

# TAMPERING WITH AN ELECTRIC METER IS DANGEROUS

It's also illegal and results in  
higher rates for other Co-op members.



- ⊘ Never break a meter's seal.
- ⊘ Never open a meter's base.
- ⊘ Never remove a meter or alter an entrance cable in any manner.

If you know or suspect someone has tampered with their meter, please contact us immediately.



**SAM HOUSTON**  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



# Scammers Ramping Up

Slow them down with skepticism, vigilance



Scammers are targeting unsuspecting citizens with even greater frequency—and increasing creativity. Crooks now threaten victims with everything from legal action involving the IRS to turning off power to your home. Or they pretend to help victims avoid complications with utility, cell phone, video streaming, bank or other accounts. But there is good

news: Scams are being recognized and reported more often. And all it takes to thwart one is awareness and vigilance.

## A FEW COMMON SCAMS

Staying alert and cautious every day can help you avoid these common scams.

**The Utility Scam:** An individual poses as an employee of your electric cooperative, telling you that your power will be turned off for nonpayment of your bill. The scammer says you can avoid disconnection by giving them money via a prepaid credit or debit card.

**The Something-for-Nothing Scam:** A con artist claims to represent a government program that helps pay utility bills. They say your bill can be paid with stimulus money; all you have to do is “verify” your bank account, credit card or social security number. No such government program exists. Sharing this information puts you at risk for identity theft and financial damage—and for electricity disconnection when the bill isn’t actually paid by the bogus program.

**The Netflix Scam:** This email scam targets subscribers of the Netflix video streaming service, warning that their account is being canceled. The objective is to steal personal and credit card information. The professional-looking, personalized email often bears the subject line “Your suspension notification” and includes a link to a fake Netflix page where you would unsuspectingly enter your login information and credit card number.

## AVOID BEING SCAMMED

Despite differing tactics, all scams share one objective: to get money or sensitive information from you. Never provide passwords or PINs, nor your social security, credit card, bank or other account numbers, unless you initiated the contact and trust the person with whom you are speaking. No legitimate business should ever contact you to ask for personal financial information.

- If someone comes to your home claiming to be a Cooperative employee and demands to collect money or inspect parts of your property, note the person’s identification,

then make them wait outside your locked door. Call the Co-op immediately to verify whether the person is, in fact, an employee. If not, call local police and do not let the individual into your home.

- If you receive a call from someone who pressures you for immediate payment or personal information, do not respond to their requests. Instead, hang up. Call the company they claimed to represent, then local authorities.
- Think before you respond to an email. View with suspicion any emails that push you to click on links or otherwise act immediately. If you want to change settings for any account, never click on links in an email. Instead, independently navigate to the site in your browser.

## AFTER A SCAM

If you suspect you’ve already been the target of a scam:

- Be proactive. If you already have provided financial information to someone you later suspect as fraudulent, immediately contact your bank.
- Report the incident. Notify the organization that the scammer claimed to represent, and the police. They might not be able to do anything, but every report helps build a body of information to identify and stop these scams in the future.
- Do not fall for a “recovery” scam. Don’t give anybody any more money on the promise that they will get your lost money back. It’s just another scam.
- Inform others. Share this information with friends and family so they do not fall prey to scams.



# Paying Your Bill Is Even Easier Online



Behind your meter is access to detailed data about your energy use in realtime. Through account access via mySamHouston,

you're even able to access and manage your account online.

Access your mySamHouston account through our website, SamHouston.net. Once there, you can click on "Billing and Payments" from the top navigation, to pay your bill, view past bills and your electricity usage. From

there you can make a payment easily and securely. To make your payments even easier, you can setup auto pay. Enjoy the convenience of having your bill automatically paid each month from your bank account or credit card. With our auto pay program, you no longer have to worry about due dates or late fees. Your payment is automatically drafted from your account each month.

Not ready to enroll in auto pay? While you're logged in, you can sign up for email or text message alerts. We'll make sure you stay in the loop. Set up your own alert preferences, and we'll let you know when your bill is due, a payment is received or even when you're close to your desired monthly electricity usage.

# Operation Round Up Needs You



Do you enjoy helping non-profit organizations or volunteering? Are you a member of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative who lives in District 4, Hardin and Liberty Counties? If you can say an enthusiastic "Yes!" to both questions, consider applying to be a volunteer board member for Sam Houston Electric Cooperative Charitable Foundation, better known as Operation Round Up®.

