Comanche ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
P.O. BOX 729 • COMANCHE, TX 76442 • (325) 356-2533
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

From Famine to Feast

As the old saying goes, "If you don't like the weather in Texas, wait a few minutes, and it will change."

Texas weather is as unpredictable as it is extreme. The past few years have been no exception. It is hard to believe that only a year ago, Central Texas was suffering one of its worst droughts in decades. Rainfall records were far below normal, and fire hazards were at an all-time high. Before we had a chance to ring in the New Year in 2007, more than 200,000 acres had been burned by wildfires in Texas. We were witness to friends and neighbors who lost homes, cattle, fences, feed and wildlife. The devastation was horrific to say the least. Carbon, Kokomo and Cross Plains suffered catastrophic losses.

In June 2006, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that 12 to 15 inches of rain was needed across Texas to bring the Palmer Drought Severity Index back to near normal.

As 2007 was being ushered in, drought conditions in Texas were still hanging in there, with approximately 20 percent of the state still in an "exceptional" drought, and an additional 20 percent suffering "extreme" drought. But all that changed in June, when Central Texas was sandwiched between two high-pressure systems that brought moisture in from the Gulf and just wouldn't go away.

On June 29, after weeks of flood conditions, Gov. Rick Perry issued a disaster declaration for 37 Central Texas counties. Included were six of the seven counties served by Comanche Electric Cooperative: Brown, Callahan, Comanche, Eastland, Mills and Stephens. Heavy rains have caused severe flooding for our members from north to south, with Lake Leon being the hardest hit.

Comanche Electric Cooperative crews worked diligently day and night to restore service where possible. There were, however, some areas that were not safe to restore, and our crews were forced to do what had to be done to keep the public safe. All services should now be back on, with the exception of those left disconnected by request.

The board of directors and the management of Comanche Electric Cooperative wish to send a special "thank you" to the crew members who worked so hard to keep the power going. They would also like to send an additional "thank you" to our wonderful members who were so patient and understanding during this time.

Are You Prepared for Hunting Season?

Hunting season is upon us, and with the record rainfall we have had this year it promises to be a most profitable season. But are you ready?

Comanche Electric Cooperative serves approximately 500 hunting camp meters, and each year as the hunting seasons begin, we are inundated with calls at the last minute for service to hunting camps. If you will need new service at a hunting camp, or an upgrade or connection at your existing camp, please contact Comanche Electric Cooperative as soon as possible.

It will likely take several weeks, and in some cases, months, to connect new service to a hunting camp. Help us to help you be comfortable on your lease by giving us plenty of time to prepare your service for the hunting season.

Look Up! Watch for Overhead Power Lines

When using ladders around the house to clean windows and gutters or to paint, or when trimming trees, be mindful of overhead power lines.

- **Never touch or allow anything you are holding to touch any power line. Power lines are not insulated to protect people from injury. Birds on wires aren't in danger because they don't provide a path to the ground. You and a ladder, pole or kite string do.**
- **You don't need to be in contact with a power line to get hurt. Electricity can jump and often does when a potential conductor such as a ladder comes within a certain proximity. Be safe and keep well away—at least 10 feet—from overhead power lines.**
- **Any ladder—not just a metal one—is dangerous around power lines. No matter what the ladder is made of, it represents a potential hazard.**
- **Call your electric cooperative to report power lines that pass through tree limbs.**

COMANCHE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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FIND US ON THE WEB AT WWW.CECA.COOP

YOUR "LOCAL PAGES"

This section of *Texas Co-op Power* is produced by Comanche EC each month to provide you with information about current events, special programs and other activities of the cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact Shirley at the Comanche office or at sdukes@ceca.coop.

COMANCHE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Calling All High School Juniors!

Texas has a great past, but what about its future? The answer depends on our ability to prepare and train the next generation of leaders. Without opportunity, motivation and education, future leaders will not be equipped to provide the leadership necessary to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

It is to this end that Comanche Electric Cooperative teams up with the University of Texas of the Permian Basin to sponsor the John Ben Shepperd Leadership Forum each year. More than a traditional learning experience, the forum is an event where students commonly discover themselves. Led by local community leaders, this forum offers young people the opportunity to learn leadership, communication and goal-setting skills and heightens their awareness of responsible citizenship.

Forum attendees discuss public affairs issues that affect our state and local communities while learning skills for effecting positive change. The forum is an excellent opportunity for young leaders to become more involved in the leadership of their local governments.

