

# NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

**NOEC'S TEAM  
BEHIND THE SCENES**

**SMALL CHANGE  
THAT CHANGES LIVES**

**AUGUST 2021**



Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

# NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Northeast Connection is published monthly to communicate with the members of Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative.

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## BUSINESS HOURS

**Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Offices are closed Saturday, Sunday and holidays.

## DISPATCHING AVAILABLE 24 HOURS AT

1.800.256.6405

### If you experience an outage:

1. Check your switch or circuit breaker in the house and on the meter pole to be sure the trouble is not on your side of the service.
2. When contacting the cooperative to report an outage, use the name as it appears on your bill, and have both your pole number and account number ready.

Please direct all editorial inquiries to Public Relations at 800.256.6405 or email [publicrelations@noec.coop](mailto:publicrelations@noec.coop)

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## NOEC'S TEAM BEHIND THE SCENES

**Eric Stites**  
**Dispatch Supervisor**

Work somewhere 24 years and you are bound to experience change. I have certainly seen my fair share here at Northeast

Oklahoma Electric Cooperative.

My employment at NOEC has been a journey in and of itself. I started working on the brush crew when I was nineteen years old. Later, I ran a tree trimming crew for several years. During that time I assisted our linemen with power restoration during many storm events. Little did I know all of the experience I was acquiring would one day be put to good use in an entirely different area of the cooperative.

In 2012, I moved into the dispatch department. The transition from being out in the field to being in an office environment was very overwhelming at first. At times, it still can be pretty hectic. I recall the first storm that hit while I was the only person working. The outage map lit up like it was the Fourth of July. The phones immediately started ringing off the hook and the system alarms were going berserk. I remember standing up and thinking to myself: *Maybe I'm not cut out for this.* Then a sense of calm came over me. I reverted back to all my training and past experience, sat back down, and started sending crews to outages. I started managing the phones as fast as one person could. That was the first of many storms to come and with each one I dispatched, I realized they all presented new challenges.

After several years of working as a dispatcher, I had an opportunity to take over as supervisor. It was about that same time that our cooperative launched its Fiber To The Home (FTTH) broadband business. When that happened, the responsibilities of our group changed. Not only did we monitor power outages and dispatch crews for the cooperative, we also began handling technical support for BOLT Fiber Optics. Those new assignments brought an entirely new and different set of challenges.

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Events are published as space allows and must be submitted at least 60 days in advance. Send information, including phone number for publication, to Northeast Connection Events Calendar, PO Box 948, Vinita 74301 or email to publicrelations@noec.coop

**\$100 IS HIDING!**

Search the pages of NE Connection for a 6-digit account number with an asterisk on each side. For example: \*XXXXXX\*. Compare it to your account number, which appears on your monthly electric bill. If they match, contact the cooperative at 918.256.6405, by September 1, 2021, to claim a \$100 credit on your electric account.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**The Grove Block Party**  
**Aug 6**  
 Grove, OK

**2 Hip Chicks Roadshow**  
**Aug 7**  
 Claremore, OK

**1st Annual Ottawa County Corporate Challenge**  
**Aug 7**  
 Miami, OK

**Ottawa County Fair**  
**Aug 14-21**  
 Miami, OK

**Angler Nation Bass Fishing Tournament**  
**Aug 14-15**  
 Bernice, OK

**Jay Cruise Night**  
**Aug 14**  
 Jay, OK

**Rodeo Miami**  
**Aug 27-28**  
 Miami, OK

**3rd Annual Crosswired Cowboy Church Rodeo**  
**Aug 27-28**  
 Grove, OK

**Will Rogers Memorial Rodeo Parade**  
**Aug 25**  
 Vinita, OK

**Will Rogers Memorial Rodeo**  
**Aug 25-28**  
 Vinita, OK

**SAVE THE DATE**

**REC Day 2021**  
**Sep 18 | 4 Locations**

- Craig County Fairgrounds, Vinita
- Mayes County Fairgrounds, Pryor
- Miami Fairgrounds
- Grove Civic Center

