

Rigors and Rewards



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER/CEO STEVE YOUNG

IF YOU WERE TO POLL A RANDOM SAMPLE OF LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL or college students about their career aspirations, not many would have electrical line work at the top of their lists. And truthfully, anyone considering a career in the utility industry would be wise to carefully consider this specific role.

Line work is no picnic. Lineworkers often must battle the elements and work long, irregular hours to restore outages as quickly as possible. They take on many of the challenges of a first responder's dangerous work with perhaps less recognition, and, through it all, they must maintain a friendly and professional demeanor as a

customer-facing representative of their employer. But for the right person, the job's rigors are more than offset by its rewards.

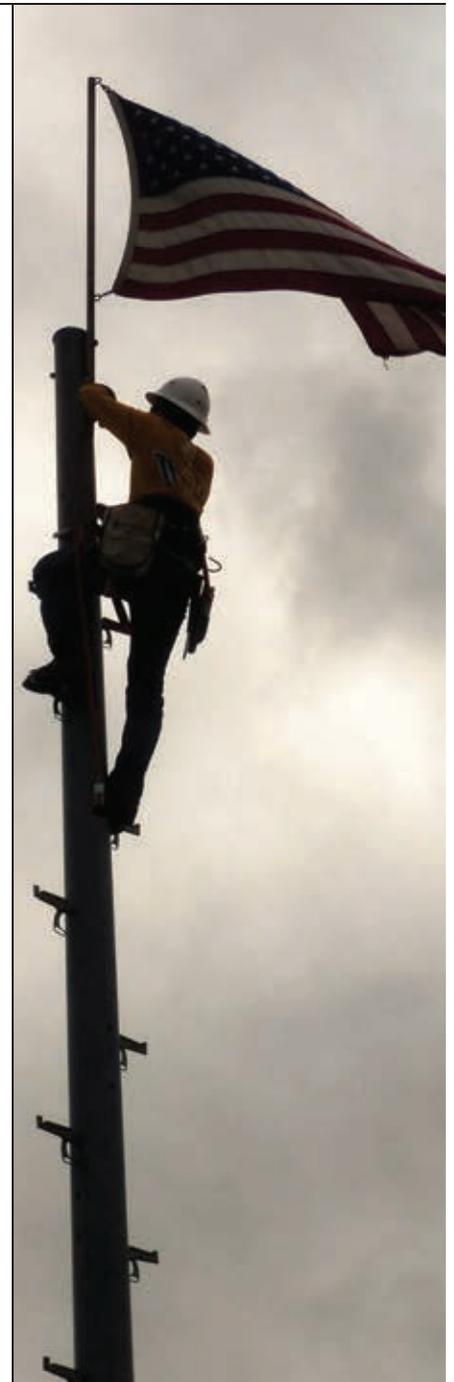
Hamilton County Electric Cooperative's lineworkers have lit up our members' lives since 1938, powering people's dreams and empowering them to achieve their goals. From providing the lamplight that our members study by to the internet connectivity most of us need to move ahead professionally, electricity is the unseen, often unconsidered workhorse humming in the background. Our linemen are the unsung facilitators of this energy source and form a brotherhood in their daily reckoning with and management of this volatile but crucial resource.

That's why we honor them annually on National Lineman Appreciation Day, April 8 this year.

Since there is no equivalent day of tribute for our equally integral behind-the-scenes staff at the cooperative and other crew members, we ask that you include all our employees in your expres-

sions of gratitude this month. Hamilton County EC works as a team to keep your lights on. Some of our workers risk life and limb in the aftermath of torrential rain while others weather storms of a different sort. Member services staff often absorb the brunt of members' frustrations, and dispatchers must allocate co-op resources and personnel effectively and efficiently during chaotic weather events, often while juggling other tasks.

Please join us this month in thanking all lineworkers and electric cooperative staff. Their service and pride brighten our community immeasurably.



CUSTERPUBLICPOWERDISTRICT

**You've Got
Friends in
High Places.**

Lineman Appreciation Day
Monday, April 8



DAVE SHAEFER

April 22 Is Earth Day



EARTH DAY—AN ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT—IS A GOOD TIME TO resolve to save some energy around your home. You can start this month by:

Paying your bills online. You'll save paper, stamps and time.

