



## THANK YOU, FARMERS AND RANCHERS!

March 19 is National Ag Day, when we celebrate the hardworking farmers and ranchers who fuel our community's growth and nourish us all.

Agriculture is a backbone of our region, and we're proud to power those dedicated to such efforts.

## Powering Progress: Updates on Our Substation Projects

At Big Country EC, we are committed to providing safe and reliable power to our valued members. The heartbeat of this commitment lies in our continuous endeavor to create a resilient and adaptable power supply through projects such as constructing new substations or maintaining the existing substations on our grid. As we start to dive into the swing of 2024, we wanted to share an update on our current substation projects.

### Camp Springs

This substation is in the early stages of construction. Currently, the groundwork for the pad is in progress, and we expect it to be finished by March 15th. The next phase of construction will commence shortly after when crews are available.

### Sylvester

The Sylvester substation is nearing completion, with commissioning and testing scheduled for April 8th. If all goes well, we expect to energize the substation by April 19th.

### North Hamlin

This substation is wrapping up construction and is expected to be completed by the end of March, with energization anticipated by September.

### Nugent

We are initiating the design process to rebuild this existing substation. The redesign will incorporate the latest technologies and industry standards.

The strides we are making in the construction of new substations are not just about building infrastructure; it's a testament to our collective commitment to a resilient power supply for our community. As we power ahead with progress, these substations represent the cornerstone of a more reliable and responsive electrical infrastructure. We sincerely appreciate the trust our members place in us to make responsible decisions on behalf of the cooperative, enabling us to confidently look ahead to a brighter and more sustainable future. Together, we illuminate the path where the strength of our community shines through in every flicker of light.



# **BIG COUNTRY** ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE *Membergram*



## Celebrating Five Years of Local Flavor: The Hodge Pack Show

In the heart of our community, there's a dynamic force that's been keeping us entertained, informed, and connected for the past five years. The Hodge Pack radio show, a vibrant blend of sports, local life, and everything in between, recently marked its five-year anniversary milestone with a lively Chamber of Commerce ribbon-cutting ceremony at their broadcast studio in Abilene.

Every Friday morning from 7-9:00 am on KLGD 106.9, listeners are treated to a unique mix of engaging discussions, live interviews, and the latest local updates. The show's charismatic hosts, Josh Greer, Misti Collier, and Ryan Holmes, have become familiar voices in our lives, bringing together sports enthusiasm and community news for a two-hour discussion on all things local.

The show's tagline, "sports life and everything in between," encapsulates its diverse range of topics, capturing the essence of our region with discussions on high school sports victories, community events, and heartwarming local stories. Big Country EC sponsors the "My Town" segment, which features local people, groups, and events.

As your electric cooperative, we are excited to celebrate local businesses and their achievements!

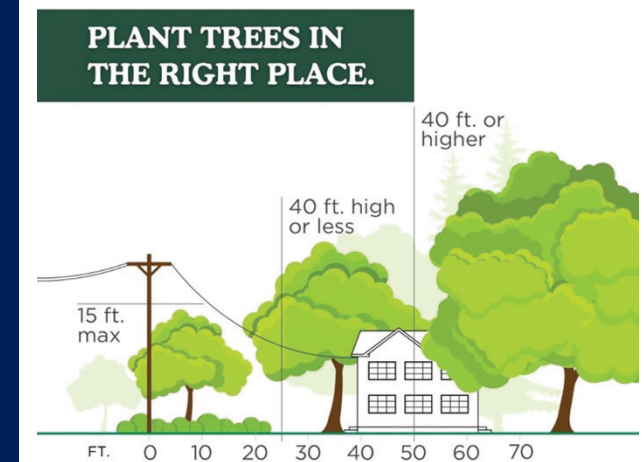


[www.bigcountry.coop](http://www.bigcountry.coop)

March 2024

## Did you know...

...there are ways you can help Big Country EC limit tree trimming? By planting trees in the right place from the start based on their expected height, you can help reduce the need to trim trees near overhead power lines.



