



APRIL–MAY 2024

SAVE THE DATE

April 23–26

**Groundman Apprentice
Essential Skills School**

McGregor, Heart of Texas EC

May 6–10

30-Hour OSHA School

Pleasanton, Karnes EC

May 14

Overview of Arc Flash

Webinar

May 20–24

**Staking Technician Training
Seminar—Phase II**

Georgetown, TEC

Training Facility

May 21

Load Management—Part One

Webinar

May 21–22

**Advanced Electrical
Theory School**

Robstown, Nueces EC

June 6–7

10-Hour OSHA School

Victoria, Victoria EC

TEC works to add schools to the 2024 calendar as registrations close when the maximum number of students is reached. Waitlists are available. Click on the desired school for details.

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.



A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION
FROM TEC LOSS CONTROL

'Safety Is Everybody's Job'

Loss Control Conference offers cautionary tales and success stories

Two realities emerged at a recent statewide gathering of lineworkers.

First, almost all of them sometimes think they are bulletproof.

Second, none of them are.

"We're a very special breed," said Branden Bauer, a former lineworker from United Electric Cooperative, a distribution co-op in Pennsylvania. He spoke in March to a gathering of 303 lineworkers, safety specialists and managers at the 78th TEC Loss Control Conference & Exhibit Show in Frisco.

Bauer described the type of people who generally get into line work: "type A personalities, bold, stubborn, go-getters, work-all-nighters." Exactly the mindset that makes co-ops such efficient and successful utilities, especially during outages.

That was Bauer about 10 years into his career. "I knew what electricity could do, and I tried to respect it," he said. When warnings about the job's hazards and the possibility of serious incidents came up in meetings, Bauer wasn't alone in thinking, "That won't happen to me."

All of that changed Jan. 8, 2021. "That 'never gonna happen to me' happened to me," Bauer said.

He was a journeyman on a crew assigned to a three-phase rebuild in a rugged rural area about 100 miles northeast of Pittsburgh. He was up in a bucket when he came into contact with what he thought was a neutral line, and 7,200 volts surged into his arms and out through his hands. His leather gloves were still smoldering and his body was almost too

hot to touch when his co-workers lowered him to the ground.

"I thought, this is it. I'm a dead man," he said. And he thought of his wife, Katelyn, who was pregnant with their first child.

As Bauer explained in his new career as a public speaker, he lost both hands, a large portion of both forearms, and muscle and skin in what remained of



Branden Bauer says that in his "nubs," he still feels like he has hands, allowing sensors in his prosthesis to pick up muscle movements that allow him to open and close his bioelectric right hand.

his limbs. He wants people who work around electricity to know details of his agonizing recovery, which included nearly 30 surgeries and more than nine weeks in hospitals in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Cincinnati.

"When you get burnt, or you get hurt, it affects everybody in your life," he said.

Katelyn Bauer spoke about racing to UPMC Mercy Burn Center in Pittsburgh, where Branden was airlifted, and wondering if he would still be alive when she got there. "I just wasn't ready to lose my best friend," she said.

For nights, she cried herself to sleep, only to return to the hospital the next day to present a strong and encouraging front. She describes Branden's surgeries and therapies as endless.

"We're still navigating challenges daily," Katelyn

2025 TEC LOSS CONTROL CONFERENCE & EXHIBIT SHOW

March 11–14 | San Marcos, Embassy Suites

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TEC Loss Control Conference continued from Page 1

said, including the time their now-2-year-old daughter asked why Daddy doesn't have hands.

Branden is back at his co-op, working on a limited basis as a line superintendent. His real love is still line work, which is why he speaks at gatherings of his peers, reiterating a constant message heard in the utility industry: "Safety is everybody's job."

The Bauers were among two dozen speakers at the conference, which welcomed 74 first-time attendees and 53 exhibitors, cele-



It took weeks of surgeries and horrific treatments before doctors realized they couldn't save Bauer's arms. "Next time you want to take a shortcut ... think about your family," he tells lineworkers.

brated safety milestones at the organizations that participate in TEC's Loss Control program, and marked the end of one man's leadership in the safety community.

Danny Williams retired from TEC at the end of March, ending his 59-year career. That includes 38 years as an instructor and 17 years as the Loss Control manager.

Martin Bevins, TEC vice president of communications and member services, marveled at the impact Williams had imparting safety messages across the state. "There are countless times when that education and that information has helped someone," Bevins said.

Williams, 80, started his career in 1965 at McCulloch EC in Brady. "It's been a good run," he said. "I don't know anything else I could have done that would be more self-satisfying to me than this job."

Curtis Whitt, who started at TEC in 2002, takes over as Loss Control manager. He calls Williams a mentor. "Knowledge is most valuable when it's shared and applied, and I don't think you will ever meet anyone that has shared more knowledge than Danny Williams," Whitt said.

Presentation of the Ray Pantel Award is a high point of the conference, and that wasn't lost on Derly Carrizales, this year's recipient.

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Top: Chris Hernandez of Energy Reps discusses his company's products with an attendee. Above left: Derly Carrizales of Medina EC wins the Ray Pantel Award, TEC Loss Control's highest honor. Carrizales started his career at Medina in 1982 and became safety manager 13 years ago. Above right: Gregg Belcher of Hamilton County EC wins the Unsung Hero Award. He has 30-plus years at the co-op and has often served as a guest instructor at Loss Control schools. Below: From left, Oscar Rochin presents the GE Safety Award to Navarro County EC's Breezy Elder, Jerad Taylor and Isaiah Solis. To see a list of all the awards presented at the conference, click [here](#).



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Hearing his name announced and then being surprised by his wife, kids and grandkids was almost overwhelming.

