

Making The Roads Safer



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER/CEO JERRY BOZE

SAFETY IS, WAS AND ALWAYS WILL BE A PRIORITY AT Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative. This includes the safety of you, our members, as well as that of our employees.

We are proud of our safety record and the measures that we put in place to safeguard those who work to bring you a steady supply of electricity. That especially goes for our lineworkers and support crews, who have some of the most dangerous jobs around.

Our constant focus on safety includes meetings and classes in which employees receive training in staying safe around dangerous equipment and in hazardous situations. Our co-op's strategic plan always contains a strong safety component designed to keep our workers and the public out of harm's way.



While some of our crews' most dangerous work is high in the sky, distracted drivers on the ground also pose a significant risk. Here TVEC crews work to restore an outage after a wire was broken across a road in Van Zandt County in early January.

Working around electricity, often far above the ground and in all weather conditions, is inherently dangerous. But not all the dangers our employees face come from the weather, climbing or power lines. If you are not paying attention when you are behind the wheel, the danger might come from *you*.

Sometimes the job of building a line or restoring power places our crews at the sides of narrow roads that run through our service territory. It's in these situations that you can help keep your electric cooperative workers safe.

and line crews working, give them and the road ahead all of your attention.

Slow down and, if it is safe, move over to give crews as much space as possible.

Respect traffic cones, flashing lights and other signals. They could be the only thing between your car and workers or equipment.

With your cooperation, the dangers of line work don't have to be increased by traffic. There is much our crews can do to enhance their safety, but there's not much protection from a distracted driver.

Please be careful, be aware, slow down and help protect TVEC's most valuable asset: our people.



WE LOVE OUR MEMBERS!

Happy
Valentine's Day
February 14

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*Give friends
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The Best of Typically Texas Cookbook features more than 700 best-loved recipes (with more than 300 desserts) from two of our most popular cookbooks.

Now available at TVEC office locations. Come by and purchase your copy today!

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.

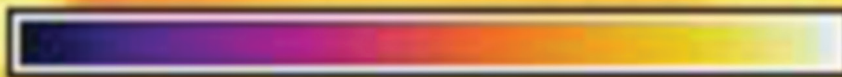
Do not fall for a “recovery” scam. Don’t give anybody any more money on the promise that they will get your lost money back. It’s just another scam.

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

Visualizing Heat Loss

Thermal imaging technology shows a few things your house may be hiding

25°F



58°F

December and January brought some seriously cold temperatures for the first time this winter. As home heating units struggled to keep interior temperatures 50 degrees warmer than outdoors, energy use spiked, and concerned Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative members began to call for help.

For TVEC Energy Management Advisor Chris Walker, the extreme temperatures became an opportunity to educate members about steps to take for lower electricity usage and to reduce bills.

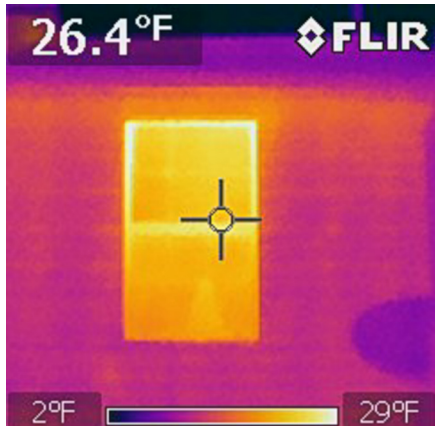
“My mantra is always ‘Keep more of what you make,’ because once you have used the power to heat your home, the whole idea is to keep that heat inside with you,” Walker said. “There are two major things we work on for both energy efficiency and comfort—air sealing and insulation. These two areas make the biggest impact, and they can be addressed even before big-ticket items like new windows or appliances.”

Feeling the discomfort of a cold house is easy enough, but with a little help from technology you can get a look at where the heat escapes. A thermal imaging camera like the one used for TVEC’s free home energy audits, can spot air gaps, poorly insulated areas and other problem areas.

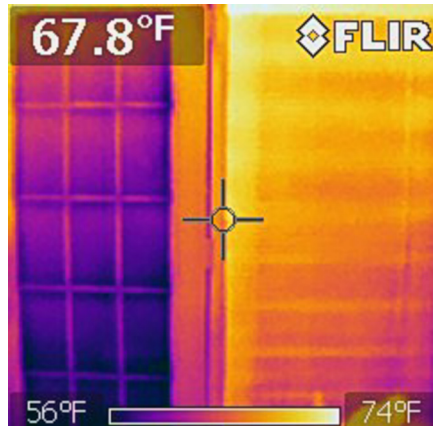


Winter cold like we experienced in January makes a big impact on home energy use. Some problems are easy to spot, but others only stand out when you look at them through the eyes of a thermal imaging camera.

