



MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER/
CEO

STEVE
YOUNG

A Labor of Love

EACH SEPTEMBER we celebrate Labor Day, a national tribute to the contributions American workers make to the strength and prosperity of our country.

The word labor is defined as an expenditure of physical or mental effort, especially when difficult or compulsory. That definition is not lost on the employees of Hamilton County Electric Cooperative. When the lights go off—whether due to thunderstorms, wildfires, hurricanes or ice storms—our lineworkers leave their families to work tirelessly in harsh and dangerous conditions to restore your power. Other employees handle your phone calls and dispatch crews to get electricity flowing to your home as quickly and safely as possible.

But that doesn't mean the job is a laborious punishment. It's a labor of love.

When the weather goes awry and the calls come in, employees who were safe at home often call in to see if there's anything they can do to help. We've had customer service representatives simply show up to help answer members' calls during a crisis. This is because they care about what they do. They care about the membership. And nothing is more important than making sure that every member is safe and sound—with the power humming—even during inclement weather.

And it's not just when the lights are off that our employees are working hard. Their dedication is evident every day.

Our lineworkers go through extensive training to ensure their safety and that of their fellow crew members. Our office staff is also trained to stay safe around electricity, and this, in turn, helps ensure your safety. Hamilton County EC is always here to educate you about the dangers of electricity, and, through *Texas Co-op Power* and other avenues, we pass along tips to help keep you safe and save you money by making energy-conscious decisions.

We don't do this because it's our job. We do it because we care about you, our members, who are our friends, family and neighbors.

Today I want to ask you, our member-owners, to thank a co-op employee if you see one. Thank them for their commitment, their talent, their hard work and their service to the membership of this co-op. After all, even though our offices will be closed for Labor Day on September 6, if your power goes out, we'll be on our way to fix it, holiday or no holiday. ■

**ALWAYS
CALL
BEFORE YOU
DIG**



FALL IS THE PERFECT TIME to plant trees, shrubs and other plants. But before reaching for that shovel, you need to call 811. This is the national number that connects you to your local call-before-you-dig center, where you can ask for the approximate location of buried utility lines to be marked for free.

Many homeowners incorrectly believe they don't need to call 811 before breaking ground on projects such as tree and shrub planting. A call must be placed to 811 before every digging project, not just for tree and shrub planting, but also for projects such as building a deck, putting in a pole for a basketball goal or installing a mailbox.

There are more than 200,000 unintentional hits to underground utility lines annually across the country, and almost 40% of those happen because someone chose to make a judgment call instead of a phone call to 811.

Unintentionally striking an underground utility line while digging can cause harm to you or those around you, disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, and result in bills to cover repair costs and even fines in some areas.

So play it safe and call 811 before you dig. ■

Beware of Overhead Power Lines on Farms

POWER LINES POSE a major hazard for farmers. Lines over roads and rural areas have a minimum clearance of 18 feet but just 12.5 feet over residential private property.

Before working in a field or around shops or grain bins, always take the time to note the location of power lines so that you can make sure to remain a safe distance from them.

To stay safe around overhead power lines, farm operators and workers must:

- ▶ Always use a spotter when operating large machinery near lines.
- ▶ Use care when raising augers or grain truck beds around power lines.
- ▶ Keep equipment at least 10 feet from lines—at all times, in all directions.
- ▶ Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine clearance.
- ▶ Always lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads.
- ▶ Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for added clearance.
- ▶ Call the electric co-op immediately if a power line is sagging or low.
- ▶ If contact is made with a power line, remember that it is almost always safest to stay on the equipment. Make sure to warn others to stay away and call the co-op immediately.
- ▶ The only reason to exit is if the equipment is on fire. If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together, avoiding touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, “bunny hop” away.
- ▶ If you see someone’s equipment in contact with a power line, the best help you can give is from a safe distance. Make sure to yell out to, signal or call the equipment operator to make sure he or she remains in the vehicle, and notify the cooperative immediately. ■



JENNY SWANSON | ISTOCK.COM

Hamilton County Electric Cooperative Association

CONTACT US

112 E. Gentry St., Hamilton
P.O. Box 753, Hamilton, TX 76531
Local (254) 386-3123
Toll-Free 1-800-595-3401
Web hamiltonelectric.coop

General Manager/CEO

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24/7

Outage Hotline Numbers

For information and to report outages, please call us.