“I always wondered what it would be like to be up there,” said Carziales, the safety manager at Medina EC. “So many people to thank. It’s not all about me.”

Gregg Belcher of Hamilton County EC won the Unsung Hero Award for his contributions to the Loss Control program, including serving as a guest instructor at schools.

Navarro County EC continued its run of success by collecting the GE Safety Award for the fourth year in a row and fifth time in six years. General Electric bestows the award based on a scoring system that includes Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program accreditation, disabling injury index, and records for driving and injury incidents.

Alex Llamas of Brownfield Power and Light and Carolyn Morrow of GVEC received Lifesaving Awards, and five others (including Llamas) received Good Samaritan Awards.

The celebration of safety included recognizing organizations that have attained at least 1 million hours worked without a lost-time incident, led by GVEC with more than 2.5 million hours. Bailey County, Central Texas, Navarro County, San Bernard, San Patricio, Trinity Valley and Victoria ECs also reached that milestone.

“You can be safe by luck for a little while, but when you get to a million or more, you’ve done something right,” Whitt said.

In addition, 38 organizations received No Lost-Time Awards, led by the city of Fredericksburg, which has run its streak to 38 years. And 62 individuals earned safety achievement awards, led by Verline Parks of Deep East Texas EC and Henry Neil Schaefer of Bandera EC, who have both worked 50 years without a lost-time incident.

A common message at the conference was that safety needs to be a priority at all times.

“Safety isn’t a department, and it’s not a person. It’s a mindset,” said Rayce Cantwell, Wise EC general manager. “It’s a culture that takes time. That doesn’t happen overnight. It’s built out of action. It’s a culture built out of care and concern for your co-worker.”

A panel of safety managers addressed how they strive to lead by example, including making ongoing communication a priority and ensuring their colleagues don’t see the safety managers as the watchdogs of the co-op.

“Positive reinforcement goes a lot further than negative reinforcement,” said Tim Landes of Bandera EC. “It’s not a finger-pointing deal.”

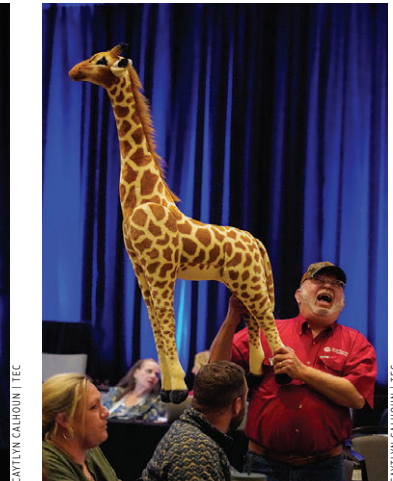
Ben Greene of South Plains EC agreed. “I’m not trying to make their jobs harder,” he said. “I’m trying to make their jobs safer.”

Raising money for the TEC Loss Control Scholarship program is the main purpose of fun activities at the conference. An auction of 91 donated items brought in a record \$89,000. The Gordon Williams Memorial Golf Tournament, a raffle and donations added \$6,048—for a total of \$95,048. Since 1994, the auctions alone have raised more than \$720,000.

The fundraising allowed TEC to award 55 scholarships of \$1,750 each.



CATLYN CALHOUN / TEC



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Top: TEC’s Martin Bevens, left, presents Danny Williams with an award in recognition of his retirement after a 59-year career. Above left: Curtis Whitt is the new TEC Loss Control manager. Above right: TEC’s David Nance sticks his neck out on behalf of a stuffed giraffe, one of a record 91 auction items. Below: Chris Scibica of UtilSoft was one of 53 vendors who showcased their goods and services to attendees.



CATLYN CALHOUN / TEC



Lifesaving Awards

ALEX LLAMAS

Brownfield Power and Light

Llamas, a lineworker, was at a family gathering when a boy began to have trouble breathing and complained of chest pain. The boy collapsed and became unresponsive while Llamas was checking on him. Llamas, following guidance he learned in company safety meetings, began CPR, and 911 was called. A doctor determined the boy experienced a caffeine overdose, likely caused by an energy drink.

CAROLYN MORROW

GVEC

Morrow, a recruiting and development manager, came home to find that her husband, Ken, was not looking, acting or feeling like himself. As she thought back to heart-related safety training she received at the co-op, she knew he needed to see a doctor promptly. Tests showed Ken had an aortic aneurysm, which could be fatal, and needed open-heart surgery.

24/7 Good Samaritan Awards

KOLE DELLINGER AND DAKOTA JONES

Bowie-Cass EC

The lineworkers were leaving a job when they noticed a man in a wheelchair struggling to move up a steep grade along a busy highway. Jones offered to push him to his destination, and Dellinger followed in the bucket truck with its hazard lights on.

JEREMY GRISSOM

Bowie-Cass EC

Grissom, a lineworker, came across a truck sitting on a highway in Omaha, Texas. The driver seemed confused and unable to see well; he said he'd just had an eye procedure. Grissom called 911 then drove the man home safely.

ALEX LLAMAS AND BRANT QUINTANILLA

Brownfield Power and Light

The lineworkers went to a customer's home to ask about his bill. The door was cracked open slightly, and they heard a faint yell from inside the home. They entered and found the homeowner on the floor, where he had been stuck a couple days, after a fall. Llamas called EMS and both workers waited until medical help arrived and took over.



ALEX LLAMAS



CAROLYN MORROW

Click [HERE](#) to see the 2023 Lifesaving Award videos and videos of previous recipients.



WATCH VIDEOS

Photo Challenge Winner

Randal Bailey of South Plains EC was voted winner of the conference's photo challenge. The theme was View From the Top (of a Pole).



RANDAL BAILEY | SOUTH PLAINS EC