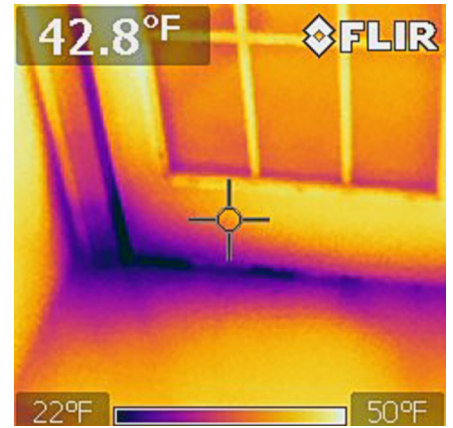
“Really you have to start with air gaps, because a cycle of hot air blowing out and cold air blowing back really works against your heater,” Walker said. “As homes age and go through seasonal heat cycles, gaps can open up. Doors and windows are the



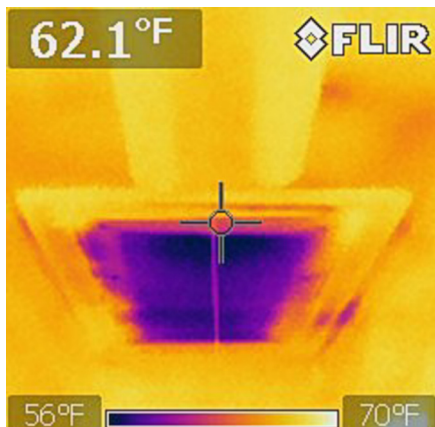
From the outside, the warm glow from the aluminum window frames was a sure sign of inefficiency. The amount of heat coming through the exterior walls was even more of a surprise to the residents.



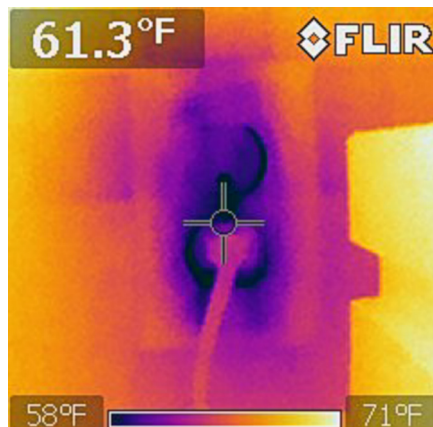
On the right, a simple bamboo-style window blind has gaps, but still offers a measure of insulation compared to the bare windows in the adjacent door.



Completely worn weather stripping and threshold areas left an air gap at the bottom of this door. While the coldest surface was measured at 22 degrees, the airflow was even colder.



Less obvious sources of heat loss like this attic access door show up clearly using thermal imaging. Weatherstripping and foam panels could make a quick and cost-effective upgrade here.



While professional help may be required for a permanent fix, temporary measures can prevent air leaks from areas such as electrical plugs, phone jacks and holes for plumbing.

most obvious places to check, but floors, wall joints, electrical outlets and any wall openings can have gaps over time.”

The solutions for sealing your home against leaks depends on the problem area, but most are relatively inexpensive. Caulking around windows and weatherstripping for doors can be effective, while spray foam can be used for many areas that are out of sight. Clear film for covering damaged or inefficient window openings is available at most hardware stores. 72935001

Insulating problem areas can include some simple fixes as well. Rolled towels can help at window frames and door thresholds. Rugs can help with both comfort and heat loss on cold floors, and taking time to close curtains and blinds can slow heat transfer at windows.

On January 2, we put the camera

to the test. With outside temperatures in the mid-teens, it wasn't hard to find exactly where the heat was getting out of the home, which was built in the early 1980's.

“From outside, you can see how the windows just glow, and you know that is taking heat right out of the home,” Walker said. “From inside, you can start looking at smaller spots that are less obvious like the attic access door and poorly insulated spots in the ceiling.”

Also clear in the thermal images was the dramatic difference between windows with curtains and those without.

“Direct sunlight through your windows can help you feel warmer during the day, but it costs a lot in heat loss to leave the curtains open any other time, and that is hard because most people don't want to be in a dark house either,”

Walker said. “The key in all of this is finding a way to be comfortable, but constantly thinking about ways to stop losing the heat that you have made.”

