

# A Labor of Love



## MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER LEROY T. SKLOSS

Each September, we celebrate Labor Day, a national tribute to the contributions American workers make to the strength and prosperity of our country.

The word *labor* is defined as an expenditure of physical or mental effort especially when difficult or compulsory. That definition is not lost on employees of Karnes Electric Cooperative. When the lights go off—whether due to tornadoes, wildfires, hurricanes or ice storms—our linemen leave their families to work tirelessly in harsh and dangerous conditions to restore your power. Other employees field your phone calls and dispatch crews to get electricity flowing to your home as quickly and safely as possible.

But that doesn't mean the job is a laborious punishment. It is a labor of love.

When the weather goes awry, and the calls begin to come in, not all calls are from members. Often on those days, employees who were safe at home call in to see if there's anything they can do to help. We've had customer service representatives simply show up to help answer members' calls during a crisis. This is because they care about what they do. They care about the membership, and nothing is more important than making sure that every member is safe and sound—with the power humming—even during inclement weather.

And it's not just when the lights are off that our employees are working. It is an everyday occurrence, and not just during the 8-to-5 workday.

Our linemen go through extensive training to ensure their safety and the safety of their fellow crew members. Our office staff is also trained to stay safe around electricity, and this, in turn, helps to ensure your safety. Karnes EC is always here to educate you about the dangers of electricity, and through Texas Co-op Power and other avenues, we are able to pass along tips to help keep you safe and save money by making energy-conscious decisions. We don't do this because it's our job. We do this because we care about you, the member.

Today, I want to ask you, our member-owners, to thank a co-op employee if you see one. Thank them for their commitment, their talent, their hard work and their service to the membership of this cooperative. After all, even though our offices will be closed September 2, if your power goes out, we'll be on our way to fix it, holiday or no holiday.



Encourage children to use crosswalks.

## New School Year: Time for Safety

With school bells ringing once again, Safe Kids USA reminds parents and drivers to do their part to keep students safe as they walk to school.

### Reminders for parents

- ▶ Be proactive and talk about safety with your children before they head back to school.
- ▶ Assess hazards on your child's route to school and select the way with the least number of traffic crossings.

### Reminders for drivers

- ▶ Slow down and be especially alert in neighborhoods and school zones.
- ▶ Enter and exit driveways and alleys slowly and carefully.
- ▶ Watch for children on and near the road in the morning and after school.
- ▶ Reduce distractions while driving and focus on the road and your surroundings. Put down your phone and don't talk or text while driving.

### Reminders for students

- ▶ Cross the street with an adult until you are at least 10 years old.
- ▶ Always cross the street at corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks.
- ▶ Never run out into streets or cross between parked cars.
- ▶ Make sure you always walk in front of the school bus where the driver can see you.



## Happy Labor Day!

The offices of Karnes Electric Cooperative will be closed Monday, September 2, for the Labor Day holiday.

We wish you a safe and happy holiday.

# Meter Tampering: It's Not Worth It

**Too often, workers at Karnes Electric Cooperative deal with a problem caused by people who think they shouldn't have to pay for electricity.**

Trying to shave a few dollars off their electric bills is too tempting for some people. But altering an electric meter or bypassing it to achieve "free" electricity is a bad idea on several fronts.

## It Could Be Deadly

fooling around with an electric meter is a recipe for disaster. Opening the meter can expose the thief—and his or her neighbors—to deadly current. One false move could lead to serious injuries or even death from electrocution.

Our service personnel undergo extensive training to learn how to work around live current. Any other removal of the meter is a violation of the agreement you signed when you became a member of Karnes EC.

## It Could Destroy Property

The same current that poses a deadly risk to people also can put a home at risk. Wires that carry electricity are insulated not only to protect lives, but also to prevent fires.

Bypassing a meter also means bypassing the protection that the meter provides.

## It Could Lead to Jail

Tampering with an electric meter is a felony crime in Texas with a sentence of up to two years in jail. In addition, when the electricity theft is discovered, Karnes EC will assess fees, plus bill the thieves for the estimated amount of stolen electricity.

