

NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



HAR-BER VILLAGE
EVENT BRINGS SANTA TO GRAND LAKE

DECEMBER 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

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CONVENIENCE & SECURITY IN AN UNSECURE WORLD

Cindy Hefner
Billing Supervisor

Whether your bank changed hands, you fell victim to a scam, lost a debit card, or moved to a new home—you've experienced

something that caused a long list of tasks to be performed. For example, two local banks recently changed ownership. This necessitated the issuance of new routing numbers and debit cards.

Remember that auto pay form you filled out and sent to the cooperative? If your bank was one of those that recently changed hands, we need you to contact us with your new bank or card information. Without this new information, automatic payments from your debit card or electronic withdrawals from your bank account can't be applied to your account. This will result in your bill going unpaid, past due, and subject to disconnect. To continue using the auto pay feature, a new form must be completed. You can find this form on our website at www.noec.coop under member services, form downloads or at one of our office locations.

Speaking of scammers, it seems each passing week brings a new round of fraudulent activity to our service territory. When we hear about these incidents, it is truly upsetting. Our members have been important to us for over 83 years. The last thing we want to hear about is undue financial burden placed on one of our valued members after having fallen prey to a con artist.

It is important to remember that no one from NOEC will ever come to your doorstep to collect if your electric bill is past due. Nor will we ask you to wire money to us or have you make a trip to your nearest dollar store and buy a gift card to send us.

Secure payment for your electric service can always be made through our online app, SmartHub. If you aren't using SmartHub, we highly recommend downloading it today. Here are some other options for you to consider: You can visit either our Vinita or Grove office locations to conduct business in person or you can reach us by phone at 800.256.6405 and use our automated phone system.

Continued on page 2.



A CAUTIONARY TALE



HOLIDAY RECIPES



HAR-BER VILLAGE EVENT

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIPS

1. Eliminate air leaks and drafts
2. Let the sun in during the day
3. Close curtains at night
4. Close unused rooms.
5. Turn the thermostat down when you go to sleep

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 January 3, 2021, to claim a \$100 credit on your electric account.

DECEMBER 2021 EVENTS

Rhema Christmas Lights
All December Long | Tulsa
 Rhema Bible Church

Bluegrass & Acoustic Jam
Mondays in December | Grove
 Episcopal Church

Christmas Parade
Dec 2 | Vinita
 Downtown Vinita

Pryor Christmas Parade of Lights
Dec 2 | Pryor
 Downtown Pryor

Best Christmas Pageant Ever
Dec 2-5 | Miami
 The Coleman Theatre

Home for the Holidays Craft Show
Dec 4 | Salina
 Major County Fairgrounds

Santa's Ozark Mountain Village
Dec 4 & 18 | Grove
 Har-Ber Village

Route 66 Christmas Parade
Dec 4 | Miami
 Main Street

Hometown Christmas
Dec 5 | Inola
 Downtown Inola

Ladies Night Out
Dec 9 | Miami
 Main Street

Jay Christmas Parade
Dec 11 | Jay
 Main Street

Christmas Light Boat Parade
Dec 11 | Grove
 Cherokee Yacht Club

Lights on the Lake Parade
Dec 11 | Grove
 Downtown Business District

It's a Wonderful Life
Dec 12 | Miami
 The Coleman Theatre

SIX Christmas
Dec 18 | Miami
 The Coleman Theatre

December events are subject to date change or cancellation. Please contact the host for most current event information.

CONVENIENCE & SECURITY

CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER

We also have several pre-established payment kiosks located throughout our system for your convenience. Kiosk locations include Harp's grocery stores in Chelsea, Grove, Locust Grove and Salina; Homeland grocery stores in Jay and Pryor; and Reasor's in Langley. MoneyGram may also be used for payments.

If you are ever skeptical about a caller requesting money for your electric service, don't hesitate to call our office and inquire about the validity of the call. Never use the number the caller provides. Give us a call at 800.256.6405 and we will quickly provide you with the status of your account, putting your mind at ease.



