

Sam Houston EC's Member Education Programs Win at National Competition

One of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative's main goals is to inform our members about what goes on at the Co-op and what makes co-op membership different than being a customer

of any other utility company. This is accomplished through a variety of ways, from Texas Co-op Power magazine to our Annual Report to Members. And each year,



a prestigious team of judges compares our communication materials to those from other electric co-ops all over the country. After careful consideration, coveted awards are presented to those co-ops they believe do the best job of communicating with their members.

After reviewing a record of 665 entries, the Council of Rural Electric Communicators announced the winners in July at the 2002 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Marketing, Member Services and Communications Conference in St. Louis, Missouri. The spotlight shone on Sam Houston Electric Cooperative as winners of five "Spotlight on Excellence Awards."

"We are honored to have been recognized for our communications programs," said Keith Stapleton, Sam Houston EC's Manager of Communications. "The purpose of our communication materials is to provide our members with pertinent information about the Co-op and keep them informed

about the electric utility industry as a whole. Winning these awards is a source of pride for our employees, as well!"

Sam Houston Cooperative's Deregulation Education Campaign

took the top Award of Excellence for Best Total Communications Program. The Co-op implemented the campaign to help not only member-owners but also the

community to understand the complex issues surrounding electric deregulation and how electric cooperative members and investor-owned utility customers are affected differently.

The Cooperative's "storyteller" ad series, featuring

Sam Houston EC members Azee Caldwell, Donna Gregory, Robert and Pasty Harms, Pearl Havard and Faye Moore, and employees Scott Ferguson, Jeff Slone and Roger Wiegreffe also was

awarded first place in the Best Advertising Campaign category. Sam Houston EC's newsletter, Newsline, also took top honors as Best Newsletter. The Cooperative received recognition for their 2000 Annual Report to Members, "There's More to Our Story than Electricity," featuring the same individuals in the ad series. The



2002 Calendar and Member Handbook, with a patriotic "Texana" theme and distributed to each member-owner last fall, was recognized with an Award of Merit in the Best Wildcard division of the competition.



A Final Word...



Sam Houston

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

H.E. STRIEDEL, GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO, Guest Editorial

When I walked through the door of Sam Houston Electric 34 years ago, I wondered how many of our members knew what makes us a cooperative. And as I prepare to retire, I still wonder the same thing. There seemed to be no better topic for this, my final editorial as Sam Houston EC's General Manager and CEO, than the pure and simple "spirit and power of cooperation."

If you ask someone about the difference between an electric cooperative and an investor-owned utility, chances are, you will get a blank look for an answer. For the most part, people don't know the difference. They do, however, know the spirit of cooperation.

What's the difference? It's huge. Over the past year, we have experienced the biggest cooperative effort in the history of our country. When terrorists struck the heart of New York City and Washington, D.C., we did not react as individuals.

We reacted as one unified group of people. People of all backgrounds, religions and races circled our country's wagons.

In essence, we went back to our roots to cooperate with each other. Often, though,

when we think of our roots, we think of being old-fashioned. Well, old-fashioned does not mean outdated. Old-fashioned means taking extra time to do a job right, treating people with dignity and delivering service that is better than people expect.

As a co-op, we are owned by our members, not by investors looking to make a profit. To please our member-owners we go back to our roots: We do the job right, we treat them with respect and we try to put a smile on their faces. If that is old-fashioned, that's okay. Because that's the cooperative way.

Now, more than ever, I am glad to be an American. And I am truly proud to have been an employee and member of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative. That is because co-ops were founded on the same enduring ideals and principles as our country.

As a long-time leader of a cooperative, I know that for people united in one belief, working together with determination

toward a common goal, anything is possible. That spirit is what makes us a cooperative. And when I walk out that door into retirement, I'm confident that our members will carry that spirit on into the future.



**The Cooperative
Spirit: alive now,
more than ever**



Where “Playing” With Fire is a **Good** Thing!

There's a certain seven-acre site situated just west of Livingston on Highway 190 that always seems to be on fire! It's the Polk County Fireman's Training Field.

