

# Drive the Safe Road



## MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER LEROY T. SKLOSS

**Safety is a priority at Karnes Electric Cooperative. This includes the safety of you, our members, as well as that of our employees.**

We are proud of our safety record and the measures that we put in place to safeguard those who work to bring you a steady supply of electricity. That especially goes for our lineworkers and support crews, who have some of the most dangerous jobs around.

Our constant focus on safety includes meetings and classes in which employees receive training in staying safe around dangerous equipment and in hazardous situations. Our co-op's strategic plan always contains a strong safety component designed to keep our workers and the public out of harm's way.

Working around electricity, often far above the ground, and in all weather conditions, is inherently dangerous.

But not all the dangers our employees face come from the weather, the climbing or power lines. If you are not paying attention when you are behind the wheel, the danger might come from you.

Sometimes the job of building a line or restoring power places our crews at the side of narrow roads, which run through our service territory. This is where you can help keep your electric cooperative workers safe.

If you see utility vehicles and line crews working, give them and the road ahead all of your attention.

Slow down and, if it is safe, move over to give crews as much space as possible.

Respect traffic cones, flashing lights or other signals. They could be the only thing between your car and workers or equipment.

With your cooperation, the dangers of linework don't have to be increased by traffic. There is much our crews can do to enhance their safety, but there's not much protection from a distracted driver.

Please be careful, be aware, slow down and help protect Karnes Electric's most valuable assets: our people.

**Karnes EC encourages you to put down the cellphone and keep your full attention on the road when driving to help keep our crews—and others—safe.**



## Scholarships Available

**Rural scholarships will again be available through Karnes Electric Cooperative this year, thanks to a law enacted on September 1, 1997. HB 3203 allows nonprofit electric cooperatives to put unclaimed funds—previously collected by the Comptroller's Office for the State General Fund—to use for student scholarships.**

The Karnes Electric Board of Directors has approved ten \$1,000 scholarships to be awarded this year. These scholarships will be awarded to graduating high school seniors who are legal dependents of active members receiving electric service from Karnes Electric Cooperative.

Applications will be available at all schools in the Karnes Electric service area. Applications must be received by the main office in Karnes City by 5 p.m. April 1. Applications received after April 1 will not be eligible. Awards will be announced within 60 days of the deadline date.

Karnes Electric is excited to be able to provide these scholarships. Please check with your school counselor if you or someone you know is interested and meets the qualifications. If you need additional information, you may contact our main office at (830) 780-3952 and ask to speak to Janet Scheffler or Karen Brysch, or email [kbrysch@karnesec.org](mailto:kbrysch@karnesec.org).



**Karnes Electric Cooperative lineworkers don't work alone on our power lines. Whether they are climbing poles, restoring power or clearing tree limbs to prevent future outages, they are never far from the hearts of the women and men who love them.**

At this time of year, stores seem flooded with hearts, candy and cards professing true love. But to be honest, those sentiments pale in comparison to the bonds of love we see every time a storm sweeps through our area.

If the lights go out, our lineworkers' families send their loved ones out into the elements. When other electric cooperatives are in trouble after devastating hurricanes, tornadoes, fires and floods, our lineworkers have traveled to bring the lights back on for complete strangers. Each time these brave men and women leave home to help those in need, their families are left behind, praying for a safe return.

Working with high-voltage electricity, lineworkers find themselves in life-or-death situations on a regular basis. That's why Karnes EC focuses on safety first. Our safety program includes daily briefings, monthly meetings and ongoing training to ensure that our team performs its job safely. We know the folks who love our lineworkers appreciate the time we take to make sure our employees get home safe every night.

Marrying into this profession isn't easy. Lineworkers are often on call and must be ready to respond at a moment's notice if their community needs them. This makes children's sporting events and family get-togethers hard to pull off sometimes. But the crews who keep your power flowing do so because they know that without their commitment, many of the things we've come to expect—hot meals, lights, entertainment—wouldn't be possible. By devoting their lives to working on utility lines, they connect all of us to a better way of life.

This Valentine's Day, we'd like to take a moment to thank the families who support and love our team of lineworkers who brave the elements and work long hours to keep power flowing to our homes each and every day. Thank you for putting your love on the line—we're committed to making sure the lineworkers you love return home safely.

## 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)

# Time Is Running Out

Switch your federal benefit checks to direct deposit today

**There is only one month left to switch from paper checks to direct deposit for your federal benefit payments. If you still receive a paper check for your Social Security or other federal benefit payments, you are required to switch by March 1, 2013.**

Don't delay. Make the switch before time runs out. It's fast, free and easy to sign up for direct deposit or the Direct Express Debit MasterCard by visiting your local bank or credit union, by calling the U.S. Treasury Electronic Payment Solution Center at 1-800-333-1795, or by visiting GoDirect.org.