UNCLAIMED DOLLARS COULD BE YOURS

Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative members are entitled to a portion of any profit made by the company. As approved by the NOEC board of trustees, refund checks were mailed to members in September 2021. These checks represented the following patronage capital retirement:

- 100% of remaining unretired patronage from 1988 totaling \$412,475
- 50% of 1989 patronage totaling \$310,866
- 9.59% of 2020 patronage totaling \$494,289
- Estate closings totaling \$151,000

Checks totaling \$10 or more were mailed to eligible members. Checks were not mailed to members whose patronage capital accounts totaled less than \$10. These accounts will continue to accumulate funds with each retirement. When an account reaches \$10 or more, a check will be issued following the next retirement. NOEC makes every effort to ensure members receive patronage capital that is rightfully theirs. To accomplish this, it is important for NOEC to have your current mailing address. Checks are often returned marked "undeliverable." Many of these do not have the correct 911 address. A partial listing of unclaimed checks is provided at right. Future issues of Northeast Connection will contain additional listings. If you see your name, claim your check by calling 800.256.6405, extension 9313. A complete list of returned checks is available online at www.noec.coop. Visit the link or scan the QR code at right with your smartphone to access the listing.

- A&D INC - LANGLEY OK
- ABBOTT, CAROLYN Y - GROVE OK
- ABBOTT, JASON E - PRYOR OK
- ABERCROMBIE, FLOYD G - SALINA OK
- ABSHIER, M G - PARSONS KS
- ADAIR, KATHY - CHELSEA OK
- ADAMS, JOE E - OAK CREEK CO
- ADAMS, JOHN C - BARTLESVILLE OK
- ADAMS, R M/MARY - GROVE OK
- ADAMS, RAY - NEOSHO MO
- ADAMS, ROBERT L/RAYMA - PURCELL MO
- ADAMS, SCOTT W - VINITA OK
- ADDINGTON, CHUCK - FAIRLAND OK
- ADDISON CONSTRUCTION CO - JAY OK
- ADDISON, ALAN D - CLAREMORE OK
- ADKINS, DARYLE L - SILOAM SPRINGS AR
- ADKINS, WILLIAM H - SILOAM SPRINGS AR
- ADKINSON, MELISSA - MIAMI OK
- AKIN, ROBERT - PRYOR OK
- ALCORN, BRIAN K/LEILA A - WESTVILLE OK
- ALDERSON, BOBBIE J - ROME NY
- ALEXANDER, GEORGE H - CHELSEA OK
- ALEXANDER, KENNETH B - STILLWATER OK
- ALLEMAN, PAUL R - GOLDSBORO NC
- ALLEN JIM - GROVE OK



SCAN ME!

ALLEN, CHARLES T - TULSA OK
ALLEN, GARY E/SHIRLEY J - PRYOR OK
ALLEN, JAMES - CHOUTEAU OK
ALLEN, JIM - FAYETTEVILLE AR
ALLEN, KATHY E - PRYOR OK
ALLEN, LISA - WYANDOTTE OK
ALLEN, STANLEY/JAN - LOVELAND CO
ALLEN, WALLACE - WELCH OK
ALLISON, DAVID E - ADAIR OK
ALLTEL MOBILE - LITTLE ROCK AR
ALVARADO, FABIOLA - COLCORD OK
ALVIS, DAVID/CLARA - CHELSEA OK
AMES, CHARLEY T - JAY OK
AMOS, RACHEL S - GROVE OK
ANDERSON, DARREN D - FAIRLAND OK
ANDERSON, GERALD L - WHEATLAND WY
ANDERSON, GLEN R/ROSEMARIE - CLAREMORE OK
ANDERSON, HOWARD L - INDEPENDENCE MO
ANDERSON, JANIE L - SOUTH WEST CITY MO
ANDERSON, LESLEY - MAYSVILLE AR
ANDREWS, LENA - JAY OK
ANGELO, ALVIN L - OKC OK
ANGLIN, JAMES C - ROSE OK
ANGLUM, DEAN F/ANDREA L - SALINA OK
ANTAL, STEVE - TINA MO
APGAR, CAROL - VINITA OK
ARMSTRONG, EARL - JAY OK
ARMSTRONG, GOODFELLOW - GROVE OK
ARMSTRONG, LEXIE M CLARK - JAY OK
ARNEECHEER, CLIFFORD L - KANSAS OK
ARNEECHEER, CLIFFORD L - ROSE OK
ARNOLD, DARRELL R - COLCORD OK
ARNOLD, JACK W - KETCHUM OK
ARNOLD, JUDY/JOE - MIAMI OK
ARNOLD, RICHARD L/CAROL S - JAY OK
ARNOLD, THURMAN R - PRYOR OK
ARTHUR, PERRY D - SALINA OK
ASEBEDO, WILLIE M - LOCUST GROVE OK
ASHER, CAROLYN S - ROSE OK
ASHER, MARCKA K - COLCORD OK
ASHTON, JACKIE L - CHELSEA OK
AT&T COMMUNICATIONS - COLUMBUS OH
AT&T WIRELESS, COLUMBUS OH
ATCHISON, JOE - JAY OK
ATCHLEY, BOBBY J - CLAREMORE OK
ATCHLEY, SEAN R - VINITA OK
ATKINSON, JAMES T - ORONGO MO
AUSTIN, W M - TULSA OK
AUSTN, ROBERT E - MIAMI OK
AVERY, DORIS E - LA VETA CO
AYERS, CLARENCE - WANN OK
AYRES, TOM J/ED - TROY MO
BACK, BILL - WYANDOTTE OK
BACON, HERBERT - GROVE OK
BAILEY, JAMES L/BETTY J - TULSA OK
BAILEY, WADE E - KETCHUM OK
BAKER, CHARLES W - JAY OK

