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# RAPID RESPONSE

When storms strike and rivers rise, Bluebonnet teams rush to restore power

First responders run toward danger, and that's just what Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative crews did when the fierce Memorial Day 2015 storms toppled power poles, severed electrical lines and blew transformers.

Bluebonnet workers forged through floodwaters on foot, carrying heavy equipment on their backs, dodging snakes and sinkholes, and cutting through many fallen trees to restore power to nearly 9,500 members during the historic storms. Over a 50-hour period, crews responded to 433 widespread power outages. They replaced 50 transformers, 18 poles, 49 pole-mounted lightning protection devices and more than 400 fuses.

A destructive storm requires a dynamic response. Bluebonnet is proud to serve and appreciates all who patiently waited for their power to return.



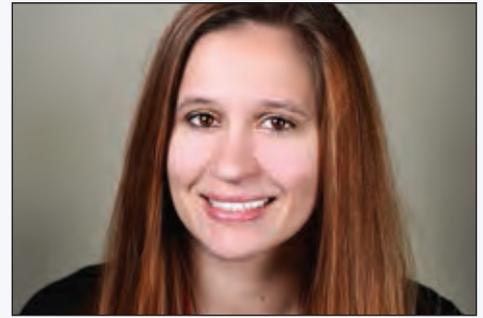
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MEMBER SERVICES

Q&A

**Q:** I save money by not keeping my house ice cold in the summer. But can I do anything on the outside of my house to keep energy costs down in the Texas heat?



**A:** Congratulations on lowering your electric bill by turning your thermostat up a few notches! Energy experts suggest keeping your house temperature between 78 and 80 degrees when you're home in the summer and above 80 degrees when you're away.

And, yes, there are some key things you can do outside to help cool the inside of your home. Start with an inspection of your air conditioning unit, a big-ticket energy user. A no-cost way to improve the AC's efficiency is to clear debris, tall weeds and other items away from the unit so ventilation is not restricted. You may need to stock up on clean filters, too, so you can replace them every month during the summer. A dirty filter slows airflow, forcing the AC to use more energy.

While you're outside, study the afternoon sun exposure on your windows. Awnings can reduce the solar heat that enters your house by up to 65 percent on windows facing south and 77 percent on windows facing west.

Today's awnings can be adjustable and retractable, water-repellent and mildew-resistant, and they can cover one window or an entire side of your house. If it's time to paint or roof your house, choose a light color to reflect sunrays.

Metal roofs really beat the heat.

Look closely at your windows and doors to check for leaks that allow cool interior air to escape your home. Caulking and weather stripping can prevent those leaks.

Nature can also cool your home. Consider planting one or more deciduous trees on the west and south sides of your house to block harsh rays in summer while allowing sunshine in after leaves have fallen in winter. Plant away from power lines and use native, drought tolerant trees. A trellis for vines can also be placed in front of windows.

Porch and yard lights can be converted to energy-efficient LED bulbs. You can also get fixtures with motion sensors and timers so lights are not on all night.

Summer is also a good time to hang laundry outdoors. If your neighborhood has clothesline restrictions, use drying racks that can't be seen over a fence or set them up in the garage or a back room.

And don't forget one of the most enjoyable ways to save energy in the summer: grilling meals outdoors instead of heating up the kitchen. Eat well, listen to the birds and enjoy a Texas sunset.

— **Brittany Hardy**, member service representative



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From 4 p.m. May 25 to 6 p.m. May 27, Bluebonnet employees worked 12-hour shifts to restore power during the Memorial Day weekend storms. 1) Matt McGarr dispatches linemen from the control center in Bastrop; 2) Apprentice lineman Jake Green carries away limbs cut by crew supervisor Patrick Little near Cedar Creek. The fallen tree blocked access to a pole that needed repair; 3) Kim Bender dispatches linemen to outages that knocked power out to thousands across the service territory; 4) Green looks for the best way to cross a rain-swollen stream; 5) Green shakes the hand of a member, Victoriano DeLeon, after entering his property to look for the cause of an outage; 6) A Bluebonnet crew works in standing water at sunset to restore power along Texas 21 north of Bastrop.

See a gallery of related photos at [tinyurl.com/bbresponds](http://tinyurl.com/bbresponds). Watch a video of Bluebonnet crews restoring power on Bluebonnet's YouTube channel.

Photos 1 & 6 and background by Jay Godwin; Photos 2-5 by Sarah Beal

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**COMPETITORS SET FOR ANNUAL LINEMAN'S RODEO**

Bluebonnet linemen and apprentice candidates, and two barbecue cook-off teams, will compete against the best of the best during the 18th Annual Texas Lineman's Rodeo on July 18, at Nolte Island Park in Seguin. At left, journeyman John Matejcek works to free the dummy in the Hurtman Rescue competition in 2014. For information about this year's event, visit [tltra.org/rodeoevent](http://tltra.org/rodeoevent).

Jay Godwin photo