If you would like to be considered for this volunteer position, please send an email with basic information about yourself to mycoop@samhouston.net or call our office at 800-458-0381.

The Foundation Board meets quarterly at the Livingston office to consider grant applications from local non-profit organizations.

If you don't have the time to join the Board, you can still support Operation Round Up. Call or log on to mySamHouston to join Operation Round Up in improving the quality of life in East Texas. Be a part of this mission by rounding up your bill to the next dollar.

The average donation each month is 50 cents, or just \$6 per year. The Foundation's Board of your fellow members evaluates applications from local non-profit organizations and distributes grants to them.

While donating roughly \$6 per year may not seem like a large amount, it's the power of cooperation that transforms your donation, along with your fellow members' donations, into a significant difference. More than \$3,000 has been distributed to local nonprofit organizations.

# Co-op Connections Deals



The Co-op Connections Card® is a member benefit program that delivers discounts from participating businesses, both local and nationwide. Visit [Connections.coop/samhoustonec](http://Connections.coop/samhoustonec) for more deals.

## Carol Bond Health Foods

334 Main Street  
Liberty, TX 77575  
936-336-9001  
CarolBond.com  
Hours: M-F, 8-6; First Sat, 9-5  
Offer: 20% discount on supplements.

## Downtown Treasures

312 North Washington  
Livingston, TX 77351  
936-327-7740  
Downtown-Treasures.com  
Hours: M-Sat, 9-5; Sun, 9-4  
Offer: 10% discount on non-sale items.

## DWG 3 Step Waterless Car Wash

832-654-7101  
936-933-2247  
3stepwaterlesscarwash.com  
Hours: M-F, 9-5  
Offer: Receive two extra microfiber towels with the purchase of an 8 oz. or larger kit.

# Conservation Corner



Consider insulating your hot water pipes. Doing so can reduce heat loss, allow you to lower the temperature setting and save

an additional 3 to 4 percent per year on water heating.

SOURCE: ENERGY.GOV



## Energy Consumption Peaks in Winter



Each year the holiday season and cold weather cause Sam Houston Electric Cooperative members to consume more electricity. In fact our system used 40 percent more electricity in December than in November. Why is this?

Bills are calculated each month using the exact amount of energy your home uses. Cold weather heating and cooking

cause more electricity to be consumed. Just as your car consumes more gasoline on long trips, your home consumes more energy for heating during cold weather. You may have noticed your heater running constantly, or you may have used space heaters to maintain a comfortable home.

It used to be challenging to know how much electricity your home is using, but not anymore. Just log on to *mySamHouston* at [SamHouston.net](http://SamHouston.net) or download the *mySamHouston* app to see your monthly, daily and even hourly electricity use. Set alerts to let you know how much electricity you've consumed, as well as when your bill is due, and much more. Call or go online today to learn more about tracking your energy consumption and reducing your electric bill.

Cooperative leadership is also working to keep the cost of electricity down by reducing the wholesale cost of electricity in December. This savings was passed directly on to our members, and you can see the "Energy Charge" on your bill went down from November to December.

At Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, we care about our members, and you can call us at 800-458-0381 for assistance with logging on to your account, or even for energy-saving tips.

## Don't Hang That Sign!



There are more than 130 million wooden utility poles in the United States, estimates the North American Wood Pole Council. That ample vertical real estate may look appealing when you need somewhere to hang your sign, deer stand, basketball hoop, clothesline or satellite dish. Don't make that mistake. Attaching items to utility poles is not only illegal, it's dangerous, too. It may seem innocent, but one pinhole from a tack, nail or staple lodged in a pole can pierce a line technician's glove, stripping away critical protection from thousands of volts of electricity. Also, obstructions can impede line technicians' ability to climb and inspect poles. It's always wise to keep any structure at least 10 feet away from utility poles. Please help Sam Houston Electric Cooperative keep our linemen—and our community—safe.