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Lengthen the life of your clothes dryer with regular cleaning. Clean the lint filter after every load, which improves air circulation and safety. Check the lint trap opening and use a vacuum to remove any lint that's fallen inside the opening.

If you use dryer sheets, check the lint filter for residue buildup. Remove any residue with hot water and a nylon brush or toothbrush. Over time, dryer sheets can leave a film on the filter, which can affect the performance of the motor.





Big Country Electric Cooperative will be closed at 11:30 on Thursday, March 28 and Friday, March 29 for the Easter holiday. Phones will be answered, and crews will respond to outages. We wish all of you a safe and joyous Easter weekend!



An overhead power line can become damaged or fall due to a severe storm, car accident, public damage or other reasons. If you see a downed power line, take these actions:

- Consider all power lines energized and deadly.
- Stay at least 50 feet away.
- Call 9-1-1 or the utility to report the downed line.
- Do not approach it or try to move it with another object.
- Do not get out of a vehicle or cab.
- Do not approach the scene.
- Warn others to stay away.
- Turn around and go another way.

Even if you do not see a downed line, realize one could be hidden by storm debris, water, snow or ice.

#### Other things to know

- Energized downed lines spread voltage through the ground or nearby objects.
- If you go near a downed line, you can become electricity's path to ground.
- You cannot tell if a power line is live just by looking at it.
- Even if a power line appears coated, it is never safe to go near it.

While transmitting and distributing power is typically safe, extreme scenarios like downed power lines are extremely dangerous. Never approach a downed power line.

Learn more at: [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safeelectricity.org)

## Assistance Available for Rural Economic Development

In 2012, Big Country Electric Cooperative established a revolving loan to administer rural economic development loans. This initiative allocates a limited amount of funds for low-interest loans, accessible to qualified applicants, to stimulate rural development. The funding is exclusively used to make loans that meet requirements outlined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program.

#### How does the program work?

The USDA provides grants to local utility organizations such as Big Country EC, which use the funding to establish revolving loan funds. In turn, BCEC passes funds through to local businesses for projects that will create and retain employment in rural areas. The ultimate recipients repay the cooperative directly. When the revolving loan fund is terminated, the grant is repaid to the USDA.

#### Eligible Applicants:

- Business ventures, including corporations, partnerships, sole proprietorships, and cooperatives, are eligible.
- Governmental units, including local townships, municipalities, county governments, regional authorities, nonprofit entities, and tribal authorities, can also apply.
- Applicants do not have to be members of BCEC.

#### Eligible Projects:

Projects must create or retain employment or provide needed community facilities and services such as industrial or commercial development, small business expansion or startup, business incubators, community infrastructure, community facilities, medical facilities, training or educational facilities, or tourism.

#### Ineligible Projects or Activities:

Certain projects or activities are ineligible for funding, such as refinancing existing debt, payments to business owners, projects without supplemental financing, and those primarily for investment purposes. Other exclusions involve general improvement loans unrelated to business expansion, agricultural production costs, vehicles for general or personal use, projects with limited security, individual residential construction projects, and activities conflicting with the objectives of the revolving loan fund.

Additionally, the program prohibits involvement in illegal or legalized activities, such as gambling casinos, which could adversely affect the objectives of the revolving loan fund. Projects presenting conflicts of interest involving directors, officers, or affiliated organizations of Big Country EC are also ineligible.

This is an equal opportunity program. Discrimination is prohibited by federal law. Complaints of discrimination may be filed with the USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, D.C. 20250. For a loan application, questions or assistance completing the loan application package, contact Sarah McLen at Big Country EC at (325) 776-3808 or [smclen@bigcountry.coop](mailto:smclen@bigcountry.coop).

