

DECEMBER–JANUARY 2026

SAVE THE DATE

Dec. 9

Sizing Three-Phase
Transformers

Webinar

Jan. 20–23, 2026

Journeyman Refresher School—
Transformers and Metering

McGregor, Heart of Texas EC

Feb. 3–6, 2026

Transformer School

Livingston, Sam Houston EC

Feb. 10–13, 2026

Journeyman Refresher School—
Transformers and Metering

Tahoka, Lyntegar EC

Feb. 17–18, 2026

10-Hour OSHA School

Fredericksburg, Central Texas EC

March 10–12, 2026

Supervisor/Foreman School

Tahoka, Lyntegar EC

Find photos from [Loss Control schools](#) on the TEC website.

TEC works to add schools to the 2026 [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

SCAN FOR A PDF
OF THIS ISSUE

**Texas Electric
Cooperatives**
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION
FROM TEC LOSS CONTROL

The Call You Never Want

The horrific injury and wondrous recovery of a senior lineworker

June 19 started out calmly at Hamilton County EC. Employees attended their monthly safety meeting in the morning, then leadership training continued into the afternoon as the thermometer inched toward the mid-90s in Central Texas.

After the training, Gregg Belcher, a crew foreman with 31 years under his belt, headed out to change a pole in Hamilton—his crew's only work order for the day.

Soon after, George Luker, the co-op's safety manager, wondered about the two calls in rapid succession that had vibrated his phone during the training. Suddenly, the radio crackled with the kind of news that stops hearts and, for an instant, seems unreal. Except it wasn't: We had a contact. It's bad.

HCEC, like all co-ops, repeatedly prepares for such a crisis. But this wasn't a drill.

Luker rushed directly to the jobsite, just three minutes from the office. He didn't know exactly what happened or who was involved until he got there and saw Gregg on the ground, obviously badly injured.

"My heart sank," Luker said. But he immediately noted that Gregg's crew and other co-op employees who had rushed to the scene were performing as they were trained. They got him down from the bucket he was working in, deployed an automated external defibrillator and cut away constricting clothing. Emergency medical services were on the way.

"That kind of stuck out in my head, that they've secured the scene, and they were providing immediate care to Gregg when I rolled up," Luker said. "They did a fantastic job in a terrible situation."

Meanwhile, General Manager Cody Lasater called Lori, Gregg's wife, who was at their home outside Hico. Lasater relayed news and details that told her life might never be the same: Gregg has been in an accident and has been taken by CareFlite to Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas. Parkland has one of the largest civilian burn units in the nation.



TRACY COX | HAMILTON COUNTY EC

Lori and Gregg Belcher at their home outside Hico with Whiskey, one of their blue lacs, in November.

"Your brain just sort of stops working for a minute," Lori said.

By sunset, she and Gregg—heavily medicated, with wires and tubes crawling all over his upper body—had been thrust into an agonizing hospital stay that tested the limits of their physical and emotional strength over four months. It was a stay that almost ended before it started.

"I was dead when they brought me down," Gregg said from the hospital in October, days before he was discharged. "It was the opinion of quite a few of the people around here that I might not make it, and that's kind of what they told Lori."

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He was far from OK.

“We were three weeks in before he was even recognizable as himself, because of the swelling and the burns,” Lori said. Questions lingered about whether his kidneys and liver would survive the trauma.

His left arm, burned beyond repair, had to be amputated—first at the elbow and then, a few days later, all the way to his shoulder.

That’s about when Lori first saw the ghastly injury to his back. Electricity had burned away much of the flesh, leaving a raw, open wound. “It was tough to look at. It was very deep,” she said. “And I remember thinking, ‘How can they fix this? You know, how is it humanly possible to fix something like this?’”



What made it possible was a team of countless surgeons, nurses, therapists and specialists working around the clock. Gregg endured more than a dozen surgeries, some during the first four weeks, when he was unconscious. A flap of skin from his flank was grafted onto his back, then carefully monitored to ensure blood flow so it would successfully heal.

His recovery, while excruciatingly slow, offered promise in small measures. One day he blinked. Then he squeezed a nurse’s fingers. And started wiggling his toes. He was coming back.

