

# Let Your Voice Be Heard



## MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER LEROY T. SKLOSS

**Early next month—at noon on January 8, to be exact—the 83rd Texas Legislature will convene for its biennial session.**

The senators and representatives that you and I send to Austin have the unenviable task of writing the laws that govern our state.

When they are deciding which issues to tackle and how to craft legislation to address those issues, lawmakers hear plenty of advice. Interest groups, lobbyists and opinion leaders all weigh in, and those voices carry substantial influence. But the voices that might matter most to the busy men and women in the legislative branch are yours, the constituents who elect them to office.

That's why it is important for you to be involved in the process, to let your elected representatives know what you want from state government and what they should do to serve your interests.

Through Texas Electric Cooperatives, our statewide organization, your interests as a member of Karnes Electric Cooperative are communicated in Austin. But from time to time, we may enlist your help in relaying those messages, because your opinion as a constituent can have a significant influence on the lawmaking process. That's why in some situations, we may ask you to chime in on issues that could ultimately affect your access to dependable and affordable electricity.

You can communicate with your senator and representative in many ways, some more effective than others. When you decide an issue is important enough to speak up, remember that the most convenient way of sending a message is sometimes the least effective.



**A face-to-face visit with your legislators, whether in Austin or at their local offices, is the best way to let them know what is important to you.**

Writing an email or, better yet, a letter to your legislator is a much more effective way of getting your point across. The fact that you took the time and effort to put your thoughts into your own words makes those words more valuable.

The rise of Internet communication has made it easy for people to sign online petitions or post messages on social networks either supporting or opposing a policy. But those forms of political speech, dubbed “slacktivism” by critics, don't hold that much sway with decision-makers simply because it's too easy to merely push a button.

But the best way to let lawmakers know how you feel might be a face-to-face visit. There's no need to drive to Austin, though. Lawmakers often return home during the legislative session specifically to meet with their constituents. Those visits present a fine opportunity to let them know what you think.

The continuing viability of our electric cooperative may be affected by policies set in Austin and in Washington next year. If we bring an issue to your attention, we urge you not to sit on the sidelines, but instead to get involved and help us keep your cooperative healthy.



**Consider giving your time this holiday season—a walk in the park or a minor home repair may be appreciated.**

## Time May Be the Best Gift

**If you have an uncle, a grandma or a neighbor who's hard to shop for and always says, “You shouldn't have” when you bring over a gift, don't buy another unwanted tie or fruitcake this year. Instead, make a present out of your time.**

Especially if your friend or relative is older or lives alone, he or she might be neglecting maintenance chores such as changing the air-conditioner filter, replacing the batteries in smoke alarms, snaking out the dryer vent or caulking around windows.

Those tasks don't take long and aren't difficult, but lots of people don't know how to—or even that they should—tend to them at least once a year. Your effort will make your loved one's home safer and could put a dent in the household energy bill.

Strap on your tool belt and take a tour of the home to notice if faucets or toilets are leaking, door or window locks are loose, out-of-reach windows need cleaning or outdoor lightbulbs need replacing.

Your thoughtful gift will, as they say, keep on giving for months, and the lucky recipient will appreciate it much more than a token item that you bought from a store.

# Give the Gift of Safety This Holiday Season

Shopping, decorating, baking and holiday entertaining are all part of what makes the holiday season a cherished time for family and friends. But these customs can be stressful, so be sure to put safety at the top of your holiday to-do list with these tips from Karnes Electric Cooperative and Electrical Safety Foundation International.

▶ When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree will stay green longer, reducing the risk of fire.

▶ On artificial trees, look for a “fire resistant” label.

▶ Always purchase electrical decorations and lights from reputable retailers and check that a nationally recognized testing organization such as Underwriters Laboratories, or UL, has approved them. Inspect electrical decorations for damage, such as cracked or frayed sockets, loose or bare wires and loose connections, before use.

▶ Never connect more than three strings of incandescent lights together.

▶ Consider using battery-operated candles in place of traditional candles.

▶ Remember to turn off, unplug and extinguish all decorations when going to sleep or leaving the house.

Once you have the safety procedures down, think about giving safety to the person who already has everything. Newer smoke and carbon monoxide alarms provide better protection than ever before and are easy to install. Both types of alarms should be placed on every level of the home and outside sleeping areas. Additional smoke alarms should be installed inside each bedroom.

Tamper-resistant receptacles easily replace standard outlets to provide a simple, permanent solution for protecting children from shock and burns. An electrician can install arc-fault circuit interrupters in the electrical service panel to provide enhanced protection from home electrical fires.

A home electrical inspection makes a great gift for people with older homes. Many potential electrical hazards can be identified during an inspection, allowing them to be corrected before tragedy strikes.

Unlike gifts that may be quickly forgotten, the gift of safety benefits your loved ones long after the holidays have passed.

For more information, visit [holiday.safety.org](http://holiday.safety.org).

*Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International*

Using an artificial tree can reduce the fire risk, but it's still important to make sure light strings are in good working order.