BAKER, EMMA J - MUSKOGEE OK
BAKER, EVELYN R - FAIRLAND OK
BAKER, F E/IMOGENE - BROKEN ARROW OK
BAKER, PAUL - AFTON OK
BAKER, ROBERT - AFTON OK
BAKER, ROBERT B/DORINDA - ADAIR OK
BAKER, THURMAN J - LOCUST GROVE OK
BAKER, VIRGIL V - VINITA OK
BALES, JIM R - GROVE OK
BALES, MARTY D - DISNEY OK
BALES, TERRY/PHILLIP - GROVE OK
BALLARD, RAY - COLCORD OK
BALLOU, S ROCKWELL - CLAREMORE OK
BANDY, JERRY - PRYOR OK
BANFIELD, JOHN F - SALINA OK
BANK OF OKLAHOMA - GROVE OK
BANK OF OKLAHOMA - PRYOR OK
BANK OF OKLAHOMA - TULSA OK
BANK OF QUAPAW - QUAPAW OK
BANKS, ANDREA - PRYOR OK
BANNING, BOY R/KATHERINE - AFTON OK
BANNING, VERNITA A - KETCHUM OK
BARB, KATHRYN - VINITA OK
BARBEE, CHRISTINE M - DELAWARE OK
BARBER, CHARLES L III - AFTON OK
BARFIELD, RONALD JR - VINITA OK
BARKER, E S - MARIETTA GA
BARKER, E S - SALINA OK
BARNARD, JOHN T - GROVE OK
BARNES, WILLIAM E - FOYIL OK
BARNETT, AMBER M/ANTHONY L - KANSAS OK
BARNETT, LUTHER R - ROSE OK
BARNETT, MATT P - OVERLAND PARK KS
BARNETT, TAMMIE Y/KENNETH - SALINA OK
BARRETT, ANTHONY K - SALINA OK
BARRETT, DAN P - WYANDOTTE OK
BARROWMAN, NANCY C - EUCHA OK
BARROWS, CHARLES - JAY OK
BARTHOLOMEW, KAREN A - PRYOR OK
BARTLEY, CHARLIE - COLCORD OK
BASS, HASKELL H JR - TULSA OK
BASS, TOMI - FAIRLAND OK
BASSETT, RICHARD A - AFTON OK
BASTIAN, DAVID M - BARTLESVILLE OK
BATES, ARTHUR H - LOCUST GROVE OK
BATES, DARRIN E - CHELSEA OK
BATES, GARRY L - GROVE OK
BATES, MARK R - CHOUTEAU OK
BAUCOM, DEBRA K - PRYOR OK
BAUGHMAN, LAVERN - GENTRY AR
BAUMERT, JAMES L - LOCUST GROVE OK
BAUSER, SHERRY M - SILOAM SPRINGS AR
BAXTER, DOROTHY D - GROVE OK
BAYS, CURTIS R - CHELSEA OK
BEAL, RODNEY C - JAY OK
BEALL, JENETTA - PRYOR OK
BEAN, RICHARD/LINDA - GROVE OK