**USE CAUTION  
WHILE BURNING**  
**MAKE SURE YOU'RE  
A SAFE DISTANCE  
AWAY FROM  
ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT**

**SAFETY  
STARTS WITH  
YOU!**

**IF YOU PLAN TO BURN,  
LOOK AROUND FIRST  
AND STAY CLEAR OF ANY  
POTENTIAL HAZARDS.**

SAMHOUSTON.NET • 800-458-0381



**SAM HOUSTON**  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# Taylor's Twain

Circleville Philosopher entertained small-town newspaper readers with satire

BY JOE O'CONNELL

Philosopher Henry Fox of Circleville wanted to be elected to the Texas Legislature on a platform of just five of the Ten Commandments, a 1951 Abilene Reporter-News article announced.

"Seems to me," Fox wrote, "all 10 of 'em ain't very popular with the majority. Some folks favor one set, some another. Under my system, you pick out any five you prefer."

Meet Texas' answer to Mark Twain.

Fox's weekly satire columns were printed in small-town newspapers across the nation, most widely in his home state, from 1935 until his death in 1989, says Gary Borders, who has collected more than 2,500 of the columns for a biography of the down-home sage.

"What struck me was how good he was at satire and humor," Borders says. "Liberals could read him and think he was like them. Conservatives could read him and think he was like them, too."

Fox grew up in Granger and attended nearby Southwestern University in Georgetown, where he discovered his satirical knack through work for the student paper. In one column he took aim at a professor who required students to read one of his own books. Fox almost got kicked out of school for his opinions, his daughter, Carol Fox, recalls. "He wrote of the book, 'It's too light to serve as a doorstop, too big to fill a mouse hole.'"

After college, Fox spent a year in New York City striving to make his literary mark. Turns out he spent much time in the library, reading, his daughter says. He returned to Texas, lived with his brother and worked without a salary for what is now the Austin American-Statesman to learn the newspaper business.

With his father's financial help, Carol Fox says, Henry Fox bought an East Texas newspaper in Centerville then another in Madisonville, where his life changed in big ways. He developed a crush on Marie Price, the editor of the Frankston newspaper, and began writing a satire column as the folksy Navasota Philosopher (after the nearby Navasota River), partly to compete with the rival editor but mostly to get her attention.

"They got into a Hepburn-Tracy contest, writing back and forth in their columns," his daughter says. In person, Fox was extremely shy; he sent his friend and Williamson County Sun publisher Don Scarbrough to take a peek at Price. At Scarbrough's urging Fox got up the nerve to meet her. Two months later, he proposed.

Fox first gained national attention as the creator of the Madisonville Sidewalk Cattlemen's Association, a group poking fun at boot-wearing lawyers who didn't own cattle. Penalties for such boot wearing were to include dunking in the town fountain. Newspaper wire services spread the group's fame. When a Massachusetts girl heard of it, she wrote



Henry Fox in his home office in 1979.

asking where she could buy boots, then not readily available nationwide. Fox and his pals flew her in, dressed her in a full cowgirl outfit and raked in publicity for their small town.

After World War II, Henry and Marie Fox moved to a house on the San Gabriel River in Circleville, a dot on the map outside of Taylor. Soon, his column took off. A version of it appeared in *Collier's* magazine nationwide, and he began to self-syndicate a weekly column. Marie and the kids would stuff envelopes and send his words out to the world. At its peak, Borders says, the column ran in 150 newspapers and claimed a readership of more than a million.

“The Circleville Chamber of Commerce has issued a bulletin to all industries that if

they should happen to move to Circleville, they should bring their own labor with them,” Fox was quoted as saying in the *Waco News-Tribune* in 1952, adding, “We at Circleville are working all we intend to.”

Fox’s stroke of business acumen was to let each newspaper personalize the column. He’d leave blanks for names of a local banker or business. The name for the column itself changed, too. It was the “Jollyville Philosopher” in Round Rock; the “Sinking Fork Philosopher” in Charleston, Indiana; and the “Papago Philosopher” in Casa Grande, Arizona. Fox was the actual Circleville Philosopher in the *Taylor Daily Press*.

“Most readers thought he was a local guy writing the column,” says Borders, who published the *Fort Stockton* newspaper,

where the column was called “Pecos Willie.” Borders became fascinated with the writer and the whole notion of the once-vibrant world of small-town journalism. His book-in-progress has the working title, “Yours Faithfully, JA,” the sign-off for each of Fox’s columns. “JA” was said to stand for “Jack Ass,” a term an unhappy reader directed at Fox.