That didn’t surprise the people who know him. “He’s got such a great attitude, and he’s working so hard,” Lasater said. “He’s just a badass.”

Lori agreed. “I would say that’s accurate. Yeah, a 59-year-old badass.”

“That’s a good term for him,” Luker said.

Luker also had high praise for Lori. “That lady has not left his side. She’s 5-foot-nothing, but she is a pillar of strength. God bless her.”

Lori knew falling to pieces would not help anybody, and she found strength in prayer. “I feel like I’m walking through this in a God bubble, and I have just peace,” she said.

Lori posted Facebook updates almost daily about Gregg’s progress, giving hope to a vast community of family and friends back home. “We’re really close here at this co-op,” Lasater said. “We consider ourselves a family.”

That network of co-workers and friends in Hico and Hamilton

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Above: Gregg in late June. Below: By September, therapists had Gregg back on his feet to regain strength and his sense of balance.



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and at co-ops rallied with fundraising to help with expenses, collecting \$93,000 at a benefit event in August and through other donations.

“The communities of Hico and Hamilton have been incredible,” Lori said. “We were just blown away by the love that people have shown us.”

At Parkland, Gregg remained focused on recovery and regaining mobility.

One day in the hallway, a therapist asked him to walk 10 feet. With her holding onto him and Gregg steadying himself with a cane, he shuffled along for 10 feet. Then he kept going, 15 feet farther. The therapist became emotional.

“The next day, she asked me, ‘What’s your goal?’ I said, ‘To make you cry.’

“I got lots of angels in this hospital that have helped me,” Gregg said days before he was discharged. “A lot of angels. A lot of angels.”

By mid-October, he was eager to get home to his three dogs—two blue lacs and a Plott hound—which he had been training to recover game animals wounded during hunts.

Christmas 2025 is going to be special for the Belchers. As he adjusts to navigating life with one arm, Gregg knows he’s lucky to be alive. And he realizes he was misguided, as he said most lineworkers are, to think such a horrific accident happens only to other people.

“You know, we’re 10 feet tall and bulletproof,” Gregg said. “We don’t think it’s going to happen to us.”

Luker remains troubled that his close friend has become a walking example of what safety professionals constantly preach: You might only get one mistake in line work.

“Whether you have two years of experience or whether you have 30 years—that voltage, it doesn’t care,” Luker said. “Those years of experience don’t give you any kind of a free pass.”



Back home, granddaughter Steely James Stafford feeds Gregg cake. “He’d let her feed him worms if that’s what she wanted,” Lori said.



David Nance, left, on the best advice he ever received: “My dad told me years ago that a lineman’s pencil has no eraser. In other words, you can’t make a mistake. You make a mistake, and it could be your last.”

TEC’s Nance Retires After 51-Year Career

When David Nance joined TEC Loss Control as an instructor in 2006, he thought some of the knowledge gained after working in the utility industry for 32 years could help keep others safe.

“I wanted to see if I could make a difference in the lives of other linemen,” said Nance, who retired Sept. 23. His 51 years in the industry included 24 years at Jackson EC.

For the past 19 years, he traveled widely across Texas, conducting safety meetings and technical skills schools at electric cooperatives and other organizations as one of TEC’s 12 experts weaving a safety net for the industry’s frontline workers.

“He genuinely cared and wanted to help wherever and however he could,” said Curtis Whitt, Loss Control manager.

Nance, who is himself a member of Jackson EC and Nueces EC, didn’t hesitate to say what he hopes his lasting impression is. “The one thing that I would want people to remember is how I closed all my meetings: ‘Be your brother’s keeper.’

“Watch out for everyone, and make sure everyone gets to come home. If we do that, we’ve done a proper job.”

Texas Co-ops Stand Out at International Rodeo

A Pedernales EC three-person team claimed fourth place among cooperative journeymen at the International Lineman's Rodeo in October. Zachary McFee, Zack Gough and Nick Morris were joined by a crew of co-workers and two MidSouth EC crews in the top 20 at the competition in Overland Park, Kansas.

