

TEC LOSS CONTROL SAFETY WATCH

FEBRUARY–MARCH 2025

SAVE THE DATE

March 11–14

**TEC Loss Control Conference
& Exhibit Show**

Frisco, Embassy Suites

March 24–28

30-Hour OSHA School

Livingston, Sam Houston EC

March 24–28

**Staking Technician Training
Seminar—Phase 1**

Georgetown, TEC Training Facility

April 8–10

Supervisor/Foreman School

Kerrville, Kerrville Public
Utility Board

April 15–18

Basic Pole Climbing School

Pleasanton, Karnes EC

April 28–May 2

**Staking Technician Training
Seminar—Phase II**

Georgetown, TEC Training Facility

May 6–9

Troubleshooting School

McGregor, Heart of Texas EC

May 13–16

**Groundman Apprentice
Essential Skills School**

City of Seguin

TEC works to add schools to the 2025 [calendar](#) as registrations close when the maximum number of students is reached. Waiting lists are available. Click on the desired school for details.

ALWAYS THINK SAFETY

Gloves | Grounds | Cover Up



A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION
FROM TEC LOSS CONTROL

TEC Loss Control Conference To Spotlight Work Practices, Celebrate Safety

Timeout!

Ken Macken wants everybody to stop and think about their safety procedures. He says it's time to reset game plans in the electric utility industry and reduce or eliminate injuries and fatalities.

"It really is across all the crews, the foremen and management—this whole initiative of trying to get our work practices to where we cannot have any injuries—or serious injuries," said Macken, NRECA's director of safety programs. "We cannot have any fatalities."

Macken will be among more than a dozen speakers at the upcoming TEC Loss Control Conference and Exhibit Show, March 11–14 at the Embassy Suites in Frisco.

Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange received claims for 18 electrical contacts and one fatality in 2024. That comes from worker compensation data compiled by Federated, which covers about 60% of the co-ops in the country.

Even as those numbers mark a decrease from 2023, Macken wants the hundreds of lineworkers, safety specialists and managers at the conference to consider them unacceptable.

"Take a timeout," Macken said. "Look at your culture. Look at your own certain practices. Look at your own commitment to safety, no matter what level you're on, and just commit to that."

The conference offers a perfect timeout, when attendees can take in sessions that will spotlight:

- Individual influence
- Incident trends in Texas
- Leading by example
- Risky driving
- Work zone safety
- Why safety matters to organizations' success

Macken will address NRECA's Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program and its ongoing Commitment to Zero Contacts initiative.

"I believe we can get to zero contacts," Macken said. Most incidents are preventable, he said, citing proper grounding practices, the use of rubber gloves and lockout-tagout procedures as the foundation for achieving a perfect record.



Curtis Whitt, left, leads a panel discussion of co-op general managers in 2024.

"I'm challenging people to do whatever it takes to get to zero because we're still having too many fatalities; we're having too many contacts," he said.

Corey Parr, vice president of safety and loss prevention at Federated, agreed. He said that situations in which "people are getting hurt should not be dangerous. I don't believe they're dangerous. I believe they're unforgiving when we choose to break a rule or misuse a piece of equipment."

Curtis Whitt, TEC's Loss Control manager, hopes a timeout like the conference puts a renewed focus on the very work practices Macken cites.

"We're overlooking our basic work procedures," Whitt said.

The conference is the centerpiece of a program that in 2024 provided training to a record 1,204 utility workers at specialized schools around the state. In addition, TEC's team of 10 instructors conducted 849 safety meetings at 99 participating organizations—57 co-ops, 30 municipal utilities and 12 contractors.

The conference also celebrates organizations and individuals for outstanding safety records, and employees who changed lives in their communities will receive Lifesaving and Good Samaritan awards.

A golf tournament and auction of donated items are important fundraisers for TEC Loss Control scholarships. Last year they helped raise more than \$95,000.

Learn more and register for the conference [here](#).

CAYLYN CALHOUN | TEC

Back to Basics at TEC

Curtis Whitt is taking the new year to recalibrate TEC Loss Control's priorities. In fact, those priorities will include emphasizing the most basic safety procedures.

Top of mind for Whitt and his nine fellow safety instructors is focusing on the use of rubber gloves and proper grounding procedures and the importance of lockout-tagout and testing for voltage.

