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country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Full Speed Ahead

ecoLINK Fiber Broadband Enters Phase III

High speed internet and telephone service coming to co-op members near Beggs, Bixby, Glenpool, Henryetta, Nuyaka and Okemah

Good news, co-op members! ecoLINK, East Central Electric's fiber broadband subsidiary, announced it is entering Phase III of its five-phase fiber build out.

Phase III includes the fiber huts and feeders of Bald Hill 1, Bald Hill 4,

Beggs 3, Beggs 4, Bixby 3, Bixby 4, Glenpool 1, Glenpool 3, Henryetta West 3, Henryetta West 4, Nuyaka 1, Nuyaka 3, Okemah 2 and Okemah 3. Officials expect feeders and fiber huts to be ready to serve members by March 2022. Fiber huts serve as the main switchboards for the network.

ecoLINK's fiber broadband internet offers upload/download speeds of 100 Mbps or 1 GB Mbps with packages starting at \$55/month. Phone service includes unlimited long distance within 50 states, caller ID, call waiting, call forwarding, and call blocking for \$35/month. Bundle phone and internet and save \$60/year.

Interested in ecoLINK services? Be sure to register (see steps below). Registration ensures that you are notified when your area is open for orders. Registration does not obligate you to receive fiber service, but it can help you beat the rush of anticipated orders. ☎

Get ahead of the crowd! Register online following the steps below so we can notify you when your area is open for orders.

For more details, please give us a call at 918-756-0833, or visit www.ecoLINK.coop.

Steps to register for email notifications regarding ecoLINK fiber

- STEP 1**
Go to www.ecoec.com and click on "ecoLINK fiber" button that will take you to www.ecoLINK.coop.
- STEP 2**
Click on "Check Availability" in upper right corner.
- STEP 3**
Follow prompts to complete registration. This step ensures you'll be notified by email when your area/feeder is open for orders.
- STEP 4**
The "dashboard" will provide information about whether or not your fiber hut and feeder is open for orders.
- STEP 5**
You'll receive an email when your area is open for orders. You will then need to call 918-756-0833 to place your order for ecoLINK fiber.

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

Merging Lanes

By the time you read this, Christmas 2020 will be over and 2021 in the picture. Hopefully no bad weather and no catastrophes, but if so, East Central Electric crews will have responded in their normal way.

So many accomplishments in the last few years—a new office facility, solar farm, high speed internet, and record breaking attendance at our district meetings and the ECE Drive-Thru Annual Meeting.

The board continues to meet monthly, in person or via telephone, because of Covid. What a disruption to our lives, but our co-op stays strong and vigilant.

This summer, District 2 and District 5 board seats will be up for election, and plans for the annual meeting will be underway. The format of the 2021 meeting is still uncertain. We did learn a few things from last year's meeting that will improve the meeting process this year. Stay tuned for updates.

Over the years, I have worked with many types of people. I enjoy and prefer those workers and friends who have a "go get'em" attitude, an easy smile, a light heart, and a positive attitude. Those that enjoy life are fun to be around, and it's contagious. Try it and see.

A common statement these days is, "Stay in your lane." I believe sometimes

you have to change lanes to get ahead, or to just get where you want to go.

That doesn't mean it's okay to run over or take advantage of others, but it is okay to broaden your outlook.

"For years, your co-op was thought of as a rural electric provider; however, in our efforts to improve the lives of our members, we merged with the broadband lane."

Take East Central Electric's fiber broadband program. For years, your co-op was thought of as a rural electric provider; however, in our efforts to improve

the lives of our members, we merged with the broadband lane. Oh, the changes we have seen over the last 82 years— and more are on the way!

My Grandma and Grandpa were regular attendees and members of their small Stonebluff Baptist Church. On one stormy night, Grandpa went to the service alone and fell asleep during the sermon. The electricity went off, and the preacher announced they would have silent prayer while waiting to see if the lights would come back on.

The silence caused Grandpa to wake up, and through the dark stillness he said, "Well, I'll be damned, they've all gone off and left me."

The preacher responded, "No, Brother Lawrence, we're all still right here."

Remember this the next time your lights go out. You aren't alone. Your East Central Electric crews are on the way! 🙌

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



Special Announcement

Pandemic Puts Co-op Youth Programs On Hold

This time of year your East Central Electric (ECE) staff are usually busy traveling to schools, sharing information on summer programs such as Youth Tour and Energy Camp.

But during a pandemic, normal is out. The situation regarding public health and safety is unpredictable, making it nearly impossible to plan ahead for programs involving travel and public gatherings of more than six people.

The uncertainty of the situation in Oklahoma, as well as other states, forces state and national Youth Tour coordinators to delay plans for the time being. We understand their concerns, and appreciate the care and caution they show for the thousands of students and chaperones who participate in the annual tour.