Caulking around windows and doors to seal air leaks and adding insulation to your attic. Both measures will prevent air-conditioned air from escaping your house through the roof this summer.

Taking shorter showers and using a water-saving showerhead.

Unplugging TVs, stereos, computers, cellphone chargers and other electronics when you're not using them.

Running your dishwasher and clothes washer only when they're full to save water and energy.

Replacing your old thermostat with a programmable model. You could save up to 10 percent on cooling and heating with these devices, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

Investing in LED light fixtures. You'll save energy, and you won't have to replace any lightbulbs for up to 10 years. If changing out fixtures isn't practical, use LED bulbs and be sure to turn off the lights when you leave a room.

Lowering your water heater's temperature to 120 degrees. Wrap your storage tank in a blanket designed to keep it warm so it will use less energy to heat the water.

Washing clothes in cold water. You could save more than \$60 a year.

Switching to Energy Star-rated appliances, fans and electronics. Using Energy Star-certified products throughout your home could save you nearly \$750 over the lifetime of the products.

Replacing your air conditioner's filters before the cooling season begins. Clean filters help the system operate more efficiently.

Putting off using the air conditioner, especially at night, until the weather gets hotter. Open windows instead and let the spring breeze into your house to keep you cool.

Hamilton County Electric Cooperative Association

420 N. Rice St. • P.O. Box 753
Hamilton, TX 76531

GENERAL MANAGER/CEO

Steve Young

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Contact Us

For general information
or to report an outage

CALL US

(254) 386-3123 local or
1-800-595-3401 toll-free

PAYMENT LOCATIONS

Hamilton County EC Office
420 N. Rice St., Hamilton

Brown & Wesson Insurance
915 Third St., Goldthwaite

Fort Gates Water Corporation
103 Gateway Circle, Gatesville

Kempner Water Supply
11986 E. Highway 190, Kempner

Lometa City Hall
109 W. San Saba St., Lometa

Online

hamiltonelectric.coop

Telephone

Call 1-877-833-4031 to pay using our automated phone system (credit/debit card or check).

Bill payments can be set up to be bank drafted or charged to a debit or credit card monthly.

TEXAS CO-OP POWER 
CELEBRATING 75 YEARS

Tools of the Trade



DAVE SHAFER

ON MONDAY, APRIL 8, NATIONAL LINEMAN APPRECIATION DAY, HAMILTON COUNTY Electric Cooperative honors the employees who keep the lights on. You see them stationed in the sky, in the partial enclosure of a truck's bucket, working diligently to maintain lines and restore power after a storm. What may not be evident from the ground, though, is all the equipment a lineworker needs to do his or her job safely. A lineman's personal protective equipment includes:

- ▶ Fire-resistant clothing that self-extinguishes, limiting injuries from burns.
- ▶ Insulated rubber gloves, often worn with a pair of leather gloves over them to prevent punctures to the rubber beneath.
- ▶ Insulated hard hats worn at all times for protection from falling objects.
- ▶ Steel-toe boots that prevent gouges.
- ▶ Safety goggles that protect against loose debris and other hazards when working on electric lines and rights-of-way.

Linemen also may wear equipment belts, tool pouches, safety straps and other equipment. Those additional items typically weigh about 50 pounds altogether, a heavy burden while negotiating hazardous conditions 40 feet in the air, surrounded by dangerously high voltage.

A less obvious component of the lineworker's experience is all the time and training that goes into preparing for the job. Classroom training programs last a few months, followed by intensive, yearslong apprenticeships that continue training on the job, ensuring that journeyman linemen are ultimately experts at what they do.

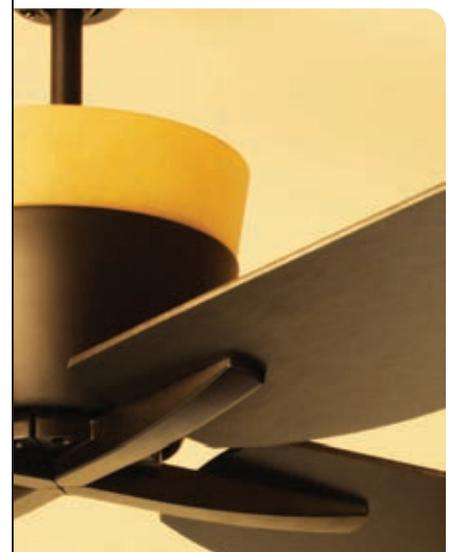
Next time you see a lineworker, be sure to thank him or her for their time and dedication in honing their vital skills, along with their selfless application of those skills in service to our community. Our lives would be pretty dim without them!