# NOEC'S TEAM BEHIND THE SCENES

CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER

**great strides in technology over the years. For one thing, we no longer track outages like they did “back in the day” when they used a paper map, push pins, and yarn. Looking around our modernized “NOC”—that’s short for network operations center—it’s hard to believe we once used those primitive methods to restore power.**

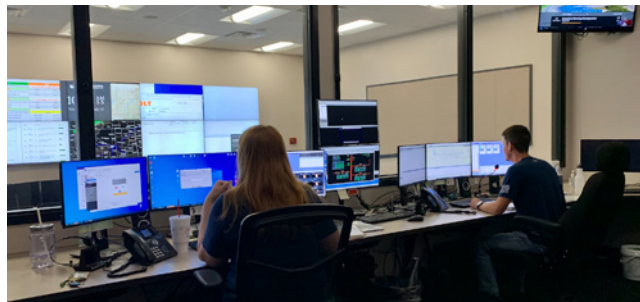
NOEC has advanced its technology tremendously in recent years. We’ve implemented an outage management system that predicts outage size using data relayed from our AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) meters, SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) system, and reports from our membership. Thanks to today’s technology, the cooperative is often aware of an outage before the member even calls. Members also have more flexibility in how they relay outage information to us. They can now report and view active outages using the SmartHub app or web page without the inconvenience of making a phone call.

If making a phone call is your only means to report an outage, our IVR system can use the incoming call to pull up your location. You can then report the outage with a description or by leaving a voicemail to which a dispatcher can respond. Members can also sign up for notifications through SmartHub which will provide notification through text or email when an outage occurs. It will even give you a notification if there is a planned outage in your area. Be sure to update your notification preferences in the SmartHub settings. Before contacting us, we always like to remind members to check the breakers both inside the home and at the meter before reporting an outage.

Also, BOLT Fiber Optics customers are encouraged to reboot the set top box and router before contacting technical support. You might be surprised at how often the simplest solution addresses the problem.

I am privileged to work with great people here at the cooperative and am fortunate to have such a talented team. Each member of the NOEC dispatch department takes their job very seriously. They know what they do is important and they take a great deal of pride in their work and a job well done.

So even though our dispatch center is unrecognizable from 20 years ago, our focus hasn’t changed. I’m proud to say that we’ve assembled a good team and are constantly striving to provide a best-in-class member experience while offering reliable electric and quality fiber services.



*Above: a current look at our dispatch center and (below) a picture of Jack Hale Jr. hard at work from the NOEC photo archive.*



# OPERATION ROUND UP

## SMALL CHANGE THAT CHANGES LIVES

A total of \$24,863.46 in grants were awarded to five different organizations during the March 2021 meeting of the Operation Round-Up Trust Foundation Board of Directors. The largest grant awarded was a check for \$10,000 that the Town of Kansas Police Department used to purchase and install four video systems for its patrol vehicles. Another \$4,659.38 grant went to the Craig County Sheriff's Office for the purchase of two portable Motorola APX radios plus accessories.

Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative adopted Operation Round-Up in 1998. More than 300 electric co-ops across the U.S. now implement the program as a way to positively impact the communities they serve.

"Operation Round-Up has allowed cooperative members to contribute to local fire departments, law enforcement agencies, food banks, and other organizations that often times don't have the funds to provide adequate services," explained Bob Eubanks, who has served as a director on the Operation Round-Up Trust Foundation Board since 2004. Operation Round-Up, he said, "also provides

assistance for individuals with catastrophic needs."

Added Eubanks: "To contribute, all members have to do is allow their monthly electric bill to be rounded up. Giving doesn't get much easier than that."

If you would like to sign up to participate in Operation Round-Up, or if you need additional information, contact a Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative member services representative at 1.800.256.6405.



