

country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Cyberbullying, social networking scams, digital identity theft, and ransomware attacks make the internet seem like a scary place.

Sometimes you just want to watch videos of dogs being reunited with their deployed military humans. You shouldn't have to worry about who is spoofing your Facebook account while you stream.

On February 7th, we recognize Safer Internet Day as a world-wide campaign to spread awareness about internet safety.

Because our goal is to protect our co-op members and subscribers, safety and security features come standard with all ecoLINK internet plans.

Always-On Security

When you have ecoLINK fiber internet, you have multi-layered protections integrated into your Wi-Fi router at no additional charge. Our security system is constantly hunting for viruses, malware, and intrusions on your system, and shutting them down before they infect your devices.



Whole home network security even protects the most vulnerable devices in your home, like thermostats, cameras, smartTV's and baby monitors.

And daily updates ensure our virus and malware protection keeps up with whatever the internet's bad actors have planned next.

In one month, October 2022, we protected our subscribers from 23,381 intrusions, 4,193 web threats, and 127 viruses and malware attacks.

Added Control with the App

ecoLINK subscribers can choose to take added control over their home internet security with our ecoLINK+ app and the Bark add-on coming in 2023.

Using the free ecoLINK+ app, subscribers can view all the connected devices on their network; set up parental controls, time limits, and content filters; and create a guest network to prevent untrusted devices and individuals from accessing your home network.

The Bark add-on, which will be newly available to ecoLINK subscribers for \$12 per month, gives parents advanced digital content monitoring capabilities without having to snoop through their children's devices.

Bark monitors texts, YouTube, and 30+ other apps and social media platforms for signs of cyberbullying,

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To learn more about your elected trustees, or to view a district map, please visit 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

Hard Pills to Swallow and Hard Work to Follow

I woke up early Christmas morning with a sore throat. I have a tendency to get upper respiratory problems every fall/winter and always think I will sweat it out and not get a doctor's help. But a year ago Christmas was when I had COVID for 30 days and was afraid I was never going to get it sweated out. Then Donna spent 9 days in the hospital with COVID Pneumonia, so this year we went to the urgent care Monday afternoon. Donna tested negative, but I tested positive for COVID again. The doctor prescribed 2 meds. One for COVID (3 large boluses/steroids 2 times a day for 5 days) and 5 tiny pills once a day for bronchitis.

For several years I have had a restricted throat and worry about swallowing. This issue started with not being able to swallow my saliva. I could breathe but had to expel any saliva that was generated. I would go to the ear, nose, and throat doctor. They would run a 'garden hose' (seemed like) down my throat, jam the blockage out, dilate my esophagus and send me home able to swallow anything I put in my mouth. Then in time it would tense up again and do the same thing.

In 2009 I had open heart surgery (4 bypasses) and one of the pills at the hospital was as big as a bolus we give our cows. I was not a good patient—I feared those big ole pills, and the nurse said she would put applesauce with it to help. Great thought but a big ole pill (whole) in a spoon of applesauce doesn't get it down. I finally persuaded her to grind up the pill in the applesauce. Now, back to the current COVID pills. When we got home Monday afternoon I panicked knowing

those pills were large and I had to take all 3, so I cautiously took each one and could feel it dragging on all sides of my throat as it went down. But the procedure was a success. Previously my life was spared by 2 different friends using the Heimlich maneuver. It was the first time for each of them but thankfully, for me, successful.

After getting the pills down, I went to bed and right to sleep. Most of my adult life I get up about 5 a.m. At 5 a.m. Tuesday I woke up feeling like I could dig post holes, cut wood, etc. I was in good shape. The pills are worth the worry. Now time to take 3 more. It went well, and Tuesday night I went to bed with my eyes wide open—no sleep—up Wednesday morning ready to cut more wood, dig post holes, haul hay ... but not sleep. I can't lay there awake so I get up and starting making lists of things that need to get done in daylight.

Remember Craig is recovering from bladder cancer (no help on ranch), Monty is struggling with Parkinson's (limited help), and I am making lists! I have six helpers coming to work next week to help get some of these items done so my list has a list. You get the picture! I want to leave my ranch in better shape than it was when I came. I cannot tolerate a gate that doesn't swing open, shut, and fasten; a mud hole in the gate; a fence not fixed ... those things that make life better when functioning properly.

That is one of the attributes I believe our ECE Board, staff, and employees are committed to—a standard of excellence that helps all member-owners have a quality of life. Do you realize our last "rate" increase was

in 2015! Yes, your 'cost' has gone up some due to the cost of power we have to pay and our electronic equipment. But our controllable cost is the same as 7 years ago—even through storm Uri that hit the entire country last year. Some electric providers will be paying higher bills to catch up on that debacle for many years. ECE and our Co-op family were able to ride through with limited problems; however, we do know that power cost is going up. With the government advocating stopping electric production from coal, the cost will escalate. Coal was the only source for generating power during storm Uri that was dependable. We have a strategic planning meeting scheduled in the spring to address a plan. Right now it does not look very serious. Maybe a slight increase—maybe not yet!

We were able to give our employees a nice Christmas banquet, bonus, and good will. Happy workers are productive.

