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country living

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PUBLISHED FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



SmartHub Is The Smart Choice

New e-bill system lets you pay your bill, review energy usage, receive notices and more using your smartphone, iPad or tablet.

More good reasons to pay your electric bill electronically: Available now from East Central Electric (ECE), SmartHub offers the latest technology to help you manage your electric account 24/7 by computer, smartphone or tablet, using IOS or Android technology.

SmartHub offers a more extensive menu of services than ECE's previous e-bill program. With SmartHub, you can:

- Check your electric usage
- Contact your co-op office
- Pay your bill
- Manage your account
- Sign up for notifications such as high usage
- Access custom widgets

You will appreciate SmartHub's easy navigation, and the account information is both accurate and timely.

Members who are trying to curb their home energy costs will find the usage data especially valuable. "This puts the power of data in the member's hands," said Tamara Hawkins, manager of co-op office services. "When you know how and when your home uses the most energy, you can make more informed decisions that will help you save money."

Members can also sign up for usage notifications, which will notify you when your usage is especially high. The system has other advantages as well.

"The two-way communication available with SmartHub makes it easy for someone to notify us of account and service



issues. It also lets us notify them about special offers, services and events," Hawkins added.

To sign up for SmartHub, simply click on the Pay Bill link at **www.ecoec.com**, or download the SmartHub app. Previous e-bill customers may use their current login and password to access SmartHub. New users should click on the link "Sign Up to Access our Self Service Site."

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OFFICE HOURS:

Monday-Friday, 8 am - 4:30 pm.

POWER OUTAGE HOT LINE

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PAYMENT OPTIONS

- Pay online at **www.ecoec.com**.
- Pay by phone using VISA, Mastercard or Discover at **866-999-4584**. Available 24 hours a day. Convenience fee associated with payments.
- Pay in person using our drive-through window or lobby during regular office hours, Monday through Friday, 8 am to 4:30 pm.
- Pay via automatic draft of your checking or savings account. Sign up electronically or download the ebill form for easy automatic payments at **www.ecoec.com**.

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operation roundup **update**

Operation Roundup funds support local charitable organizations, civic groups, youth programs, community services, and needy families and individuals. For more information on this voluntary bill roundup program, please visit **www.ecoec.com**.

Figures to date:

Applications reviewed.....	586
Applications granted.....	424
Applications denied.....	151
Applications tabled.....	10
Scholarships awarded.....	\$107,000.00

Total Disbursements.....\$1,086, 799.46

Average member contribution.....44¢





Co-op Website Gets a Fresh New Look

East Central Electric Cooperative's new website goes live this month, bringing co-op members a fresh new look, user-friendly interface, and a comprehensive menu of co-op services and information to help you find fast answers to your questions.

The site will include new features such as the "Pay Now" button, that quickly delivers members to the new SmartHub payment site. Check out the new website at www.ecoec.com.

Co-op Crews Well Prepped for Winter Storm Clean

When Winter Storm Clean blasted through Oklahoma on December 8, East Central Electric crews were ready for it. While the worst of Clean's wrath fell in icy sheets across southeast Oklahoma, co-op crews and personnel monitored the storm's approach closely using the Sperry-Pilz ice index. The index, developed specifically for electric utilities, provides a detailed forecast of expected snow and ice, enabling co-ops to position crews and resources in areas most at risk for severe outages.

East Central Electric held an emergency response meeting prior to the storm's arrival to review the co-op's emergency response plan, and discuss Ice Index forecasts.

"The index showed mostly snow for our area, with the possibility for ice in the Checotah/Eufaula area," said Dave Sermons, director of engineering and operations. "Fortunately, that didn't happen."

In southeast Oklahoma and northwest Arkansas, Clean dumped up to an inch and a half of ice and left thousands without power. Responding to calls for mutual aid, East Central Electric deployed two two-man crews with bucket trucks on December 7 to assist in the restoration effort. Employees Jody Gilroy, Pete Hogan, Pat Livesay and Joe Bales worked with crews from Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative to restore power in rural areas near Pocola, Okla.



Opportunities for Teens

College Scholarships • Youth Tour • Energy Camp



East Central Electric's commitment to community includes programs that improve educational and leadership opportunities for rural teens.

From college scholarships to travel, the following youth programs are accepting applications now. Please share this information with your teen and encourage them to participate. They won't regret it.