**Bowlin Springs Fire Department**  
\$1,026.93 | Leaf Blowers



**Kansas Police Department**  
\$10,000 | Video Systems



**Craig County Sheriff's Department**  
\$4,659.38 | Portable Radios



**Langley Police Department**  
\$1,677.15 | Laptop, Stop Sticks, & Flashlights

# TRAINED TO SAVE



Colton Bengé and Patrick Somerville

**It's something everyone needs but no one ever wants to use. It's a little like life insurance. Actually, it's a lot like life insurance.**

CPR training is one very important facet of a comprehensive organizational safety program at Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative. In fact, NOEC requires each of its employees to maintain CPR certification by completing Red Cross first aid training with refresher courses every two years. Two cooperative employees put that training to practical use June 18 when they found themselves in a life-or-death situation.

After putting in a long day of contract work for another utility, right-of-way crewmen Colton Bengé and Patrick Somerville were making preparations to cook dinner at a hotel where they were staying. The two were just about ready to fire up the grill when they heard frantic screams coming from the other side of the hotel. They hurried to the sounds of distress and found a panicked woman trying to assist her unresponsive husband.

**"As we approached, we saw a man lying on the ground," said Bengé. "His face had turned purple. He wasn't breathing and he had no discernible pulse."**

**\*918411\***

Somerville began chest compressions on the gentleman while Bengé ran to the lobby to have someone call for help.

**"By the time I made it back outside, I could tell Patrick was getting tired, so we traded spots and I started doing compressions," said Bengé.**

The two traded off until paramedics arrived. It was later learned that the man's condition stabilized and he recovered fully from the incident.

Rusty Lewis, a right-of-way supervisor, praised Bengé and Somerville for "stepping up" in a tough situation.

**"They really went above and beyond the call of duty," said Lewis. "We're very proud of them."**

Amid the many other responsibilities that come with employment, first aid training can often seem like an unwanted distraction from the actual task at hand. It can be boring and even feel like a giant waste of time. You'll do it because you have to, but you won't be happy about it.

**"I think everyone should take time to become CPR and first aid certified," said Matt Montgomery, NOEC Safety Coordinator. "You never know when these skills will be needed—whether it be a family member, friend, or in this case a complete stranger. Colton and Patrick are both commended for their willingness to step in and utilize their training."**

By his own admission, Bengé says it is easy to disregard training that you never expect to use. If we're being honest, many of us feel the same way.

**“I’ll be the first to admit that I have always thought this training was kind of silly,” he said. “You never think you will have to use it.”**

Benge’s tune changed dramatically after this experience. Suffice to say there are at least two cooperative employees who will never question the importance of safety training.

**“I want to thank the cooperative for helping prepare us for situations like this,” he said. “In this instance it saved a husband and father. Without it, I really would have been standing there and watching helplessly.”**



..... NOEC employees are taught appropriate CPR procedures

# DRIVE-THRU REC DAY

## RETURNING IN 2021

**REC Day is once again coming to a town near you. After last year’s record-setting response to the annual meeting drive-thru format, NOEC members will enjoy the convenience of attending the popular event at a location closer to home in 2021.**

REC Day 2021 is set for Saturday, September 18. Members will be able to register that day from 8 a.m. until noon at one of four locations.

This year’s drive-thru locations include:

- **Craig County Fairgrounds, Vinita**
- **Mayes County Fairgrounds, Pryor**
- **Miami Fairgrounds**
- **Grove Civic Center**

“While we considered last year’s event a remarkable success, a decision was made to select registration sites that afforded greater protection for both members and employees should we encounter inclement weather,” explained NOEC General Manager Daniel Webster.

“REC Day 2021 will be here before we know it and we are looking forward to seeing everyone again at one of our four drive-thru sites,” said Webster.

### PRIZES

- \$20 Electric Credit (first 5,000 registered members)
- (4) \$500 electric credits (must present barcode to be eligible to win)

### GRAND PRIZE

- (4) \$1,000 cash (one per location)



# CO-OP CONNECTIONS

YOUR CONNECTION TO GREAT SAVINGS

Use the Co-op Connections Card you already have, download the smartphone app, or print out your own card at [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop). It's free!