## Which BCEC Irrigation Option Suits Your Needs?

Each year, irrigators are provided with the opportunity to select options that best suit their needs. BCEC offers the following irrigation options:

- A** Flat Rate:  
Uses one set charge for all kWh used.
- B** Stepped Charge:  
Involves a stepped charge structure where a portion of the usage incurs higher charges, while the remaining usage is billed at lower rates. This option is more economical for irrigators who water more than 45% each month.
- C** Off-Peak Usage:  
Allows usage during a set off-peak period during the month. Usage during the on-peak period results in an on-peak demand charge. This option is best for those who can water during the off-peak periods.

It's important to note that irrigation options are selected annually and cannot be changed during the year once the selection has been made. The annual horsepower charge is billed in April. Letters, or emails for those who have opted in, will be sent out to irrigators outlining irrigation options and corresponding rates. Please call us if you have any questions.

## Upcoming Pole Inspections

Big Country EC is set to commence pole inspections, starting this month and likely continuing until the beginning of September. To ensure the thoroughness and efficiency of this process, we've enlisted the expertise of a trusted contractor specializing in utility pole assessments: Sundance Power Pole Inspections.

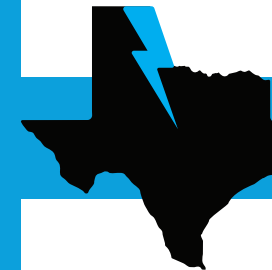
These inspections are a component of our ongoing commitment to maintaining a reliable and safe electrical infrastructure for your benefit. The skilled crews from our contracted partner will meticulously examine each pole, identifying any issues that could impact structural integrity or compromise the reliability of our electrical distribution system.

The collaborative effort between BCEC and Sundance is aimed at proactively addressing potential concerns before they affect your power supply. Throughout the inspection period, you may notice the contractor's crews in your neighborhood, working diligently to assess poles.

Your cooperation and understanding during this process is greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions or concerns about the upcoming pole inspections, please feel free to call us. We are here to address any queries you may have.



SUNDANCE PPI



[www.bigcountry.coop](http://www.bigcountry.coop)

#### Office Hours

Monday - Thursday: 7:30-12:00, 1:00-5:30  
Friday: 7:30-11:30

#### Contact Us

Toll Free: 1-888-662-2232  
Roby: (325) 776-2244  
Stamford: (325) 773-3684  
Snyder: (325) 573-3161

#### Report Outages

Please **call** your local BCEC office to report power outages.



## We're Mobile!



Access your BCEC account anytime with SmartHub! Download the app for your mobile device today by visiting [www.bigcountry.coop](http://www.bigcountry.coop) or searching for SmartHub in the app store.

#### Ask about our partnerships with:



**Rural Development Assistance Available Through BCEC**  
BCEC is an Equal Opportunity Lender.

Big Country Electric Cooperative, Inc. has a limited amount of funds available for low-interest loans to qualified applicants to stimulate rural development. Applicant does not have to be a member of Big Country Electric Cooperative. Please contact Sarah McLen at [smclen@bigcountry.coop](mailto:smclen@bigcountry.coop) for details.



Call 811 at least 2 working days before you dig.  
Visit [www.texas811.org](http://www.texas811.org) for more information.

**Agricultural Tax Exemptions** - In order to claim an exemption from Texas sales and use taxes on electricity and other items used in agricultural and timber operations, you are required to provide us with a registration number on Texas Agriculture Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certification Form 01-924. All water wells should be exempt if used for irrigation or watering livestock. The Texas Comptroller's Office issues the registration number and those wanting to claim the exemption must fill out an application. Registration numbers must be renewed every four years. Applicants can request a paper application to mail in by calling 1-800-252-5555 or download a copy from the comptroller's website, [www.getreadytexas.org](http://www.getreadytexas.org). The generic exemption certificate, Form 01-339, cannot be used to claim the agricultural exemption. Accounts that do not have the new required form on file will be subject to taxation.  
**Commercial Tax Exemption Records** - A completed and signed exemption form is required for each commercial tax exempt account. Accounts that do not have current exemptions on file will be changed to taxable accounts. Any refunds for taxes must be claimed from the State of Texas. Thank you for your help.