DILIANAIKOLOVA | ISTOCK.COM

HAPPY EASTER! APRIL 21

Hamilton County EC will be closed April 19 in observance of Good Friday.



CHARLES SCHUG | ISTOCK.COM

Power Tip

With warmer temperatures, make sure your ceiling fans are rotating counterclockwise so that the blades push cooler air down—and always remember to turn them off when you leave the room.

Spring Spells Beauty— and Hazardous Weather

IT DOESN'T GET MUCH MORE TEXAN THAN FAMILY

photos snapped among blossoming bluebonnets. We love our state flower, as evidenced by the ubiquity of those photos, taken alongside highways and in fields awash in indigo and dotted with white. What we love less are some of the damaging storms that tend to accompany this time of the year. It's a cruel seasonal coincidence—one of the most beautiful times of year to be outdoors in the Lone Star State can also be among the most hazardous.

Lightning strikes the U.S. about 25 million times a year, according to the National Weather Service. And although most lightning occurs in the summer, people can be struck at any time. On average, lightning kills 47 people in the U.S. annually, with hundreds more injured severely. If you find yourself in the midst of threatening weather, heed the following advice to remain safe.

Be aware that lightning often strikes outside an area of heavy rain and can strike as far as 10 miles from rainfall. Many lightning deaths occur ahead of storms, before any rain has fallen, or after rain has ceased and a storm has seemingly passed. The important rule to remember: If you can hear thunder, you're in danger. Don't be lulled into a false sense of security by calm skies. If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to pose a threat.

Once you've detected even a distant rumble of thunder, get to a safe place. Fully enclosed buildings are best, but a hard-topped metal car with closed windows will work. Stay sheltered until at least 30 minutes after the last peal of thunder. It's critical to know that sheds, picnic shelters, tents, trees and covered porches will not protect you from lightning.

If you're indoors during a thunderstorm, avoid using a corded phone unless it's an emergency. Cordless phones and cellphones are safe to use. You should also refrain from bathing or washing dishes by hand until the storm has passed, since lightning can travel through wiring and plumbing. Lastly, during turbulent weather, stay away from window frames and doors that lead outside—they can conduct electricity.

Flooding is another potential hazard of spring storms, particularly in our flash flood-prone state. There were 116 flood-related fatalities in the U.S. in 2017, according to the weather service, and flash flooding is the No. 1 weather-related killer in Texas.



Water covering roadways may obscure washed out bridges and other hazards.

NIKONSHUTTERMAN | ISTOCK.COM

Nearly 50 percent of flood fatalities involve vehicles, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety. Stay safe in a sudden downpour by remembering:

- ▶ It takes only 2 feet of water to float a 1.5-ton car. Tires work against drivers in floodwaters, acting as floats that can lift up vehicles and send them downstream.
- ▶ Water covering roadways may obscure washed out bridges and other hazards. If you try to drive across, you might not be driving on a solid surface.
- ▶ Once inclement weather hits, stay tuned to alerts via radio, TV or cellphone.
- ▶ Don't attempt to traverse flooded roads or streams on foot. It takes as little as 6 inches of water to knock an adult off balance. Water may be flowing more rapidly than it appears.
- ▶ Never allow children to play near ditches or storm drains.
- ▶ Finally, be especially cautious at night, when it's harder to recognize flooded areas.
- ▶ As always, if you see a downed power line, avoid it and notify Hamilton County Electric Cooperative at (254) 386-3123 as soon as possible.

Community Calendar



Comanche

Comanche Citywide Garage Sale, April 6.

Texas Motorcycle Roadriders Association Rally Motorcycle Parade, April 12, 6:30 p.m., courthouse square.

Texas Motorcycle Roadriders Association State Rally, April 12-14, Comanche City Park, 1200 Comanche Trail. For more information, visit tmra.org.

Gospel Music Jamboree, April 21, Comanche City Park, 1200 Comanche Trail.

