow fever terrorized Texas multiple times in the 1800s

BY MARTHA DEERING

IT BEGAN WITH A HEADACHE, FOLLOWED by chills, fever, muscle and bone pain, and dizziness. “After a few hours, the eyes are bloodshot, and have a peculiar shining, drunken appearance,” wrote Dr. Ashbel Smith, who treated patients on Galveston Island during the yellow fever epidemic of 1839. “A diminution of the pains and febrile excitement very generally takes place, from eight or 10 to 20 hours.”

At this point, the patient either began to recover or progressed to the critical stage. The yellow tinge of jaundice that gave the disease its name appeared, followed by the dreaded “black vomit,” which signaled the approach of death.

From 1668 to 1893, port cities along the Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic Ocean and Mississippi River basin were stricken by 135 major yellow fever epidemics, according to a 1986 article in *Texas Medicine*. At least nine times between 1839 and 1867, Galveston suffered outbreaks that killed a total of 6,000–8,000.

Yellow fever, also called yellow death or yellow jack (after the yellow flags ships were required to fly when passengers showed signs of illness), terrified early Texans. Once stricken, a healthy person could be dead within three days, and doctors were at a loss to explain the fever’s rapid spread. Smith was correct to believe that it was not contagious. But he and other physicians wrongly believed garbage heaps and unsanitary conditions produced particles called miasmata that infected



those who breathed the contaminants. That theory was questioned during the epidemic of 1853, as increased sanitation and quarantines did not stop the disease and 60% of Galvestonians got sick.

The virus that causes yellow fever likely originated in Africa and was transmitted to the Americas by slave ships as early as the 1600s. Major outbreaks occur in populated areas where breeding mosquitoes transmit the virus from person to person. Frightened residents of Galveston and other cities hit by large outbreaks burned barrels of tar in the streets and sprayed sulfur and lime in the homes of infected patients—believing the substances served as disinfectants. Even so, the agony subsided only after a hard freeze, often resurfacing when spring arrived.

During the 1839 epidemic, a cabin just east of 18th Street in Galveston, built on raised blocks with two windows and a door in the middle, served as the general hospital. It was erected away from town to isolate the sick. Shallow burials nearby revealed bones exposed by the sea washing over them.

A Cherokee woman named Sarah Ridge Paschal successfully treated yellow fever patients in her home with traditional Cherokee herbal medicine, including tea from orange tree leaves. All of her patients survived, and neither she nor any of her three children caught the fever.

Texas doctors were unable to recognize the mosquito vector. Pathologist Walter Reed, experimenting on humans in Cuba in 1900, confirmed Carlos Finlay’s hypothesis of 1881 that mosquitoes transmitted the disease. The experiments proved that mosquitoes flourished in fresh water and transmitted the disease after a viral incubation period of at least 12 days. This essential information spread, and mosquito control improved.

Smith went on to become the driving force behind the establishment of the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. Today, yellow fever can be prevented by a single dose of vaccine.

Martha Deering, a Heart of Texas EC member, lives in McGregor. Read more of her work at marthadeering.com.

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Farmers Market

IN MY VIEW, FARMERS MARKETS ARE ONE of the best ways to see Texas on display. From rows of stacked peppers to bowls of the sweetest berries to the friendly faces behind the tables, a farmers market is a conduit to all that grows around us—and inspires me to get into the kitchen.

We're coming into the best time to experience these local markets. As the growing seasons converge, you might see collards alongside early tomatoes or strawberries along with the last of the winter citrus. Now is the time to experiment!

This dish is a favorite in my house, and it's a great way to get kids to eat vegetables. Instead of chicken, you can use ground beef—or cooked lentils for a meatless option.

MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Zucchini Taco Boats With Chicken

- 4 medium zucchini
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- ½ cup diced onion
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup tomato sauce or salsa
- ½ cup shredded cheese

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees and lightly coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with nonstick spray.
2. Slice zucchini in half lengthwise and scoop out centers, reserving the flesh in a bowl. Place zucchini hollow-side up into baking dish.
3. Cut chicken into small pieces, about half-inch cubes. Warm olive oil in a sauté pan over medium-high heat, then add chicken and cook until cooked through and starting to brown, about 8 minutes. Add onion and reserved zucchini flesh and continue to cook 1 minute.
4. Mix together chili powder, cumin, oregano, paprika and salt and sprinkle over chicken. Stir to coat and cook 2 min-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

Recipes

Farmers Market



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

BLAIR SHELTON-TONGSON | LAMAR ELECTRIC

Fresh sweet corn is the star of this dip that is ideal for entertaining. Reminiscent of esquites—Mexican street corn salad—it also features cumin, chili powder and jalapeño. “For an extra kick,” says Shelton-Tongson, “add a dash or two of ground cayenne pepper.” If fresh corn isn’t available, use thawed frozen corn.

Baked Street Corn Dip

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sour cream
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon chili powder, plus more for garnish
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{4}$ stick) butter or vegetable oil
- 3 cups sweet corn kernels (about 4 ears)
- 1 cup diced tomatoes
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 clove garlic, pressed or minced
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro, plus more for garnish
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup shredded cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a large bowl, mix together cream cheese, sour cream, mayonnaise, cumin, chili powder, and salt and pepper. Stir until creamy, then set aside.
3. Melt butter or heat oil in a large skillet over low heat. Add corn, tomatoes, jalapeño and garlic. Sauté gently 8–10 minutes.
4. Remove corn mixture from heat and stir into cream cheese mixture. Add cilantro and shredded cheese, stirring until well blended.
5. Pour into a medium baking dish and bake 12–15 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool 5 minutes. Garnish with chili powder and cilantro and serve warm with tortillas or corn chips. ▶ Serves 12.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

utes. Stir in tomato sauce or salsa and simmer 5–10 minutes, until thickened.

5. Divide chicken mixture into zucchini and top with cheese.

6. Cover with foil and bake 35 minutes.

▶ Serves 4.

COOK'S TIP A melon baller works wonderfully to scoop out the insides of the zucchini, but if you don't have one, a spoon will do.

Follow along with **Megan Myers** and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Carrot Fritters.

Chopped Spring Veggie Pasta Salad

MARIAN EVONIUK | PEDERNALES EC

Pasta salad is an easy, versatile way to enjoy everything the farmers market has to offer. If you like, you can skip the step of roasting the peppers and asparagus—just make sure you select thin, tender asparagus stalks at the market.

- $\frac{1}{4}$ pound asparagus, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 6 cups plus $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water, divided use
- 2 cups uncooked tricolor rotini
- $\frac{1}{2}$ pound green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 cups peas
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped red onion
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped cucumber
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup loosely packed cilantro, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Italian salad dressing

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Spread asparagus and pepper evenly over a large, parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet. Roast uncovered 20 minutes. Remove from oven and set aside to cool.
3. Bring 6 cups water to a boil in a 2½-quart heavy saucepan, then add pasta. Cook until pasta is al dente, about 8 minutes.
4. Drain pasta in a colander, rinsing with cold water, and pour into a large mixing bowl.
5. Using same saucepan, add the

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You'll want the best **Game Day Snacks**, our September recipe contest, when football season kicks off. Send us your favorites. The deadline is **April 10**. Readers whose recipes are featured will receive a special *Texas Co-op Power* apron.

ENTER ONLINE at TexasCoopPower.com/contests; MAIL to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; FAX to (512) 763-3401. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op and the name of the contest you are entering.

remaining 1/4 cup water and the green beans. Cover and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook 3–4 minutes. Add the peas and continue cooking an additional 3–4 minutes, until veggies are tender but still have some bite. Drain and rinse with cold water to stop the cooking process.

6. Into the large bowl containing the pasta, add the asparagus, peppers, green beans, peas, red onion, cucumber, tomatoes, cilantro, garlic, salt, pepper and Italian dressing. Mix well, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving. ▶ Serves 6–8 as a side dish.

