

country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

East Central Electric (ECE) recently learned that members are getting uninvited visits from solar sales reps. While saving energy and money is something your co-op staff understands and encourages, it's important to be on alert for potential scams.

"Unfortunately, the solar industry is not immune to businesses and individuals who try to scam consumers. If an offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is," says Billy Moore, ECE director of member and public relations.

Moore helps co-op members avoid scams by checking the solar contracts for flaws that could result in home liens and increased financial risk. Some companies use deceptive business practices that tie people into lengthy contracts that force them to buy the electricity produced by solar panels at exorbitant rates. Salespeople may try to mislead consumers into believing that they work for their local electric company.

Moore urges members to contact the co-op if they are approached by a solar

Avoid Solar Scams

Beware of the sunshine sales rep that promises you the moon



and can make their decision based on the most accurate information available," he adds.

Moore recommends members avoid solar companies that use the following sales techniques:

- Door-knocking
- Cold calls
- High-pressure tactics that require consumers to sign up on the spot

If you receive an unexpected call, email, or personal visit from someone using these methods, you've probably been targeted by a solar scam, especially if they demand immediate payment or push you to sign-up immediately. If

company. ECE staff can provide a wealth of experience and data gleaned from operating the co-op's 950-panel Community Solar Project.

"We support and are experienced with solar and other renewables, and are happy to answer your questions. We just want to make sure our members are protected,

you feel unsure, ask for their company details and tell them you will contact them later. In the meantime, check to see if their business is legitimate.

"We certainly don't want to give the impression that all solar companies are out to scam you. But when an unfamiliar organization or salesperson contacts you, it's always wise to contact the company on your own to verify their identity," Moore adds.

Check customer reviews of the company online and through the Better Business Bureau. If you're serious about solar, be sure to get bids from three to four companies and compare the numbers. Before signing a solar contract, be sure to ask the following questions:

- What if I want to sell my house?
- How can I get out of my contract?
- What will it cost to get out of my contract?
- Will my monthly rate per kilowatt hour or monthly leasing charge for the solar panels automatically go up every year?

Solar panels are a big investment for any home or business owner. It pays to look closely at the details. ☺

To learn more about solar panels for your home or business, solar energy production, and other renewable resources, please call Billy Moore at **918-756-0833** or visit www.ecoec.com.

WAY TO GO!

**Co-op Member Honored
With FFA Award**

At a special gala on February 1 in Oklahoma City, the Oklahoma FFA Foundation presented East Central Electric member Monte Womack with its first-ever Alumni Believer award. The award recognizes Oklahoma FFA Alumni who demonstrate incredible passion and effort to support Foundation programs.

*Monte Womack*

Womack, of Morris, Okla., is a former state FFA officer, retired agricultural educator, and a past chairman of the Oklahoma FFA Alumni Association and the Oklahoma FFA Foundation. He has received numerous agriculture industry-related awards at the local, state and national level. Most recently, he received the National Association of Agricultural Educators Outstanding Service Citation. Womack was first to provide sponsorship for the Oklahoma Agriculture Education Teachers Association scholarship program, and actively volunteers to help with youth activities throughout the year, including the state FFA convention and the Oklahoma Youth Expo swine show.

"The first Alumni Believer Award couldn't go to a more deserving individual than Monte," said Kendall Brashears, interim executive director of the Oklahoma FFA Foundation. "His constant support and dedication to the Oklahoma FFA organization has positively impacted the lives of countless students."

To learn more about your elected trustees, or to view a district map, please visit www.ecoec.com. To contact your trustee, please call 918-756-0833.

**notes from
the chair**

by Lowell Hobbs, President, East Central Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees

**Flushing Out The Truth**

East Central Electric Co-op is making plans for district meetings on June 11 and our annual meeting on July 23. These events are important to our co-op, and we hope to see many of you there.

Our fiber-to-the-home project is steadily advancing. Each week, ecoLink connects more homes to our fiber-based internet service. If you have not communicated your interest in these services, please call the co-op office at 918-756-0833. The level of member interest in a particular area will help us determine which part of our service area we will connect next.

Everyone seems to be in a hurry for things to happen. I visited with some friends in the middle of January, and one of them said, "I wish spring would hurry up and get here."

"I can tell you how to hurry it up," I replied. "Go down to the bank and get you a ninety-day loan. You'll be surprised how quickly that ninety days will pass!"

Oh, one more thing about the outdoor toilets I mentioned last month. Without running water and electricity to heat and cool it, the outhouse was not a place where you wanted to spend a lot of time. Before toilet tissue, we kept the old magazines or a clean pile of corn cobs in the outhouse. Can you imagine the hygiene?

My grandpa sent a penny postcard to Sears, Roebuck & Company and asked them to send a few rolls of toilet tissue. They wrote back and told him to order it from their 1,005-page catalog. He replied,



"Without running water and electricity to heat and cool it, the outhouse was not a place where you wanted to spend a lot of time."

"If you send me your 1,005-page catalog, we won't need toilet paper for a while."

Putting the bathroom inside the house has caused a lot of family arguments. *Mama, Sister won't come out of the bathroom so I can use it!* When someone figured out to put multiple bathrooms in the house, it was good. Today, having multiple bathrooms in the home is almost as thrilling as having electricity. Now we can sit on the pot in our private indoor, air-conditioned bathrooms, laptops in hand, computing away. What a life! ☺

Lowell Hobbs represents ECE District #2. To reach him, please call his cellphone at **918-695-5289**.