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The Polk County facility is used for just what you might think—training firefighters, the men and women who volunteer to protect our homes and lives from fire. But, it's more than that. It's a daily reminder of what community involvement can not only accomplish, but also sustain.

With the help of builders, welders, pipeliners, electricians and various other skilled workers who lend a hand in keeping the field in working order, the Livingston Volunteer Fire Department maintains the facility (as a result of an agreement made with the City of Livingston when the site was obtained in 1976). A total of ten volunteer fire departments in Polk County, as well as numerous other departments, use the field on a regular basis. That means close to 1,500 firefighters benefit from the field on an annual basis.

What exactly is fire training?

Training includes fighting all types of fire situations—from structural fires to liquid gas and diesel spills. Self-contained breathing apparatus and electrical safety are also among the training classes offered.

So, how do you train for fighting fires? There's no easy way...you have to actually fight fires! At the training field, firemen are put into real-life situations. Burn structures are purposely set aflame for trainees to "practice." "This particular field has eight burn projects, a rappelling tower for high angle rescue along with a confined space scenario, and trench rescue classes," said Mark Taylor, Livingston Fire Marshal. "Once the fires are out, the department rebuilds each structure and the process starts over again. We're now in the process of building a new



project – a car fire simulator. It's set up like a service station, with fuel pumps and vehicles. It will be ready for use next year."

The burn structures are made of cinder block, with concrete poured into the holes, and are constructed similar to a house. Hay or straw is used to generate the fire and the firemen enter with full gear – coats, helmets, boots, air packs and hoses – to extinguish the flames.

"It's just like a real fire scenario. The fire may char the exterior shell when it infringes on the walls and the ceiling," said Corky Cochran, Livingston VFD Fire Chief, "...but the concrete structure withstands the abuse."

Local fire departments use the facility four or five times a year for internal training; in addition, Texas A&M University (TAMU) coordinates a larger-scale fire school each April. Over 400 students and instructors participate in TAMU's two-day class, which combines classroom and field training. Attendees come from fire departments all over East Texas for continuing education and accredited certification hours. Fees from the annual fire school fund the operations of the training facility—from improvements to repairs to new projects. The City and County also contribute to the field's operating funds.





Cooperative came through for the annual fire school in a matter of minutes. "Just before the two-day school in April, the department realized there wasn't enough power coming into the training facility for our night burns," said Cochran. "We made one phone call, and within 10 minutes, two of Sam Houston Electric's field supervisors pulled up to evaluate what needed to be done. At one o'clock that afternoon, they had a whole team there; and by five, our problem was resolved. They had totally taken care of it."

"I was part of the crew who built the additional line so that the school would have lights for the classrooms and the training field itself," said Randy Campbell, Sam Houston Electric Cooperative Lineman and Member of the Livingston Volunteer Fire Department. "I was glad to help out and I know Sam Houston Electric was, too, because we realize how much the volunteer fire department does for all of us."

And that's just one example of the community's involvement. A number of other local businesses also contribute to the facility. "If we see

something that we can make use of in the field, many times the business owner will let us have it," added Cochran. "In addition, the City Parks Department keeps the field mowed; the Sheriff's Department has an inmate work crew to assist in cleaning and maintaining the field; the City electric crew helps with our electrical maintenance; the City water department helps with the water supply; and the City street department and County Commissioners help maintain our road."

"Without that field, we wouldn't receive the top-notch fire training we get," said Campbell. "The City of Livingston pays for us to go to the school and the Co-op allows Sam Houston employees who are also volunteer fire fighters to take the time and go. We can then bring the training back and pass it on to other local fire departments."

As you can see, this is no ordinary training field; its survival depends on the entire community. By providing our firefighters with the opportunity to combat a variety of fires in a safe environment, they are better prepared to do their jobs, which in turn helps keep our homes and families safe from harm's way.