## Karnes Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 7, Karnes City, TX 78118

### GENERAL MANAGER

Leroy T. Skloss

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Arlon Retzloff, President, *Whitsett*

Martin R. Harris Jr., Vice President, *Tilden*

Larry R. Schendel, Secretary-Treasurer, *Runge*

Frank A. Geyer Jr., Assistant Secretary-Treasurer, *Charlotte*

Paul T. Brysch Jr., *Karnes City*

David C. Davidson, *Poteet*

Shirley Hofmann, *Runge*

### COOPERATIVE OFFICES

#### Main Office

1007 N. Highway 123, Karnes City

#### District Office

1824 W. Goodwin, Pleasanton

Pay your bill, submit meter readings and view your account summary at [karnesec.org](http://karnesec.org).



## Contact Us

For information and outages during office hours

**(830) 780-3952** Karnes City

**(830) 569-5538** Pleasanton

**1-888-807-3952** Toll-free

To report a power outage after 5 p.m. and on weekends and holidays

**(830) 780-3952**

Coy City, Ecleto, Floresville, Gillette, Goliad, Karnes City, Kenedy, Runge, Three Rivers, Tilden and surrounding areas

**(830) 569-5538**

Charlotte, Christine, Pleasanton, Poteet, Verdi and surrounding areas

### FIND US ON THE WEB

[karnesec.org](http://karnesec.org)

# Karnes Electric Cooperative Returns \$390,091 in Capital Credits

The Karnes Electric Cooperative Board of Directors authorized the return of \$390,091 in capital credits to the cooperative's members. Any member of Karnes Electric currently having an active account received their capital credit refund in the form of a credit on their October bill. Any member no longer receiving service from Karnes Electric had a check mailed to them.

You've probably heard of profit-sharing for people who work for employee-minded companies. But did you know that a rural electric cooperative that sells electricity actually hands its profits back to its consumers?

Rural electric cooperatives are nonprofit businesses. They charge a fair rate for electricity and use the money to make sure there's enough power to go around. They use it to maintain their equipment, pay their staff and run the business. Anything that's left over is returned to their customers.

Cooperative employees don't even refer to that money as "profit," because they know the utility isn't going to keep it. There are no stockholders to pay because cooperatives are owned by the people who buy their services, not by investors. So cooperative employees call the money left over after all expenses are paid "margins." And they call the refunds they send to their consumers "capital credits" or "patronage dividends."

Getting a capital credit refund is a bonus that consumers get for buying their electricity from a cooperative. Another bonus is that those consumers are actually members—and part-owners—of the cooperative, rather than just customers. So capital credits are a benefit of membership.

Including the amount authorized for return this year, the capital credits returned total \$4,695,623.

Karnes Electric Cooperative is proud of its 72-year heritage of providing electric distribution power in 12 South Texas and Coastal Bend counties. We are headquartered in Karnes City with a district office in Pleasanton.

## Statement of Nondiscrimination

Karnes Electric Cooperative, Inc., is the recipient of Federal financial assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended; and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which provide that no person in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, or disability shall be excluded from participation in, admission or access to, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organization's programs or activities.

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is General Manager Leroy T. Skloss. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 1-800-795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). The USDA is an equal-opportunity provider and employer. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

# Internet for Your Corner of the World

HIGH-SPEED INTERNET FOR THE KARNES COMMUNITY

- + Local Service and Support
- + High-Speed Wireless Internet
- + Email Spam & Virus Filtering
- + Web Hosting
- + Affordable Residential and Commercial Plans

Call **800.699.4832** or visit **www.karnesec.net** to get connected today.