**It's time to rediscover the power of the Co-op Connections Card. As a member of Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, you are eligible for discounts on products and services from participating local and national businesses with the Co-op Connections Card. Best of all, the card is absolutely free for NOEC members.**


The reach of Co-op Connections Card program is broad. Thousands of deals are being offered to cooperative members nationwide. Members can save money on everything from lodging to dining to prescriptions. This is just one more way you benefit from being a cooperative member. Start taking advantage of these benefits today.

The Co-op Connections Card offers cooperative members more than 24,000 local and national deals on products and services. This card helps you save on:

- **Automotive**
- **Clothing & accessories**
- **Dining**
- **Energy efficiency**
- **Healthy Savings benefits like dental and vision**
- **Travel**
- **And so much more**

Co-op Connections® Card

 **NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

 Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives



## Discounts Galore

- Use the card to support businesses in your community.
- Big savings when you shop online.
- Printable coupons for groceries that update daily.
- 10% to 85% discounts on most prescriptions at over 60,000 participating pharmacies.
- 10% to 60% discounts on eyeglasses, contact lenses, eye exams and LASIK.
- 20% to 40% discounts on dental care such as cleanings, x-rays, root canals, crowns and orthodontics.

## Business owners welcome

If you are a business owner and would like to offer a Co-op Connections discount, please email us [publicrelations@noec.coop](mailto:publicrelations@noec.coop) and we will get you signed up.

For a list of great deals visit [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop).



# TRUSTEE NEWS

## NOEC TRUSTEE ACHIEVES CREDENTIALS IN ELECTRIC UTILITY COMPETENCIES

Brian “BK” Kelly, District 3 representative on the Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees, recently earned his Board Leadership Certificate (BLC) from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). This latest achievement for Mr. Kelly came following his completion of the Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) program in 2019.

An ever-changing business environment has imposed new demands on electric cooperative directors, requiring increased knowledge of changes in the electric utility business, new governance skills, and a solid knowledge of the cooperative principles and business model. NOEC has a commitment to work through NRECA to sharpen this body of knowledge for the benefit of its electric cooperative consumer-owners.

**“These certifications demonstrate to our membership and the community at large an ongoing commitment from our trustees to advance their knowledge and perform their fiduciary duty to the best of their abilities,” said NOEC General Manager Daniel Webster.**

The CCD distinction is earned by attending five required courses and successfully completing a learning assessment for each. Mr. Kelly demonstrated an understanding of the competencies contained in following core courses: Director Duties and Liabilities, Understanding the Electric Business, Board Operations and Process, Strategic Planning, and Financial Decision-Making.



*From left: Daniel Webster and Brian “BK” Kelly*

The second part of the director education program, the BLC, recognizes individuals who continue their professional development after becoming CCDs. The BLC program consists of a series of courses focusing in greater depth on specific industry and governance issues. These include issues such as risk management, power supply, parliamentary procedure, technology and policy development.

NRECA’s director certificate programs are specifically designed to help electric cooperative directors, at every stage of their service, understand their roles and responsibilities, stay up-to-date on the key issues and trends in the industry and prepare them to meet the challenges facing electric cooperatives now and in the future. NRECA offers director education courses throughout the year in conjunction with a variety of NRECA educational conferences and events across the country, in partnership with statewide associations and onsite at individual cooperatives.

# SAVE ENERGY

## DURING THE HEAT

### TIPS TO CUT COST: USE YOUR OVEN EFFICIENTLY

#### KNOW WHICH RACK TO USE

Don't be afraid to move the oven racks around, and to arrange your food accordingly.

- **Top Rack:** Watch anything on the top rack, since it is meant for high-temperature and quick cooking.
- **Middle Rack:** Best for moderate temperature cooking.
- **Bottom Rack:** Use this for slow cooking and low temperatures.

#### NO PEEKING

Resist the urge to open the oven door, especially while baking, since you lose a disproportionate amount of heat (approximately 25 degrees) in doing so. Instead, stick to your timer, the oven light, and your nose to see if it's done.