LOCAL
(254) 386-3123

TOLL-FREE
1-800-595-3401

ABOUT HAMILTON COUNTY EC

HCEC owns and maintains more than 4,000 miles of line to provide electric service to more than 12,000 members in Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Mills and San Saba counties.

PAYMENT OPTIONS AND LOCATIONS

Online at hamiltonelectric.coop

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

Bank draft can be set up or bill payments can be charged to a debit or credit card monthly.

Hamilton County EC Office

112 E. Gentry, 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

VISIT US ONLINE

hamiltonelectric.coop

Keep Cool While It's Still Hot Out

UNLESS YOU WANT to keep your thermostat so low that you send your cooling bill through the roof, it's a good idea to find some energy-friendly ways to keep your cool.

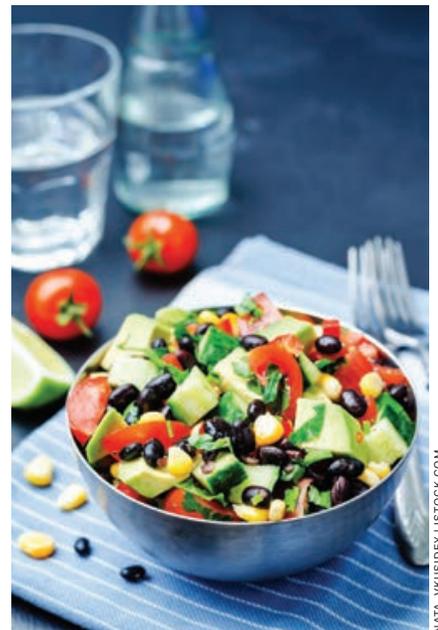
Take cool showers. If your house isn't cold—and there's no reason it should be, even with the air conditioner on—ease up on the hot showers. A cool shower will lower your body temperature and get you just as clean.

Chill the meal plan. Instead of baking, broiling, boiling, sautéing and frying every night, how about making colorful salads and eating raw foods?

Filter the sun. Install solar screens or window films on east- and west-facing windows so you can keep the heat out while allowing the light to come in.

Seal leaks and cracks. You'll find them all over your home—around windows, doors, and electrical and cable outlets. They're easy to caulk and weatherstrip.

Schedule a checkup. Your air conditioning technician can tell you if your AC unit is running efficiently and tweak it so it stays that way. ■



Electrical Safety Basics for Children

PARENTS SHOULD TEACH children a valuable, potentially lifesaving lesson: Respect electricity.

Here are electrical safety basics every child should know:

Mixing water and electricity can kill you. Teach children not to use electric toys or other devices near water or in the rain.

Plugging multiple devices into a single outlet or power strip can create sparks and even cause a fire if that outlet can't handle the load. Teach kids to plug into surge-protected power strips or to use one device at a time and unplug the rest.

When they unplug those devices, they should grab them by the plug, not the cord. Yanking a cord can damage the appliance, the outlet and the plug itself.

Electrical cords can be strangling hazards and might cause electrical burns if they are misused. Make sure youngsters keep cords away from their mouths and necks. It's best to hide cords so they aren't a temptation.

Electrical outlets are receptacles for electrical plugs only. Children should know from an early age that it's a no-no to put foreign objects or fingers into plugs. Sticking other items into an electrical socket can lead to electric shock or death. Use childproof outlet covers.

