

## Bracing for Hurricanes

Forecast for 2026 isn't alarming, but co-ops are ready anyway

The start of hurricane season, June 1, always puts electric cooperatives on alert—dispatchers, line crews, operations folks, warehouse personnel and communicators. They all know that strategies put in place after countless planning sessions could be implemented at a moment's notice. Despite the advance warning provided by today's meteorological tools, storms can take a sudden turn that puts a co-op in the bull's-eye.

“By the time June 1 rolls around, we have already spent days' worth of time planning,” said Doug Turk, CEO at Sam Houston EC. Included in the preparations are tabletop exercises, bird-dog training and attending disaster exercises for neighboring entities.

That attention to detail helped Sam Houston EC recover after Hurricane Beryl leveled 90% of its system in July 2024.

“The challenges that hurricane season brings to our part of the state give us an opportunity to shine in the service to our members,” Turk said.

National Weather Service forecasts in mid-May predicted a below-normal Atlantic basin hurricane season, which runs through Nov. 30. Eight to 14 named storms are forecast, including one to three major hurricanes with winds of at least 111 mph.

The Atlantic season is expected to be below normal due to competing factors, according to the NWS. El Niño is expected to develop and intensify, and ocean temperatures in the Atlantic are expected to be slightly warmer than normal, with trade winds that are likely weaker than average. El Niño conditions tend to support less tropical storms and hurricanes, while warmer ocean temperatures and low winds support a more active year.

“Although El Niño's impact in the Atlantic Basin can often suppress hurricane development, there is still uncertainty in how each season will unfold,” said Ken Graham, NWS director. “That is why it's essential to review your hurricane preparedness plan now. It only takes one storm to make for a very bad season.”

Gulf Coast co-ops got a break in 2025, when only



one named storm made landfall in the U.S. That was Tropical Storm Chantal, which brought excessive rainfall and flooding to North Carolina in June.

The National Hurricane Center's seven-day tropical weather outlook will show tropical storm and hurricane watches and warnings. The Atlantic tab is most meaningful for Texas co-ops.

TEC maintains an [Emergency Contact List](#) that helps with coordination of mutual aid during a crisis. Organizations are asked to review their information regularly and contact Tami Knipstein at [tknipstein@texas-ec.org](mailto:tknipstein@texas-ec.org) with any changes. ■

**Toppled trees during Hurricane Beryl made a mess of things for Sam Houston EC even as the co-op was in the midst of an ambitious effort to remove dead and threatening trees from rights-of-way.**

### SAVE THE DATE

**July 13–17**  
**Staking Technician Training Seminar—Phase II**  
Georgetown, TEC Training Facility

**July 14**  
**Protection Relays for High Impedance Faults**  
Webinar

**July 16–18**  
**Texas Lineman's Rodeo**  
Seguin, Nolte Island Park

**July 21–24**  
**Groundman/Apprentice Essential Skills School**  
Tahoka, Lyntegar EC

**July 28–31**  
**Journeyman Refresher School—Transformers and Metering**  
Bryan, Bryan Texas Utilities

**July 28–31**  
**Troubleshooting School**  
Merkel, Taylor 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 above for details.



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CANY CALHOUN PHOTOS | TEC

## Ongoing Education

From left, Devery Rosenquist, Jay Esquivel, Wesley Caldwell and Chris Muennink talk during the TEC Loss Control staff retreat in April. The training included a daylong session—The Anatomy of a Successful Safety Meeting—led by instructor Sandy Geroux, right, clarifying a point with Curtis Whitt. Geroux has been meeting with the staff since 2022 as it continues strengthening its presentation and engagement skills to deliver safety training across the state. Loss Control’s rigorous 2026 schedule includes 98 schools at 18 training sites and 752 regular safety meetings that serve a total of 96 organizations.

## Remembering a Leading Safety Ambassador

**THE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE** safety community suffered a great loss April 18 when Ken Macken died of a heart attack while driving near his home in Rose, Oklahoma. Macken, 64, was NRECA director of safety programs since 2024.

Just days before he died, Macken had led NRECA’s Safety Leadership Summit in St. Louis. And a month earlier he spoke at TEC’s Loss Control Conference.

“He made an impact on everybody he ever came into contact with,” said Curtis Whitt, TEC Loss Control manager. “Ken’s energy was high-level. He made me want to do my job better.”

