

Right-of-Way Maintenance Critical to Reliable Service



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER/CEO STEVE YOUNG

Dear Member,

EACH YEAR, HAMILTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE SPENDS nearly \$900,000 trimming and clearing vegetation from its rights-of-way, and we still don't seem to make any headway! With the rains in recent years, trees and other vegetation seem to grow back almost as quickly as we trim them. Because of this strain, this year the cooperative will begin using herbicides in its vegetation management program. We used herbicides on a trial basis in 2017 with very good results.

The herbicide application will be performed by Chemical Weed Control, a company founded in 1962 that operates in 21 states. They are a leader in vegetation management, providing herbicide application, mowing and rights-of-way clearing for utilities, oil and gas operations, and railroads.

Hamilton County EC is proposing to apply herbicides as well as mulching where necessary. Herbicides will be applied only to vegetation beneath distribution lines through spot treatments. No large-scale broadcasting will be used. The herbicides that will be applied are labeled for areas where livestock and wildlife graze. Herbicides that may be used include the following:

- ▶ Triclopyr 4 (Garlon/Grazon ET/Remedy)
- ▶ Picloram 22K (Tordon 22K/GrazonNext/Grazon)
- ▶ Fluroxypyr (Surmount, mixture of picloram and fluroxypyr)
- ▶ MSM 60 (Escort/Ally)

Strict industry regulations mandate that power lines and the rights-of-way surrounding them must be clear of potential hazards caused by overgrown vegetation. Properly maintained rights-of-way are essential to the safety of our lineworkers and help protect your property from fire and other hazards. Trees in electric lines are the main cause of blinking lights and outages. Your cooperation in this endeavor is greatly appreciated.

If the electric lines crossing your property have been selected for herbicide application, you will receive a notification letter in March. You will have the opportunity at that time to contact the cooperative and voice any concerns you may have. Again, we appreciate your cooperation in helping us keep you and our lineworkers safe.

Sincerely,

Steve Young

General Manager



WHAT TO DO IF...

You Encounter a Downed Power Line

EVEN IF EVERY HOME IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD loses electricity during a storm, a power line hanging loose could very well be "live" and electrocute you if you touch it.

Just because the electricity is out doesn't mean power lines are dead. **So if you see one, follow these tips to stay safe:**

- ▶ Don't touch a power line with your hand, body, a stick, a broom—not with anything. Stay as far away from it as possible.
- ▶ Call 911 and your electric cooperative.
- ▶ If your car or another person is touching a downed line, don't touch your car or that person. The power could flow through them and into you.
- ▶ Don't drive over a downed wire.
- ▶ If a line falls on your car while you're in it, stay inside. The ground around your car could be energized, and if you touch it, you could be electrocuted. Warn others to stay away and call 911 for help.
- ▶ Teach children about the dangers of fallen power lines.

Why Do Utility Companies Manage Vegetation?

STRICT INDUSTRY REGULATIONS MANDATE THAT POWER LINES and the rights-of-way surrounding them must be clear of possible hazards caused by overgrown vegetation. Trees must be kept back from power lines to help prevent power outages, and the rights-of-way must be easily accessible for maintenance and repair crews in the event of an outage.

Overgrown vegetation in and around power lines can lead to:

- ▶ Trees and branches touching or falling on power lines, which is the most frequent reason for service interruptions.
- ▶ Limited access to power lines for our crews who need to routinely perform inspections, maintenance and repairs.
- ▶ An unsafe bridge to electrical poles and lines for children and animals—increasing risk of electrocution and shock.

Years of field experience have shown that using herbicides along with mechanical methods to manage vegetation is the most efficient way to keep power lines and rights-of-way clear. Using mechanical methods alone isn't practical with the hundreds of miles that must be managed and doesn't control vegetation with as much success or longevity as herbicides.

The spread of invasive plant species has presented another problem for these areas. Using herbicides helps prevent these weeds from overtaking rights-of-way and thwarts their spread to adjacent areas, including your property.

What Will It Look Like After Treatment?

