



MESSAGE FROM  
GENERAL MANAGER  
KERRY KELTON

# Weathering the Storm

*Natural disasters leave safety issues in their wake*

**FLOODS. WIND. RAIN. WHEN MOTHER NATURE WREAKS HAVOC** on the power grid, a host of hazards often follows. That makes safety—always a top priority for Mid-South Synergy—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 types of weather problems. Here's a look at the most common storm situations that create safety issues for your cooperative and its 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.

Last year, when floods ravaged South Texas, electric co-ops lost precious infrastructure. Lineworkers had to improvise creative solutions to restore power needed by homeowners and businesses to pump out water and make repairs. Because of the dangers, co-ops urged 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 dealer.

When high winds accompany rains that produce flooding, downed power lines are a real 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 utility poles like twigs and reducing transmission towers to heaps of twisted metal. Power outages can result.

Downed power lines pose the greatest electrical risk after a tornado or bout with high winds because you can't tell whether they still are energized. Always assume downed power lines are live. Keep at least 35 feet 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 increased use of portable generators, which can be deadly if misused. Most people get hurt by generators when they operate the machines too close to or even inside their homes, which allows carbon monoxide to filter throughout living areas. Most generators emit deadly levels of the gas within minutes.

In addition, if you plug your portable generator into a wall socket, it can threaten co-op lineworkers by producing back-feed that unexpectedly re-energizes power lines.

Backfeeding is a deadly serious issue for electric co-op lineworkers. Portable generators should never be plugged into a home's wall outlet, and permanent generators must have a transfer switch installed. Call Mid-South Synergy if you plan to install an emergency generator.

# Plant for Beauty and Energy Efficiency

**YOU MAY PLANT SHRUBS AND BUSHES TO MAKE YOUR YARD LOOK NICER. THEY ALSO** can lower your energy bill. Careful landscape planning can help protect your house from summer's hot sun and winter's cold winds.

**Here's a quick guide to saving energy through smart planting:**

- ▶ Determine the climate in your area and even in your yard. Does your house sit on a sunny hill? Does it get more wind than most?
- ▶ The best landscaping combines trees for shading in the summer and those that serve as windbreaks in the winter.
- ▶ Trees can reduce air temperature nearby by up to 9 degrees, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Air underneath trees can be 25 degrees cooler than the area above unshaded blacktop.
- ▶ Plant deciduous trees—the kind that shed their leaves in the fall—with high, spreading branches to the south of your home. This allows for ultimate shading in the summer, while still letting winter solar heat filter in. To the west, plant trees with lower crowns to block afternoon sun.
- ▶ Deciduous trees of 6–8 feet can begin to shade your home the first year, although 5–10 years will pass before they're tall enough to shade the roof. Use shrubs, vines and groundcover to line walkways and windows for additional cooling.
- ▶ If winter wind is a concern, design windbreaks to reduce wind chill. Plant a combination of trees, shrubs and bushes with low crowns to the north and north-west of your home. Dense evergreen trees protect best, but plant them at a distance of two to five times their maximum height. As a backup, plant bushes and vines about a foot from the house to create insulating air space.

Remember to stay well clear of power lines when planting trees. The goal is for a tree to grow, so make sure you'll have plenty of clearance even when it reaches maturity.

By incorporating energy-saving ideas into your landscape plans, you can have a beautiful yard and a lower energy bill year-round.



## Co-op Linemen See Students From a Different Perspective

When co-op linemen are high atop utility poles, they can see a lot. And this time of year, they're on special alert for students who may have a problem, like a stalled school bus or other conditions that may be unsafe for school kids.

Sure, our primary mission is to provide first-rate electric service. But if we can do other things to serve the community, you'll have even more reasons to be thankful for Mid-South Synergy.





# Understanding How Your Appliances Use Energy



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**IF SOME OF YOUR APPLIANCES ARE GETTING OLD AND WILL NEED** to be replaced soon, it's time to do some homework. Your appliance choices can have a significant impact on your electric bill.

Your energy use varies month to month, so it can be difficult to see the difference any one appliance makes. Instead, it's best to think about how an appliance uses energy over its lifetime. Think about upfront and lifetime energy costs.

In a *Consumer Reports* test, the most efficient refrigerator used \$68 less in electricity per year than the least efficient model. Compound that difference over a decade or two, and the lifetime energy savings could be greater than the upfront cost. All it takes to get the best appliance for your needs is some research.

Appliances use less energy, on average, than home heating and cooling equipment but still can use several hundred dollars' worth each year. That dollar amount depends on factors like the model, how often it's used, the settings you use and even the time of day it's most used.

Over the past few decades, new appliances have become more energy efficient, driven partly by government standards. These requirements, created by the U.S. Department of Energy, save consumers more than \$60 billion each year by requiring appliances to include an EnergyGuide label that shows estimated energy use and operating costs per year. These estimates help you compare models and calculate initial costs against long-term savings.

Some appliances also will have an Energy Star label. This sticker indicates an appliance is substantially more efficient than the minimum standard. Your greatest energy savings opportunities can come from replacing an old appliance with an Energy Star-rated appliance. Removing a refrigerator that's 20 years old and replacing it with a new Energy Star model can lower its electricity costs by 75 percent.

In some cases, the way an appliance is configured also can make a significant difference. For example, the most efficient refrigerator models have the fridge compartment stacked on top of the freezer. All 36 of the most efficient clothes washers of 2018 were front-load models.

Consider how much you use the appliance, too. The more you use the appliance, the greater your savings from choosing a more efficient model. If you use the appliance less or have a small household, you may get by with a smaller refrigerator or freezer, which will save money.