We will keep you posted on plans for Youth Tour and Energy Camp as they develop. Please stay tuned to your co-op newsletter and ECE social media for information. Your patience is appreciated.

Help In Hard Times

Increased energy use during the winter can cause utility bills to go up at a time when many people are struggling financially. If you are unable to pay your bill, please contact us *before* your bill is overdue. We can help you arrange a more flexible payment schedule and suggest payment options that will help you. Talk to us at **918-756-0833**.



5 Ways To Stay Cozy This Winter



Baby, it's cold outside! When you're feeling chilly at home, remember there are budget-friendly ways to remain comfy without turning up the thermostat. Here are five easy ways to stay cozy this winter.

Cover up. Whether you're experiencing extremely cold winter temps or you simply "run cold," an electric blanket can deliver quick warmth like a regular throw or blanket cannot. Electric blankets can include a variety of features, like timers and dual temperature settings (if your cuddle buddy prefers less heat). This winter, consider an electric blanket instead of turning up the heat. Your energy bill will thank you.

Warm Digits. One of the easiest ways to stay cozy is to keep your feet warm. Our feet play a critical role in regulating body temperature, so when your feet are warm, your body automatically feels warmer. Try a pair of comfortable wool socks or house slippers to stay toasty.

Let The Sun In. On winter days when the sun is shining, take advantage and harness natural warmth from sunlight. Open all

curtains, drapes and blinds in your home to let the sunshine in—you'll feel the difference.

Don't Dry Out. Another way to make your home cozier is to use a humidifier. Cold air doesn't hold water vapor like warm air, so by adding humidity inside your home, you can feel a little warmer. A favorable level of humidity inside your home can also help clear sinuses, soften skin, and improve sleep.

Floor Appeal. Beyond adding visual appeal to your home, area rugs also provide extra insulation and a warm surface for your feet on cold winter days. Use large area rugs in rooms where you spend the most time. You'll enjoy the new colors and textures of the rug, and the additional warmth will help keep your home comfortable.

These are just a few ways you can stay cozy this winter without turning up the thermostat. Don't forget the hot chocolate!

To find more ways to save on your electric bill this winter, please check out ECE's energy saving services at www.ecoec.com, or give us a call at 918-756-0833.

Enjoy Better Home Phone Service

Choose residential telephone service from ecoLINK!

Make the switch to ecoLINK, and enjoy advanced telephone features such as:

- ★ Unlimited long distance within the U.S.
- ★ Caller ID
- ★ Call Waiting w/ Caller ID
- ★ Call Forwarding
- ★ Call Blocking

Get it all for
\$35
per month

Call 918-756-0833 for more details, or visit www.ecolink.coop.



Earn Cash Back

when you choose an energy efficient heat pump, water heater, or other appliance.

- Geothermal Heat Pumps (new installations \$750/ton; replacement units \$150/ton)
- Marathon Water Heaters (\$150)
- Energy Star Heat Pump Water Heaters (up to \$500)
- Energy Star Room ACs (\$50)
- Energy Star Programmable Thermostats (\$50)

Please visit www.ecoec.com for full details, or call 918-756-0833.

operation roundup

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.....	1,182
Applications granted.....	804
Applications denied.....	354
Applications tabled.....	12
Scholarships awarded.....	\$265,500
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Total Disbursements.....	\$1,956,056.05
Average member contribution.....	48¢



ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you use a space heater for extra warmth, make sure you place it on a flat surface on the ground and at least three feet from flammable objects such as furniture or curtains. Never leave a space heater unattended, and remember to shut it off when leaving the room or sleeping.

SOURCE: ELECTRICAL SAFETY FOUNDATION INTERNATIONALZ



RECIPES

Slow Cooker Hoppin' John

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 lb. dry black-eyed peas | 1 onion, chopped |
| 6 cups water | 2 stalks celery, chopped |
| 1 large ham hock | 4 cloves garlic, minced |
| 12 oz andouille sausage, sliced | 2 bay leaves |

DIRECTIONS

Place black-eyed peas in a large container and cover with several inches of cool water; let stand 8 hours to overnight. Drain and rinse.

Pour 6 cups water into a pot; add ham hock. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until meat is tender, about 1 hour. Transfer ham hock to a plate to cool and reserve 4 cups of the cooking liquid.

Layer soaked peas, andouille sausage, onion, celery, and garlic in the bottom of a slow cooker. Remove meat from ham hock and add meat to slow cooker. Sprinkle bay leaves, cumin, salt, and red pepper flakes over the top. Pour reserved cooking water over peas mixture.

Cook on high until peas are tender, at least 4 hours.

Source: allrecipes.com



East Central
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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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 24/7.
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-thru/night drop window Monday - Friday from 8 am to 4:30 pm.
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