

GENERAL
MANAGERBRAD
BIERSTEDT

Don't Let a Phone Call Ruin Christmas

2021 HAS BEEN HARD on all of us. Destructive weather and the pandemic have inflicted loss, uncertainty and grief on our community, and all the while, scammers have been making things worse.

They're a scourge that just won't go away. Phone scammers have honed their craft over the past year and a half, taking advantage of the anxieties of the times to swindle victims out of billions of dollars.

In fact, 1 in 3 Americans reported falling victim to a phone scam in the first year of the pandemic, handing over an average of \$502 each time to criminals—a total of \$29.8 billion—according to a study by software company Truecaller. Some folks were defrauded more than once. Identity theft and fraud reports were up 45% in 2020, the Insurance Information Institute found.

We've seen it firsthand at Karnes Electric Cooperative. Our members have reported a rise in attempted phone scams by people claiming to represent the co-op. The fraudulent callers sometimes target Spanish-speaking and older people, threatening to disconnect the power unless the victim makes an immediate payment.

Impostor scammers like these prey on those most vulnerable in our community by exploiting their fears. Utility scammers try to create a sense of urgency so you'll act fast and hand over personal information or money without thinking. Always take a moment to evaluate the situation before acting, and if possible, talk it over with a loved one.

A critical finding of the Truecaller study was that phone scam victims aren't maybe who you'd expect. The majority were between the ages of 18 and 44.

We don't want any of our members to fall victim to this practice, especially during the holiday season. If you receive a suspicious call or text message from someone claiming to represent the co-op, put down the phone and call Karnes EC directly.

You and yours have been through enough in 2021. Don't let a scammer ruin your holidays too. ■



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Don't Burn Up Heat in the Fireplace

IF YOU USE an old-fashioned fireplace, you can do a few things to improve its efficiency:

Close the damper when you're not using it. As soon as the fire has burned out, close the flue. An open damper lets the heated indoor air travel right out of your house.

Update your fireplace with tempered glass doors and a heat-air exchange system that blows warm air back into the room.

Replace the seals around your fireplace flue damper. Loose seals can let heat leave the house even when the damper is closed.

Insulate your chimney. A chimney liner helps prevent buildup and can protect masonry from the corrosive byproducts of flue gases.

Call a chimney sweep. An annual inspection and cleaning keeps a fireplace functioning safely and more efficiently.

If you don't use your fireplace, it might be tempting to have the flue sealed and to put in an electric log set instead. That would eliminate drafts, but it might be a good idea to leave fireplaces functional in case you need heat in an emergency. ■

Want To Win a Trip to Our Nation's Capital?

It's Youth Tour time again

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES across the U.S. send nearly 2,000 high school students to Washington, D.C., each year for the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, which offers teens a chance to learn, explore the capital and meet their representatives in Congress.

The winner of the 2022 Karnes Electric Cooperative Youth Tour essay contest will receive a travel package worth \$5,000 and join other Texas high school students in Washington, where they'll visit the White House, Capitol Hill, the Supreme Court, Washington National Cathedral, Arlington National Cemetery, the Smithsonian Institution, Kennedy Center and many other national landmarks. The travel package includes air transportation to and from Washington, hotel accommodations, meals, entrance fees, several Youth Tour T-shirts, and \$250 cash for miscellaneous expenses.

Youth Tour will begin in Austin on June 12 and end in Austin on June 21. To give participants a snapshot of our own state government in action, a day of the trip includes a tour of the Texas Capitol and a visit to the Bullock Texas State History Museum.

Applicants must be high school students who have completed their freshman year by the end of June 2022 and must reside in the home of a parent or legal guardian who is an active member of Karnes EC.

Download an application on the Karnes EC website, karnesec.org; pick one up at any Karnes EC office; or email ksanchez@karnesec.org. The deadline for applications is Friday, January 7, 2022. ■



GREG MELAND | ISTOCK.COM

Karnes Electric Cooperative

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24/7 Outage Reporting

TOLL-FREE

1-888-807-3952

ONLINE

At karnesec.org using your SmartHub account, or use the SmartHub app on your mobile device.

Please be prepared to provide your account number and meter number.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

- Online or via the SmartHub app
- 24-hour pay-by-phone
- Auto bill pay
- Mail
- In person
- Night drop
- Kiosk located at Pleasanton Member Service Center

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Open Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Karnes City Headquarters

1800 N. U.S. Highway 181, Karnes City

Pleasanton Member Service Center

1824 W. Goodwin St., Pleasanton

MISSION STATEMENT

Providing quality service to empower communities and improve lives.



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Let Your Home Be Bright—and Safe

HOLIDAY DECORATIONS brighten Christmas, but the National Fire Protection Association reports that holiday lights and other light-up decor are involved in an average of 160 house fires each year, causing millions of dollars in property damage. And 12% of home candle fires occur in December—1.5 times the monthly average.

Reduce the risk at your house this holiday season by keeping these important considerations in mind.

Lights

Unlike incandescent bulbs, which release most of their energy as heat, LEDs are cool to the touch—which also means they're more energy efficient. LEDs are made with epoxy lenses, not glass, and are much more durable.

When hanging lights outdoors, use a wooden or fiberglass ladder and keep well away from power lines.

Turn off all indoor and outdoor holiday lighting before leaving the house or going to bed. An outlet timer can make this a cinch.

Never drape anything over a lightbulb or lampshade.

Avoid using candles. Consider using battery-operated candles in place of traditional flames.

