

FEBRUARY–MARCH 2023

SAVE THE DATE

Feb. 9

**2023 NESC Clearances for
Joint Use Facilities**
Webinar

Feb. 14

**Introduction to Substation
Design/Operation**
Webinar

Feb. 14–17

Metering School
McGregor, Heart of Texas EC

Feb. 16

**2023 NESC Clearances to
Grain Bins and Pools**
Webinar

Feb. 20–24

**Staking Technician Training
Seminar—Phase III**
Georgetown,
TEC Training Facility

March 6–10

**Staking Technician Training
Seminar—Phase I**
Georgetown,
TEC Training Facility

March 9

NESC Grounding Requirements
Webinar

March 21–24

**TEC Loss Control Conference
& Exhibit Show**
San Marcos, Embassy Suites

ALWAYS THINK SAFETY

Gloves | Grounds | Cover Up

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Use the [TEC Safety and Loss Control discussion list](#) on the TEC member website to share and gather information.



**Texas Electric
Cooperatives**
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION
FROM TEC LOSS CONTROL

Enhanced Education

Virtual reality will be among the talking points as TEC Loss Control Conference continues advocacy of safety culture

Electric co-ops have long been ready adopters of technology. Bucket trucks eased the physical toll of climbing poles and increased efficiency in the early 1900s. Automated meter reading systems streamlined billing and monitoring of the grid in the 1990s. More recently, geographic information systems—digital mapping software—gives co-ops detailed images of their systems, including lines, substations and transformers.

Virtual reality is taking its place alongside those advancements as the utility industry adds another tool to its training regimen. The emerging technology already enhances education in fields such as medicine and in the military.

“Just like in aviation and surgery, nothing replaces the need to train on actual equipment, but the mastery of the actual equipment is accelerated when VR training is included into the mix,” says Nathan Cannon, who will present several VR sessions at the annual TEC Loss Control Conference & Exhibit Show, March 21–24 in San Marcos.

Cannon is a systems innovations analyst with Pike Enterprises, which provides a variety of services to utilities. He emphasizes the efficiency benefits of VR training, which employs a computer-generated sensory experience that he says can put students on task more readily.

“VR training teaches skills through efficient task repetition and real-time feedback in a safe environment,” Cannon says. “In fact, we have found that students who experience VR before hands-on training are much more confident and comfortable performing tasks when they enter a training yard.

“We believe that the next one to two years will bring significant growth in VR training as a desired addition to line work training.”

Education is just one focus of the Loss Control Conference, which brings together hundreds of lineworkers and other utility employees and dozens of vendors in the promotion of safety in the industry.

Other topics on the agenda include:

- Keeping things simple: leading the charge by taking care of yourself.



Nathan Cannon of Pike Enterprises says virtual reality training “helps accelerate task mastery and should be considered complementary to the traditional hands-on human instruction.”

- Electrical contact data and accident trends.
- Rewiring attitudes and risky behaviors on the road.

• Breaking down barriers: speaking up about safety. Organizations and individuals will be honored for outstanding safety records, and Lifesaving and Good Samaritan awards will be presented to employees who changed lives in their communities.

Regular highlights of the conference are the Gordon Williams Memorial Golf Tournament, scholarship auction and exhibition show, where attendees can visit with vendors showcasing the latest equipment and services in the electric industry.

The golf tournament and auction helped raise more than \$60,000 for the TEC Loss Control Scholarship program at the 2022 conference.

Register for the conference through the [TEC Event Calendar](#).

Rusk County EC Bids Farewell to Seale



Mike Seale is off fishing these days, having left behind a 24-year career at Rusk County EC.

Also left behind is a legacy of demonstrating Concern for Community, one of the Seven Cooperative Principles.

Seale, who started as an apprentice lineworker and worked his way through the ranks and into the service department, retired in November. Rusk County EC's members were foremost on his mind as he bid farewell.

"When we have big outages, people see our trucks coming and go to clapping," Seale said. "That's what I'm going to miss: knowing we are doing the right thing and helping people in need."

"My dad always taught me if you're going to do something, do it right. This world is competitive, and you have to be competitive to get anywhere. I'm not going to turn my back on my neighbors, who are the members. And that's the hardest thing about retiring."

Seale twice received a Lifesaving Award from TEC's Loss Control program. The first time, Seale's quick thinking and first-aid skills saved the life of a co-worker and friend who was shot in a hunting accident.

His second award, in 2011, came for rescuing a communications worker who was overcome with heat exhaustion while working 120 feet in the air on a radio tower. Seale climbed the tower—to heights far surpassing those of utility poles that lineworkers typically ascend—harnessed and tied off the distressed worker, then lowered him to a fire ladder waiting below.

Seale recalled a conversation he had with a younger lineworker during hurricane recovery in New Orleans. His colleague asked for advice on working for the first time in the aftermath of a storm. Seale's response serves as a telling message for all co-op workers.

"They are going to treat you like a king, but don't take advantage of them," Seale told him. "They had something and now have nothing. If they offer you something like money, don't take it. You make sure they have what they need."



Mike Seale rescues a communications worker in distress from a radio tower.

COURTESY RUSK COUNTY EC

Taylor EC Puts Safety in the Spotlight

Taylor EC held an all-day training event Oct. 25, 2022, at the co-op's headquarters in Merkel to spotlight employee safety practices. Co-workers were invited to watch crews demonstrate pole-top rescue, climbing and bucket safety at the training grounds, which TEC uses for schools throughout the year. The co-op honored the lineworkers and celebrated another year of safety with a luncheon.

TEC UPDATE

Scholarship Auction Items Needed

TEC Loss Control seeks donated items for the scholarship auction March 23 at the TEC Loss Control Conference in San Marcos. The auction is the primary fundraiser for the TEC Loss Control Scholarship program. Email Tami Knipstein at tknipstein@texas-ec.org to enroll your donations. The auction raised \$59,535 in 2022, when TEC awarded scholarships to 68 graduating seniors.

Down to the Wire

TEC is adding a special feature to its Loss Control Conference and scholarship auction: wire art. Creative lineworkers and others in the industry are known to turn wire scraps into masterpieces, as seen below, and the sculptures will be showcased in March in San Marcos.



SAM HOUSTON EC

The Wire Art Challenge features a photo contest, with attendees voting on their favorite wire art. They can also vote with their wallets because the sculptures will be included in the scholarship auction, which raises tens of thousands of dollars every year.

Email photos of your work to tknipstein@texas-ec.org.

Send your sculptures by Feb. 28 to the following address so they can be included in the scholarship auction: Texas Electric Cooperatives, Tami Knipstein, 1122 Colorado Street, 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701.

Texas Mutual Recognizes Co-op Safety Records

Three co-ops, Bluebonnet EC, Magic Valley EC and United Cooperative Services, were recognized by Texas Mutual Insurance Co. for their commitments to safety in 2022. All three were among 200 of Texas Mutual's 74,000 policyholders to earn its Platinum Safety Partner Award for their commitments to keeping employees safe and providing safety resources.

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