**Livingston VFD
Remembers
September 11**

As part of the International Association of Fire Chiefs' nationwide effort to commemorate the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks on America, the Livingston VFD will salute the courage of the fallen firefighters, law enforcement and civilians who have bravely served to protect the freedom of our country. The ceremony will take place at the time of the attacks and will be marked by four fire trucks, each traveling inward from the corners of Livingston, to meet at City Hall. The community is invited to participate in a short commemorative observance and prayer to honor the fallen heroes from September 11.

A truly collaborative effort

Like the firefighters themselves who voluntarily risk their lives to save ours, even their training could not happen without volunteers. "Each spring when our annual fire school begins, we'll have the county judge out here... bankers, lawyers, insurance people, city administrators and staff, housewives and retired firefighters," said Cochran. "You name it, they're here helping with registration, food service or whatever we ask of them."

And some of them put out fires of their own. Last year, Sam Houston Electric



ReMember This

You can prevent damage from Power Surges

You know that powerful surges caused by lightning or other power sources can damage or destroy electronic equipment and appliances. What you may not know is the only way to fully protect these valuable electronics is to install a meter-based surge suppression system outside your home or business that reduces high voltage spikes before they can get inside and cause damage.

Invest in a Surge Protection System

For a one-time set-up charge of \$29.95 and a monthly fee of just \$5.95 you can have peace of mind that your home is protected from surges. The system is easily installed by a Sam Houston EC technician and includes:

- Installation of a protector cuff (with a 15-year warranty) on your meter that captures surges before they enter your home
- Plug-in devices specifically designed to protect individual appliances and electronics within your home
- A manufacturer's lifetime warranty that reimburses you up to \$25,000 should property damage occur due to a power surge

Protect your investment in expensive electronic equipment.

Contact a Member Services Representative at 1-800-458-0381 or visit www.samhouston.net today for more information or to sign up. It's a minimal investment for the security it brings!



Your vote counts: Participate by proxy.

This year's Annual Meeting of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative will be held on November 12, 2002. Among the day's activities will be the election of four members to the Board of Directors. Since it is impossible for all 48,000 members to attend the annual meeting, the Cooperative bylaws provide for proxy voting so each member may be represented at the meeting. Look for your proxy card and information about Director elections with next month's issue of Texas Co-op Power magazine. Return your proxy card by November 5, and you will be eligible to win FREE ELECTRICITY or many valuable prizes.



SAFETY MATTERS



Meter Tampering: A Costly Crime

Stopping energy theft is important for all of us, because eventually, stolen electricity costs all members more money. It's something we at Sam Houston Electric take very seriously.

Attempting to reconnect a sealed meter or tamper with it in any way is extremely dangerous and could cause a serious electric shock. Not only that, but unauthorized reconnection will result in a "meter tampering" fine and is considered a felony that could lead to arrest and conviction.

When electric service is disconnected, it is Sam Houston EC's policy to leave a disconnected meter on location for use by a future customer. Once a meter is disconnected, it is pulled from the socket, turned to the side, sealed and locked to ensure safety and prevent tampering.

While Sam Houston EC personnel are trained to detect tampering, you can help too. If you suspect someone is stealing electricity, report it to a Member Services Representative at 1.800.458.0381 or log on to www.samhouston.net. And if you need your meter reconnected, simply contact us and we'll be glad to send a Sam Houston EC service technician to your home or business.



As the saying goes...give a little, get a little.

At one time or another, everyone benefits from the assistance service organizations provide our community. At Sam Houston EC, we feel like the least we can do is provide them with a little support in return.

“ We started the VFD here in 1990. We’ve slowly built the department, and Sam Houston Electric has been a big help along the way. Each year they send us a letter offering to donate funds, and we always reply right away. Their contributions helped replace our truck tires one year, and another year we bought handheld radios and pagers. A couple years ago, we bought oxygen tanks for the trucks.... It wasn’t two weeks before we got called to a fire where we put the tanks to use. The oxygen saved one man a trip to the hospital. Now, that’s a good example of how important the money is.... ”

So you can see how important the Co-op’s contribution is to us and the people in our community.

J.E. Anderson, Fire Chief
Friday Volunteer Fire Department



Energizing Communities Since 1939