BEAR, JOHN L - AFTON OK
BEAR, JOHN L - FORT SMITH AR
BEARD, SCOTT - FAYETTEVILLE AR
BEATTY, A L - KERRVILLE TX
BEAVER, DERRILL B - TULSA OK
BEETCH, ARMOND L - QUAPAW OK
BELL, JOHN - GROVE OK
BELL, ROBERT D - TULSA OK
BELL, ROGER L - COLCORD OK
BELVEAL, MARVIN - COLCORD OK
BENGSTON, WILL M/WILLIAM L - AFTON OK
BENHAM, HERALD - SALINA OK
BENNETT, DON - EUCHA OK
BENNETT, ERNEST R - COLCORD OK
BENNETT, ERNEST W - BRAZORIA TX
BERGMAN, HENRY/BETTY - PRYOR OK
BERNDT, SANDRA L - AFTON OK
BERRY, JAY - KEOTA OK
BERRY, JEFF - DISNEY OK
BERRYHILL, BOB/JANE - TULSA OK
BERRYMAN, JAMES - VINITA OK
BERTRAM, GAGE R/BEN - BIG CABIN OK
BESEAU, JAMES W/JANET J - GROVE OK
BESORE, KARINA - NORMAN OK
BIAS, DUANE - SALINA OK
BIAS, MATTHEW W - CHOUTEAU OK
BIBB, KEN-JOHN W - BROKEN ARROW OK
BIBLE, RICK N - VINITA OK
BILKE, RALPH E - QUAPAW OK
BILKE, VERL C - ATOKA OK
BILLINGSLEY, RAYMOND J - MOUND VALLEY KS
BIRKENKAMP, JANETH - CARL JUNCTION MO
BISHOP, CHRISTINE - MIAMI OK
BISHOP, CLARENCE - GLENROCK WY
BISHOP, JOYCE - JAY OK
BISHOP, TOMMIE L/PETER B - EUCHA OK
BIVENS, MARLIN L - PRYOR OK
BLACK, ADRAIN - ROSE OK
BLACK, JAMES K/MYRA - TEXARKANA TX
BLACK, LEE H - VINITA OK
BLACK, PETE - LANGLEY OK
BLACKBEAR, JIMMY JR - JAY OK
BLACKFOX, ALENE - TAHLEQUAH OK
BLALACK, KENNETH L - MIAMI OK
BLANKET, PETE - SALINA OK
BLAYLOCK, BILLY J/MARY H - FAIRLAND OK
BLAYLOCK, JAMES E - FAIRLAND OK
BLEVINS, JOANN - JAY OK
BLEVINS, JUNE E - JAY OK
BLEVINS, TIMOTHY - AFTON OK
BLEVINS, TRACY L BOWZER - GROVE OK
BLEVINS, WADE - JAY OK
BLUEJACKET, WALTER L - MIAMI OK
BOGER, STEVE D - KANSAS OK
BOHANNON, DICK - VINITA OK
BOLANDER, JOHN J - FAIRLAND OK
BOLIN, JIM - TWIN OAKS OK

HAR-BER VILLAGE EVENT BRINGS SANTA TO GRAND LAKE

Imagine, if you will, Santa Claus relocating his entire North Pole operation to Grand Lake for one very special Christmas season. Word has apparently spread to Claus about the amazing hospitality that can be found in the Ozark foothills of northeast Oklahoma. Of course, an excited Jolly St. Nick packs up his holiday workshop and hits the road. When he and his elves arrive, they get right to work, churning out Christmas magic for the world to enjoy.

That's the premise behind Santa's Ozark Mountain Village, a clever concept that originated in the creative mind of Josh Goff, Special Events Coordinator for the Grove Area Chamber of Commerce. As Founder of Santa's Ozark Mountain Village, Goff is excited to roll out the event for a second season.

"Santa's Ozark Mountain Village is a celebration of the unique heritage of the Ozark hills and the stories and traditions that bind us all," Goff explained, adding: "Har-Ber Village is a hidden gem that lends itself to the picturesque postcard-like setting. We feel like it's a perfect marriage." said Goff.

Goff's idea takes advantage of the one-of-a-kind feel already captured by the quaint venue's mid-19th century setting by lighting and decorating more than two dozen buildings from the park's main street and beyond.

Last season, visitors thoroughly enjoyed the themed Christmas light display and walk-through experience sponsored by the Grove Area Chamber of Commerce in partnership with Har-Ber Village Museum. This year promises to be even better with the addition of a mercantile and saloon.

An enjoyable experience awaits your entire family at Santa's Ozark Mountain Village. Plan your visit for one of the following dates: December 4 and 18. Hours of operation are 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Har-Ber Village is located at 4404 West 20th Street in Grove.

Ticket prices are \$12 for adults ages 17 and over, \$9.50 for senior adults ages 63 and up, \$7 for children ages 4-16, and \$9.50 for Har-Ber Village members. Season passes can be purchased at a cost of \$24 for adults and \$14 for children. Kids ages 3 and under will be admitted at no charge.

SANTA'S OZARK MOUNTAIN VILLAGE

Our story begins in 1864, when America needed Christmas more than ever before.

Overwhelmed and overworked with no time to play, Santa and his elves worked night and day.

His solution came by word of mouth, Santa heard about the Ozarks way down to the South.

Their skill and craftsmanship couldn't be beat, but could Santa's elves handle the heat?

With a touch of his nose and some magical power, it would snow on the foothills upon every hour.