Our goal is to keep power lines and rights-of-way safe and your power on. But we also focus on keeping vegetation in these areas undisturbed. Using herbicides not only removes unwanted or invasive weeds, brush and trees, it also promotes the growth of desirable grasses and wildflowers by reducing competition for moisture, sunlight and nutrients.

Since 1953, researchers at Purdue and Pennsylvania State universities have studied the differences between herbicide use and mechanical methods on power line rights-of-way. Results show that herbicide use can enhance wildlife habitat more than mechanical methods alone by promoting grasses, low-growing shrubs and other ground cover that native animals prefer.

How Will This Affect Wildlife and the Environment?

All pesticides sold in the United States must be registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency based on the submission of scientific studies showing that the pesticide will perform its intended function without unreasonable adverse effects to human health and the environment.

In addition, we take extra precautions such as extensive applicator training to ensure the environment and native wildlife aren't harmed. We also make certain that site visits are properly timed for best results and the most appropriate application methods are used when taking into account the site surroundings.

Who Applies the Herbicides?

We employ a rigorously trained team of professional applicators to help ensure safe handling and precise application to only targeted trees and brush. Safety—both to the surrounding vegetation and people in the area—is their highest priority. They conduct evaluations of adjacent properties to make sure your property is unchanged after the application.

How Will This Affect My Property?

As work begins, we will take time to inform property owners about the nature of the work, so you are comfortable as we service these areas in your neighborhood.

Our crews use only the most proven and environmentally sound tactics to control vegetation, such as the effective and responsible use of herbicides. This is based on nearly 60 years of university and industry research on how to use herbicides to foster optimal plant and wildlife habitats. In addition, we practice precision herbicide application techniques by using buffer zones between treatment areas and your property. The result is power lines and rights-of-way that are clear of hazardous vegetation with little to no effect on nearby properties.

Can't the Vegetation Just Be Mowed?

In many cases, mechanical methods like trimming, cutting and mowing can yield less than desirable results for both vegetation control and the environment. With certain vegetation, mowing actually helps the plant spread since it only removes the plant tops and leaves the roots intact. This can promote rapid resprouting, and seeds may be spread throughout the area through movement of the equipment. Mechanical methods also can have negative effects on wildlife, the safety of crew members and your property. Flying debris is dangerous to animals and our operators. Mechanical methods also can induce soil erosion and compaction, as well as cause ruts from heavy machinery moving across your property. The use of petroleum products and engines carry their own hazards, both to crews inhaling exhaust and in its introduction to the environment.

Herbicides enable control of the entire plant and often only require one application every few years. This eliminates the need for much more frequent mechanical treatments, like tree trimming and mowing—meaning you'll see our crews much less.

For more information on the safe use of herbicides, visit these websites.

- U.S. Department of Agriculture:** usda.gov
- Utility Arborists Association:** utilityarborist.org
- Nature Conservancy:** nature.org
- U.S. Forestry Service:** fs.fed.us
- National Wild Turkey Federation:** nwtf.org
- U.S. EPA:** epa.gov/pesticides



ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS AND SENIORS:

Win a Trip to Washington, DC!

June 6–15

YOU'RE A TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR OR SENIOR. YOU'RE SMART; YOU HAVE BIG dreams. Maybe you've never been out of the state, and maybe you've never flown on a plane, but you want to travel—to experience a big city, visit historic landmarks and meet people, and not just fellow high schoolers but influential public figures, like your U.S. representative.

If that describes you, then you're a candidate to apply for a slot on the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., June 6–15, sponsored by Hamilton County Electric Cooperative Association and organized by Texas Electric Cooperatives.

Youth Tour is an action-packed trip to the U.S. capital with about 150 of your peers and chaperones from across Texas. You'll visit the Washington National Cathedral, Arlington National Cemetery, Mount Vernon, Smithsonian Institution, memorials and more.

You could be a part of this legacy shared by the more than 3,800 past Texas Youth Tour students who have participated since 1965.

Eligibility: Students who have completed their sophomore year of high school and whose parent or legal guardian is a member of Hamilton County EC are eligible.