Flying kites and climbing trees are never safe activities near power lines. If a tree has a power line running through it—or if it's even within reach of the line—it's not a safe place to play. If a kite gets caught in a power line, the child should not tug on it to get it loose. The string could conduct electricity and seriously hurt the child.

Electrical substations are fenced off to keep children and animals out. If a toy or small pet gets inside the fence, the child should tell a parent or teacher, who can call a trained worker to come and retrieve it. ■

Understanding Power Blinks and Surges



LISA BRONITT | ISTOCK.COM

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED your lights blink during a thunderstorm? Or perhaps you've returned home to find your microwave clock blinking despite a sunny day. When this happens, your home has likely experienced a brief disruption to your electric service, which could result from a power blink or surge. While the symptoms of blinks and surges can appear similar, what's happening behind the scenes can be quite different.

Power Blinks

Power blinks are brief service interruptions typically caused by a fault (short circuit) on a power line or a protective device that's working in reaction to the fault. Faults are caused by a variety of disturbances, like squirrels, birds or other small animals contacting an energized power line; tree branches touching a power line; or lightning. In fact, when it comes to power disruptions caused by critters, squirrels reign supreme. In 2019 alone, squirrels were responsible for more than 1,200 outages.

You may also experience a brief interruption when protective devices are working to detect the fault. Believe it or not, these brief power blinks caused by protective devices are actually good because that means the equipment is working as it should to prevent a prolonged outage.

Regardless of the outage cause, Hamilton County Electric Cooperative crews will be on their way to inspect the damage and make necessary repairs. Any time you experience repeated power disruptions, please let us know so we can help you determine the cause and minimize future issues.

Power Surges

Power surges are brief overvoltage spikes or disturbances that can damage, degrade or destroy electronic equipment at your home or business. Most electronics are designed to handle small variations in voltage, but power surges can reach amplitudes of tens of thousands of volts, which can be extremely damaging to electronic equipment.

Surges can be caused by internal sources, like air conditioning systems, or external sources, like lightning and damage to power lines and transformers. We encourage all members to install surge protective devices to safeguard your sensitive electronics. ■

5 Beach Safety Tips for Labor Day

IF YOUR LABOR DAY plans include a holiday to one of Texas' 367 miles of coastline this year, remember to stay safe with these tips from the American Red Cross.

Be aware that swimming in the ocean is different from swimming in a pool. Be sure you have the skills and strength for the conditions. Know your limitations and make sure you have enough energy to swim back to shore.

Swim only at a beach with a lifeguard, within the designated swimming area. Obey all instructions and orders from lifeguards.

Swim sober and with a buddy.

Walk carefully into open waters. Watch out for and avoid aquatic life, which might be dangerous.

If you are caught in a rip current, try not to panic. Signal to those onshore that you need assistance. Swim parallel to the shore until you are out of the current. Once you are free, swim toward shore. If you can't swim to the shore, float or tread water until you are free of the rip current and then head toward shore. ■



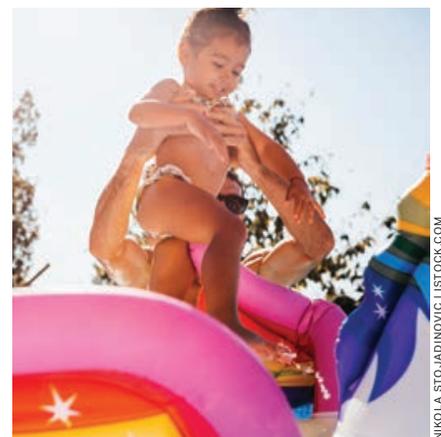
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Work and Play Safely Around Water

FEW THINGS ARE more refreshing on a hot day than cool water—in the shower or pool, under a sprinkler, or even from a garden hose.