**If you receive a Social Security check by mail, you must switch to direct deposit or a debit card by March 1.**

## Choose your payment option

**DIRECT DEPOSIT:** If you have a checking or savings account, sign up for direct deposit, and your federal benefit payment will go straight into your account on payment day each month.

**DIRECT EXPRESS CARD:** If you don't have a bank account or prefer a prepaid debit card, you can opt to have your payment posted to this card. It is accepted anywhere Debit MasterCard is accepted,

and there is no sign-up or overdraft fee. The card allows you unlimited purchase transactions and one free ATM cash withdrawal per month. There are fees for additional cash withdrawals, paper statements, fund transfers and other services.

If you do not set up an electronic payment option by March 1, you will receive your payments via the Direct Express Debit card.

## Be prepared

Have the following information on hand when you make the switch:

- ▶ 12-digit federal benefit check number
- ▶ Amount of most recent federal benefit check
- ▶ If switching to direct deposit, a check from your bank account, which will contain your local bank's routing transit number and your account number
- ▶ The type of bank account (checking or savings)

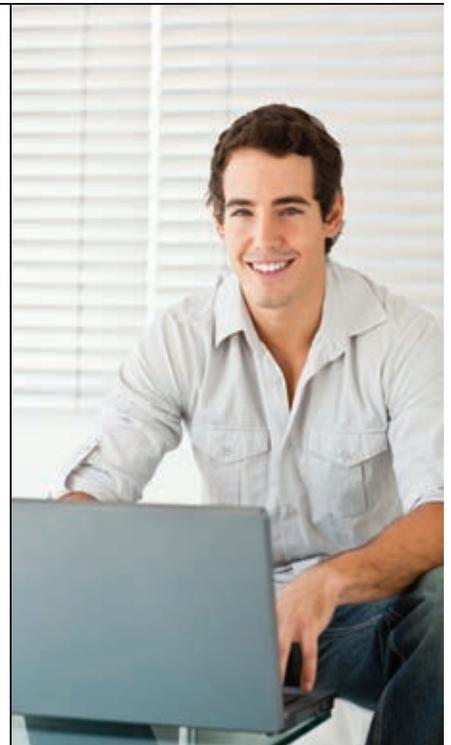
## Keep your money safe

Direct deposit is safer than paper checks. In fact, you are 125 times more likely to have a problem with a paper check than with an electronic payment. Even though direct deposit is safer, it's important that you take steps to keep your money safe. The Treasury Department urges you to follow these three tips:

- ▶ Do not give personal banking or other information to anyone who calls, texts or emails you.
- ▶ Do not give out your Social Security number or account information to anyone unless you are the one who has contacted them.
- ▶ Review your checking and savings accounts often to make sure that all account activity is yours.

Remember, you are required to switch to an electronic payment option by March 1. Time is running out—make the switch today.

*Source: U.S. Department of the Treasury*



**Shop online, pay bills, download music, watch movies—faster!**

**HIGH-SPEED INTERNET FOR THE KARNES COMMUNITY**

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

**karnesec.net**

# Clearing the Air

## Replace air filters regularly for efficient heating and cooling

BY MEGAN MCKOY-NOE

**Clogged air filters could add \$82 to your electric bill every year. Checking, changing or cleaning your filter once a month saves money and extends the life of your home’s heating, ventilation and air conditioning system.**

More than half of your monthly energy bill goes toward keeping your home comfortable. While air filters prevent pesky dust and annoying allergens from clogging your HVAC system, dirt builds up over time. If left unchecked, a dirty filter strains a home’s HVAC system and forces it to work harder to push conditioned air through tight spaces, resulting in higher energy bills.

### Filter facts

Air filters protect HVAC systems and perform double duty by collecting some loose dirt from the air. These handy sieves live in duct system slots or in return grilles of central air conditioners, furnaces and heat pumps.

Successful filters have a short lifespan—the better a filter catches dirt, the faster it gets clogged and must be cleaned or replaced. Leaving a dirty air filter in place cuts a home’s air quality and reduces HVAC system airflow.

While removing a clogged filter altogether relieves pressure on the system, the system can’t perform well without one. Unfiltered dust and grime accumulate on critical parts including the evaporator coil, causing unnecessary wear and tear.

### Monthly check-up

The U.S. Department of Energy advises checking an air filter once a month and replacing it at least every three months. It’s crucial to inspect and replace filters during seasons of heavy use like summer and winter.

If you have pets or smokers in the home, filters clog quickly. Remodeling projects or furniture sanding add more dirt than normal; a filter may need to be changed more often.

Turn your heating and cooling system off before checking your filter. Slide the filter out of your ductwork and look for layers of hair and dirt. Run a finger across the filter. If the finger comes away dirty or there’s a line left on the filter, it’s time for a change.