Talk To Us

Do you have questions or suggestions that will help ECE serve you better? Please contact us via email at info@ecoec.com, or call 918-756-0833. We appreciate your opinion!

 INNOVATIONS

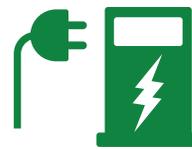

Is It Time To Drive **Electric?**

ECE has information that can help you decide.

Fuel savings aside, there are plenty of reasons why a rural driver might want to trade in their gas-guzzling car for an all-electric vehicle (EV). They are fast, fun to drive, and cost less to maintain than a traditional car because they have fewer parts. No need for oil changes, either. But that doesn't make an EV the perfect fit for every consumer. It's helpful to weigh the benefits and drawbacks based on your individual driving habits and needs.

That's where your electric co-op comes in. East Central Electric offers an online EV resource guide that helps you make the best decision. When you click on the EV link found on our home page, you will find answers to all of your EV questions. A savings calculator helps you compare the cost of driving a traditional car to an EV using current fuel costs for our area. A straightforward questionnaire "Is an EV Right for You" helps determine if an EV is suitable for you based on your lifestyle and driving habits. If an EV seems like a good fit, use our web resource to check out available makes and models, compare prices, battery range, and other details.

East Central Electric added an EV to its fleet last year. Please contact us with questions, or drop by and see the car for yourself. We're happy to share our experience. In the meantime, plug in to www.ecoec.com and see if an EV is right for you. ☺



\$863

Annual estimated fuel savings for drivers logging roughly 15,000 miles per year. *Figure based on current energy and fuel costs.

Check out our online guide to EVs at www.ecoec.com



Can We *Help* You Help Others?

Apply now for funding assistance from Operation Roundup

East Central Electric service territory is filled with organizations doing good things for local residents and communities. Sometimes these groups could use some extra money to help them help others.

2020

OPERATION ROUNDUP
Application Deadlines

April 1
July 1
October 1

Find details and funding applications at
www.ecoec.com.

That's the purpose behind East Central Electric Operation Round-Up program. Operation Roundup provides funding to local civic clubs, youth groups, community projects, and more.

The Operation Roundup grant foundation board meets in January, April, July and October to decide on funding requests from individuals, families and non-profit groups. Board members review applications on their own, and then again at their meeting. Each application is discussed before a decision is made.

Find funding applications and other details at www.ecoec.com. The next application deadline is April 1.

Valuable Rebates Can Help Every Member Save \$\$

East Central Electric (ECE) offers free energy audits and other services to help lower your home energy costs. We also offer hundreds of dollars in rebates to help make energy efficiency improvements more affordable.

Visit www.ecoec.com or call ECE at **918-756-0833** to learn how you can earn cash back on geothermal heat pumps, Marathon water heaters, room AC's, and programmable thermostats. If you schedule a home energy audit with us, ECE will pay up to \$500 toward the cost of updates and/or repairs you make based on the energy auditor's recommendations.

operation round-up

MONTHLY UPDATE



Operation Roundup funds support local charitable organizations, civic groups, youth programs, community services, and needy families. For more information on this voluntary bill roundup program, please visit us online at www.ecoec.com.

Applications reviewed.....	1,542
Applications granted.....	771
Applications denied.....	336
Applications tabled.....	28
Scholarships awarded.....	\$245,000
<hr/>	
Total Disbursements.....	\$1,891,971.86
Average member contribution.....	48¢



Black-Eyed Pea Gumbo

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1 tablespoon olive oil | 4 (15 oz) cans black-eyed peas w/ liquid |
| 1 medium onion, chopped | 1 (10 oz) can diced tomatoes and green chiles |
| 1 medium green bell pepper, chopped | 1 (14.5 oz) can diced tomatoes |
| 5 stalks celery, chopped | 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped |
| 2 cups chicken broth | |
| 1 cup brown rice | |

DIRECTIONS

Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat, and cook the onion, pepper, and celery until tender. Pour in the chicken broth, and mix in rice, black-eyed peas with liquid, diced tomatoes and green chiles, diced tomatoes, and garlic. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer 45 minutes, or until rice is tender. Add water if soup is too thick.

Source: allrecipes.com



ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

If your home experiences flooding, be aware that submerged outlets or electrical cords may energize standing water. Never enter a flooded area until it has been determined safe to do so by a professional.

SOURCE: ELECTRICAL SAFETY FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL



East Central
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

PO Box 1178
2001 S. Wood Drive
Okmulgee, Oklahoma 74447-1178

(918) 756-0833
www.ecoec.com



OFFICE HOURS:

Monday-Friday, 8 am - 4:30 pm.

POWER OUTAGE HOT LINE

(918) 756-0833

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Lowell Hobbs, District 2
President

Larry Harvey, District 1
Vice President

Dwight Luther, District 7
Secretary Treasurer

Jim Hall, District 6
Asst. Sec. Treasurer

Ed Kloeckler, District 5
Michael Vernnon, District 4

Max Shoemake, District 3

Tim Smith
General Manager

PAYMENT OPTIONS

- Pay online at www.ecoec.com using SmartHub, or download the app.
- Pay by phone using VISA, Mastercard or Discover at 866-999-4584. Available 24 hours a day. Convenience fee associated with payments.
- Pay with cash or credit/debit card at participating Moneygram or Pay Site locations. Convenience fee associated with payments.
- Pay using our drive-through window or lobby, Monday - Friday, 8 am to 4:30 pm.
- Pay via automatic draft of your checking or savings account. Sign up online or download the ebill form for easy automatic payments at www.ecoec.com.