Yet few things are as dangerous around the home as water that comes into contact with electricity. So:

- ▶ Keep electrically powered toys, appliances, outdoor TVs, electric grills—anything with a plug—far from the pool, sprinkler system, sink and hoses. And keep them out of the rain, even if it's only sprinkling.
- ▶ If an electric toy or appliance lands in water, don't touch it—and teach your children the same. Electricity travels quickly through water, so touching anything electric that's wet can lead to a shock or worse—electrocution.
- ▶ Have an electrician check the electrical connections to pools, hot tubs, fountains and other outdoor water sources. They should be grounded.
- ▶ If you use extension cords to reach outlets for washers, dishwashers, air conditioners or other appliances in wet spaces, disconnect them. Those appliances should be plugged into grounded outlets.
- ▶ Teach everyone in your household where your home's circuit breakers are located and how to switch them off during an emergency. ■



NIKOLA STOJADINOVIC | ISTOCK.COM



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Leave Lawn Ready for Spring

BEFORE YOUR LAWN goes dormant for the season, give it a little pampering so that it will look its best next year. Some care and maintenance now can mean a thick and verdant lawn next spring.

Remove leaves. A layer of leaves blocks light and traps in too much moisture. Your grass will thank you for keeping up with leaf blowing or raking so that it won't get soggy or decay over the winter.

Keep mowing. Grass grows throughout the winter in warm climates and up until the first hard freeze in colder places. Setting your mower deck to a high level will help grass maintain moisture and resist matting. Don't mow it too short because that affects the root system, making it less likely to withstand winter conditions.

Continue watering. Just the rain and dew might not be enough to sustain your lawn, so keep the sprinklers or irrigation system going until there's a risk of a freeze.

Aerate the soil. Using a core aerator every couple of years prevents soil compaction and breaks up debris that blocks sunshine and nutrients.

Fertilize. An extra shot of nutrients found in lawn fertilizer can help your grass get through the winter. Consider a slow-release fertilizer that is high in nitrogen. Fertilizing in the fall helps your turf fight disease, boosts drought tolerance, replenishes nutrients and enriches the soil, and promotes healthy root growth. To maximize the benefits, apply after aerating.

Spread seed. Healthy and prolific grass offers good protection against weeds, so sprinkle some more seed over existing turf. Fall is the ideal time to reseed because the days are not as hot and the nights are cool. Remember to apply seed where it can contact the soil and to keep seeds moist until they germinate. ■

Don't Fall Victim to Utility Scams



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EVERY DAY, millions of Americans are targeted by scammers through phone calls, emails, text messages and websites and in person. Scammers' tactics can change daily, which is why it's important for consumers to stay on top of the latest scam reports.

Electric co-op members have been targeted through a phone scam purporting that power will be shut off unless immediate payment is received. Remember, Hamilton County Electric Cooperative will never call you and demand immediate payment without notice.

We want you to be aware of two other trending scam tactics. One is the overpayment trick, in which a scammer contacts you and claims that you have overpaid your utility bill. The scammer will say they need your personal banking information to deposit the extra funds back into your checking account. Don't fall for this scam! If you make an overpayment to us, Hamilton County EC will automatically apply the credit to your account, which will carry over to the next billing cycle.

Another trending scam is called smishing (short for Short Message Service, or SMS, phishing). Many consumers know to watch out for suspicious emails, but we tend to trust text messages sent to our smartphones. Always question suspicious texts, especially from someone claiming to represent a utility. Hamilton County EC will only send you important updates via text if you've signed up for our text alert service.

Here are a few reminders on how to take control of the situation when you've been targeted by a scammer:

Take your time. Utility scammers try to create a sense of urgency so that you'll act fast and hand over personal information without thinking. Take a moment to evaluate the situation before acting.

Be suspicious. Scammers typically request immediate payment through prepaid debit cards or third-party smartphone apps. Unusual requests like this should raise red flags. Remember, if the request seems strange and out of the ordinary, you're likely being targeted by a scammer.