When replacing the filter, make sure the arrow on the filter indicating the direction of the airflow points toward the blower motor. To help schedule monthly check-ups, write the date on the side of the filter so you know when it needs to be checked again. Once you’ve made the change, turn your system back on.

### Filtering choices

Shopping for a new filter? Before you leave home, write down the size printed on the side of your current filter. If you get a

filter that’s too small, dirt will get around the barrier and invade your system.

There are several different types of filters and levels of efficiency. Filters are either flat or pleated; pleated filters offer extra surface area to hold dirt, making them more efficient.

The most common filters use layers of fiberglass reinforced with metal grating. Some filters boost efficiency by using polyester fibers.

Air filters are rated by a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value, or MERV. Ranging from 1 to 20, this scale gauges a filter’s effectiveness at blocking debris. Low MERV-rated filters offer high airflow into a cooling or heating system, but only catch large air particles. A higher rating isn’t always better—those filters block more dirt but also reduce system airflow. Most experts recommend filters with a MERV of 6 or higher.

If a family member suffers from allergies, a high-MERV filter keeps out excess dander, smoke and other allergens. Ask a



**TOP:** Need help remembering how long a filter’s been in place? When you replace a filter, write the date on the side. **BOTTOM:** This dirty filter was left in place for six months—layers of dirt and hair prevent air from entering the home’s HVAC system.

heating and cooling professional what type of filter works best for your home and family needs.

Once you find a filter that works well in your home, it’s a good idea to keep spare filters on hand.

*Megan McKoy-Noe writes on energy-efficiency issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

FREE WAYS TO

# Lower Energy Bills

**Who doesn't like saving money? You don't have to spend an arm and a leg when it comes to lowering your electric bill. By just following these simple steps, you can save energy and money, all without being taken to the cleaners.**

1. When it's sunny outside, throw open the curtains, even in the winter. Let the sun help warm your room and add enough light that you won't need lamps until sundown. On cloudy days, keep the windows covered, and more cold air will stay outside.
2. Cover bare floors. Carpeting or rugs add to comfort and heat retention, especially if there is little or no floor insulation.
3. Use a countertop convection oven, microwave, slow cooker or smaller electric appliance instead of a full-sized oven whenever possible.
4. If your refrigerator sits near a window or door, move it to another spot, if there's room. When sunrays and heat from the outdoors touch the fridge, it has to work harder—and use more electricity—to keep your food cold.
5. Unplug appliances—small ones like phone chargers and larger ones like computers and TVs—when you're not using them. Electronic devices use a little bit of electricity as long as they are plugged in—even when they are turned off. If you can't or don't want to turn your appliances off, switch them to “sleep” mode so they will draw less energy while nobody's using them.



## Treat Your Loved One—and Your Electric Bill

**This Valentine's Day, a romantic, home-cooked dinner for two may be just the perfect gift for both your valentine and your electric bill.**

Instead of using your oven to prepare your love's dinner, use your smaller convection or toaster oven, or even your slow cooker. By ditching the range, you'll ditch the extra expense of firing up that big contraption for a small two-person meal.

When dinner is served, turn off the lights and light the candles. Not only will you have the romantic ambiance of candlelight, you'll also save on your electric bill.

Don't throw those used dishes into the dishwasher when you're done. Instead, wash and dry them by hand—together. You'll enjoy a little together time, and your water heater will enjoy a little break. Just be sure not to leave the water running as you're washing.

After the last dish is put away, resist the urge to turn up the thermostat. Winter may still be in full swing, but your warm-blooded valentine is much nicer to snuggle up to than a high heating bill. Turn your thermostat down a few degrees, grab a blanket and spend some close quality time with the one you love.