How you operate appliances also can make a difference. Here are some easy ways to save:

## Refrigerator/Freezer

- ▶ Set your refrigerator at 35–38 degrees and your freezer at zero.
- ▶ Make sure there is adequate airflow between your home's wall and the back of the unit.
- ▶ Keep the refrigerator relatively full when possible.
- ▶ Replace the seals around the doors if they appear to be leaking air.

## Stove/Oven

- ▶ Use the burner size that best matches the pan.
- ▶ Use smaller appliances like a microwave or slow cooker instead of the oven when possible.

## Dishwasher

- ▶ Use the most energy-efficient and shortest setting that gets your dishes clean.
- ▶ Air dry rather than using the heated dry function.
- ▶ Wait until the dishwasher is full before running it.

Make the most out of your appliance energy use with a little research before buying a new model and a few easy adjustments to the way you use them.

# Mid-South Synergy Partners With Nest To Help Members Conserve Electricity



Are you a Mid-South Synergy member looking to cut energy costs this summer? If yes, then this offer is for you.

Mid-South Synergy is partnering with Nest thermostats to conserve energy—and save you money. With these special thermostats, Mid-South Synergy will be able to adjust your thermostat during peak hours of energy usage. This conservation mitigates a vast amount of power usage throughout the summer months, making electricity bills lower.

But don't worry: If you get too hot, these beautifully engineered Nest thermostats still allow you to be in control. You can always turn your thermostat back to your desired temperature to stay comfortable.

This energy-saving practice will only be in effect

between the hours of noon and 9 p.m., over a maximum of four hours at a time. Moreover, this practice will be used no more than 25 times throughout the summer.

When you take advantage of implementing this state-of-the-art thermostat through Mid-South Synergy, you will immediately receive a \$100 enrollment incentive toward your bill. On top of that, Mid-South Synergy is offering \$40 more in bill credits between the months of June and September and a \$25 check as a home improvement rebate.

To take advantage of this offer, call (936) 825-5100 or visit [nest.com/midsouth](http://nest.com/midsouth).



# Outdoor Electrical Safety

Lighting that improves the look and safety of our homes, electric tools that make outdoor work easier and power lines to our homes all need to be handled with care. Get a handle on outdoor safety with these tips:

## Outside Electrical Work

- Have a qualified electrician do all electrical work.
- To prevent an electrical shock, make sure all outdoor electrical receptacles are protected with a ground-fault circuit interrupter, or GFCI.

## Equipment Safety

- Use lighting and power tools that have been tested by a qualified test laboratory, and make sure they are made for outdoor use.
- Store power tools indoors.
- Keep electric tools away from children.
- Keep the area around your electric meter and other electrical equipment clear.
- Check lighting and extension cords for damage before use. Replace any damaged cords right away.
- Use only extension cords that are listed by a qualified test laboratory and rated for outdoor use.
- Extension cords are not meant for long-term use.

## Power Lines

- Alert your electric cooperative to branches that look like they may fall on electric wiring.
- Use only wooden or fiberglass ladders outdoors. Keep ladders at least 10 feet away from power lines.
- Never touch anyone or anything in contact with a downed wire because it still may be live. Stay at least 35 feet away. Report downed wires to authorities right away.

## Call Before You Dig

Call 811 before doing any digging on your property. Professionals will mark where your underground utilities are located—at no charge to you.



# STRAIGHT SHOOTING ON Safety

Texans love to hunt. It brings suspense, excitement and escape from the daily routine. Here are the 10 commandments of shooting safety:

**Always point** the muzzle of your gun in a safe direction.

**Treat every firearm** or bow with the same respect you would show a loaded gun or nocked arrow.

**Be sure** of your target.

**Unload firearms** and unstring conventional bows when not in use.

**Know** your safe zone-of-fire and stick to it.

**Handle firearms**, arrows and ammunition with care.

**Control** your emotions when using weapons.

**Wear** hearing and eye protection.

**Don't consume** alcohol or drugs before or while handling firearms or bows.

**Never use** electrical insulators and transformers as targets.

**Mid-South Synergy encourages you to always practice safety.**



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## Happy Labor Day!

We will be closed Monday, September 3, for the holiday. As always, crews will be on standby in the event of an emergency.



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## Power Tip

Look for LED products and fixtures for outdoor use, such as on pathways, steps and porches. Many include features like automatic daylight shut-off and motion sensors.



## ***CAJUN PINWHEELS***

1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened  
Dash salt and pepper  
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper  
¼ cup black olives  
¼ cup green olives  
2 tablespoons finely chopped onion  
1 cup Monterey Jack cheese, shredded  
1 pound cooked salad shrimp, deveined and chopped  
7 flour tortillas, room temperature

1. Combine cream cheese, spices, olives, onion, cheese and shrimp in a small bowl. Stir well.
2. Spread mixture over each tortilla, then roll tightly.
3. Cover with plastic wrap and chill in refrigerator at least 2 hours.
4. Slice rolls ½ inch thick and layer on platter.





## Want Solar Power?



Synergy Solar offers members a rate of 11.5 cents per kilowatt-hour/month, or \$11.50 per block/month, guaranteed for five years. Our members can rest easy knowing that their rate is secured for the future.

For our residential members who participate, Synergy Solar proves to be accessible, affordable and renewable by offering a maintenance-free program. To find out more, please call us at (936) 825-5100 or email [synergyspot@mid-southsynergy.com](mailto:synergyspot@mid-southsynergy.com).

## TEXAS CO-OP POWER MID-SOUTH SYNERGY EDITION SEPTEMBER 2018



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## We'd love to hear from you!

Have an interesting story or local community event?  
Or simply tell us how we're doing!

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