Contest Rules: Students must complete a 2018 Youth Tour application and submit an essay not to exceed 500 words on this theme: "If you had the opportunity to change one thing about your school or community, what would it be and why?" The winners will be chosen according to originality and content of their essays. Essays must be attached to the completed application and submitted no later than **February 23.**

For more information, visit texasyouthtour.com. Contact Keela Payne by phone at (254) 386-9428 or by email at keela.payne@hamiltonelectric.coop for an application.

Batteries Have Their Day

Keep them out of the way

FEBRUARY 18 IS NATIONAL BATTERY

Day—a day to appreciate the convenience that batteries provide our everyday lives.

Portable electricity isn't something we think about every day because it is so easily accessible.

To celebrate National Battery Day, take a moment to consider some safety measures around these useful little sources of portable energy, particularly the small, round button batteries.

Never leave batteries sitting out.

Store spare batteries, and batteries to be recycled or disposed of, out of sight and reach of young children.

Check all household devices to be certain the battery compartments are securely shut. Use strong tape to secure compartments that children could open or that might pop open if the device is dropped.

Never put batteries in your mouth to test, to hold or for any reason. They are slippery and easily swallowed.

Don't store batteries near pills or in pill bottles, leave them on bedside tables or place them loose in your pocket or purse.





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. Hwy. 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.

Hamilton County EC Scholarship Program

WILL YOUR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE NEED COLLEGE MONEY? HAMILTON COUNTY

Electric Cooperative Association will be awarding several scholarships of \$1,000 each for the 2018–2019 school year, divided into \$500 for each semester.

To be eligible your student must:

- ▶ Be a senior attending a high school within the Hamilton County EC service area and graduating in May.
- ▶ Be a dependent of an active Hamilton County EC member.
- ▶ Reside full time in the home of a parent or guardian who is a full-time resident in Hamilton County EC's service area.
- ▶ Have applied for admission as a full-time student at a state university, junior college or technical school.

Each winner must use the scholarship awarded within one year of issuance. Scholarship applications are now available and will be accepted until March 30. Scholarship winners will be chosen by a committee independent of Hamilton County Electric Cooperative Association. For more information and an application, please contact Keela Payne by phone at (254) 386-9428 or by email at keela.payne@hamiltonelectric.coop.

Community Calendar



Comanche

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

Copperas Cove

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

Evant

Create Your Special Valentine, February 3, 8-10 a.m., and February 10, 1-4 p.m., Evant Chamber of Commerce. Accomplished calligrapher Karen Wheelless will be available for you to bring, buy or make your special valentine.

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

Gatesville

Taste of Gatesville, February 6, 5:30-8 p.m., Gatesville Civic Center. Sample foods from local restaurants and vendors and explore what some of Gatesville's retail merchants have to offer. More details posted soon at visitgatesvilletx.com.

Chamber Market Days, second Saturday of every month in the parking lot of the historic Cotton Belt Depot, 2307 S. Hwy. 36. Market vendors display unique merchandise and farm-fresh foods.

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 gatesvillecountrymusic.com

countrymusichalloffame.com or call Roger Vierende at (254) 547-6834.

For more information about Gatesville events, visit gatesvilletx.info, call the Gatesville Chamber of Commerce at (254) 865-2617 or Cheri Shepherd, Gatesville Convention and Visitors Bureau, at (254) 499-0102.

Goldthwaite

Goldthwaite State Championship BBQ & Goat Cook-Off, April 27-28, Goldthwaite City Park. For more information, contact the Mill County Chamber of Commerce at (325) 648-3619 or gcc@centex.net.

Hamilton

My Funny Valentine, Improv Comedy Variety Show, February 10, 7 p.m., Studio on the Square, BYOB. Comedy and music to make your heart smile.

Valentine Dinner & Dance, February 10, Fair Park

Spring Fling, March 12, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m., St. John Lutheran Church fellowship hall, 611 S. College St. Features engaging speakers, entertainment, silent auction, vendor booths, door prizes and lunch, all for only \$10. Sponsored by Hamilton Extension Education Association. A limited number of 8x8 vendor spaces are available. For more information, contact Mary Lambert at (254) 386-8396 or malambert65@gmail.com.