Our service and office personnel are trained to detect electricity theft by spotting suspicious anomalies on bills—or even just noticing that a light is on in a house where service has been disconnected.

The co-op also receives reports from members who realize that the theft of electricity comes out of their pockets. Because electric cooperatives are nonprofit, the thieves are not stealing from the company, they are stealing from its members.

Karnes EC must pay for all electricity generated and distributed on our lines. When someone doesn't pay for that electricity, the cost is passed along to all members. Electricity freeloaders are stealing from members' pockets in the long run.

If you know of someone who is not paying for their fair share of electricity costs, we urge you to call us at 1-888-807-3952. Not only will you stop a theft, you could also save a life.



**Only authorized employees of your electric co-op should work on your home's meter.**



## Karnes Electric Cooperative

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

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Leroy T. Skloss

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### 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)

# Be Safe This Fall

*When working outdoors, watch for electrical hazards*

**Summer is coming to an end, and temperatures will finally begin to cool down. During the dog days, you may not have had a chance to tackle all of those maintenance jobs you had planned.**

Now that it's cooler, it's time to finish those jobs left over from the summer such as trimming trees and doing general property maintenance.

You need to take special care around electricity when working outdoors. If you are planning home maintenance projects such as trimming or removing trees, cleaning gutters or repairing roofs or chimneys, be careful when working near overhead power

lines or underground cables where they enter your house. These lines are not safe to touch.

A tall ladder, for example, accidentally touching an overhead power line can lead to serious injury or death.

In general, overhead electricity lines are not insulated, and if anything capable of conducting electricity touches them, the electricity will pass through that object, injuring or even killing the person holding it.

Be aware that you don't actually have to even touch the line—



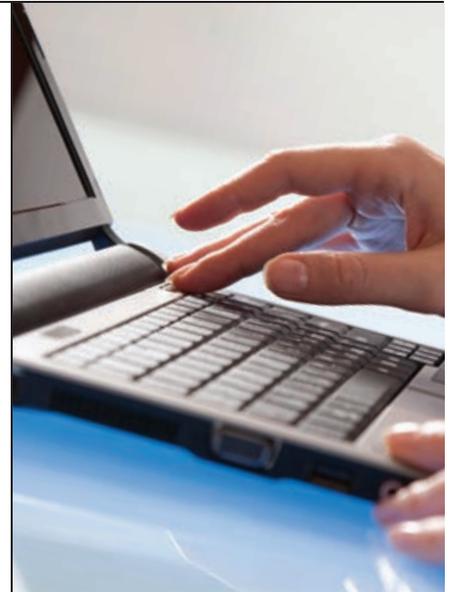
**Make safety a priority with outdoor chores. Know what's below ground before you start to dig.**

almost touching may be enough to trigger the flow of current and cause that shock.

**Follow these safety tips for a safe and productive autumn:**

- ▶ Before starting on any jobs outside, make sure you locate power lines or underground cables. Plan your work. If you are going to be working near these lines, arrange for Karnes Electric Cooperative to disconnect your power supply while you are working.
- ▶ If you are handling any tall object near power lines, don't let it come in contact with or even get close to those power lines. Keep yourself and any objects you are handling at least 15 feet away from overhead power lines.
- ▶ Watch out for what's below—make sure you check for any underground gas, power, telecommunications or water services before you dig by calling 811, the state's free utilities locating service.
- ▶ Use a licensed electrical contractor for all electrical repairs.
- ▶ Plant trees well away from power lines and keep branches trimmed before they get too close.
- ▶ Before installing a clothesline, TV antenna or other high structure, check for power line clearance.
- ▶ If you are operating any electrical equipment outdoors, always use a plug equipped with a ground-fault circuit interrupter, especially when working in wet, or even just damp, conditions.

*Source: Energy Safety Service*



## Power Down

*Turn off your computer when not using it*

**It takes less energy to switch your home computer on and off, even several times a day, than it does to let it run unused.**

To save energy—and money—make use of your computer's sleep mode and other power management features.

