Heart of Texas EC Upgrades Training Facility

Lineworkers across the state have access to a new facility at Heart of Texas EC where they can continue their TEC Loss Control skills and safety training.

The new building replaces an old Quonset hut, which TEC Loss Control used for hands-on training for about eight years. It had no heat, air conditioning or bathrooms and was quite a distance away from the classroom. Heart of Texas EC’s board and management decided to replace the Quonset hut with a structure that eliminated those shortcomings.

The first training in the new building was a transformer school in January.

Brandon Young, general manager at Heart of Texas EC, credits the co-op’s board for financially supporting construction of a new building. “As soon as they understood the value of how training would increase the level of safety for not only our workforce but for the workforce throughout the state, all of them wanted to be part of it,” Young said. “At HOTEC, we all believe in the Seven Cooperative Principles and take particular satisfaction in working for an organization that sees the value of cooperation among cooperatives.”

Heart of Texas EC’s operations employees offered design ideas and helped in the construction of the building. “I tell people this is a training facility built by linemen for linemen,” said Bryan Chandler, operations manager at Heart of Texas EC.

McGregor is home to one of TEC’s 15 training centers across the state.
Beware of Venomous Snakes

Most of the 78 species of snakes found in Texas pose no real threat to humans. But the venomous varieties—copperheads, cottonmouths, coral snakes and eight species of rattlesnakes—can deliver deadly bites.

Outdoor workers, including utility employees, farmers, foresters, landscapers, groundskeepers, gardeners, painters, roofers, pavers, construction workers, laborers, mechanics and other people who spend time outside must be vigilant about where they step and reach with their hands.

An estimated 7,000–8,000 people per year are victims of venomous snakebites in the United States, resulting in about five deaths. One to two people in Texas die every year from venomous snakebites, according to the Department of State Health Services.

Disability and permanent injury (such as the loss of part or all of a finger or the function of it) are much more common, reported in 10%–44% of patients with rattlesnake bites.

Snakes do not prey on humans and will not chase you—in fact they usually retreat or escape if given the opportunity—according to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. When surprised or cornered, snakes will bite to defend themselves.

Use extreme caution when handling a dead venomous snake. They have been known to bite and envenomate.

Check out TPWD’s Texas Venomous Snakes: Safety First brochure for safety and first-aid information about venomous snakes found in Texas, and click here for more frequently asked questions and answers about snakes.

Storms Hammer East Texas Co-ops

A tornado that killed three people and destroyed 173 homes April 22 left 18,000 Sam Houston EC members without power. The EF3 tornado packed winds of up to 140 mph and left a 32-mile-long trail of destruction in Polk County.

“The damage was extensive,” said Rachel Frey, a SHECO communications specialist. “We initially lost service from five substations across the northern portion of our service area.” The co-op employed 500 contractors for the restoration work, which took days and was slowed by local COVID-19 restrictions, which allowed only one worker assigned to each truck.

Neighboring co-ops had their own repairs to make from that storm system and another the week prior. All 10 Group 1 co-ops battled rounds of outages, rebuilds and repairs in March, April and May.

“This round of storms is the worst we’ve had in several years,” said Mark Boyd, general manager and CEO at Bowie-Cass EC. An April 24 storm had some BCEC members’ service out for seven days, a situation exacerbated by an April 28 storm. Then a May 8 storm caused three days of repair work, Boyd said.

Lineworkers work to restore power in Onalaska after a tornado caused extensive damage.