■ College Scholarships

The East Central Electric (ECE) Operation Roundup program offers one \$1,000 scholarship to one qualifying student from each of the 42 high schools in and around co-op service territory, including home and private schools. Last year, only 26 schools took advantage of this opportunity.

Scholarship funds may be used to attend college, university or technical school. Recipients are selected based on scholastic achievement, community and school activities, awards and honors, educational goals and financial need.

Applicants must live on co-op lines with a parent, legal guardian or spouse, or be a co-op member themselves. The member must participate in Operation Roundup, or join the voluntary bill roundup program before the scholarship application is submitted.

Applications are available at www.ecoec.com. Under the Services tab, click on Community and Youth Services, and then Operation Roundup. For details, please contact Amy Nix at **918-756-0833** or email anix@ecoec.com. Application deadline is March 1, 2014.

■ Rural Electric Youth Tour

East Central Electric will sponsor four high school juniors on the 2014 Rural Electric Youth Tour, June 13-19, in Washington D.C. The one week, all-expenses-paid tour includes stops at historic monuments, government buildings, memorials and museums, with visits to the Hard Rock Cafe and other favorite tourism hot spots. To be considered, students must write a formal letter of 300-400 words to an elected or appointed official of their choice. The letter should focus on a problem or issue of the applicant's choice, explain why this issue is important, and if possible, include possible solutions.

Find Youth Tour applications and details at www.ecoec.com, or contact Billie Been at **918-756-0833**. The deadline to enter is March 1, 2014.

■ YouthPower Energy Camp

For eighth graders, East Central Electric offers a free trip to YouthPower Energy Camp, May 27-30 in the scenic surrounds of Oklahoma's Red Rock Canyon.

Energy campers learn about co-ops and build leadership skills by participating in fun games and activities. ECE will sponsor four teens to attend Energy Camp.

Interested teens should fill out an application form, available online at www.ecoec.com, or contact Billie Been at **918-756-0833**. The deadline to apply is March 1, 2014.



Cold Enough For You?

What not to do when it's cold outside

Don't light up your wood-burning fireplace. A crackling fire doesn't contribute much heat to your room. Plus, the open flue sucks the heated air out of your house through the chimney. Burning a fire in the hearth when the temperature dips into the 20s can actually increase your heating bills.

Don't overstuff your refrigerator. Stacking holiday leftovers on top of each other and squeezing extra containers of food onto every refrigerator shelf prevents the air from circulating around them. This forces the appliance's compressor to work harder and use more electricity.

Don't crank the thermostat way up to heat a cold house in a hurry. Turning the heat up to 90 degrees won't warm up a 70-degree house any quicker than turning it up to 73 degrees, and if you forget to turn the thermostat back down before your house overheats, that's a waste of energy.

Don't run bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans any longer than you have to. Flip them on to clear smoke or steam. Once the air clears, turn them off. They pull heated air from your home, which can cause your heater to run longer than necessary.

Don't use a barbecue grill or a propane patio heater indoors. Even if your central heating system is on the fritz, this is a fire hazard and can expose your family to carbon monoxide poisoning.



Don't leave a space heater running when you leave the house. Even if the room will be cold when you return, shut off portable heaters if you're not going to be there to see them topple over, overheat or catch something on fire.

Don't turn off your ceiling fans. Ceiling fans save energy during the summer and winter. The trick: Reverse the direction that the blades spin. Heat rises, so in the winter, the blades should blow warm air down into the room.

Don't close the blinds. No matter how cold it is outside, let the sun shine into your room to warm it up and give your heating system a break. Close blinds and curtains after dark.

Don't close off unused rooms. When you do, you restrict the flow of air that helps your heating system warm your home evenly. Cutting off that air flow makes your heater run longer and work harder to maintain a comfortable temperature in the rest of the house.

Don't turn your furnace completely off, even if you're going on an extended winter vacation. Set the thermostat to 55°F. so the plumbing pipes in an unheated house won't freeze and burst.

For more ways to save energy this winter, please visit www.ecoec.com or togetherwesave.com.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Tip of the Month

Fighting winter chills? A crackling fire in the hearth warms the house, but don't let it heat up your electric bill.

To cool energy costs, keep the fireplace damper closed when not in use. Caulk around the fireplace hearth. Double up on wood-earned warmth by lowering the thermostat setting to between 50°F. and 55°F.

Learn more at www.energysaver.gov.