Here are some tips for energy-efficient computer use:

- ▶ Turn off the monitor if the computer will sit unused for more than 20 minutes.
- ▶ Switch the whole thing off if you'll be away from it for more than two hours.
- ▶ Plug all monitors, printers, scanners, routers and other accessories into a good-quality surge protector to turn them all off by flipping a single switch.
- ▶ If your computer has a sleep mode, you'll have to adjust the sleep settings in the computer's system preferences. The feature will power down your computer once it senses no activity for an extended time. Energy Star estimates that sleep mode can save you up to \$30 a year on your electric bill.
- ▶ Consider trading in your desktop unit for a laptop that consumes less energy.
- ▶ Run the laptop off the battery as much as possible and unplug the charger when it is fully charged.

# Landscape for Looks and Efficiency

**DEAR JIM:** We are landscaping our new house. We like a wooded yard for shade and to enhance the energy efficiency of our home. Where should we plant trees, and which are best? What materials are good alternatives to grass for ground cover?

—Mark G.

**DEAR MARK:** Wise landscaping can do more than just create an attractive yard. It can also lower your utility bills, summer and winter, and improve your family's comfort year-round. Trees, being a key component of any residential landscaping design, can have the greatest effect on your utility bills.

For one, the evaporation of moisture from leaves actually cools the air around your home, akin to how perspiration cools your skin. And by taking advantage of passive solar heating during winter, with the proper placement and selection of trees, you can use less electricity to heat your home.

The primary goal of efficient landscaping with trees is to shade your home during summer, yet allow the sun to pass through during winter. Additional goals are, depending on your climate, to allow cool evening breezes to flow around your house or to provide moisture for evaporative cooling of the air near your home.

In an average temperate climate, a typical efficient tree landscaping plan has deciduous trees that lose their leaves in the fall to the south, southeast and southwest. The leaves block the sun during summer, but during winter, the sun shines through to heat your home.

Plant dense evergreens along the north, northeast and northwest sides, which block cold winter winds. With shorter days and the sun lower in the sky in winter, not much solar heat comes from these directions.

In hot, humid climates, shading during summer is most important. Taller trees should be planted closer to your home to block the sun, which is higher in the sky.

For ground cover, there are alternatives to grass, such as ground cover plants and gravel. Both have their advantages and disadvantages for landscaping a house. Low-growing ground cover near your house can help to keep it cool during summer. The leaves block the sun's heat from absorbing into the ground, and they give off moisture for natural cooling. Ground cover has a lesser effect on efficiency during winter.

The cooling effect from ground cover is most effective in drier climates because there is more evaporation. In hot,



JAMES DULLEY

Low-water-use ground cover plants and boulders are shaded by trees during the summer and help warm the home during winter.

humid climates, the additional moisture from plants near the house will further increase the relative humidity level. This is more of a problem if you rely on natural ventilation than when using air conditioning with the windows closed.

Landscaping with gravel eliminates the need to water grass, but it can increase the air temperature around your house, particularly in the evening. The thermal mass of the gravel stores the afternoon sun's heat, which helps in the winter. If you use gravel, make sure it's shaded by deciduous trees during the summer.

*Jim Dulley is an energy and home improvement specialist and writer.*

# Farm Lighting Systems Advance with LEDs

BY BRIAN SLOBODA AND MARTHA J. CARNEY

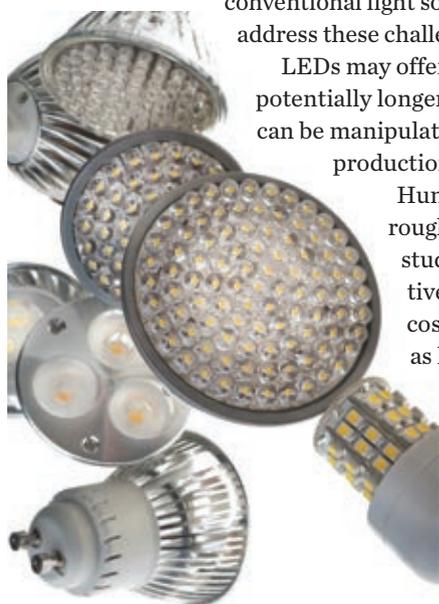
**One of the biggest developments in lighting our homes, businesses and streets involves the use of light-emitting diode, or LED, technology. LEDs convert electricity directly into bright, white light far more efficiently than other lighting options, and farmers are taking notice.**

Farms pose unique challenges for lighting. Harsh environments—excessive dirt, dust, heat, humidity and ammonia emissions—affect lightbulb performance. To date, conventional light sources have not been able to successfully address these challenges.

