



BRAZOS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Aspires to provide innovative and outstanding service to our members and customers.

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Lineman & Technician Appreciation: Changing America with “one foot’s progress” at a time

When you think about history, 90 years isn’t a very long time. Consider just a handful of the life-changing advances that became common in the United States over the last nine decades: Refrigerators. Air conditioning. Television. Computers. The Internet. Smartphones.

None of those things could have become commonplace without electricity, and 90 years ago, having electricity in your home depended largely on where you lived. People in big cities or areas with large, concentrated populations got electricity from private companies or municipal providers. People in rural America? For most of them, it wasn’t an option.

That all began to change on May 20, 1936, when President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Rural Electrification Act into law. Suddenly people all over the country could start looking forward to the benefits of electricity, regardless of the costs and challenges of creating that infrastructure.

But who would actually be doing the physical work of building that infrastructure, of setting poles, stringing line, and establishing substations? The very first electric cooperative linemen and technicians, that’s who.

This week we celebrate National Lineman and Technician Appreciation Day, and we will also use this occasion to honor the countless hard-working individuals whose legacy is a country where electricity is reliable and affordable.

The very first co-op linemen and technicians worked out of pickup trucks and had to do everything by hand using a few crude tools. They worked from dawn to dusk, six days a week, and spent many nights sleeping in pastures. They also never doubted that what they were doing was worth it.

One Brazos Electric lineman, Eugene “Butterball” Medlin, remembered his time on a Brazos construction crew in June 1947. “We were told to dig two holes, each eight feet deep and in solid rock,” Medlin said. “Every morning they would drop me and another guy off there with a nine-foot digging bar, digging spoon, shovel, and a lunch pail. Every afternoon they would come pick us up, and we would have made maybe a foot’s progress.”

The work was hazardous then, and it’s hazardous now, even with incredible advances in gear,



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vehicles and the ability to communicate from anywhere in the field. Hazard is something linemen and technicians understand, and it's one reason why there is such a brotherhood in this profession.

No matter which electric utility they work for, linemen look out for each other, they get to know each other's families, and they develop lifelong friendships.

"You have to get it in your mind that being a lineman is a way of life, not a job," said one recently retired lineman with decades of experience under his belt. "It's a 24-7-365 way of life. The camaraderie that linemen have with each other, it doesn't matter where you go, linemen will shoot the breeze about the job, trading stories about getting power restored quickly and safely."

Throughout the last 90 years, linemen and technicians have been standing shoulder to shoulder with each other to repair the damage caused by hurricanes, wildfires, blizzards, tornadoes, and anything else Mother Nature throws at them.

Linemen and technicians are not LIKE first responders. They ARE first responders. Like firefighters, police officers, and medical personnel, linemen are always heading toward the danger and the damage.

A lot has changed over the last 90 years, both in the electric industry and in the country. Some things, however, remain the same: the toughness and grit of electric linemen and technicians, and the bond that makes these strong individuals far stronger as a team.

Brazos Electric thanks you all, past and present, for keeping the lights on and so much more.