Lifeline Screening, March 21, Fair Park.

John Deere Day, April 7, Lawson Implement

Friends of the Library Annual "Books and Butt" event, April 20, 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. Carry-out orders are available by calling the library at (254) 386-3474

or email the day before the event, hamiltonpubliclibrary.texas@gmail.com. All funds raised benefit the Hamilton Public Library.

Durty Spur 10K/30K Trail Run, April 21, Circle T Arena and Little Bear Creek Ranch. The course is a 10K loop. You'll see a multitude of exotic animals as you run through tough terrain and altitude changes. For more information, contact Sara Ensor at saraensor80@gmail.com or (254) 784-0855 or visit the website at durtyspurtrailrun.com.

For more information about Hamilton events, visit hamiltontexas.com or contact the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce at (254) 386-3216 or hamiltonchambertx@gmail.com.

Hico

Billy the Kid Day Open Car Show, April 7. Typically, over 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.

For more information about Hico events, visit hicotxchamber.com.

Lampasas

Free guided tours of the historic Lampasas County Courthouse, Saturdays, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., historic downtown courthouse square. The 30-minute tours visit each floor of the courthouse, including the stately second-floor courtroom as well as the third floor, which houses the tower clockworks. The Lampasas County Courthouse is the third-oldest courthouse in continuous use in Texas. For more information, contact Jim Rutland at (512) 556-5302 during regular business hours.

Lampasas County Museum, Fridays and

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

Lampasas Trade Days, February 3, March 3, April 7, 9 a.m.–4 p.m., 2646 E. Hwy. 190. For information, contact Barbara Postel at (512) 734-1294.

Casino Night, February 10, Lampasas County Show Barn

Lampasas Hillacious Bike Tour, April 14, 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Challenging routes through beautiful rolling hills of Lampasas County. The ride benefits Lampasas Association for the Arts, Lampasas County Chamber of Commerce and Vision Lampasas.

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

Lometa

Carnival, March 29–31, 6–11 p.m., Regional Park

Rodeo, March 30–31, 7:30 p.m., Arena at Regional Park, Junction U.S. 183 and U.S. 190. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids, and free for children 6 and under and active military with ID. Sponsored by the Lometa Lions Club.

Diamondback Jubilee Rattlesnake Roundup, March 31, 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Regional Park. For more information, contact David Smith at (512) 752-3106.

