

## Consolidation Won't Mean a Change in Service

Please mark your calendars. Beginning July 1, 2007, McLennan County Electric Cooperative and Belfalls Electric Cooperative will officially consolidate to form Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative. We will send out further updates and reminders as July 1 draws near. The web-site address is [www.hotec.coop](http://www.hotec.coop).

This consolidation will bring about some changes in operating procedures as we adapt to provide more efficient service. However, like BEC and MCEC, Heart of Texas Electric Co-op will continue to be a member-owned cooperative, governed by a member-elected board of directors. The co-op's only purpose for existence is to provide the membership with reliable

electricity and quality service at the lowest possible cost.

The telephone numbers will stay the same. The offices will continue functioning with the same employees. You will still receive prompt, courteous service for billing questions, outages and any other concerns. The name may be changing, but the face of your co-op and our commitment to providing quality service to our members will not change.

BEC currently has 10 employees, and MCEC currently has 41. The new co-op will have 51 employees who will continue to have the same dedication to providing quality customer service and electricity to our members.



## COMPARING THE COST OF ELECTRICITY

As a courtesy to our members, we have listed below a price comparison of utilities within our service area. The cost estimate displayed is based on 1,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) and is inclusive of fixed and variable charges. The average price shown in these calculations represents an average annual price per kWh.

Some Retail Electric Providers charge rates that vary by season or usage level. As a result, the actual average price listed on a customer's bill for any given month may differ

from that listed here depending on the usage of the customer and the actual rates charged during that month.

The information provided has been obtained from the Public Utility Commission updated December 2006 and can be viewed at:

[www.puc.state.tx.us/electric/rates/RESrate.cfm](http://www.puc.state.tx.us/electric/rates/RESrate.cfm) or [www.powertochoose.com](http://www.powertochoose.com)

TXU SESCO, Power Start Plan ..... \$142

TXU Energy, Texas Choice Plan ..... \$145

Direct Energy, Price Protection Plan\* ..... \$135

Reliant Energy, Flex Plan ..... \$142

Belfalls Electric: ..... \$124

\*Requires 12-month contract.

## DON'T DISCOVER ELECTRICITY WITH YOUR KITE

Flying kites is one of the few spring pastimes that has survived in the video-game era and can still captivate children. But when electric lines and telephone poles dot the skyline, kids need to take special care when flying their kites.

Parents should supervise kite-flying children. Fly kites only in a clear, open and level field, well away from any overhead power lines. If a kite gets caught in a utility line, don't try to untangle it. Instead, call your electric cooperative to report the tangled kite, and leave it to the experts to get it away from the power line.

For safe kite flying, follow these rules:

- Remember Ben Franklin? He discovered that lightning was made of electricity when his kite was struck during a storm. He wasn't hurt; you might be. Never fly a kite in stormy weather, as wet kites and string can conduct electricity.
- Use a strong, dry cord for string, and do not buy or make kites using metal or wire parts or cotton-wrapped wire string. Metal parts will conduct electricity if they touch an electrical wire.
- Keep your eyes on the ground when running with a kite to avoid tripping over rocks and holes.
- Choose an area away from highways or streets when flying.
- Do not fly kites on rooftops.

## IN EMERGENCIES

During regular business hours: (254) 583-7955. Please contact our after-hours answering service in case of an outage not occurring during business hours: (254) 583-7955 or (254) 751-8458.

# It's Time To Turn Over a New Leaf

Several cases of spring fever have been reported with the new growing season approaching quickly. Farmers and gardeners, novice and experienced, have begun their preparations for their new crops. What better time is there to pass along a few helpful hints from one of the most highly regarded publications, *The Old Farmer's Almanac*. Since 1792, the almanac has given people from all walks of life useful information regarding tidal forecasts, recipes, planting charts, and much more. Here are a few tips to bring in the new season.

Vegetables love the sun. They require six hours (continuous, if possible) of sunlight each day, at least.

Vegetables must have good, loamy, well-drained soil. Most backyard soil is not perfect and needs a helping hand. Check with your local nursery or county extension office about soil testing, soil types and soil enrichments.

Placement is everything. Like humans, vegetables need proper nutrition. A vegetable garden too near a tree will lose its nutrients to the tree's greedy root system. On the other hand, a garden close to the house will

help discourage rabbits, raccoons, deer, mice and opossums from nibbling away your potential harvest.

Vegetables need lots of water, at least 1 inch a week.

Water newly started seedlings carefully. A pitcher may let the water out too forcefully. A mist sprayer is gentle but can take a long time. Try using a meat-basting syringe, which will dispense the water effectively without causing too much soil disruption.

March is the time to consider the following:

- Plant deciduous trees and shrubs this month.
- Prune fruit trees until spring buds swell. Maple and birch should not be pruned until they leaf out.
- Check trellises, latticework and fences for winter damage. Repair before spring growth begins.
- Dormant spraying for fruit trees should be done before spring growth begins.

Start some vegetables in flats now: Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, peppers, eggplants, tomatoes and lettuce are good choices.



# SPRING INTO SAFE OUTDOOR WORK

It's spring, when lawns awaken and homeowners emerge with power tools in hand for yearly repairs and yard work.

Work safely. Use this season to examine your home for electrical safety mishaps-in-the-making, and take care with electrical equipment outdoors. A few tips for a safe spring:



- Before you dig a hole—even a small one—call 1-800-DIG-TESS to learn whether your landscaping will interfere with underground utilities.

- Any contact with a power line can be fatal, so if you need work done near a power line, like trimming trees or installing a satellite dish, call a professional contractor to do the job.

- Inspect all power tools for damaged cords, plugs or cases.

- Store tools in a dry location. If you suspect that your tools have gotten wet over the winter, do not plug them in until they have dried completely and are inspected for damage by a professional.

- Do not use electric lawnmowers on wet grass.

- Use extension cords rated for outdoor use when working with electrical tools outdoors.

- Inside your home, inspect for overloaded outlets and damaged cords.

- If your home isn't meeting your electrical demands, have an electrician install new outlets and ground-fault circuit interrupters.