"These things are all fundamentals," said Whitt, who was promoted to Loss Control manager in 2024. "It all goes back to basics."

In 2024, TEC Loss Control conducted 65 specialized schools with 1,204 students around the state. Whitt is proud of those numbers, but he said he becomes frustrated when thinking about last year, which included multiple fatalities in Texas from electrical contact and a double amputation after contact. At some point, a work procedure, practice or decision regarding safety failed in each of those situations, he said.

Problems aren't the result of lack of knowledge. "It's lack of judgment and poor choices," he said. "We're overlooking our basic work procedures. How do we reach these guys?"

When lineworkers take a shortcut, get into a bad habit or ignore some aspect of their safety training, they aren't putting just themselves at risk. Whitt often reminds participants in his schools and safety meetings that when a lineworker dies or is seriously injured, it devastates their families—wives, children, parents. And it's traumatic for the organization they work for.

He tells his students: When you go up on a pole or in a bucket, you need to work as if your wife and kids are up there on the line with you because the livelihood of all of them is in your hands.

"Most people make choices and take risks because they have the mentality that 'it's not going to happen to me,'" Whitt said. "They have this self-imposed sense of invincibility."

"There's too much dodging bullets out there."

At the 2025 Loss Control Conference and Exhibit Show in March, 10 organizations will receive awards for reaching at least 1 million hours worked without a lost-time incident.

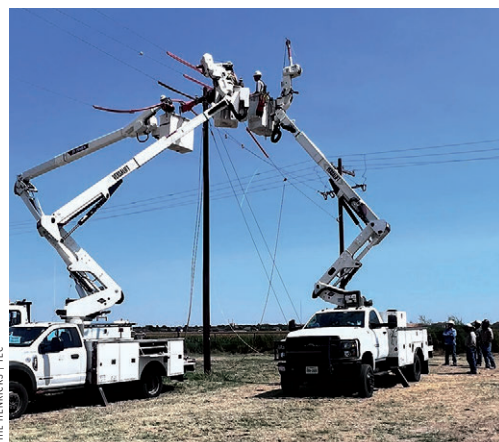
Whitt will celebrate those successes. Still, when

he looks out at the hundreds of lineworkers, safety specialists and managers attending the conference, he'll feel haunted by the failures of 2024, which he said "glare out at us like a beacon on a dark night."

And he'll wonder, once again, "How do we reach these guys?"

The question haunts him. And the failures keep him up at night.

"Hell, yeah, they do," he said.



Students and instructors at a TEC Hotline School in September 2024 in Levelland.

TEC UPDATE

Scholarship Auction Items Needed

TEC Loss Control seeks donated items for the scholarship auction March 13 at the Loss Control Conference in Frisco. The auction is the primary fundraiser for the Loss Control Scholarship program. Email Tami Knipstein at tknipstein@texas-ec.org to enroll your donations. An auction of 91 donated items brought in a record \$89,000 in 2024, when TEC awarded scholarships to 55 graduating seniors.

Enter the Photo Challenge

The TEC Loss Control Photo Challenge is open to all employees of electric cooperatives, municipal electric utilities and contractors who participate in the Loss Control program. Photos will be judged by popular vote at the Loss Control Conference in March.

Theme: Mutual Aid: Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Entry deadline: Feb. 14

Photo limit: Three per person

How to enter: Email high-resolution digital images to tknipstein@texas-ec.org.

Lineworker Recruitment Toolkit

TEC's Lineworker Recruitment Toolkit can help electric cooperatives recruit lineworkers from within their communities. The materials are perfect for local job fairs, high school guidance counselors and junior college career boards.

The toolkit includes these ready-to-print PDF files:

- A brochure that offers a snapshot of a lineworker's career.
- A flyer and a poster for use in the co-op office, in local schools and at career day events.
- Ads that can be used in *Texas Co-op Power* local pages, newsletters, area newspapers and other publications that could reach prospective lineworkers.

Plus:

- A video that will inform and motivate prospective recruits.
- A PDF of *Texas Co-op Power* stories on lineworkers.
- Floor and tabletop pull-up banners can be purchased to display at events and in office lobbies.

Customize the Toolkit

The toolkit materials can be customized to add your co-op's name and contact information. Download the order form [here](#).



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