Most of my life I have enjoyed the privilege of a good dog. When I would come home (more times a female dog), she would run and play and bounce ... so glad to see me. I thought why don't we as humans learn something from that. I urge you to try it. Come home to your family eager to be there—happy to see them. Joyful and excited like your dog probably is. (If your dog is one that wants to bite you, ignore this thought.) Be aware thankful for the many great things God has allowed us to use as we serve Him. With your hand in God's hand you'll be alright.

I took my last 3 steroids tonight (Saturday) before going to bed at 9:25 p.m. I seemed to finally go to sleep. (No sleep, from Tuesday morning to 9:30 Saturday night.) I woke up at 11:15 p.m., went to kitchen, got a drink, back to bed and before I got to sleep ... much racket! Neighbors celebrating new year midnight. So now I am wide awake making adjustments to my many lists!!

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

Safer Internet

Continued from Cover

explicit content, online predators, depression, suicidal ideation, threats of violence, and more.

Parents get automatic alerts via email and text when Bark's algorithms detect potential risks.

Parents can also turn on location sharing, set screen times and block access to a variety of websites including streaming, gaming, and adult content.

The Bark add-on will be available to subscribers using the ecoLINK+ app by the end of February. Our ecoLINK Subscriber Support Representatives are available to answer questions and help you learn how to use the app to have more control over your home internet security.

D-I-Y Safety Precautions

Of course, even if you don't yet have ecoLINK internet available in your area, there are still proactive

steps you can take to stay secure while you browse online.

While software updates seem to occur at the most inconvenient times, don't put them off. Software updates on your computers and mobile devices are often done to add new features, fix known bugs, and upgrade your device security to protect from the latest threats.

Avoid opening suspicious emails or text messages, or clicking links when you don't 100 percent know and trust the source. Many cyber crimes are started with a seemingly innocuous message. Maybe it's an offer that's just too good to be true, or they've created a sense of urgency by telling you an account will be suspended if you don't act now.

When you get a message like that over text or email, take a breath and pause to analyze the details. Is it coming from someone I know? Is this an unusual request or out of character for this person? Was this sent at an unusual time of day? Is it just a hyperlink with no further information? These are just some of the many

red flags that can tip you off before you fall victim to a phishing scam.

Another important tip is to not get lazy with your passwords. Reusing the same passwords for every account or sticking with something easy to guess like "Password123" puts you at extreme risk.

Alongside secure passwords, it's important to set up two-factor authentication on any accounts you can. It may seem like a hassle to have to prove your identity every time you log-in, but it beats the alternative where you log-in to find all your financial information has been stolen or your passwords have been changed by a bad actor.

We shouldn't have to live in fear. It would be nice to live in a world without cybercriminals and online predators. But there are steps we can take to protect ourselves and our loved ones online.

Now back to your regularly scheduled programming — videos of happy dogs greeting their owners in uniform.

Youth Tour



Youth Tour is an all-expense-paid trip to Washington D.C. that Oklahoma's Electric Cooperatives provide to 11th graders in our service territories each year. This trip is an all-encompassing leadership experience allowing rural students the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to walk the halls of Congress and speak with elected officials.

Energy Camp



A four-day, action-packed adventure for 8th graders, Energy Camp helps develop leadership skills and promotes teamwork while teaching cooperative enterprises and electrical safety. While offering traditional summer camp activities like swimming and hiking, teens also have the unique opportunity to climb a utility pole, ride in the basket of a bucket truck, and create and run a co-op business.

Scholarships



Supported by co-op members, for co-op members, our Operation Roundup program annually awards a \$1,000 college scholarship for 12th grade dependents of co-op members. There is one scholarship available per school in our service territory.

Applications Open Now

Applications Due March 1st. Visit ecoec.com/youth-power.



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.

TOTAL GRANTED
\$2,239,356.78

APPLICATIONS REVIEWED
1,345

APPLICATIONS GRANTED
945

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED
\$304,500

AVERAGE MEMBER CONTRIBUTION
48¢



Banana Pudding

INGREDIENTS

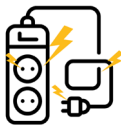
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 5 oz. instant vanilla pudding | 8 oz. Cool Whip |
| 2 C. milk | Vanilla wafers |
| 1 can Eagle Brand evaporated milk | 4-8 Bananas |

DIRECTIONS

Mix vanilla pudding with the milk until thick. Stir in Eagle Brand evaporated milk and then add Cool Whip. Layer vanilla wafers, banana, and pudding mixture in a 9x13" pan and repeat. Serve chilled.

SOURCE: ECE 80TH ANNIVERSARY COOKBOOK

Submit your recipes for the 85th anniversary cookbook to kharrison@ecoec.com.



ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

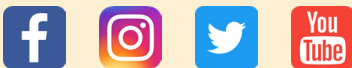
Most home fires caused by electrical malfunction or failure can be prevented. Hire a qualified electrician to inspect your home for wiring faults, overloaded circuits, and defective outlets.

SOURCE: SAFELECTRICITY.ORG



East Central ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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Pay online using SmartHub.

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 window Monday - Friday from 8 am to 4:45 pm.

Pay via automatic draft of your checking or savings account. Sign up online or download the ebill form at www.ecoec.com, or set up online payments through your bank. No convenience fee.