#### USE EFFICIENT BAKING DISHES

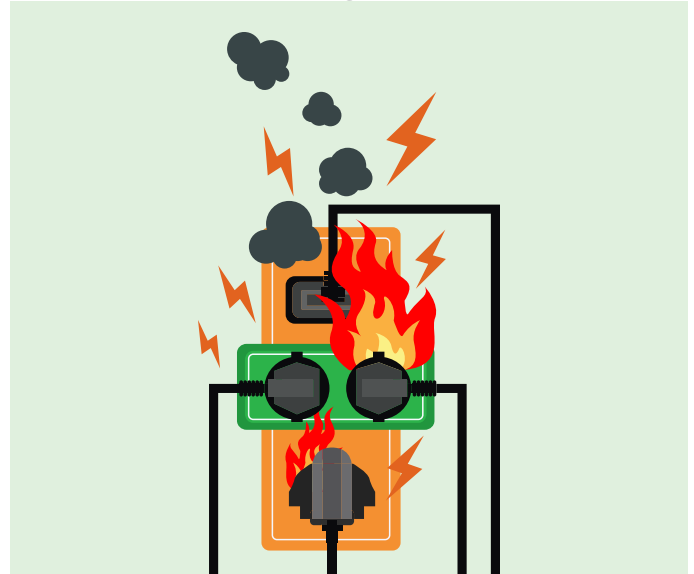
Glass or ceramic baking dishes hold heat much better than their metal counterparts, so you can turn the temperature down as much as 25 degrees and the food will cook just as quickly.

#### NO FOIL

Some people line oven racks with foil to increase cooking efficiency with the aid of reflection. However, the foil stops air from flowing freely in the oven, which actually makes your oven less efficient.

#### COVER IT

Although not everything you cook in the oven can be covered, always use a lid or tin foil when you can.



### BACK TO SCHOOL ELECTRICAL SAFETY

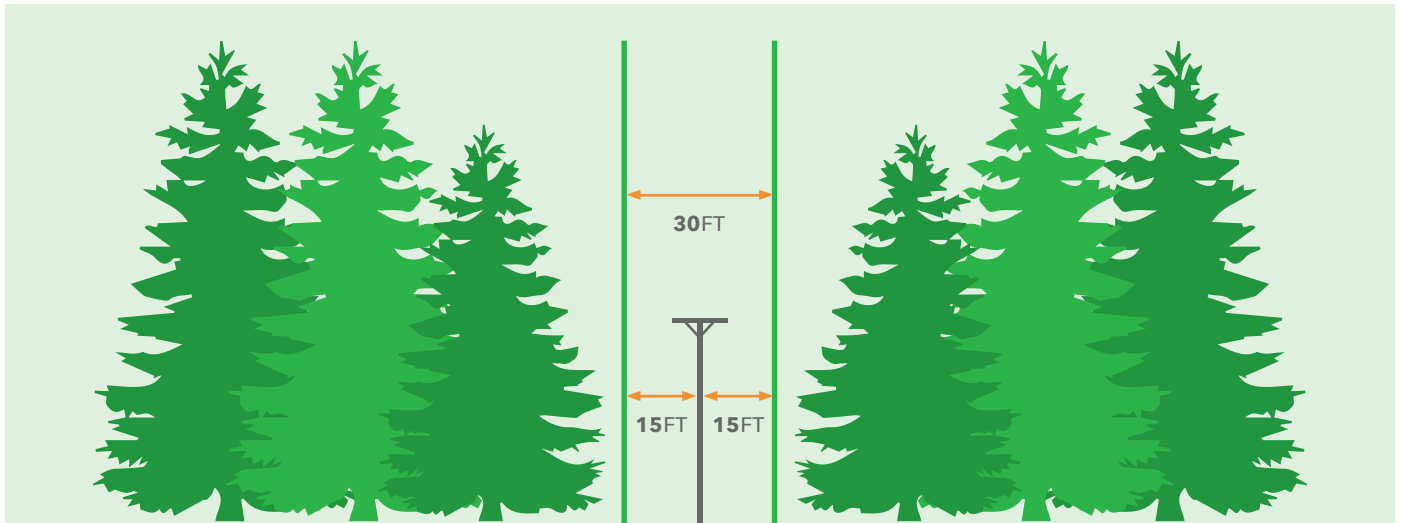
- Never plug too many things into one outlet or extension cord. This could damage the electrical system in a home or even cause a fire.
- Don't use electrical appliances or electronics near water, like in bathrooms or kitchens.
- Look out for power lines before climbing a tree. Wood is a great conductor of electricity, and it can go right through a tree branch and you.
- Put safety caps on all unused electrical outlets. Covering outlets will also help stop cold drafts in the winter.