Confirm before you act. If you're contacted by someone claiming to represent Hamilton County EC or another utility but you're unsure, just hang up the phone and call the utility directly. You can reach us at (254) 386-3123 to verify the situation. ■



LAURI PATTERSON | ISTOCK.COM

Beach House Pasta

- 2 teaspoons dried shrimp**
- 1 pound angel hair pasta or linguine**
- 3 tablespoons olive oil**
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced**
- Pinch crumbled chile pequin**
- 1 pound rock shrimp or other small shrimp, peeled and deveined, cut into small pieces**
- Kosher salt**
- 1 tablespoon chopped tarragon**
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley**
- Finely grated zest of 1 lemon**
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice, plus more to finish**
- 3 tablespoons cold butter, diced**
- 2 scallions, sliced**

1. Grind dried shrimp with mortar and pestle; set aside.
2. Cook pasta in a large pot of boiling salted water until al dente. Drain it, reserving 1½ cups liquid.
3. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the garlic and chile and cook, stirring, about 1–2 minutes. Add rock shrimp, season with salt and cook, tossing, 1–2 minutes. Add the tarragon, parsley, lemon zest and juice, pasta, ¾ cup pasta cooking liquid, and butter, and toss to coat. Cook, tossing and adding more of the cooking liquid as needed, until sauce is glossy and coats pasta, and shrimp are cooked, about 3 minutes. Season with salt if needed.
4. Divide pasta among bowls and top with scallions and reserved dried shrimp.

Serves 4–6.

 Find this and more delicious recipes online at [TexasCoopPower.com](https://www.texascooppower.com).

Community Calendar

Hamilton County Electric Cooperative is actively monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic. The following community event information was gathered in late July with sincere hopes that these events will be held. Please contact event sources directly to confirm event dates and details.

Comanche

Pow Wow, September 25–26, City Park, 1200 Comanche Trails. A heritage festival with artisan and craft vendors, an antique tractor show, one of the largest classic car shows in North Central Texas, a Texas Motorcycle Roadriders Association motorcycle show, live entertainment, a state-sanctioned barbecue cook-off, photography and art show, and fantastic food.

Sippin' in the Sunshine, October 2, 11 a.m.–3 p.m., courthouse square. Come join us in sippin' wine, snacking on samples and shopping around town. Wine from Texas vineyards will be available to sip while you shop, and there will be vendors, food trucks and live music.

Halloween Event, October 30.

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

Copperas Cove

Farmers Market, each Thursday through October, 4–7 p.m., at the corner of Avenue D and Second Street. Offering locally grown produce and handcrafted items. Sponsored by the city of Copperas Cove Parks and Recreation. For more information, contact Ashley Wilson at (254) 542-2719 or awilson@copperascovetx.gov.

Gallop or Trot 5K, September 17, City Park, 1206 W. Ave. B.

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

Fall Chill, September 25, all day, around the downtown square on Highway 281. Chili cook-off and car show.

For information about Evant events, contact P-Cay Burkhalter at (254) 791-5441 or pcay@buenavistawildlifefafari.com.

Gatesville

Spurfest, September 18, 8 a.m.–4 p.m., Coryell Museum and Historical Center, 718 E. Main St. A celebration of Gatesville's history and frontier heritage. Free admission.

Cruzin Cruzers Car Show, September 18, 9 a.m.–4 p.m., around the courthouse square. Free admission. There will be food, vendors and more than 200 cars.

Old Time Fiddlers Contest, September 18, noon–6 p.m., Gatesville City Auditorium, 110 N. 8th St. Free admission.

Chamber Market Days, second Saturday, 8 a.m.–noon, in the parking lot of the historic Cotton Belt Depot, 2307 S. Highway 36. Browse vendors offering fresh fruits and veggies, metal decor, honey, salsa, jellies, baked goods, plants, homemade crafts, furniture, clothing, and much more.

For more information about Gatesville events, call the Gatesville Chamber of Commerce at (254) 865-2617 or visit gatesvilletx.info.