Macken will be remembered almost as much for his red inspirational plastic bracelets, which he often handed out at conferences, as for his enthusiasm and safety speeches.

The bracelets had the simple message “10 10 2 & 2” in white type because Macken wanted everybody in Co-op Country to go home every day with 10 fingers, 10 toes, two arms and two legs. ■



Part of Ken Macken’s message at the TEC Loss Control Conference was simple: “I want every single one of you to get to the end of your career with all 10 fingers, all 10 toes, two arms and two legs.”

## TEC LOSS CONTROL UPDATE

### 2027 Loss Control Scholarship Applications

The TEC Loss Control Scholarship program supports students in the cooperative and electric utility industry family. Class of 2027 high school seniors are now eligible to apply if they are the child of an electric cooperative, municipal or contractor employee who participates in TEC’s Loss Control program, such as organizational safety meetings, schools or the Loss Control Conference. Scholarship applications will be available this fall on TEC’s website. For more information, email [Tami Knipstein](mailto:Tami.Knipstein).

### Lifesaving Award and 24/7 Good Samaritan Award Nominations

TEC will begin accepting 2026 Lifesaving and Good Samaritan Award nominations July 1. Complete your organization’s nominations and return to [tknipstein@texas-ec.org](mailto:tknipstein@texas-ec.org) by Dec. 1. The nomination forms are located on the [Loss Control](#) page of the TEC website. These awards will be presented at the 2027 TEC Loss Control Conference, March 16–19 in San Marcos.

### TEC Adds Instructor

Chasey Tharp joined the TEC Loss Control staff as an instructor in March. Tharp, a line-worker known for his strong work ethic and



commitment to his trade, comes to TEC after working 10 years at Farmers EC and a combined 10 years with the cities of Greenville and Garland.

“I love to teach the younger linemen to

become better than the last generation and instill safer practices,” Tharp said. “I lost my best friend to line work, and I feel like it’s now my job to tell my story in the hope that it will save more lives.”

## STAFF

**Martin Bevins**, VP, Comm. & Member Services  
(512) 486-6249, [mbevins@texas-ec.org](mailto:mbevins@texas-ec.org)

**Curtis Whitt**, CLCP, Loss Control Manager  
(512) 694-0232, [cwhitt@texas-ec.org](mailto:cwhitt@texas-ec.org)

**Wesley Caldwell**, LC Regional Supervisor  
(512) 942-9351, [wcaldwell@texas-ec.org](mailto:wcaldwell@texas-ec.org)

**Phillip Henricks**, CLCP, LC Regional Supervisor  
(806) 438-0067, [phenricks@texas-ec.org](mailto:phenricks@texas-ec.org)

**Tami Knipstein**, LC Program Coordinator  
(512) 486-6271, [tknipstein@texas-ec.org](mailto:tknipstein@texas-ec.org)

**Charlie Aleman**, Loss Control Specialist  
(737) 738-4474, [caleman@texas-ec.org](mailto:caleman@texas-ec.org)

**Jay Esquivel**, Loss Control Specialist  
(737) 403-6749, [jesquivel@texas-ec.org](mailto:jesquivel@texas-ec.org)

**Mike Finnell**, Loss Control Specialist  
(512) 942-9673, [mfinnell@texas-ec.org](mailto:mfinnell@texas-ec.org)

**Chris Muennink**, Loss Control Specialist  
(737) 215-7449, [cmuennink@texas-ec.org](mailto:cmuennink@texas-ec.org)

**Devery Rosenquist**, Loss Control Specialist  
(325) 668-8626, [drosenquist@texas-ec.org](mailto:drosenquist@texas-ec.org)

**David Slimp**, Loss Control Specialist  
(940) 393-5542, [dslimp@texas-ec.org](mailto:dslimp@texas-ec.org)

**Chasey Tharp**, Loss Control Specialist  
(903) 456-7656, [ctharp@texas-ec.org](mailto:ctharp@texas-ec.org)

**Ronnie Wiggins**, CLCP, Loss Control Specialist  
(512) 709-1177, [rwiggins@texas-ec.org](mailto:rwiggins@texas-ec.org)

**Tom Widlowski**, Editor  
(512) 486-6246, [twidlowski@texas-ec.org](mailto:twidlowski@texas-ec.org)