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

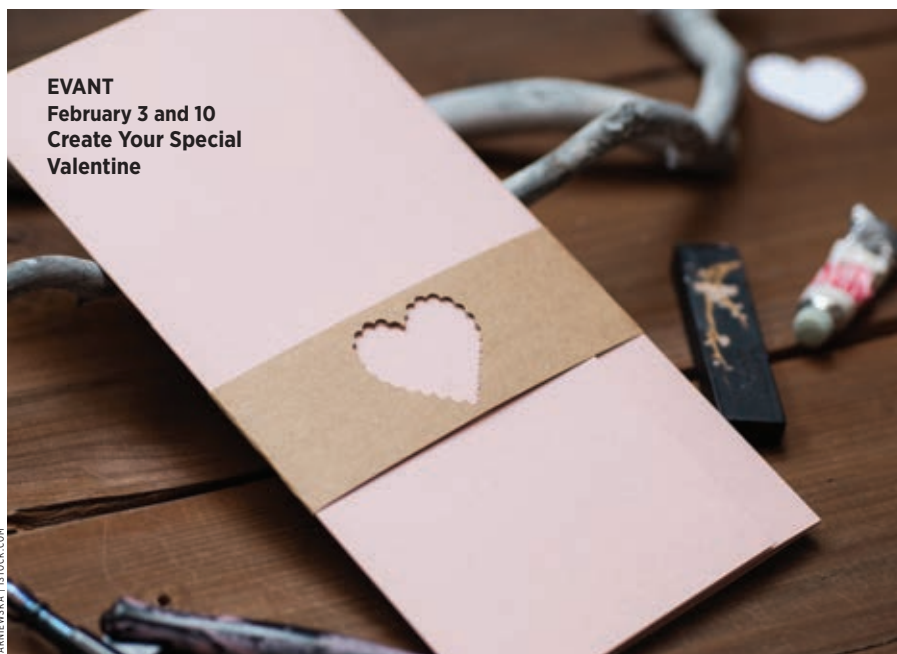
Pearl

Bluegrass Festival, February 3, March 3, April 7, 11 a.m. Stage show, jam rooms, home-cooked food and bookstore. For more information, visit pearlbluegrass.com.

Pearl Book Cottage, February 3, March 3, April 7, 10 a.m.–6 p.m. All kinds of books and resale items. Payment by donation. All donations go to charity. For information, call (254) 865-9282 or (254) 865-5864.

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

Annual Pearl Community Center Garage Sale and Flea Market March 9–10., 8 a.m.–3 p.m. Giant building full of great bargains. The Pearl Book Cottage and Flea Market will be open,



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and breakfast and lunch will be available for purchase. All proceeds go to the Pearl Community Fellowship outreach program. For information or booth space, please call (254) 865-5864.

San Saba

Pecan Capital Trade Day, March 3, April 7, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Courthouse Square. For information, contact Joann at (325) 372-4029.

A Night at the Museum—Texas Independence Day Celebration, March 3, 6–8 p.m., Mill Pond Park. Evening program includes food, music, storytellers and fireworks. For information, contact Lynn at (325) 372-8807.

Pecan Capital Street Dance XVIII, April 7, 8–11:30 p.m., Courthouse Square. The 2018 San Saba Music Series kicks off with Jason Boland and The Stragglers at this street dance

benefiting the San Saba Youth Sports Association. For information, contact the visitor center at (325) 372-5200.

4-Person Scramble Golf Tournament, April 21–22, San Saba River Golf Course. For information, call (325) 372-3212 or go to goldsansaba.com.

Catkins Ball, April 28, 6 p.m., Risien Park. For information, email contact@catkinsball.com.

For more information about San Saba County events, contact the San Saba County Chamber of Commerce at (325) 372-5141 or visit sansabachamber.com, and the city at (325) 372-5144 or visit sansabatexas.com/calendar.

WE WELCOME YOUR EVENT SUBMISSIONS

Hamilton County EC 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 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.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

IN ACCORDANCE WITH FEDERAL CIVIL RIGHTS LAW AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for USDA program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

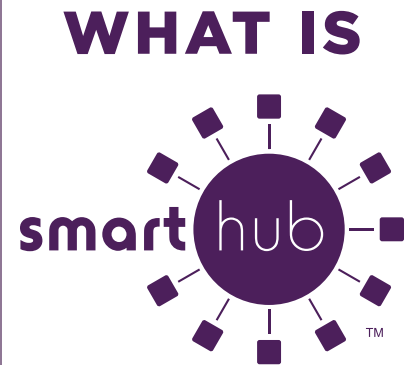
To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html or at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call 1-866-632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

2. Fax: (202) 690-7442; or

3. Email: program.intake@usda.gov

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SMARTHUB IS HAMILTON COUNTY

EC's innovative tool for account management. SmartHub can help you take control of your electricity and your account like never before!

► Register with SmartHub, and you will be able to view your current bill, the previous months' bills or even previous year's bills to compare costs. You can also view your daily or monthly electricity usage. You can see how your use is trending over time and take steps to reduce your consumption.

► Making payments through SmartHub is fast and easy. You can store your payment information for future payments or set up automatic payments. SmartHub provides a safe and secure environment for transactions between HCEC and your financial institution.