For more energy-saving tips and information about TVEC's free home energy audits for members, visit tvec.net or call TVEC member services at 1-800-766-9576.

Weatherization Assistance

Cold weather disproportionately impacts people with less resources to make upgrades. Weatherization help is available through government and community resources such as these listed below.

Greater East Texas Community Action Program

get-cap.org
800-621-5746

Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs

tdhca.state.tx.us/community-affairs/wap



Keep Kids and Sitter Safe

IMAGINE THIS: IT'S VALENTINE'S DAY, AND YOU'RE PLANNING A NIGHT OUT. YOU'VE reserved a table and booked a babysitter. You've gone over everything: instructions for the kids' routines, important contact information and where to find supplies.

But did you also prepare your home? With a little preparation, you can help ensure your children's safety, make your babysitter's life easier and secure a peaceful night out for yourself.

First, your home's electrical system should be in good working order. Looking for and repairing electrical problems well before your evening out is an important step in preventing electrical accidents.

Cracked outlet covers and discolored outlets and switches are indications of electrical problems. These problems can lead to fires and electric shocks. Contact a professional to have your home inspected and any problems repaired.

These additional tips can help increase safety awareness, eliminate electrical hazards and put your mind at ease:

- ▶ Repair or dispose of damaged electronics and cords.
- ▶ Keep cords out of sight so that children are not tempted to play with them.
- ▶ Use outlet covers or tamper-resistant receptacles. Tamper-resistant outlets have a shutter system to keep them safe.
- ▶ Use ground-fault circuit interrupters to prevent shocks. You should have GFCIs anywhere that water and electricity may meet, such as in bathrooms and kitchens.
- ▶ Have ready a fire extinguisher that is rated for electrical fires. Be sure your babysitter knows where it is and how to use it.
- ▶ Install smoke alarms, and be sure their batteries work.
- ▶ Post a list of emergency phone numbers that includes contact info for your electric cooperative.

With preparation, you can make sure that your children are in the safe comfort of home while you enjoy your night out.

Win \$25 Just for Reading

Somewhere, hidden on Pages 18–23, is a TVEC account number. Read closely. If the account number is yours, contact the Member Services Department by February 28 to receive a \$25 credit on your electric bill. Don't miss out—you could be a winner!



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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Operating in Anderson, Dallas, Henderson, Hunt, Kaufman and Van Zandt counties

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tvec.net

Operation Round Up
SPOTLIGHT
Your donations are
making a difference!

Area Fire Departments Receive Operation Round Up Grants

Each of the 53 fire departments in the TVEC service area received \$2,500 TVEC Charitable Foundation grants in December. The grants mark the fifth year of first responder support from members' Operation Round Up donations.

"More than 92 percent of TVEC members participate in Operation Round Up, and their generosity is what allows us to do this," TVEC Chief Communications Officer Jeff Lane told the firefighters. "We can't thank you enough for the time that you put in and the danger that you face to make our community better and safer. Our members really appreciate what you do for us."



First responders from around the TVEC service area gathered in December, 2017 for a short electrical safety training session and lunch in Athens, top and Kaufman. In all, 53 municipal and volunteer fire departments received \$2,500 each from Operation Round Up donations by TVEC members.

THE TVEC CHARITABLE FOUNDATION recently awarded 57 grants totaling \$145,000. Recipients of the grants include the above and:

Jefferson Street Boxing Club

\$1,500

The Jefferson Street Boxing Club serves the Kaufman area with youth programs emphasizing personal development, including boxing instruction, study aids, academic tutoring and Bible study.

Wills Point ISD Education Foundation

\$5,000

The newly founded Wills Point ISD Education Foundation will fund innovating teaching projects and dual credit opportunities for students.

Henderson County Food Pantry

\$5,000

The Henderson County Food Pantry provides food assistance to people in the Athens area and beyond, serving more than 14,000 individuals in 2016.

Athens Teenage Baseball Association

\$1,000

ATBA provides baseball opportunities for Athens-area youth. The Operation Round Up Grant is specified for use for player scholarships.

Founded in 2013, the TVEC Charitable Foundation is an independent, nonprofit organization. The foundation was created to serve the community and help improve the quality of life for residents in our service area. **The foundation is funded entirely by donations from TVEC members who participate in Operation Round Up.** For more information, please call 1-800-766-9576 or visit tvec.net.