American Cancer Society Relay For Life, April 26, Comanche City Park, 1200 Comanche Trail.

For more information about Comanche County events, contact the Comanche Chamber of Commerce at (325) 356-3233 or email comanchetxchamber@gmail.com.

Copperas Cove

Boots and Buckles Gala, April 6, 6 p.m.,

Copperas Cove Civic Center. This annual gala is a fundraiser that helps support Copperas Cove students and teachers. The Copperas Cove Education Foundation invites you to join us for a night of fun and fundraising. For more information, contact the Copperas Cove Education Foundation at (254) 547-1227.

Copperas Cove Citywide Garage Sale, April 6, 8 a.m.-2 p.m., Cove Terrace Shopping Center.

Immanuel Lutheran Church Easter Sunrise Service, April 21, 7 a.m., Immanuel Lutheran Church, 922 Lutheran Church Road, on the mountain at the cross. Breakfast will be served after the service. Everyone is invited to attend and celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. The regular Easter service is at 10:30 a.m. For more information, call (254) 547-3498.

Jackrabbit Run 5K and 10K, May 11, 8 a.m., Ogletree Gap Park. The Jackrabbit Run is a great race through the scenic hill country of the Ogletree Gap residential area. Awards will be given to the top three finishers in each age group. This race is part of the Centex Race

Series. For more information on Centex Race Series runs hosted in Copperas Cove, visit copperascove.com or call (254) 547-7571. For more information on the Centex Race Series, contact Killeen Parks and Recreation at (254) 501-6390.

Rabbit Fest, May 16-19, Copperas Cove City Park. Each year, more than 30,000 people attend this festival, which offers food and craft vendors, carnival rides, live entertainment, a car show and much more. Don't forget the Rabbit Fest Parade on Saturday morning. For more information, visit rabbitfest.com.

For information about Copperas Cove events, contact the Copperas Cove Chamber of Commerce at (254) 547-7571, email chamber@copperascove.com or visit copperascove.com.

Evant

281 Trade Days; April 6, May 4; 9 a.m.-3 p.m.; 203 W. Brooks Drive. Antiques, plants, vintage finds, food trucks and handmade items. Vendor spots available, call (254) 404-5487.

Event Spring Fling BBQ Cook-Off With Tamale Cooking Contest, April 5-6, Evant Municipal Park. Cook-off sanctioned by Lone Star Barbecue Society. Kickoff party April 5 with live music, dancing and Cajun food. April 6, barbecue and tamale cook-off, 5K Spring Fling Fun Run and Evant Chamber of Commerce Annual Greased Pig Race. For information, contact Vernon at (254) 248-2585, Jennifer at (254) 386-7395 or Mary Ann at (254) 404-5487.

Event Rodeo Association Play Day Series; April 13, May 4; 9 a.m.; Evant Rodeo Arena; 1255 S. U.S. Highway 281.

Event Rodeo Association Iron Man, April 13, 7 p.m., Evant Rodeo Arena, 1255 S. U.S. Highway 281. For information, contact Lauren at (254) 206-0662 or Hote at (254) 404-5489.

Community Easter Egg Hunt, April 20, 1 p.m., Evant Municipal Park.



BOOTS AND BUCKLES GALA

Copperas Cove April 6

Evant Rodeo Association Iron Man and Fastest Four, May 4, 7 p.m., Evant Rodeo Arena, 1255 S. U.S. Highway 281.

Evant Rodeo Association Junior Rodeo, June 28–29, 7 p.m., Evant Rodeo Arena, 1255 S. U.S. Highway 281.

For information about Evant events, contact Mary Ann Davison at evantchamber@gmail.com or (254) 404-5487.

Gatesville

Ed Leonard Band, every Thursday, 6:30–9:30 p.m., Junction on Route 36, 1216 Highway 36.

Chamber Market Days, second Saturday of each month in the parking lot of the historic Cotton Belt Depot, 2307 S. Highway 36. Vendors display unique merchandise and farm-fresh foods. Visit gatesvilletx.info for more information.

Gatesville Country Music Hall of Fame Show/Jamboree, third Friday of each month, 7–8 p.m., City Auditorium, 110 N. Eighth St. A family-friendly event. There is no admission fee, but donations are accepted for the performers. For more information, visit gatesvillemusicchalloffame.com or call Roger Viers at (254) 547-6834.