Goldthwaite

For more information about Goldthwaite events, visit goldthwaiteareachamber.com or call the Goldthwaite Area Chamber of Commerce at (325) 648-3619.



Cruzin Cruzers Car Show
September 18
GATESVILLE

Hamilton

Circle T Arena, 4007 W. Highway 36.

For information on upcoming events, visit circuitarena.net/calendar or call (254) 386-3559.

Hamilton County Heritage Days, September 2–5, Hamilton Fair Park. Enjoy a weekend full of concerts, vendors, a rodeo and much more.

Trick or Treat Around the Square, October 29, 3:30–5 p.m.

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

Hico

Girls Night Out, September 9, begins at 4 p.m., shop closing times vary.

Poker Run, September 18.

Downtown Trick or Treat, October 29, 3:30–5:30 p.m.

Choctoberfest, events all month. For information, visit facebook.com/choctoberfesthico or visithicotexas.com/events.

For information about Hico events, visit hicochamber.com or facebook.com/hicochamberofcommerce, call (254) 434-1249, or email chamberhico@gmail.com or bluestarhico@gmail.com.

Kempner

For information about Kempner events, call Kempner City Hall at (512) 932-2180.

Lampasas

Lampasas Trade Days; September 4–5, October 2–3; 9 a.m.–4 p.m., 2646 E. Highway 190. Merchandise includes antiques, collectibles, quilts, crafts, folk and fine art, new home furnishings, shabby chic furniture, new clothing, jewelry, candles, handbags, electronics, iron works, outdoor decor, plants, tools and food. For more information, contact Barbara Postel at (512) 734-1294.

Lampasas Beer Barn LTX Barbecue Fest, September 10–11, Lampasas County Youth Livestock Barn, U.S. Highway 281 South. Music, vendors, food and fun.

Classics at the Classic, September 11, 9 a.m.–2 p.m., Storm's Drive-In, 201 N. Key Ave. Free car show featuring cars from before 1990. For more information, contact Sharon Carrigan at (512) 734-5180.

Indian Artifact, Gem and Mineral Show, September 18, 9 a.m.–4 p.m., Lampasas County Youth Livestock Barn, U.S. Highway 281 S. For more information, email info@visionlampasas.org.

Lampasas County Wine Tour, September 25. Join us for a chartered tour of Lampasas County wineries. Enjoy tastings, breakfast, lunch, snacks, a swag bag, prizes and more.

Squared Silly, October 30, 5–7:30 p.m., downtown square. Come enjoy a hayride, haunted house, bounce houses and other fun activities. Kids costume contest in several age divisions as well as a family category. For more information, contact Dianna Hodges at (512) 525-1871. This event is hosted by Vision Lampasas. Small fees charged for activities, with most proceeds supporting local nonprofits.

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

Lometa

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

Pearl

Pearl Bluegrass; September 11, October 2; doors open at 7 a.m.; Pearl Community Center; 6301 FM 183. Jams and stage shows throughout the day. Acoustic bands (no electric instruments) and musicians are invited. No fee to play onstage or watch the shows. For information on how to sign up to perform, contact Anji Pearl Day at (325) 665-7996. Kitchen open 11 a.m.–5 p.m. RV parking with full hook-ups available on a

first-come, first-park basis, 30 amps are \$20, and 50 amps are \$25. For more information, visit pearltxcommunitycenter.com or the Pearl Community Center Facebook page.

Pearl Book Cottage; September 11, October 2; 10 a.m.–5 p.m. All kinds of books and resale items. Payment by donation with all proceeds going to charity. For more information call (254) 865-9282 or (254) 865-5864.

Pidcoke

For more information about Pidcoke United Methodist Church events, call (254) 300-6342 or visit pidcoke-umc.org.

San Saba

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

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 is published monthly and contains 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.



POWER TIP

Cooler weather is on its way! Is your home's heating system ready for winter? Maintenance and upgrades can help you save.

RIDOFRAZ | ISTOCK.COM