

HELPING AFTER HURRICANE LAURA

Bluebonnet crews aid in restoring power to thousands in East Texas

WHEN HURRICANE Laura made landfall in the early hours of Aug. 27, 2020, its devastating winds, rain and storm surge left hundreds of thousands of people without power across Louisiana and East Texas. Central Texans dodged damage from this storm, which enabled Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative to help out hard-hit utilities.

Two Bluebonnet crews with 10 line workers, equipped with bucket and digger trucks, tracked machines and all-terrain vehicles, replaced poles and repaired power lines across rain-soaked, swampy areas and lakes. They were among more than 200 line workers and support personnel helping restore power to members of Deep East Texas Cooperative near the Louisiana border. More than half of that cooperative's 40,000 meters across eight counties lost power.

"The work has been hot and humid. We've been picking up wire under massive pine trees," said crew supervisor Chris Rivera from the field. "But the experience has been good. We worked two days to get the town of Burkeville back on, and once we did, it was a very rewarding feeling. The members were very appreciative."

Bluebonnet also released 26 contractor crews — 12 four-person construction crews and 14 three-person tree trimming crews — to help utilities in the two states. ■



Sarah Beal photo

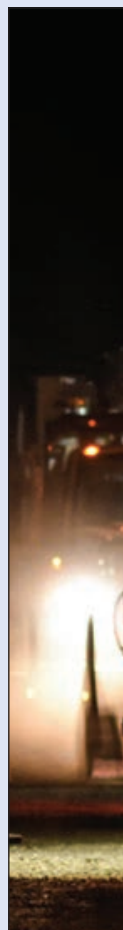
Bluebonnet crews traveled to Deep East Texas Electric Cooperative near the Louisiana border to help restore power to about 25,000 of its members after being hit by Hurricane Laura in late August. Above, from left, just before heading to East Texas, are Daniel Fritsche, Troy Moore, Eric Cobb, Chris



Heath Walden photo



Chris Rivera photo



Sarah Beal photo



Rivera, Michael Guajardo, John Horton, Nick Baker, Heath Walden, Joshua Gonzales and Derek Morgan. Below, from left: Bluebonnet crews use two bucket trucks and a digger truck to make repairs; Troy Moore, left, and Nick Baker make repairs to a pole in a heavily wooded area. The crews worked in hot,

swampy conditions for several days to restore power; a caravan of Bluebonnet trucks heads for East Texas in the early morning hours after the hurricane hit; Derek Morgan operates a track digger, which is used in areas inaccessible to standard trucks, while Eric Cobb works from a bucket.



Chris Rivera photo