

Pedernales, Bluebonnet ECs Dominate Rodeo

Competition draws hundreds of lineworkers, including some from out of state



PEDERNALES EC

Two electric co-ops raised the bar—or maybe it was a crossarm—for success at the Texas Lineman's Rodeo on July 18.

Pedernales EC journeyman crews, which compete as three-man teams, claimed first, second and third place out of the 57 teams in action at Nolte Island Park in Seguin.

Among the 132 apprentices, who compete as individuals, Bluebonnet EC claimed the top four spots and seven of the top 10, led by Kevin Christ. Co-workers Carter Brymer finished second, Lane Magnuson third and Tucker Saegert fourth.

"The win was great, but being up there with my co-workers made it even better," said Christ, a fourth-year apprentice who joined Bluebonnet EC in 2025. "We all practiced together, pushed each other and got to see that hard work pay off as a team."

In the journeyman division, the victory was a repeat of 2024 for PEC's Darren Donhauser, David Hernandez and Michael Thyberg, who slipped to eighth last year.

"Last year, we came up short," Hernandez said. "Though the outcome wasn't what we hoped for, it motivated us to come back stronger."

"Competing alongside some of the best linemen in Texas is an honor, and winning the championship is something we'll always be proud of."

In fact, their competition came from beyond Texas' borders. Two teams from California, one

From left, PEC's Darren Donhauser, David Hernandez and Michael Thyberg with their trophy for finishing in first place in the journeyman cooperative division.

SAVE THE DATE

Aug. 17–21
Staking Technician Training Seminar—Phase I
Georgetown, TEC Training Facility

Aug. 25–28
Journeyman Refresher School—Transformers and Metering
Livingston, Sam Houston EC

Sept. 15
Characteristics of Overhead Conductors
Webinar

Sept. 28–Oct. 2
Digger Operator School
Gonzales, GVEC

Sept. 29–Oct. 2
Metering School
Merkel, Taylor EC

Oct. 6–9
Basic Pole Climbing School
Crockett, Houston County 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.



SCAN FOR A PDF OF THIS ISSUE



Texas Electric Cooperatives
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION FROM TEC LOSS CONTROL

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

TEC SAFETY WATCH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

RIGHT: Bluebonnet EC's Kevin Christ said his rodeo training helped him grow as a lineworker. "It's made me more comfortable on the pole and helped my climbing skills," he said.

BELOW: MidSouth EC's Kyle Poe competes in the Apprentice Three-Phase Transformer Bank event, one of the six challenges for apprentices.

from Louisiana and one from Georgia also made the trek to south Central Texas to test their skills.

For the third year in a row, Snapping Shoals EMC hauled a trailer, gear and lineworkers a thousand miles from outside Atlanta to Texas. Snapping Shoals journeymen won first place in the downed conductor event, and an apprentice was the winner in three-phase transformer bank.

Lineworkers compete in various skills tests at the rodeo and are scored based on speed and proficiency. Co-op, municipal and investor-owned utilities sent competitors. Some of the teams will compete in the International Lineman's Rodeo in October in Overland Park, Kansas.

Other Texas co-ops competing were CoServ, GVEC and Bartlett, Deaf Smith, Deep East Texas, Farmers, Hamilton County, HILCO, MidSouth, Navasota Valley, Trinity Valley and Victoria ECs.

Notably absent in Seguin was Bandera EC, which withdrew a journeyman team and three apprentices. They were needed back home as the Hill Country faced outages and massive flooding from mid-July storms.

"While we're disappointed not to compete, there's no place our team would rather be than serving our members and communities," the co-op posted on Facebook.

Click [here](#) to see the full results. ■



SARAH BEAL | BLUEBONNET EC



MIDSOUTH EC

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. High school seniors in the class of 2027 are eligible to apply if they are children of electric cooperative, municipal or contractor employees who participate 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).

2027 Loss Control School Registration

Registration opens Oct. 21 for 2027 TEC Loss Control schools. The 2027 school calendar will be available in September on the [Events Calendar](#) page of the TEC website.

Lifesaving Award and 24/7 Good Samaritan Award Nominations

TEC began accepting 2027 Lifesaving and Good Samaritan Award nominations July 1. Complete your organization's nominations and return to 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, 2027, in San Marcos.

Emergency Contact List

The [TEC Emergency Contact List](#) is updated as needed and is located on the TEC website. Organizations are asked to review their information regularly and contact Tami Knipstein at tknipstein@texas-ec.org with any changes.

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Leaving No Castaways

Stymied by floodwater, San Patricio EC crew reaches outage by paddleboard



COURTESY TIELE DOCKENS

CONSECUTIVE DAYS OF storms and relentless rain in late May had San Patricio EC scrambling to keep up with power outages. At one point, lineworkers Joe Cruz and Brenden Walton hit a dead end that perfectly illustrated their predicament: up a creek without a paddle.

CO-OP MEMBERS TO THE RESCUE

That's the theme for the next TEC Loss Control Photo Challenge. Show us acts of kindness toward co-op employees by your members. Voting and announcement of the winner will occur at the Loss Control Conference, March 16–19, 2027, in San Marcos. Send your best photos to [Tami Knipstein](#).

Brenden Walton, in front, and Joe Cruz take a paddleboard across floodwater to reach a faulty fuse in the tiny community of Papalote.

Fortunately, Papalote resident Tiele Dockens had a paddle, which she offered, along with a paddleboard, to Cruz and Walton. Dockens and her neighbors were without electricity, and she decided she'd do anything to get her air conditioner back on.

"There's nothing worse than being stuck back here without power, especially with 100% humidity and temperatures in the 90s," Dockens said.

Dockens, on a second paddleboard, led the lineworkers across about 300 yards of flooded creek and road to relatively dry land. From there she drove them in her off-road vehicle to the pole with a faulty fuse.

Walton, an apprentice lineworker, had previous paddleboard experience, although he said, "using it with two people was a little squirrely."

"I was fairly confident we could do it," he said. Cruz, a foreman, sat behind Walton gripping a hot stick and bag of tools.

"I just figured let's give it a shot and see what happens," Walton said. "We crossed just fine."

The repair itself, replacing a fuse, was quick.

"The whole thing was pretty cool," he said. "It would have been unfortunate to leave people there for days without power when it was so hot. It was fulfilling to get out there and fix it, so they didn't have to suffer any longer."

San Patricio EC, which serves nine counties and operates with just 35 employees, impressed Dockens.

"They are small, but they're mighty," she said. ■

Remembering a Longtime PenTex Energy Employee

RONNIE BAYER, LINE SUPERINTENDENT at PenTex Energy, died June 2.

He worked at the North Texas co-op for 34 years. In mid-May he was diagnosed with Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, a rare, rapidly progressive and fatal neurodegenerative brain disorder. He was 57.

Bayer was a 29-year member of the Myra Volunteer Fire Department and an avid farmer and rancher, raising wheat and cattle. "If you asked him where he is happiest, he would reply, 'On a

tractor,' " said Neil Hesse, PenTex Energy general manager.

Hesse said Bayer came to visit his co-workers several times before he died, telling them, "If I had died suddenly, I would not have been able to feel all the love in this room. I can *feel* it!" ■



COURTESY PENTEX ENERGY