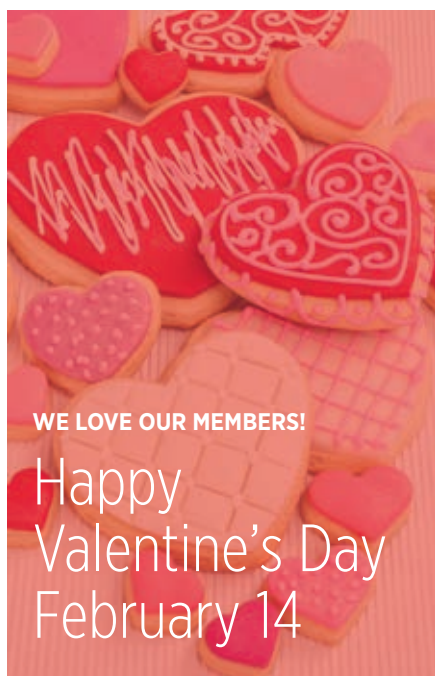
► Go paperless and manage your account via SmartHub! By registering with SmartHub, you can receive bill notifications by email or text.

► Register now at hamiltonelectric.coop! Click the Pay Online button to begin registration. You may also download the app, SmartHub, for free with your smartphone or tablet.

WHAT IS SMARTHUB?



Be in the Know Secure Customer Support Pay Bill Check Usage



WE LOVE OUR MEMBERS!

Happy
Valentine's Day
February 14



Happy
Presidents Day!
February 19

FROM HAMILTON COUNTY EC

Scammers Ramping Up

Slow them down with skepticism, vigilance

SCAMMERS ARE TARGETING UNSUSPECTING

citizens with greater frequency—and increasing creativity. Crooks now threaten victims with everything from legal action involving the IRS to turning off power to your home. Or they pretend to help victims avoid complications with utility, cellphone, video streaming, bank or other accounts.

But there is good news: Scams are being recognized and reported more often. And all it takes to thwart one is awareness and vigilance.

A Few Common Scams

Staying alert and cautious every day can help you avoid these common scams.

The Utility Scam: An individual poses as an employee of your electric cooperative, telling you that your power will be turned off for nonpayment of your bill. The scammer says you can avoid disconnection by giving them money via prepaid credit or debit card.

The Something-for-Nothing Scam: A con artist claims to represent a government program that helps pay utility bills. They say your bill can be paid with stimulus money; all you have to do is “verify” your bank account, credit card or Social Security number. No such government program exists. Sharing this information puts you at risk for identity theft and financial damage—and for electricity disconnection when the bill isn’t actually paid by the bogus program.

The Netflix Scam: This email scam targets subscribers of the Netflix video streaming service, warning that their account is being canceled. The objective is to steal personal and credit card information. The professional-looking, personalized email often bears the subject line “Your suspension notification” and includes a link to a fake Netflix page, where you are prompted to enter your login information and credit card number.

Avoid Being Scammed

Despite differing tactics, all scams share one objective: to get money or sensitive information from you. Never provide passwords or PINs, nor your Social Security, credit card, bank or other account numbers, unless you initiated the contact and trust the person with whom you are speaking. No legitimate business should ever contact you to ask for personal financial information.

▶ If someone comes to your home claiming to be a cooperative employee and demands to collect money or inspect parts of



your property, note the person’s identification, then make them wait outside your locked door. Call the co-op immediately to verify whether the person is, in fact, an employee. If not, call local police and do not let the individual into your home.

▶ If you receive a call from someone who pressures you for immediate payment or personal information, do not respond to their requests. Instead, hang up. Call the company they claimed to represent, then local authorities.

▶ Think before you respond to an email. View with suspicion any emails that push you to click on links or otherwise act immediately. If you want to change settings for any account, never click on links in an email. Instead, independently navigate to the site in your browser.

After a Scam

If you suspect you’ve already been the target of a scam:

Be proactive. If you already have provided financial information to someone you later suspect as fraudulent, immediately contact your bank.

Report the incident. Notify the organization that the scammer claimed to represent and the police. They might not be able to do anything, but every report helps build a body of information to identify and stop these scams in the future.

Do not fall for a “recovery” scam. Don’t give anybody any more money on the promise that they will get your lost money back. It’s just another scam.

Inform others. Share this information with friends and family so they do not fall prey to scams.