Santa loaded up his sleigh and went on his way, for he knew what to do save Christmas Day!

The sweet smell of dogwood, such a pleasant aroma, welcomed Mr. Claus to Oklahoma.

The holiday season was beginning to lurk, so Santa pushed up his sleeves and went straight to work.

With grit, determination, and a pinch of hospitality, his dream of a second workshop became a reality.

Here's your invitation into the past, 156 years of making memories that last!

"Pictures with Santa will be included in the price of admission," Goff said. "Guests will encounter characters from the past, including southern belles and southern gentlemen. We will also have vendors, craft classes, and many other interactive experiences."



Nicole Reynolds, Har-Ber Village Museum Manager of Programs, Events, & Marketing, said she and Director Linda Harris are excited to punctuate the 2021 season with such a delightful event.

"Upon joining the Har-Ber Village team in 2019, I saw the potential for a one-of-a-kind Christmas experience, and working with Josh and his vision we were able to accomplish just that," said Reynolds. "Linda and I always look forward to showing visitors and locals alike everything the Har-Ber Village has to offer, not only during the holidays, but during every season on the shores of Grand Lake."

ANTIQUITIES FROZEN IN TIME

Har-Ber Village is situated on 50 tranquil acres along the eastern shores of Grand Lake. The complex is home to one of the largest and most unique collections of vintage items anywhere.

Built as a gift to the community by namesakes Harvey and Bernice Jones, the park is a reconstructed turn-of-the-century village with more than one hundred buildings and exhibits. Har-Ber Village celebrated its 50th year in 2018.

There is much to see, so take your time and enjoy the Village at your own pace. For some, a stroll through the park will bring memories flooding back as they rediscover items from their childhood.

Har-Ber Village is both educational and entertaining, creating the perfect environment for grandparents to interact with grandchildren and explain how and why many of the fixtures of yesteryear were used.

During self-guided tours, visitors can experience the area's rich history and ecology while viewing collections of antiques and memorabilia.

The Village has several historic buildings that have been relocated to the grounds, including a schoolhouse, jail and more than twenty log cabins. Other structures were built to house collections and are typical of the period—a courthouse, bank, Stagecoach Inn, and church built with brick hand-made before the Civil War. Other replicated buildings include a mercantile, hanging gallows, doctor and dentist offices, print shop, post office, drug store and more.

Exhibits at Har-Ber Village feature a mix of authentic antiques, collectibles and reproductions to provide visitors with a sense of the times for our region, ranging from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s. Hands-on exhibits, frequent craft demonstrations and monthly programs and events are featured, as well as an ecology center and scenic nature trail.

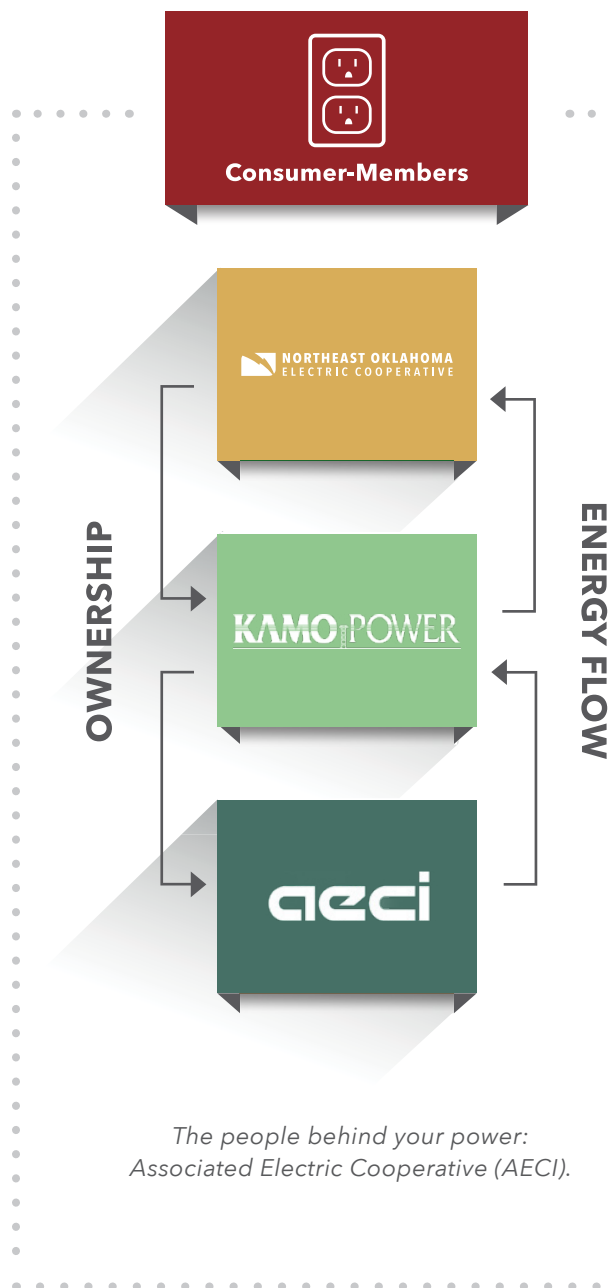
Except for special events such as Santa's Ozark Mountain Village, Har-Ber Village closes for the season from November 7 until the second Saturday in March. During the remainder of the year, the park operates Thursday through Monday from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The facility is handicap accessible and features The Country Store gift shop as well as a visitor center. The Har-Ber Village Visitor Center and Gallery opened its doors in 2008 to traveling exhibits and programs as well as arts and humanities projects.