Zucchini Nut Bread

SILVIA ARNOLD | RUSK COUNTY EC

Zucchini bread is a classic way to use summer squash—and with good reason. “This has been a favorite of the family for years,” says Arnold. Make sure to use quick-cooking oats, which are chopped rolled oats, for this recipe. The oats will help absorb some of the moisture from the zucchini while also keeping the bread tender and delicious.

- 3 eggs
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup quick oats
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 cups grated zucchini
- 1 cup chopped walnuts

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour two 8-by-4-inch loaf pans and set aside.
- 2.** In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, sugar, oil and vanilla until well combined.
- 3.** In a separate bowl, stir together flour, oats, cinnamon, baking soda, salt and baking powder. Stir into wet ingredients until no dry bits remain.
- 4.** Stir in zucchini and walnuts, then divide batter between prepared pans.
- 5.** Bake 1 hour, until a toothpick inserted into the center of each pan comes out clean. ▶ Makes 2 loaves.



Know Before You Go

New to farmers markets or need a refresher? Here are some tips for making the most of your trip.

SHOP EARLY for the biggest selection. During peak seasons, items like strawberries, asparagus and even eggs can sell out quickly.

BRING CASH and pay in exact amounts, if possible. Farmers appreciate not having to make change.

PUT A COOLER in your car. Along with a reusable tote, it will help keep items cool and organized for the trip home.

MEGAN MYERS

TEXAS COOP POWER

NEXT MONTH

FIRMLY ROOTED The Stark family lumber empire in Orange forged cultural destinations that offer nature, art and history.

LEDGER ART Native American drawings from the 19th century offer unique historic perspective.

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Sunsets

“SUNSETS, LIKE CHILDHOOD, are viewed with wonder not just because they are beautiful but because they are fleeting.” **RICHARD PAUL EVANS**, American author

WEB EXTRAS ▶ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.

▲ **ALTA COCKRELL**, Deaf Smith EC: “My son William the night I took his senior pictures outside of Hereford.”

▶ **CHARLES CARLSON**, Bandera EC: This sunset photo of mammatus clouds was taken on the Frio River near Garner State Park.



▲ **JIMMIE HEIMAN**, Guadalupe Valley EC: “Spring flowers and sunset in rural Lavaca County.”



▲ **TIFFANY ROGERS**, MidSouth EC: A musician stands at the end of a pier on Lake Livingston to play out a tune on his guitar late one August evening.

◀ **LAURA BREWER**, CoServ: “The perfect setting for reflection on the pond.”

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Elgin [11-12] Hip Hop Shop, (512) 229-3227, elgintx.com

16

San Saba [16-17] Creative Quilting Event, (325) 372-5141, sansabachamber.com

17

Beaumont Rend Collective Revival Anthem Tour, (409) 838-3435, beaumontcvb.com

Paducah [17-18] Cottle-King Old Settlers Reunion & Rodeo, (806) 492-2143, facebook.com/cottlekingoldsettlers

Terrell [17-18] Kaufman Quilt Guild Show, (972) 979-9152, kaufmanquiltguild.org

18

Burton Cotton Gin Festival, (979) 289-3378, texascottonginmuseum.org

Mason Mason County Republican Women's Home Tour, (325) 347-5516, masonxoc.com

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Cypress Mill [18-19, 25-26] Bunkhouse Gallery Art Show and Sale, (512) 517-3453, bunkhousegallery.com

23

Avinger, Hughes Springs, Linden [23-25] 50th Annual Wildflower Trails of Texas, (903) 756-7502, wildflowertrailsoftexas.org

Waxahachie [23-25] Crossroads of Texas Film & Music Festival, (469) 309-4045, facebook.com/crossroadsoftx

Hallettsville [23-26] Fiddlers' Frolics, (361) 798-2311, fiddlersfrolics.com

24

Granbury [24-25] Wine Walk, (817) 964-7993, granburywinewalk.com

Gun Barrel City [24-25] Quilt Guild Annual Quilt Show, (903) 340-6547, gunbarrelquiltersguild.org

Clute [24-26, May 1-3] *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, (979) 265-7661, bcfas.org