# DEPENDABLE ELECTRIC SERVICE

## REQUIRES A CLEAR RIGHT-OF-WAY

*Contributed by Ray Davis, Vegetation Management Supervisor*

**As both a member and an employee of Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, I understand the importance of maintaining a clear right-of-way. A clear right-of-way not only allows for reliable, uninterrupted electric service, it also ensures a safer working environment for both property owners and utility employees.**



Encroaching vegetation is a primary cause of blinks and outages on our system. Issues are caused by the overgrowth of trees into power lines and can be compounded by inclement weather such as wind, snow, ice, and flooding. Vegetation growing near power lines hinders the ability of an operations crew to get to damaged lines quickly and that adds to outage time. Keeping power lines clear of trees and brush is essential for safe, reliable electric service. It is also important to note that we are required by several regulatory agencies, including the Oklahoma Corporation Commission and the USDA Rural Utilities Service, to maintain clear rights-of-way.

What defines a clear right-of-way? I've included a diagram (see above) that shows the clearing specifications to which we must adhere. To this end, we enlist a trained staff of full-time employees and contractors who utilize chainsaws, bucket trucks, chippers, and compact track equipment.

In addition to mechanical clearing, an EPA-approved forestry herbicide may be applied seasonally to prevent regrowth once an area has been cleared.

There are situations occasionally where yard trees must be removed to meet clearing specifications. When this occurs, we may offer a complimentary voucher to redeem at a local nursery. This voucher is awarded as part of our Trade-A-Tree program and works like a gift certificate. It allows the recipient to purchase flowers, shrubs, soil, etc. The only stipulation for receiving the voucher is that any new tree(s) or shrub(s) purchased cannot be planted in the cleared right-of-way.

Removing trees near power lines is dangerous. It isn't a job for the property owner. If you are a home and/or property owner and see a tree that is near a power line and needs to be removed, please call us. Also, never let children play in or around trees that are close to any overhead lines.



# FEATURE RECIPES

## BACK TO SCHOOL



**Prep:** 10 minutes

**Makes:** 3 skewers

### LUNCHBOX TURKEY AND HAM SKEWERS

#### LUNCH

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 slice of ham
- 1 slice of turkey breast
- 1/2 cup red grapes
- 1/2 cup green grapes
- 1/2 cup cubed apples
- 2 oz. cubed jack cheese

**Step 1:** Pre-cut wooden grilling skewers to fit into the size of your resealable lunchbox container.

**Step 2:** Cut ham and turkey slices into 1" strips. Fold accordion-style and slide onto the wooden skewers. Alternate with grapes, apples and cheese cubes.

**Step 3:** Keep cold (with a cold pack) in a lunchbox until ready to eat.



**Prep:** 5 minutes

**Makes:** 10 logs

### ANTS ON A LOG

#### LUNCH

#### INGREDIENTS

- 5 stalks celery
- 1/2 cup peanut butter
- 1/4 cup raisins

**Step 1:** Cut the celery stalks in half.

**Step 2:** Spread with peanut butter.

**Step 3:** Sprinkle with raisins.

Have a recipe you'd like to share? Email it to your NOEC Public Relations team at [publicrelations@noec.coop](mailto:publicrelations@noec.coop).