LEDs may offer a robust, environmentally sustainable and potentially longer-lasting solution. Because light from LEDs can be manipulated, the technology may be able to improve production.

Hundreds of LED fixtures are being tested at roughly 50 farms across rural America—several studies involve or are led by electric cooperatives—to help reduce energy and maintenance costs. Savings are highest when lights operate as long as the manufacturers claim. With a rated life of 35,000 to 50,000 hours, LEDs can last up to 33 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs, four to eight times longer than linear fluorescent bulbs and compact fluorescent lamps, and more than twice the time of high-intensity discharge lamps.

LEDs are more expensive than traditional lighting, but the U.S. Department of Energy reports a price drop of 54 percent



**The energy-saving advantages of LED lighting may soon be at home on the farm.**

over the past two years. LEDs offer farmers several attractive attributes, including:

- ▶ Rugged and vibration-resistant construction
- ▶ Less wasted light through directional lighting
- ▶ Customizable colors (for example, blue light for calming)
- ▶ Dimmable capabilities and integration with lighting controls programmed for maximum production
- ▶ No mercury content or waste-disposal costs
- ▶ Easier cleaning. Water- and ammonia-resistant lamps can be hosed or foam-cleaned without fixture damage.

While the assessment continues, many claims about LED farm performance are anecdotal, and not yet backed by statistically sound science. Preliminary results imply promising and significant energy savings and hint at production boosts.

Farmers can remain cautiously optimistic that through research, LED companies will create lighting that is both cost effective and long-lasting and has a positive effect on animal health and well-being.

Learn more about farm and home lighting options at [energy.gov/lighting](http://energy.gov/lighting). Want more ways to save on the farm? Use the animal housing, irrigation, nitrogen, tillage and grain-drying energy calculators at [energytools.sc.egov.usda.gov](http://energytools.sc.egov.usda.gov).

**Brian Sloboda** is a senior program manager for the Cooperative Research Network. **Martha J. Carney** is founding principal of Outsourced Innovation.



## Shining a Light on LEDs

**The number of light-emitting diode lamps and fixtures installed in the U.S. has increased tenfold over the past two years—from 4.5 million units in 2010 to 49 million units in 2012. LED installations, including common indoor and outdoor applications such as recessed lighting and streetlights, are expected to save about \$675 million in annual energy costs.**

During the same period, the cost of an LED replacement bulb has fallen by about 54 percent. Switching entirely to LED lights over the next two decades could save the U.S. about \$250 billion in energy costs and reduce electricity consumption for lighting by nearly 50 percent.

Their unique characteristics—including compact size, long life, ease of maintenance, resistance to breakage and vibration, good performance in cold temperatures, lack of infrared or ultra-violet emissions, and instant-on performance—are beneficial in many lighting applications.

By 2030, LED lighting is projected to represent about 75 percent of all lighting sales, saving enough energy to power approximately 26 million U.S. households.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