Cowboy and Indian Artifact Show, April 6, 8 a.m.–4 p.m., Gatesville Civic Center, 301 Veteran's Memorial Drive (just off Highway 84). Indian artifacts, cowboy collectibles, coins, fossils, knives, jewelry and more. Admission \$5; 12 and under free. Concession stand, breakfast and lunch available. To reserve a table (6 feet at \$35) or for more information, contact Rusty Lilljedahl at (254) 865-3921.

GIG: Get Involved, Gatesville—a volunteer fair; April 8; 5–7 p.m. Everyone from students to seniors is encouraged to visit with local nonprofit and community service organizations who will share information about opportunities to volunteer. Admission is free. Contact Cheri at (254) 499-0102.

Jake Hooker and the Outsiders, a Coryell County Area Go Texan fundraiser, April 13,



HARLEM WIZARDS

**Gatesville
April 23**

7–11 p.m., Gatesville Civic Center, 301 Veteran's Memorial Drive. Steak and shrimp dinner followed by dance. Tickets are \$50 each. For tickets, call Kandi Luensmann at (254) 223-8883.

Harlem Wizards, April 23, 7–9:30 p.m., Gatesville High School gym.

Junk & Disorderly Vendor Market and City-wide Garage Sale, May 4, 8 a.m.–4 p.m., Gatesville Civic Center, 301 Veteran's Memorial Drive. Vendor market featuring antiques, collectibles and unique items. Garage sales all over town. For more information, visit visitgatesvilletx.com or call Cheri Shepherd at (254) 499-0102.

Senior Expo, May 9, 9 a.m.–noon, Gatesville Civic Center, 301 Veteran's Memorial Drive. Senior citizens are invited to connect with local service providers for information, giveaways, health checks and more.

Stache Bash Texas Music Festival, May 9–11,

Bare Bones BBQ, 4305 S. Highway 36. More than 50 local artists performing over three days. Benefiting the American Heart Association. Single-day tickets are \$15 at the door. See Stache Bash Texas Music Festival on Facebook for more information.

Shivaree, June 1, Faunt LeRoy Park. International Barbecue Cookers Association-sanctioned barbecue cook-off, family-friendly activities and live music. To register or for more information, visit gatesvilleshivaree.com.

Fire Ant Bike Tour, June 8, ride packet pickup and on-site registration 6:30–8 a.m. at the Gatesville Civic Center, 301 Veteran's Memorial Drive. Bike routes are approximately 10, 32, 50 and 62.5 miles. Information and preregistration at gatesvilleexchangeclub.org.

For more information about Gatesville events, go to visitgatesvilletx.com or call the Gatesville Chamber of Commerce at (254) 865-2617 or Gatesville Convention and Visitors Bureau at (254) 865-8951.

Goldthwaite

Jennie Trent Dew Library, story time, every Friday at 10 a.m., Jennie Trent Dew Library. Join Ms. Susan and Ms. Elizabeth for stories, crafts, songs and snacks. Advice on Your Device offered to library patrons by appointment. Please call (325) 648-2447 to set up an appointment. After-school programming is in the works! Coding classes, teen programs and more coming soon.

WE WELCOME YOUR EVENT SUBMISSIONS

Hamilton County Electric Cooperative welcomes your local event submissions. If you have any events that you would like listed in the Community Calendar, please contact Donna Harris. Information must be submitted two months in advance for the magazine. The calendar will be published monthly, and it will contain events scheduled in the month of publication and the following two months. HCEC reserves the right to edit and exclude events based on space available and other considerations. We do not certify the accuracy or reliability of any information posted in any listing in this Community Calendar. Please contact the event source directly to confirm event details. Email donna.harris@hamiltonelectric.coop, write to HCEC at P.O. Box 753, Hamilton, TX 76531, or call 1-800-595-3401.



ANNUAL BLOOMIN' FEST

Lampasas April 6

Goldthwaite State Championship BBQ & Goat Cook-Off, April 26-27, Goldthwaite City Park. For more information, contact the Mills County Chamber of Commerce at (325) 648-3619 or gcc@centex.net.

For more information about Goldthwaite events, visit millscountychamber.com or call Mills County Chamber of Commerce at (325) 451-4334.