If you need to use a candle, never leave it unattended. Keep burning candles within sight, and extinguish all candles before you leave the room or go to bed.

Place lighted candles well away from combustible material and areas where they might be knocked over. Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.

Trees

When purchasing a live Christmas tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree will stay green longer and be less of a fire hazard than a dry tree.

Cut 1–2 inches from the base of the trunk immediately before placing the tree in the stand and filling with water. This will ensure water absorption.

Because heated rooms quickly dry out live trees, refill the stand daily.

When purchasing an artificial tree, make sure to check that it's fire resistant.

Don't use electric ornaments or light strings on artificial trees with metallic leaves or branch coverings.

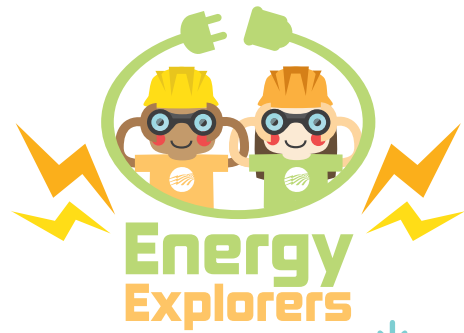
Place your tree at least 3 feet away from all heat sources, including fireplaces, radiators and space heaters.

When trimming a tree, only use noncombustible or flame-resistant materials. ■

WINTER WONDERLAND WORD SEARCH

Can you find all the words associated with winter in the puzzle below?

Use the word bank to check your work.



E	M	C	C	G	H	S	L	B	N	F	L	L	B	L
P	K	E	A	R	M	U	F	F	S	L	R	L	K	L
P	B	A	V	I	S	I	I	E	A	X	A	A	K	L
X	W	E	L	H	S	E	T	B	W	N	D	I	C	U
P	B	C	N	F	G	O	W	T	K	I	I	C	B	S
N	L	A	F	Y	W	O	Q	E	E	Z	G	I	C	R
R	C	L	C	E	N	O	T	Y	G	N	E	C	V	U
L	O	P	C	S	X	M	N	I	D	Y	S	L	I	H
W	A	E	H	D	N	S	M	S	A	Z	C	E	B	R
Z	I	R	Y	L	L	I	H	C	O	U	J	S	K	W
C	X	I	R	Q	H	C	Z	L	C	A	X	W	W	L
P	H	F	O	Y	V	S	I	W	O	H	O	C	S	M
B	P	I	P	C	O	O	Y	J	C	D	A	J	Y	L
I	Z	W	Q	F	H	E	V	F	M	D	S	P	S	P
Y	F	E	U	H	Z	V	D	N	L	W	R	B	Q	F

WINTER ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP:

Instead of turning up the heat in your home, wear an extra layer of clothing or get cozy under your favorite blanket!

WORD BANK:

- snowflake
- mittens
- scarf
- snowball
- chilly
- icicles
- cocoa
- earmuffs
- fireplace
- blanket



MARYVIOLET | ISTOCK.COM

Your Home's 5 Biggest Energy Hogs

A HOME'S HUNGRIEST energy consumers are the appliances left running all day or for days at a time. Here's a look at the top five electricity eaters and some tips on how to stave off their appetites:

The No. 1 home energy hog is the **heating system**. Ways to control your heater's energy consumption include using a programmable thermostat, upgrading to a more efficient unit, sealing ducts and replacing filters.

Next up is the **cooling system**. You can improve the efficiency of your air conditioner by having a technician service it every year, using a programmable thermostat and ensuring adequate attic insulation.

Third is the **water heater**, which can account for up to 12% of a home's energy bill. Actual energy demand for water heating depends on the model of water heater you have. Yet no matter the type of unit, these habits can help you conserve: taking quick showers, washing clothes in cold water, setting the water temperature to 120 degrees, insulating the storage tank and regularly draining sediment.

Next on the list are **dehumidifiers**, which typically run constantly to discourage mold growth and preserve stored items. To make sure your dehumidifier isn't wasting energy, close off the room where the machine is operating, set it at a reasonable level and consider upgrading to an Energy Star-certified model.

Fifth on the list—but still major power users—are **refrigerators** and **freezers**. Fridges generally are the top-consuming kitchen appliance, especially those that are a few decades old. Regardless of model, you can save energy by setting the temperature to 36–38 degrees for the refrigerator and zero to 5 degrees for the freezer, discarding freezer ice thicker than a quarter inch, checking seals, and cooling hot food before putting it inside. ■

Slow Cooker Apple Cider


- 2 quarts apple juice
- 1 cup cranberry juice
- 2½ cups unsweetened pineapple juice
- 1 liter ginger ale
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 cinnamon stick

Combine all ingredients in a slow cooker and cook on the low setting 2–4 hours, stirring occasionally.

If you need to serve it sooner, cook on the high setting 1½–2 hours.

The longer this mixture cooks, the deeper the flavor of the drink.

SERVES 24

 Find this and more delicious recipes online at TexasCoopPower.com.

ALMAJE | ISTOCK.COM



Happy Holidays

From Karnes Electric Cooperative

Our offices will be closed
Thursday–Friday, December 23–24,
and Friday, December 31.



CHEPKO | ISTOCK.COM



DID YOU KNOW

Electric water heaters account for about 12% of a typical home's electric bill? Save on water heating by setting the temperature to 120 degrees.

MARCO LEGNIDDI | ISTOCK.COM



POWER TIP

This winter, make sure that your thermostat isn't near any sources of cold air that might skew the reading and make the heater run more.

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