You can visit online at www.har-bervillage.com, call 918.786.6446, or search for Har-ber Village on Facebook for more information or to schedule a group tour. The park is pet friendly and permits leashed dogs to tour with its guests.

902958

EPIC FAILURE

TEXAS BLACKOUTS A CAUTIONARY TALE



This past February, residents of Texas suffered through rolling blackouts during a period of unprecedented extreme cold. While power went out there and elsewhere across the Midwest, it continued flowing for members of electric co-ops served by power suppliers Associated Electric Cooperative and Wabash Valley Power Alliance. This article from energy expert Robert Bryce serves as a cautionary tale we would ignore at our peril. For this reason we are reprinting it this month with his permission.

by Robert Bryce | info@ruralmissouri.coop

As the postmortem of the blackouts that slammed the state back in February continues, it's apparent that Texans narrowly averted a catastrophe that could have resulted in what biologists call a mass mortality event.

At about 2 a.m. on Feb. 15, the Texas grid came within four or five minutes of a systemwide failure that could have plunged nearly the entire state into a blackout at a time when temperatures were plunging, it was snowing sideways and the roads were impassable. Recovering from such a failure and executing what's known as a "black start" could have taken the Electric Reliability Council of Texas days or even weeks. Had that occurred, Winter Storm Uri would have killed thousands, even tens of thousands, of people.

As it was, the February snowpocalypse likely cost the state some \$200 billion, according to estimates by economist Ray Perryman, and the final death toll, according to an analysis by BuzzFeed News, could be as high as 700.

The February blackouts should have been a neon-bright wake-up sign for the state's politicians and regulators that the structure of the Texas energy grid is deeply flawed and that fundamental changes are needed. Alas, the Legislature and Gov. Greg Abbott have largely kicked the electric can down the road. That's a mistake.

The electric grid is the Mother Network. Our most important networks, including food delivery and storage, communications and GPS, depend on the electric grid to deliver cheap, abundant and reliable flows of energy 24/7/365. A prolonged electricity outage due to extreme weather, or malicious actors, would have dire effects on Texas, and because the state provides much of the country's food and fuel, it would also short-circuit much of the American economy.

I've been obsessing about ERCOT and the causes of the blackouts since February when my wife, Lorin, and I, who live in central Austin, were blacked out for about 45 hours. The government failed us, and there are three things government needs to do to assure that the state has reliable and affordable electricity.

Before going further, a caveat: The blackouts were the result of several interconnected factors and failures. Thus, there are no simple or quick solutions, particularly when it comes to a system as complex as the electric grid. That said, the blackouts were caused by flaws in the way the state's electricity market was designed and how it has evolved since it was deregulated two decades ago. And that leads to my first point.

The blackouts were due to government failure of epic proportions. The most obvious example of government failure was the decision by the Public Utility Commission to set the clearing price of electricity in ERCOT at \$9,000 per megawatt-hour – and to leave it at that extremely high level for several days despite the fact that it did not bring more generation into the market.

The result of that blunder: Texas electricity consumers were overcharged by roughly \$26.3 billion. The burden of paying for those costs will fall most heavily on regular Texans, who will see surcharges on their utility bills for years to come to pay down the bonds the state is issuing to spread out the cost of those overcharges.

Second, deregulation wasn't a boon for consumers. That conclusion is controversial, but studies have shown that Texans paid more for the electricity they used than they would have in a regulated market. A recent Wall Street Journal analysis estimates that Texans paid \$28 billion more for home electricity in the 20 years of deregulation than they would have, if they had only been charged the average regulated rate for the rest of the country.

The deregulation of the Texas electricity sector opened up the utility sector – an industry that is at root, a power-plant-poles-and-wires business – to "retail electric providers."