**karnesec.net**

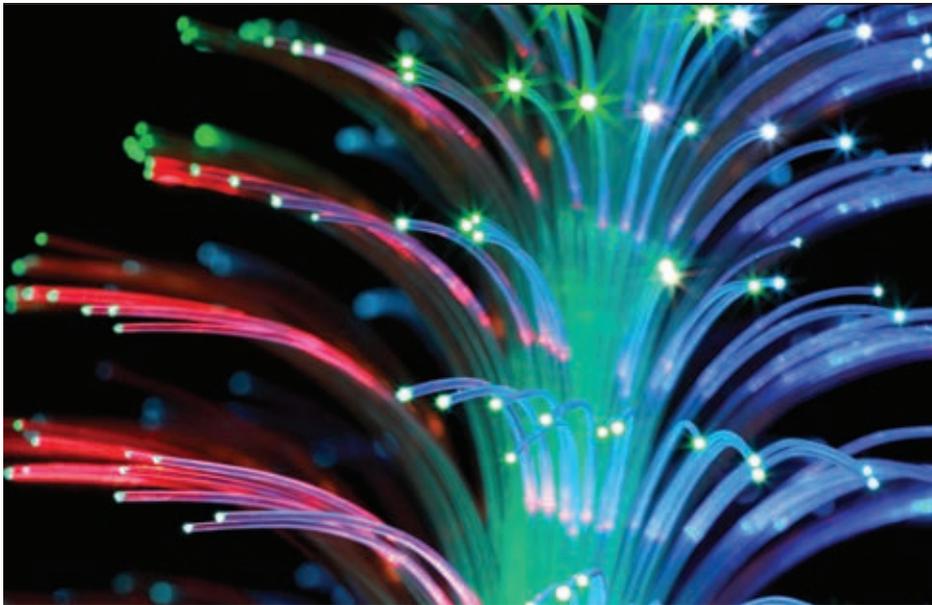


# TURNS OUT, MONEY BURNS WHEN MY WATER HEATER IS SET ABOVE 120 DEGREES.

I didn't even know there was a dial. Now, I'm saving \$73 a year by turning my water heater down to 120 degrees. What can you do? Find out how the little changes add up at [TogetherWeSave.com](http://TogetherWeSave.com).



[TOGETHERWESAVE.COM](http://TOGETHERWESAVE.COM)



# Holiday Energy Savings

The holiday season is generally a big time for energy use, but that doesn't mean it has to be that way. Here are ways to save energy (and money) during the holidays

**USE FIBER OPTIC DECORATIONS.** Fiber optic trees and decorations are the ultimate in energy efficiency. In most cases, they use a single lightbulb located in the base of the unit to light the entire decoration—that's both energy-smart and budget-smart!

**LIMIT THE TIME THE LIGHTS ARE ON.** Wait until dark to turn on your Christmas lights; then, turn them off before you go to bed. Six hours or less of daily use is a good goal. Do you have trouble remembering to turn your lights off? Then set a timer and forget about it.

**TURN OFF ROOM LIGHTS WHEN TREE IS LIT.** The lights on your Christmas tree should provide more than enough lighting to navigate around a room.

**TURN THE THERMOSTAT DOWN WHEN YOU HAVE GUESTS.** Extra bodies in the house mean extra warmth at no cost to you.

**INVEST IN RECHARGEABLE BATTERIES AND A CHARGER.** If you buy or receive gifts that require batteries, consider purchasing rechargeable batteries and a charger. Recent advancements have made rechargeable batteries better than ever.

**BUY ENERGY STAR ELECTRONICS.** Energy Star-certified electronics—TVs, DVD and Blu-Ray players, refrigerators, computers, etc.—use up to 60 percent less electricity than their noncertified counterparts.

**TAKE A WALK TO SEE THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS.** Leave the car in the driveway this year when you go out to look at Christmas lights. A walking tour of your neighborhood could be just as fun, and you won't use any gas.

**BAKE SEVERAL DISHES AT A TIME.** The holiday season is a big time for baking. Make the most of your oven and the energy that goes into heating it by cooking several dishes at once. Remember: It takes about the same amount of energy to operate a full oven as it does a nearly empty one.

**USE THE SMALLEST APPLIANCE TO GET THE JOB DONE.** Use your microwave and toaster oven for small holiday cooking tasks, and save the oven for the big ones.

**KEEP LIDS ON POTS.** Foods cook faster (meaning less energy use) when the lid is on.

**UNPLUG PHANTOM ENERGY USERS BEFORE YOU GO ON VACATION.** TVs, DVD players, computers, printers and many other electronics use energy even when they aren't turned on. Unplug them before you go on vacation to enjoy the energy savings.

## STAY SAFE— Read the Labels

Statistics show that sales of electrical products increase during the winter months.

Unfortunately, this brings out counterfeiters who use inferior materials and avoid key manufacturing steps to reduce the cost of their products, allowing them to be sold at prices no genuine manufacturer can match. Counterfeit materials also can pose other significant safety hazards that, if left undetected, can cause deaths, injuries and substantial property loss.

How do you stay safe? It just takes a little light reading—and a little common sense.

- ▶ Look for the CSA, UL or ETL-SEMKO certification marks. If you have concerns about the labels, contact the certifier.

- ▶ Beware of bargains that seem too good to be true—they probably are.

- ▶ Use established vendors who purchase their goods from legitimate distributors and genuine manufacturers.

- ▶ Check the warning label. It should be free of grammatical errors and not conflict with information elsewhere on the package.

- ▶ Look for the name and contact information of the manufacturer. If this information is missing, consider purchasing electrical products elsewhere.

- ▶ Detection based on appearance can be difficult, so be sure to read every label on every purchase. Known counterfeited products include control relays for industrial equipment, lamps, smoke detectors, fuses, circuit breakers, ground-fault circuit interrupters, conduit fittings, power strips, surge protectors, extension cords and electrical connectors.

Features on a real UL label:  
 1. UL trademark;  
 2. "LISTED" in capital letters;  
 3. Product identity (optional for molded marks);  
 4. Control or issue number.





# Merry Christmas

**Karnes Electric Cooperative wishes  
you and yours a joyful holiday season.**

*The offices of Karnes Electric Cooperative will be closed  
Monday and Tuesday, December 24 and 25, in observance of Christmas.*