Source: US Department of Energy



February billing cycles

For bill payment questions or details about East Central Electric's convenient bill payment options, visit www.ecoec.com, or call 918-756-0833.

Your prompt payment is appreciated.

	Mailed	Due
Cycle 1	Feb. 8	Feb. 28
Cycle 2	Feb. 14	March 7
Cycle 3	Feb. 22	March 15
Cycle 4	March 1	March 22

Standby Generators:

Make sure your unit has a transfer switch

If you rely on a standby generator to energize your home during a power outage, please make sure it has a transfer switch or meter collar installed prior to operation.

Without this important safety enhancement, you are violating the National Electrical Safety Code, and risking the lives of others.

“Removing a meter and plugging a generator into a meter socket is no longer allowed,” said Billie Been, co-op member services representative.

Generators that aren't properly wired into the home can back feed electricity onto co-op lines

and electrocute line workers or anyone else coming into contact with electric lines.

A meter collar device or transfer switch prevents this from happening by isolating the new, temporary power source from the main power lines feeding your home. Make sure your standby generator is properly installed and in compliance with the National Electrical Safety Code by hiring a qualified, licensed electrician to install it.

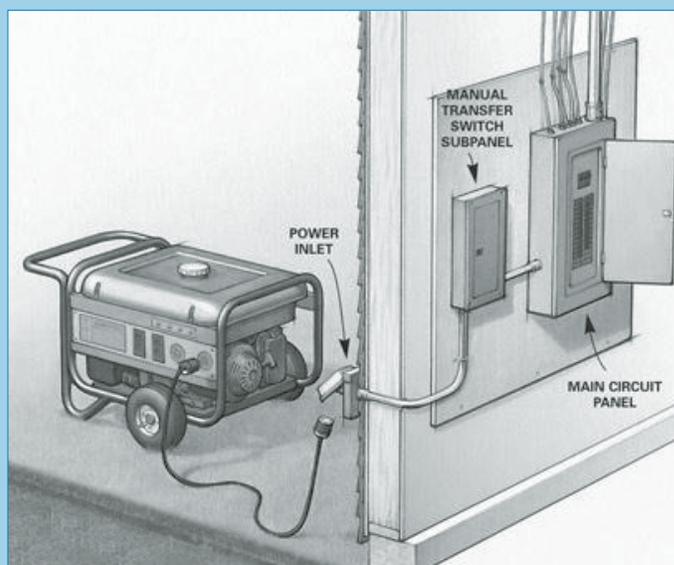
For questions about your generator and tips for operating it safely, please call your co-op at **918-756-0833**, or visit our website at www.ecoec.com.



East Central Electric offers Generlink transfer switches to co-op members, with financing options available. Price includes installation. Visit ecoec.com for more details, or call us today at **918-756-0833**.

How a Transfer Switch Works

Standby generators should have a transfer safety switch installed by a professional. An approved generator transfer switch keeps your home circuits separate from the electric co-op, and prevents power from back feeding onto co-op lines.



Generator Safety Tips:

- Portable generators should never be plugged directly into a home outlet or electrical system—use an extension cord to plug appliances into an outlet on the generator. Standby generators require a transfer switch.
- Never operate a generator in a confined area, such as a garage. Generators produce gases, including deadly carbon monoxide. They require proper ventilation.
- Generators pose electrical risks, especially when operated in wet conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure on a dry surface where water cannot form puddles or drain under it. Always ensure that your hands are dry before touching the generator.
- When you refuel the generator, make sure the engine is cool to prevent a fire, should the tank overflow.
- There should be nothing plugged into the generator when you turn it on. This prevents a surge from damaging your generator and appliances.
- Keep children and pets away from the generator, which could burn them.



therecipebox

Favorite recipes from members of East Central Electric Cooperative.



Yellow Squash Soup

Contributed by Barbara Neumeier, Council Hill

Ingredients

- 4 or 5 yellow squash
- 1/4 C. butter or margarine
- 1/2 C. Velveeta or American cheese
- 1/2 onion salt and pepper to taste

Directions

Clean squash and cut off ends, but don't peel. Cut squash and onion into chunks. Place in saucepan, cover with water and bring to boil. Cook until tender. Pour into blender and blend until completely smooth. Pour back into pan and add the rest of the ingredients. Cook until cheese melts. Serve hot. This soup is easy, fast and delicious, and it freezes well so you can save it for a wintry day.