In a flash, entrepreneurs could get into the electricity game, with no hard assets or knowledge of how the electric grid works required.

One hundred and forty years ago we had Thomas Edison. Deregulation gave us Griddy.

The deregulation of the electricity sector resulted in a market in which the buck doesn't stop anywhere. Under the old regulated utility model, when big companies owned all of the components of the grid, there was accountability. After the blackouts, all we've seen is finger-pointing. That's not a bug; it's a feature of a market that's so complex that no one understands how it really works. As Ed Hirs of the University of Houston has noted, "The 1,876 pages of regulations and rules contained in the ERCOT Nodal Protocols apparently mean nothing."

Deregulation distorted the type of generation that was added to the ERCOT grid. Over the past two decades, the generation capacity added to the grid wasn't built for reliability or resilience, it was built to collect subsidies.

Since 2006, about \$66 billion was spent building wind and solar capacity in Texas. Over that same time period, according to a recent report by Bill Peacock of The Energy Alliance, Big Wind and Big Solar collected roughly \$22 billion in subsidies of one kind or another, including state tax breaks and federal tax credits. But when the ERCOT grid was on the brink of collapse on Feb. 15, that \$66 billion was worth next to nothing. There was no solar production, and of the 31,000 megawatts of wind capacity installed in ERCOT, only about 5,400 megawatts, or roughly 17% of that capacity, was available when the grid operator was shedding load to prevent the state's grid from going dark.

The \$66 billion spent on wind and solar resulted in big changes in the state's generation capacity. Between 2006 and 2020, the amount of electricity generated with wind went up by about 20% and coal-fired generation fell by about the same amount. Meanwhile, thanks to booming population growth and increased electricity demand in the Permian Basin, electricity use was soaring.

Continued on page 8.



Over that same time, according to the Energy Information Administration, electricity use in Texas jumped by about 67 terawatt-hours per year, far more than any other state in the country. (For comparison, North Dakota, which had the second-largest demand growth over that time frame, saw electricity use rise by about 10 terawatt-hours per year.)

The surge in electricity demand put more strain on the ERCOT grid, which was not maintaining enough reserve generation capacity, that is, standby generation that can be utilized during peak times. Making matters worse, no new dispatchable capacity is being built. Instead, ERCOT is adding more weather-dependent generation. About 24,000 megawatts of solar and 11,000 megawatts of wind capacity are slated to be added to the ERCOT grid between now and 2023. Thus, over the next two years, the amount of renewable capacity in Texas will nearly double.

So what must happen to assure reliability and resilience?

First and foremost, the state must step up its oversight and regulation of the energy sector. The electric grid and natural gas grids have merged. The February blackouts proved, again, that the electric and gas grids are deeply intertwined and interdependent.

Since 2001, when Enron went bankrupt, the amount of natural gas consumed by the U.S. electric sector has more than doubled. Despite that fact, the two grids are not being regulated to assure that they are singing from the same hymnal. During the February blackouts, some gas infrastructure froze. Some gas processing plants and pipelines had their electricity cut off. That, in turn, reduced the amount of fuel available to produce power when electricity was needed the most.

In the wake of the 2011 winter storm, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the North American Electric Reliability Corporation issued a report that warned about the “interdependency of the electric and natural gas industries” and urged “regulatory and industry bodies to explore solutions to the many interdependency problems which are likely to remain of concern in the future.” It’s well past time for state regulators to heed that warning.

Second, the lavish federal tax incentives for wind and solar energy production – the production tax credit and the investment tax credit – should be eliminated immediately. Between 2010 and 2029, those tax credits will cost the federal treasury about \$140 billion.

Designed to stimulate nascent industries, the production tax credits and income tax credits have become blatant examples of the crony corporatism that is undermining the integrity of the electric grid. The subsidies reward weather-dependent generation at the cost of dispatchable generation. In 2015, Congress agreed on a five-year phaseout of the PTC. After that deal was struck, Sen. Charles Grassley, an Iowa Republican and alleged deficit hawk, said, “As the father of the first wind-energy tax credit in 1992, I can say that the tax credit was never meant to be permanent.”

But the PTC keeps getting extended, including yet another extension granted recently by the Internal Revenue Service. For years, Big Wind and Big Solar have claimed that they can produce the cheapest electricity. It’s time for them to prove it.

Third, the Texas Legislature will have to pass measures that incentivize companies to build and maintain plants that can be dispatched during times of peak demand. Those incentives should include provisions for on-site fuel storage at power plants. This was one of the recommendations put forward by ERCOT in its 60-item “Roadmap to Improving Grid Reliability” report that was released on July 13.