This year's forum will be held October 10 at the 4-H Center at Lake Brownwood and is open to high school juniors in any school in our service district. Eligible schools are: Albany, Baird, Bangs, Blanket, Breckenridge, Brownwood, Cisco, Comanche, Cross Plains, De Leon, Dublin, Early, Eastland, Goldthwaite, Gorman, Gustine, Hamilton, Hico, May, Moran, Mullin, Priddy, Ranger, Rising Star, Sidney and Zephyr. If you know of a high school junior who exhibits leadership qualities and might enjoy attending the forum, please contact a school counselor or Shirley Dukes at 1-800-915-2533 or by e-mail at sdukes@ceca.coop.

Tapping into the Sun

BY SHIRLEY DUKES

"I have no doubt that we will be successful in harnessing the sun's energy ... if sunbeams were weapons of war, we would have had solar energy centuries ago."

~Sir George Porter

The sun is the closest star to Earth and is the center and most prominent feature of our solar system, containing approximately 98 percent of the total mass of the solar system. It is a giant, spinning ball of very hot gas, the light from which heats our world, makes life possible and determines our "space weather." The sun is our major source of energy on Earth. It provides almost all the energy needed to warm the Earth and for us to live and to power everything else. Even things like coal, oil and natural gas were originally created millions of years ago by plants that used solar energy to make lots more plants.

Electrical engineers today are aggressively attempting to harness the sun's energy to provide a much less invasive and more efficient form of energy. Using solar power to produce electricity is not the same as using it for heat. Most commonly recognized by us as "solar energy," the more accurate term is "photovoltaic energy." Photovoltaics, or PV for short, are technologies in which light is converted into electrical power. It is best known as a method for generating power by using solar cells packaged in photovoltaic modules to convert energy from the sun into electricity, and is defined as "the direct conversion of light into electricity."

These PV cells are made of the element silicon, which becomes charged electrically when subjected to the sun's light. The cells perform the conversion from sunlight to electricity without moving parts, noise, pollution or radiation. The PV cell is the smallest element that converts light into electrical energy. Each cell is made of silicon like a computer chip. The silicon is treated so that it generates a flow of electricity when light shines on it.

Energy created through a solar electric system produces no pollutants, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emission. Since the cells are mostly silicon, the primary component of sand, there is no exhaust and no toxic material to leak out of the system.

Although sunlight is free and abundant, solar electricity is still usually somewhat more expensive to produce than large-scale mechanically generated power due to the cost of the panels. Until recently, photovoltaics were most commonly used in remote sites where there is no access to a commercial power grid or as a supplemental electricity source for individual homes and businesses. Recent advances in manufacturing efficiency and photovoltaic technology, combined with subsidies driven by environmental concerns, have dramatically accelerated the deployment of solar panels.

Great strides are being made in the field of solar generation. As of June, the third-largest power plant in the world is the Nevada Solar One in Boulder City, Nevada. It was built by the U.S. Department of Energy, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and Solargenix Energy. It is now switched on and providing power to Nevada's electrical grid. It covers 400 acres and should generate enough reliable, clean energy to power 15,000 homes.

The Wal-Mart conglomerate is quickly becoming one of the forerunners in efforts to integrate solar power into store infrastructures. In 2005, the retail giant opened two experimental stores, one in Aurora, Colorado, and one in McKinney, Texas. In January, it opened the first in its line of high-efficiency super-centers in Kansas City, Missouri. Based on data from their two experimental stores, Wal-Mart expects to reduce energy use 2 to 3 percent in each facility.

So, you might be wondering, "What is Comanche Electric Cooperative doing in the field of solar energy?" Our power supplier, Brazos Electric Cooperative, does not currently have any solar panels in place. This is still a new and emerging technology as far as actually generating power. While it may very well be a practical option at some time, the generation co-op does not foresee using it in the very near future. Comanche Electric Cooperative, however, can help inform the members about solar power.

There are instances when running electric lines long distances for small services such as water wells, fence chargers or electric gates is not financially feasible. In these instances, it may make more sense to invest in a small solar panel. If you have questions concerning a personal solar panel, contact Doug Erwin at 1-800-915-2533 or (254) 842-7489 or by email at derwin@ceca.coop.

At remote locations, a solar panel can sometimes be a practical solution to your power needs. Contact Doug Erwin if Comanche Electric Cooperative can help you determine whether this is a good alternative for you.