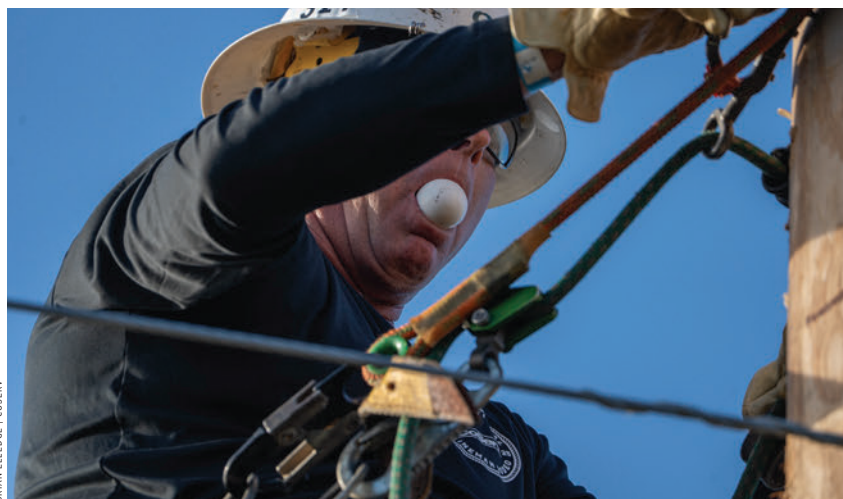
"To have a first-time team of relatively new journeymen place internationally—that was pretty cool," said Morris, a technical training instructor at PEC. "I think it also speaks to the success of our apprentice program at PEC as well as our culture of safety and tradition of excellence."

More than 1,200 lineworkers converged for the event that includes co-ops and municipal and investor-owned utilities. Journeymen compete in three-person teams; apprentices compete individually. Bluebonnet, Farmers and Trinity Valley ECs and CoServ also sent competitors. See the full results [here](#).



Left: Zachary McFee, left, and Zack Gough work atop a pole during an event at the International Lineman's Rodeo. The pair, along with Nick Morris, finished fourth among co-ops and 23rd overall after completing all four events. Below: CoServ journeyman Chris Hammonds competes in the pole climb, a timed race where the goal was to move swiftly up and down a pole without cracking the egg in his mouth.

JESSE MOLONEY | PEDERNALES EC



BRIAN ELLEDGE | COSERV

TEC UPDATE

Apply for Loss Control Scholarships

High school seniors are eligible to apply for scholarships if they are children of electric cooperative, electric municipal or contractor employees who participate in TEC's Loss Control program, such as safety meetings, schools or the Loss Control Conference. Scholarship applications are available on the [Loss Control](#) page of TEC's website. The application deadline is 5 p.m. Jan. 16, 2026. For more information, email Tami Knipstein at tknipstein@texas-ec.org.

Safety Data and Award Nominations Needed

Complete your organization's 2025 Injury/Incident Report by Jan. 30, 2026, and return to tknipstein@texas-ec.org. The 2025 Injury/Incident Report is located on the [Loss Control](#) page of the TEC website, as are nomination forms for awards to be presented at the 2026 TEC Loss Control Conference, March 17–20 at the Embassy Suites in San Marcos.

- The **No Lost-Time Award** recognizes organizations that have achieved no lost-time incidents as of Dec. 31, 2025.
- The **Million Man Hour Award** recognizes organizations that have achieved 1 million work hours or more with no lost-time injury as of Dec. 31, 2025.
- The **Safety Achievement Award** recognizes employees who have achieved 30, 35, 40, 45, 50 or 55 years with no lost-time incidents as of Dec. 31, 2025.
- The **Ray Pantel Meritorious Service Award** recognizes an individual who exemplifies outstanding dedication and service to the TEC Loss Control program.

Enter the Photo Challenge

TEC Loss Control Photo Challenge is open to all employees of electric cooperatives, municipal electric utilities and contractors who participate in the TEC Loss Control program. Photos will be judged by popular vote at the 2026 Loss Control Conference.

Theme: Energy in Action. (We're looking for photos that capture lineworkers, electric infrastructure or any visible symbols of energy in use.)

Entry deadline: Feb. 13, 2026

Photo limit: Three per person

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

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