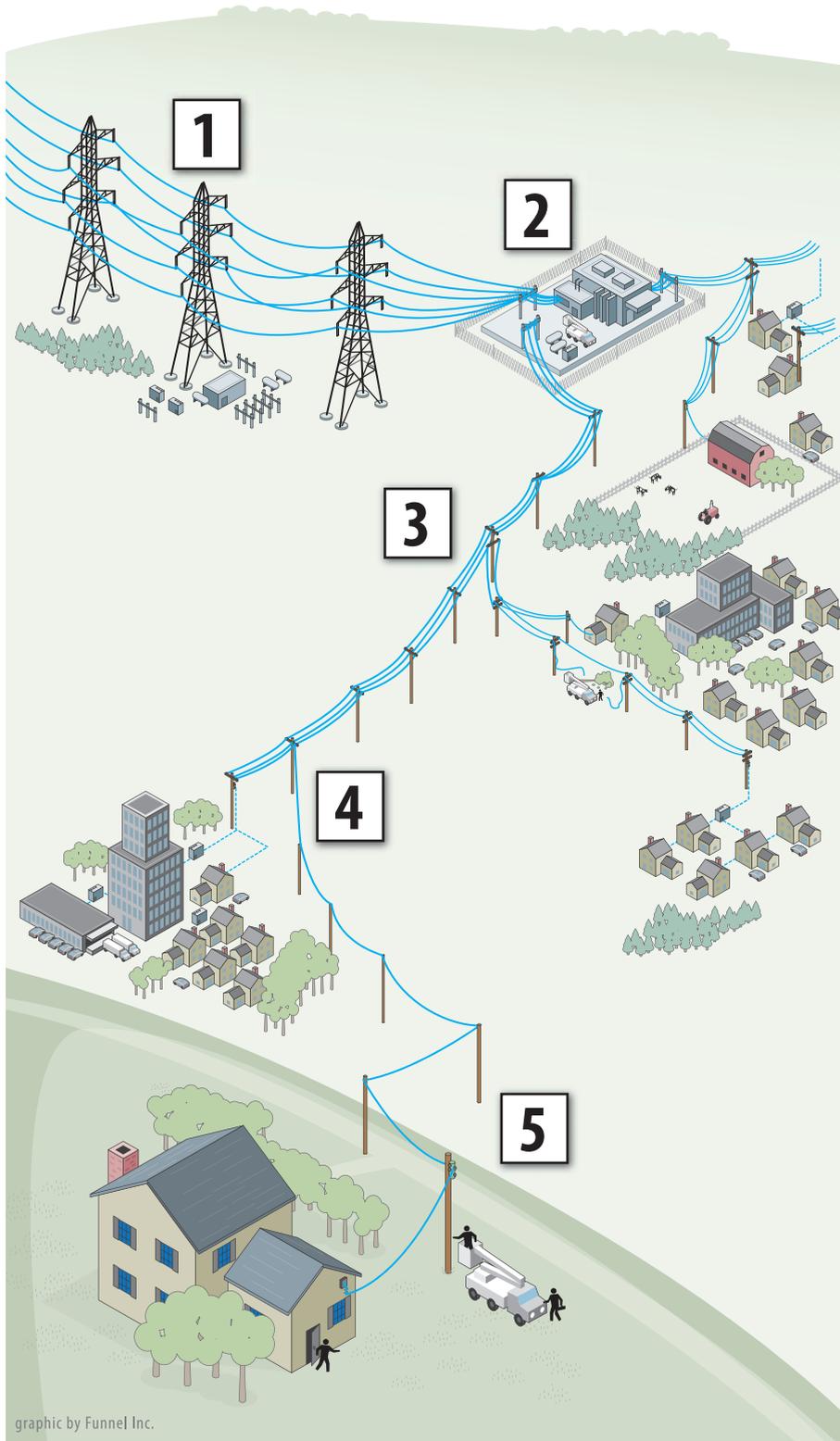
Full loads for the dishwasher mean maximum efficiency for your energy dollars.

6. Get rid of the refrigerator in your garage. Chances are, it's an old one that you moved there after you got an energy-efficient new model full of bells and whistles for your kitchen. That old energy hog would cost you plenty if it were in a room that you heat and cool. But in an uninsulated garage, it has to huff and puff to keep its contents cool when it's hot outside—and it's probably not even halfway full.
7. Use tight-fitting covers on pots and pans when cooking on the stove to shorten your cooking time and save energy. And, be sure to match the pot size to the burner on your stove. Heat is lost when small pots are used on large burners.

# Powering UP

When electricity goes out, most of us expect power will be restored within a few hours. But when a major storm causes widespread damage, longer outages may result. Co-op line crews work long, hard hours to restore service safely to the greatest number of consumers in the shortest time possible.

**Here's what's going on if you find yourself in the dark.**



## 1 High-Voltage Transmission Lines

Transmission towers and cables that supply power to transmission substations (and thousands of members) rarely fail. But when damaged, these facilities must be repaired before other parts of the system can operate.

## 2 Distribution Substation

Each substation serves hundreds or thousands of consumers. When a major outage occurs, line crews inspect substations to determine if problems stem from transmission lines feeding into the substation, the substation itself, or if problems exist down the line.

## 3 Main Distribution Lines

If the problem cannot be isolated at a distribution substation, distribution lines are checked. These lines carry power to large groups of consumers in communities or housing developments.

## 4 Tap Lines

If local outages persist, supply lines, called tap lines, are inspected. These lines deliver power to transformers, either mounted on poles or placed on pads for underground service, outside businesses, schools, and homes.

## 5 Individual Homes

If your home remains without power, the service line between a transformer and your residence may need to be repaired. Always call to report an outage to help line crews isolate local issues.

graphic by Funnel Inc.