Hamilton

Circle T Arena, 4007 W. Highway 36. For information on upcoming events, visit circletarena.net/calendar or call (254) 386-3559.

John Deere Day, April 6, Lawson Implement.

Keep Hamilton Beautiful Trash Bash, April 13. For more details, visit hamiltontexas.com.

Friends of the Library Annual Books and Butt event, April 12, 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Hamilton Public Library, 201 N. Pecan. Books for \$5 a bag and Kent Wenzel's Bite My Butt pulled pork sandwiches for \$8 a plate. For to-go orders, contact the library the day before the event at hamiltonpubliclibrary.texas@gmail.com or call (254) 386-3474. All funds raised benefit the Hamilton Public Library.

Hamilton Citywide Garage Sale, April 12.

Celebrate Hamilton County Tastes and Trades, April 18-21, Hamilton Fair Park. Great rides, vendors, lots of fun!

Cemetery Walk, May 4, 10 a.m., Oakwood Cemetery. Sponsored by the Hamilton County Historical Museum. For information, call (254) 386-5578 or (979) 595-8351.

Cinco De Mayo Celebration, May 4, Hamilton Fair Park. Taco, salsa and guacamole cook-offs; horse races; and Charrería Mexicana, Norteño and Tejano bands. Tickets \$25, parking \$5.

For more information about Hamilton events, visit Hamilton Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center on Facebook, call (254) 386-3216 or email hamiltonchambertx@gmail.com.

Hico

Billy the Kid Day Open Car Show, April 6. Typically, more than 100 cars show up for this popular annual event. A wide variety of street vendors, DJ music and a lively awards ceremony make this an exciting family event.

Taste of Hico, May 17, Hico Mercantile downtown courtyard. Local food vendors will serve samples of their signature items. The event is organized by board members of the Texas Steak Cookoff and is sponsored by the Hico Economic Development Corporation. Entertainment will be provided by the Tejas Brothers and Pushin' Luck.

Annual Texas Steak Cookoff and Wine Festival, May 18, historic downtown. Backyard chefs from all over the Southwest come to Hico to see who can cook the best steak in Texas. For information, visit texassteakcookoff.com.

For more information about Hico events, visit hico-tx.com or call Hico City Hall at (254) 796-4620.

Lampasas

Lampasas County Museum, Fridays and Satur-

days, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 303 S. Western, between Second and Third streets. Learn about the history of Lampasas County through permanent displays and special exhibitions. Free of charge.

Lampasas Trade Days; April 6, May 4; 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; 2646 E. Highway 190. For information, contact Barbara Postel at (512) 734-1294.

Annual Bloomin' Fest and Sip 'n' Stroll, April 6, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., downtown courthouse square. The festival will offer various arts, crafts, plant and flower vendors along with a variety of food trucks and Texas wines. There will be an exciting children's area and rockin' live music.

Texas Legato Winery's Crawfish Boil, April 13, 2-9 p.m., Texas Legato Winery, 2935 FM 1478. All-you-can-eat crawfish, games, wine, food, music and fun. Call (512) 556-9600 for more information.

Spring Courtyard Square Garage Sale, April 27, 8 a.m.-3 p.m., courtyard square downtown. For more information, contact Andy Berry at (512) 556-5434.

Riata Roundup Festival, April 25-27, gates open at 5:30 p.m. nightly. CPRA-sanctioned rodeo at the arena at the Lampasas 580 Sports Complex, hosted by the Lampasas County Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center. Diamond Cross Rodeo Co. will have mutton bustin', specialty acts, bareback bronc riding, saddle bronc riding, calf roping, team roping, steer wrestling, bull riding, women's barrel racing, women's breakaway roping and women's bronc riding. Please check the Lampasas County Chamber of Commerce's website for more information. BYOB. Cooler charge will apply.

Sulphur Creek Car Cruise, June 15, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., W.M. Brook Park. For questions or more information, contact Mike White at Advanced Window Tint at (512) 556-3745.

For more information about Lampasas County events, contact the Lampasas County Chamber of Commerce at (512) 556-5172 or visit lampasaschamber.org.

Lometa

For information about Lometa events, contact the city of Lometa at (512) 752-3331.

