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country living

FOR MEMBERS OF EAST CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

TOP STORY

A Shining Example

East Central Electric and other cooperatives lead the way with solar arrays

When it comes to solar energy, Oklahoma's electric cooperatives are catching all the rays. One of East Central Electric's power suppliers, Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC), announced plans to expand its solar resources by purchasing 220 megawatts (MW) from a soon to be developed solar farm in New Mexico. When that facility goes live in 2022, it will boost co-op solar assets to 270 MW, enough to power roughly 43,000 homes.

WFEC began integrating solar into its generation mix four years ago by working with member systems to install small community-scale solar arrays. The East Central Electric (ECE) array is one of eleven cooperative-owned solar facilities in Oklahoma. Community-scale arrays typically generate from 250kW to 5 MW of electricity, while utility-scale arrays generate more.

ECE General Manager Tim Smith said the utility-scale arrays provide the most significant benefit for co-ops in terms of costs. "Larger solar facilities can take advantage of economies of scale to produce electricity more economically," he said. "It just makes more sense to build one large facility than several smaller ones."

Sign up for **SOLAR!**



Subscribe to solar panels from ECE's Community Solar array:

- Earn a credit on your monthly electric bill for the energy produced.
- Support clean energy by being part of the renewable solution!

For details, please call **918-756-0833** or visit **www.ecoec.com**.

Renewable energy helps WFEC control power costs by providing a less expensive generation source during periods when fossil fuel prices go up. While solar and wind energy aren't available around the clock, their prices are much more stable than fossil fuels. "Flooding, hurricanes and other situations typically cause the price of fossil fuels to increase. Renewables provide a hedge against that," Smith said.

ECE's community-scale array produces 250kW of power. "Our co-op's peak is 120 MW, so the array won't put a huge dent in it, but it's producing at a fixed cost. You can't say that about a gas plant," he added.

One of the biggest benefits of the community-scale array is it gives members an opportunity to support clean energy by subscribing to panels. In return, they receive a four cent per kilowatt-hour discount on their electric bills for the energy produced. Since the array went live in 2016, member subscriptions stand at 160 panels, with 800 more panels available.

"This is a good option for members who would rather not mess with rooftop solar. It's a low risk, economical way for members to participate," Smith said.

ECE's solar array also serves as a useful educational tool for the public. Co-op staff answer questions, give tours, and present programs on solar energy. A live feed, available at **www.ecoec.com**, shows the array's daily and hourly energy production, as well as other information. "It takes a lot of solar energy to power a home," Smith said. "This helps people understand what it can and cannot do." ☺

ENERGY WISE

How Air Tight Is Your Home?

**ECE energy assessments
reveal surprising details
about home energy use**

Throwing money away isn't something most people do every day, but that's what happens when you take for granted how your home uses energy. Inefficient heating systems, holes under the sink, loose ductwork, and lack of adequate insulation are some common problems that can suck the dollars right out of your pocket.

To help cooperative members pinpoint energy waste in their homes, East Central Electric offers professional home energy assessments at no cost. During the on-site evaluation, ECE's building performance specialist performs



prioritized list of improvements based on the estimated energy saving payback.

Members who follow through on the suggestions may find the savings worth their trouble. The U.S. Energy Information Administration says homeowners can save five to 30 percent on energy bills by making the efficiency upgrades identified in their energy assessment.

Because major upgrades may be too expensive for some homeowners, ECE's energy assessor always tries to provide affordable options that will still net savings.

Recent assessments of ECE member homes revealed the biggest problem by far

Jesh Plumb, ECE building performance specialist, reviews home energy findings with Cheparney Barnette of Muskogee.

was electric resistance heating. Electric resistance heaters consume three times more electricity than heat pumps.

The assessment typically takes an hour, with assessors leaving plenty of time for questions and advice. If you're serious about lowering home energy costs, a free home energy assessment is the best spot to begin.

To schedule an assessment, please call **918-756-0833**. Find more details and energy tips at www.ecoec.com.

You could save 5 to 30 percent on your energy bill by making efficiency upgrades identified in your energy assessment.

a thorough inspection of the home including attic insulation, duct condition, hidden draft penetrations, comfort issues, and more. The inspection includes a professional blower door test, one of the best tools to measure a home's air-tightness and locate hard-to-find drafty areas.