25

Cisco Folklife Festival, (254) 631-6501



April 25
Tatum
Pecan Pie Festival

Conroe Relay For Life of Conroe & Walker County, (713) 706-5686, relayforlife.org/conroeandwalkercotx

Jacksonville North Cherokee VFD Fish Fry, (903) 571-5854

Karnack Earth Day Flotilla, (903) 736-3063

Rising Star Rising Star VFD Crawfish Boil, (254) 433-3285, risingstarfd.org

Tatum Pecan Pie Festival, (903) 947-6403, facebook.com/tatumpecanpiefestival

Brazoria [25-26] Migration Celebration, (844) 842-4737, migrationcelebration.org

May

2

Georgetown Preservation Georgetown Home Tour, (512) 869-8597, preservationgeorgetown.org

Hilltop Lakes Hilltop Lakes Equestrian Association Kentucky Derby Gala, (713) 503-0470

3

Wylie Wylie 500 Pedal Car Race, (972) 516-6016, wylietexas.gov

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Dark Landmark

Dead Man's Hole near Marble Falls remains as a grim reminder of Civil War brutality

MY FASCINATION WITH TEXAS HISTORY inspired me to visit Marble Falls and Dead Man's Hole, the dark landmark south of town.

I started my visit at the Falls on the Colorado Museum, housed in a 129-year-old school building. My education began by peering at the bones of Rockie, a 700-year-old bison whose remains were found on a nearby ranch.

Remnants of the town's pioneer days include artifacts ranging from saddles to railroad ties. I visited the town's namesake falls beneath nearby Lake Marble Falls, and I was fascinated by tales of the town's grim Civil War experience as it relates to Dead Man's Hole.

Of course, I couldn't go exploring on an empty stomach, so I stopped by the legendary Blue Bonnet Cafe, which has been feeding hungry travelers since 1929. My chicken-fried steak was made even better by the towering wedge of coconut meringue pie that followed.

After lunch, I drove 4 miles and found the historical marker for Dead Man's Hole. A few hundred feet away, I saw the hole in the limestone. The 7-foot-wide Dead Man's Hole earned its grisly name during the Civil War, when locals disposed of the bodies of at least 17 Union sympathizers in the cave.

In those days, after Texas seceded, many Hill Country German communities remained loyal to the Union. Burnet County voted overwhelmingly against



Chet Garner at Dead Man's Hole outside Marble Falls.

secession, but local Confederate zealots, called fire eaters, killed some of those who favored the North. Dead Man's Hole became both courtroom and cemetery as hasty trials resulted in slaughter.

After Burnet County Judge John R. Scott was deemed a Union loyalist, he attempted to flee to Mexico but was gunned down, his body tossed into Dead Man's Hole. Even though the historical marker puts the number at 17, legend suggests as many as 36 bodies were thrown into the pit.

Whatever the actual number, it troubled me just to stand nearby, even in the middle of the afternoon more than a century later. The cavity is now covered by a steel panel to keep anyone from slipping in. I hopped down onto the metal and felt an unnerving thump as my weight hit the steel and sent reverberations into the

depths below. I bent down and attempted to peek through. I dropped a pebble down and listened to it bounce off rocks until it faded away. From the sound of it, the hole went on forever.

The cave was not fully explored until 1951, when a group of Austin spelunkers pulled out multiple sets of bones. Local lore suggests that the last skeleton was brought to the courthouse, and while it was awaiting a proper burial, it disappeared.

I stepped away from the hole and made certain I was the only person present that afternoon. As the hair on my neck began to stand up, I decided I didn't want to find out if anyone was nearby. I began to briskly walk (OK, run) back to my truck.

Chet Garner shares his Texplorations as the host of *The Daytripper* on PBS.

 **WEB EXTRAS** ▶ Read this story on our website to see Chet's video of his visit to Dead Man's Hole.

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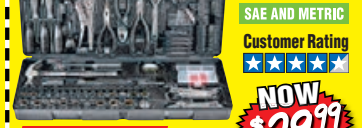
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