Pearl

Bluegrass Festival; April 6, May 4, June 1; 11 a.m. Stage show, jam rooms, home-cooked food and bookstore. For more information, visit pearlbluegrass.com.

Pearl Book Cottage; April 6, May 4, June 1; 10 a.m.-6 p.m. All kinds of books and resale items. Payment by donation with all proceeds

going to charity. For information, call (254) 865-9282 or (254) 865-5864.

Community Meal, third Thursday of each month, 11:30 a.m., Pearl Baptist Church, Highway 183. Contact Connie at (254) 223-0621.

Pidcoke

Easter Sunrise Service, April 21, 8 a.m., Pidcoke United Methodist Church, 11230 FM 116 N. Breakfast and Easter egg hunt follow the service.

The Big Feed, May 4, 5:30 p.m., Pidcoke United Methodist Church, 11230 FM 116 N. All-you-can-eat fried fish and brisket meal.

For more information about Pidcoke United Methodist Church events, call (254) 760-2288 or visit pidcoke-umc.org.

San Saba

Pecan Capital Trade Days; April 4, May 4; 9 a.m.–2 p.m.; courthouse square. Welcome to our monthly trade days featuring hand-made crafts, homemade goodies and much, much more. Contact JoAnne at (325) 372-4029 for vendor information.

Golf Tournaments; 4-Person Scramble, April 13–14, all day; 3-Person Scramble, May 18–19, all day; Guys & Dolls, June 1–2, all day; San Saba River Golf Course; CR 102. For information, visit goldsansaba.com or contact Chuck Jennings at (325) 372-3212.

Catkins Friday, April 26, 5–8 p.m., Wedding Oak Winery, 316 E. Wallace St. Come enjoy the kickoff to the Catkins Ball weekend. For details, contact Wedding Oak Winery at (325) 372-4050.

Catkins Ball, April 27, 6–11 p.m., Risien Park. This annual event, hosted by the Community Foundation of San Saba County, raises funds to support restoration projects. This year's theme is Aloha San Saba. Live music, dancing, great food and drinks will be available. For more information, visit sccf.org/catkins-ball-2019.

Farmers Market, begins May 15 and recurs every Wednesday through mid-August, 8 a.m., courthouse square. Contact Don at (325) 372-4029.

San Saba Pro Rodeo Days, May 31–June 1 at the San Saba Rodeo Arena. Details to be announced.

For more information about San Saba events, contact the San Saba Visitor Center at (325) 372-5200, the Chamber of Commerce at (325) 372-5141 or visit sansabatexas.com/calendar or sansabachamber.org.

Energy Savings Beyond Belief

A QUICK SEARCH OF THE INTERNET REVEALS MANY GREAT WAYS TO SAVE ENERGY

around your home. Simple things such as adding insulation or using energy-efficient lightbulbs are easy and relatively inexpensive. The same search will also reveal “amazing” products that claim to cut up to a third of your energy bill—without you changing anything about your energy habits.

Claims like these sound too good to be true, and there's good reason for that—they almost always turn out to be exaggerations or outright lies.

One popular scam involves a little box that promises to save you energy, “condition” your power and make appliances last longer. The people who sell these boxes often claim outrageous energy savings and use terms including power conditioning, capacitors and power factor. The sales materials often claim that your utility doesn't want you to know about the device. That's actually true—because it's a rip-off.

There are several questions you should ask a salesperson (or yourself!) when reading an ad for the next magical cure-all:

1. Is it too good to be true? Trust your instincts, and if the product over-promises, it's likely a waste of money.

2. Does it violate the laws of science? Some products claim that they are capable of “changing the molecular structure ... to release never-before tapped power.” Changing scientific principles is no easy task. If the inventors truly can do this, they won't be mailing flyers or operating from a poorly designed website.

3. Was the product tested by an independent group like a national lab or university? If not, be skeptical. Scammers have been known to lie about the tests.

Sometimes energy scammers contact consumers directly, either by calling or stopping by and claiming they represent your local electric co-op. Never give personal or financial information to someone who claims to be an employee of the co-op without confirming their identity. If they call, ask for a callback number, then verify their identity with your cooperative. If they stop by, ask the person for a valid employee ID.

The key is to be skeptical and ask questions. Asking tough questions will not offend honest people. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