Typically, this level of analysis would cost homeowners \$500 or more, but ECE members receive it free. The inspection comes with a detailed report that highlights areas in greatest need of attention, and provides a

{ DID YOU KNOW? }

The average home has enough air leakage to add up to a two foot square hole. **That's like leaving a medium sized window wide open for 24 hours a day.**





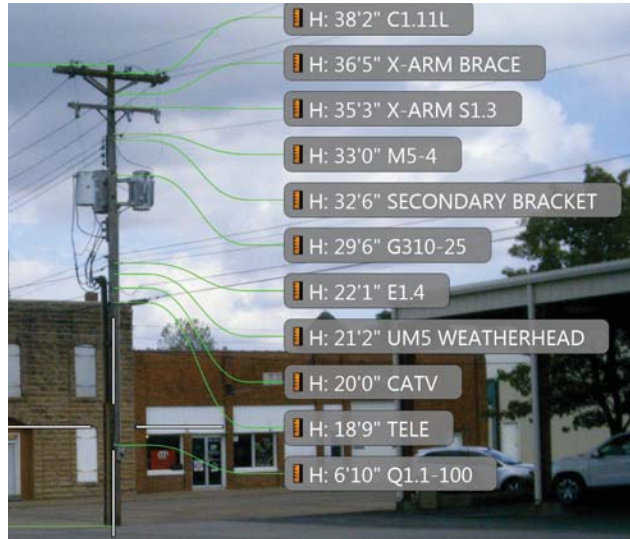
Fiber Update

System inspection ensures equipment can handle fiber cable. Surprise: There's more to it than you'd think.

Work is officially underway to extend fiber broadband service to cooperative members. Staff and crews of East Central Electric have been busy surveying poles and other equipment throughout the system in preparation for hanging fiber cable.

Fiber must be installed to meet state, federal, and local code requirements. As the photo to the right shows, there's more to it than most people might think. Each pole must be checked to determine if it is sound enough to handle the added weight of the fiber cable. Crews also check the positioning of devices attached to the pole to ensure no interference between the fiber cable and electrical wires and equipment.

Weather permitting, the crews should complete the survey within a month. Crews will begin installing fiber cable in the Eufaula area.



Want Fiber Broadband?

Register your interest and sign up for updates by clicking on the EcoLINK button found on our homepage at www.ecoec.com.



Since announcing plans to offer fiber broadband service, the co-op has received multiple calls from members who are eager for the service to get up and running.

"We appreciate that members are excited for fiber to arrive, but with nearly 6,300 miles of line in our system, installation will take some time to complete. By taking the time to do it right, we make sure there are fewer problems later on," said Tim Smith, ECE general manager.

Clean Energy
from the Earth



Geothermal heat pumps put you in the green!

Is there a geothermal heat pump in your future? If so, congratulations! You're choosing one of the most efficient, environmentally friendly heating and cooling methods available.

As you plan for your geothermal heat pump, be sure to consider the efficiency ratings. A higher energy efficiency ratio (EER) means an appliance requires less energy to operate. The purchase price will probably be higher than a less efficient unit, but the energy you save from reduced heating and cooling bills make it well worth the extra cost.

When pondering your choices, remember that East Central Electric Cooperative offers heat pump rebates of \$750 per ton on qualifying geothermal units.

To qualify, geothermal heat pumps must meet certain EER standards. Make sure you purchase the heat pump that will earn you a rebate—and save you the most money in operating costs over the long term.

For rebate details, including EER qualifications and other guidelines, please contact ECE Member Services at **918-756-0833**, or visit www.ecoec.com.

Go Paperless.

Save a tree—and help your electric co-op save money— by signing up for electronic billing using ECE's SmartHub. Once you sign up, you will receive a monthly e-statement for your records. The e-bill will include a link to SmartHub for quick and easy online payments, or pay using any of our standard payment methods.

Sign up today by clicking on the bill payment link at www.ecoec.com, or give us a call at **918-756-0833**.



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.....	1044
Applications granted.....	709
Applications denied.....	321
Applications tabled.....	24
Scholarships awarded.....	\$218,000
Total Disbursements.....	\$1,723,980.88
Average member contribution.....	44¢

RECIPES



Irresistible Irish Soda Bread

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/3 cup white sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 2 cups buttermilk
- 1/4 cup butter, melted

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a 9x5 inch loaf pan. Combine flour, baking powder, sugar, salt and baking soda. Blend egg and buttermilk together, and add all at once to the flour mixture. Mix just until moistened. Stir in butter. Pour into prepared pan.

Bake for 65 to 70 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the bread comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack. Wrap in foil for several hours, or overnight, for best flavor.

Source: allrecipes.com



ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

For outdoor equipment, use lighting and power tools that have the label of an independent test laboratory and make sure they are made for outdoor use.

SOURCE: NATIONAL FIRE SAFETY PROTECTION ASSOCIATION



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- 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.

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