

GENERAL
MANAGERBRAD
BIERSTEDT

Weathering the Storm

Natural disasters leave safety issues in their wake

FLOODS. WIND. RAIN. ICE. When Mother Nature wreaks havoc on the power grid, a host of hazards often follow. That makes safety—always a top priority for Karnes Electric Cooperative—a major concern even *after* a storm blows through.

Creating a culture of safety is incredibly important to electric co-ops because some of our employees face hazardous situations daily. We also want to ensure the safety of those we serve—our members.

Every region of the state deals with its own weather crises. Here's a look at the most common storms that create safety issues for your cooperative and our members.

Floods

Beyond the hazard that floodwaters pose to drivers, water can turn an already tricky situation into a deadly one if you attempt to work with electrical equipment that's wet or submerged.



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Because of the dangers, co-ops urge members to exercise caution and call a licensed electrician before beginning cleanup efforts. Do not use electrical appliances that have been wet until they've been examined by a qualified service repair professional.

When high winds accompany rains that produce flooding, submerged power lines are a dangerous possibility. Stay away from water near power lines.

Tornadoes and High Winds

Tornadoes are common in Texas and can leave wide swaths of destruction behind—snapping poles like twigs and reducing transmission towers to heaps of

twisted metal. Whether it's an actual tornado or high winds, power outages can result.

Downed power lines pose a great risk because you can't tell whether they're still energized. So always assume downed power lines are live. Keep at least 15 yards away from downed lines and anything touching them.

If you find yourself in a situation where you're close to downed lines, shuffle away in small steps, with your feet together, touching the ground at all times to prevent electrocution.

Prolonged power outages can spur the use of portable generators, which can be deadly if misused. Operating the machines too close to or inside a home allows carbon monoxide to accumulate in living areas. Most generators can emit deadly levels of the gas within minutes.

If you plug your portable generator into a wall socket, it threatens lineworkers by producing backfeed that unexpectedly reenergizes power lines. Backfeeding is a deadly serious issue for crews. Portable generators should never be plugged into a home's wall outlet, and permanent generators must have a transfer switch installed. Call Karnes EC if you plan to install an emergency generator.

Ice and Snow

Freezing rain and sleet don't always cause a power outage. But every so often, a catastrophic ice storm strikes.

If the initial blanket of ice doesn't snap crossarms or cause tree branches to crack and fall onto wires,

the weight of the ice eventually can pull down poles, knocking out power. The dangers of downed lines and generators apply in such a situation.

Co-op Crews Work Hard

Karnes EC's employees work hard to restore power after severe weather events. Co-op lineworkers must endure the same hardships at home as the co-op's members. Nevertheless, line crews will be in the field when it's safe, working until everyone's lights come back on. ■