During the February disaster, the most reliable power plants were the ones that had on-site fuel: the coal and nuclear plants. Thus, the state should give incentives for fuel storage near power plants. For instance, diesel fuel can be stored easily and relatively cheaply. That fuel could be used in turbines or quick-start reciprocating engines like the ones made by outfits like Caterpillar, Cummins and Wärtsilä.

In summary, the mistake made by Texas regulators was to treat electricity as a commodity. That’s wrong. Electricity isn’t like sneakers or hot dogs. Electricity is a critical service. The grid is the backbone of modern society, a complex and delicate machine that connects all of our homes and businesses to each other. Without reliable power, modern society falls apart.

The February blackouts were the result of a government failure to properly manage our most important network. If Texas’ elected officials don’t fix the problems in ERCOT, more blackouts, and even cost burdens for low- and middle-income Texans, are certain.



FEATURE RECIPES

HOLIDAY PARTY FAVORITES



Cook Time: 3-4 hours

Serves: 8 servings

SLOW-COOKER GRAPE JELLY MEATBALLS

PARTY DISH

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lb. frozen meatballs
- 2 cups BBQ sauce
- 1 (12-oz.) jar grape jelly
- 1/4 cup sriracha

Step 1: Place meatballs in bowl of a slow cooker and pour BBQ sauce, grape jelly, and sriracha over. Stir to coat meatballs.

Step 2: Cook on low for 3 to 4 hours. Stir meatballs before serving.



Cook Time: 1 hour

Serves: 24 servings

CRANBERRY AND FETA PINWHEELS

PARTY DISH

INGREDIENTS

- 3/4 cup dried sweetened cranberries
- 1 (8 oz) package cream cheese, room temperature
- 3/4 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1/4 cup chopped green onion
- 2 large flour tortillas, wheat or spinach for pretty color

Step 1: Combine all ingredients except tortillas, mix well.

Step 2: Combine all ingredients except tortillas, mix well.

Step 3: Roll up tightly, wrap in plastic and refrigerate at least one hour.

Step 4: To serve cut each roll into 12 slices.

YOUTH TOUR

Instead of a written essay, completing a 6-8 hour community service project between November 1, 2021, and March 12, 2022, will qualify four area high school juniors to win an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., as part of the 2022 Youth Tour contest. In addition to the D.C. trip, the four students selected will receive \$500 in spending cash. Should COVID-19 prevent the in-person trip on June 17-23, 2022, contest winners will instead each receive a \$1,000 scholarship to a college, university, or trade school of their choice; a 64gb iPad mini w/pencil; and the ability to participate in a virtual Youth Tour experience. Students who are in the eleventh grade and attend school within the NOEC service area of Mayes, Delaware, Craig and Ottawa Counties (or Chelsea High School in Rogers County) are eligible to participate in this contest. NOEC membership is not required.

ENERGY CAMP

Meanwhile, area eighth graders will have an opportunity to create a 1-3 minute TikTok that encourages electrical safety as part of the Energy Camp contest. Four winners will be selected to attend Energy Camp May 31-June 3, 2022, and will also each receive a smart tablet computer. Should COVID-19 prevent the in-person camp, winners will still receive a smart tablet computer and the ability to participate in a virtual Energy Camp experience. Students who are in the eighth grade and attend school within the NOEC service area of Mayes, Delaware, Craig and Ottawa Counties (or Chelsea High School in Rogers County) are eligible to participate in this contest. NOEC membership is not required.

COLLEGE/TRADE SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP

The NOEC college scholarship program will remain unchanged for 2022. Four area high school seniors whose parents or guardians are NOEC members and who live in a household served by NOEC electric are encouraged to apply for a \$1,000 scholarship to a college, university, or trade school of their choice. Applications must be received by March 20, 2020. Four winners will be selected.

YOUTH PROGRAMS GET A NEW LOOK

The Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative Public Relations team is announcing some big changes to its youth programs. Youth programs coordinator Clint Branham said the cooperative is excited about the new offerings and is sure area youth will feel the same.

"Our youth programs will take on a fresh look for 2022," Branham said. "We hope these changes breathe some new life into our longstanding essay contests and encourage participation."

CLASSROOM INCENTIVE

NOEC is encouraging area teachers to get involved. If an instructor administers either Youth Tour or Energy Camp as part of classroom assignment and produces a contest finalist, he or she could be rewarded with \$100 toward the purchase of classroom materials or equipment.

For applications, deadlines, and additional information, visit www.noec.coop and click on Youth Programs under the Community Services tab.