ISTOCKPHOTO

# Pay Attention to Cords, Plugs and Outlets

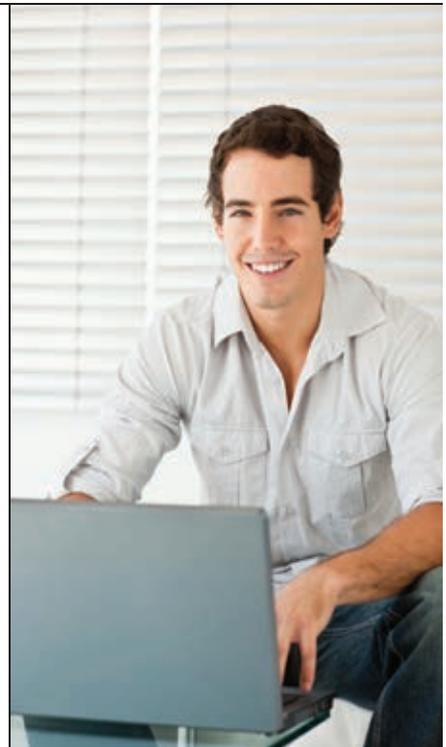
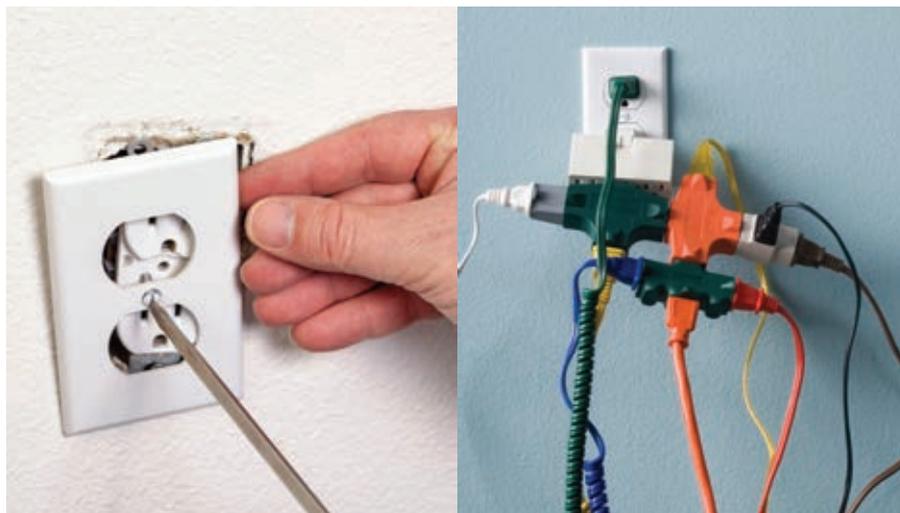
**Misuse of and malfunctioning electrical outlets and cords cause nearly 50,000 house fires every year, the National Fire Protection Association reports.**

Keep your family safe by paying attention to how household members treat cords, plugs, appliances and outlets.

Some tips:

- ▶ If you notice an appliance cord is damaged, frayed, split or coming loose from its plug, don't use the appliance. Have the cord replaced or buy a new appliance.
- ▶ Don't leave an extension cord plugged in for more than a few days. It's not designed for permanent use. Move your lamps, electronics and appliances closer to wall outlets so you don't need extension cords. If you don't have enough outlets, hire an electrician to add more.
- ▶ When you use an extension cord, keep it in plain sight. Do not hide it under a carpet where it can get trampled on all day. If the cord overheats, it can catch the rug on fire.
- ▶ Child-proof all receptacles so children won't stick their fingers into outlets.
- ▶ Don't plug more than one high-wattage appliance or electronic device into a single receptacle, even if using a multiplug power strip. The power strip doesn't add capacity to your electrical circuit. It just makes it easier to overload it, which can cause a fire.
- ▶ Avoid outlets and switches that heat up when used. Call an electrician to identify and solve the problem.
- ▶ If you trip a circuit every time you turn on your hair dryer or if your lights flicker or dim, that's a problem. Call an electrician.
- ▶ Find out which kind of lightbulb is safe for each table lamp in your house. You'll find information about maximum wattages if you look at the lamp socket.
- ▶ Install ground-fault circuit interrupters anywhere water can affect a circuit: the kitchen, all bathrooms, the laundry room, the basement and on outdoor electrical circuits.
- ▶ Equip your home with arc-fault circuit interrupters, which can prevent a fire.

**LEFT: Every outlet should have a properly fitted and securely mounted switchplate.**  
**RIGHT: An overload waiting to happen. Use power strips or have additional outlets installed.**



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