Despite his national following, Fox led a quiet, reclusive life in Circleville, his daughter says. Every day at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. he would go to the nearby Circleville Store, order a Coke and listen. “He called it his laboratory,” Carol Fox says. “It was a place to study human nature.”

JOE O’CONNELL IS AN AUSTIN WRITER.

# Concrete Example

One of several unlikely ships now resides in Galveston

BY MARTHA DEERING

In the old gangster films, a mafia boss who got crosswise with another boss might find himself wearing “concrete shoes” and tossed into the river to “sleep with the fishes.”

With that legend in mind, it is surprising to note that concrete was once successfully used as a building material for the hulls of ships. One such vessel, the SS Selma, remains partially submerged in Galveston Bay and now is recognized as an archaeological landmark.

From the early days of shipbuilding until the mid-19th century, wood was the material of choice for seagoing vessels. The advent of steam propulsion fueled a desire to find improved shipbuilding materials, and the first iron ship, Aaron Manby, was built in London in 1821.

Iron sinks, but iron ships displaced water, and were lighter and stronger than wooden ships.

Shipbuilders preferred steel for large vessels because it was very strong for its weight. But when the supply of steel for ships fell short during World War I, President Woodrow Wilson approved the Emergency Fleet program that called for the construction of 24 concrete ships. None were completed before the end of the war, but 12 ships eventually were built. Although they stayed afloat, most sailors referred to them as “floating tombstones” and preferred not to serve on them.

A ship with a concrete hull floats as long as the weight of the water it displaces is greater than its own weight. The density of an object is the mass divided by the volume, so the weight of the hull and the air or cargo inside it (the total volume) had to be less than the water it displaced. British builders successfully experimented with concrete barges, tugs and fishing boats as early as 1917.

Flying in the face of logic, there were advantages to concrete ships, according to N.K. Fougner in the 1922 book *Seagoing and Other Concrete Ships*. They were cheaper to build, cost less in upkeep and were less subject to vibration from engines. More quickly and cheaply repaired than steel ships, they were fireproof and not subject to corrosion. Of course, steel reinforcing rods were necessary inside the concrete hull to give it strength.

Some of the American concrete ships completed after World War I were dispatched to transport troops home from Europe and then sold to private companies. When steel became more abundant, the concrete ships proved too expensive to operate—requiring huge amounts of fuel to push their heavy hulls through the surf.

The largest two were sister ships, identical oil tankers a bit over 400 feet long: the SS Latham and the SS Selma. The Latham struck a jetty on the way back from its maiden voyage



AMY BORGENS

between Tampa and Philadelphia and limped into Galveston for repairs. Eventually, it became a floating oil tank near New Orleans.

The Selma performed more impressively, serving several coastal ports until it, too, hit a jetty, outside Tampico, Mexico, and suffered a 60-foot crack in its side. It was towed back to Galveston for repairs, but no one knew how to repair a long crack in a concrete ship, so it languished in Galveston harbor until 1922, when officials decided to scuttle it.

Galveston Bay was too shallow, and sinking it there would cause a hazard to marine traffic. The Selma was towed into a trench 1,500 feet long and 25 feet deep dug on a shallow shelf off Pelican Island,

where it is still visible today. It rests near the “marine battleground” where the Civil War’s Battle of Galveston occurred in 1863 and is clearly visible from the Bolivar Ferry.

That move did not signal the end of the Selma’s usefulness, however. Its career as a wreck is more exciting than its seagoing history. In 1926, it was used to store explosives. (Residents who considered the derelict ship an eyesore suggested that the dynamite stored in its hull be used to blow it up.)

In 1928 an oil exploration company used it as a work-staging area. During Prohibition, U.S. Customs inspectors smashed at least 11,000 bottles of bootleg liquor in its hold, much to the

**Only the hull of the SS Selma was concrete—5 inches thick at the bottom, tapering to 4 inches on the sides.**

chagrin of a major smuggling ring doing big business along the Gulf Coast.

In 1992 the Texas Antiquities Committee designated the Selma a State Archeological Landmark and named it the Official Flagship of the Texas Army. All this praise was confirmed with an official Texas Historical Marker. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. From 1992 until his death in 2011, A. Pat Daniels, owner of the Selma and retired city editor of the *Galveston Daily News*, threw a birthday party for the old vessel.

MARTHA DEERING, A MEMBER OF HEART OF TEXAS EC, LIVES NEAR MCGREGOR.