



# Current

News from Floresville Electric Light & Power System

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## Technology Adds to Service Reliability

## Another Drone Flies As FELPS Increases Technology Use

FELPS has purchased a new drone named Grackle to join Goose and Gander and the FELPS information technology team has expanded the capacity for images of service equipment. These additional forays into innovation and technology mean even more reliable and cost efficient service for customers.

FELPS added a third drone to the fleet to allow for continued service when routine maintenance is scheduled on one of the others. The drones are used to monitor utility lines and poles for wear-and-tear and to help identify areas that require vegetation trimming. The inspections aid in determining when equipment is nearing the end of its life and can help determine when distribution automation will be helpful.

The information technology team also has expanded the storage capacity of file servers that house images of pole tops, lines and vegetation that drones have accumulated in their flights. These images allow analysis of equipment and comparison over time.

FELPS drone pilots will continue their systematic sweep of lines and poles across the service area by flying over

portions of FM 775 and nearby roads, including Cherry Ridge, S. Palo Alto, Wild Flower and Palo Verde Dr., during the next few weeks. They will search for vegetation and infrastructure that could lead to service disruptions. The team will inspect new lines and poles that were put up as part of the SS30 Project, which added a new distribution circuit to meet the needs of customers along Highway 87 and County Road 342 and in La Vernia. The inspection will verify the accuracy of modeling work. Planned future drone work will include a limited lighting audit in the Eagle Creek area.

During outages, including those caused by storms, drones can be used to identify faults or downed poles so crews can more quickly restore power. Routine inspections can be made more safely and cost effectively by reducing the need to use a bucket truck to examine the tops of poles.

The drones also can be used to survey new construction sites to help better plan the infrastructure to fit the surrounding environment. They have a thermographic sensor that captures images based on temperature. This feature allows staff to inspect customer-owned solar panels for damage and consistent sunlight intake.

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## FELPS Briefs

- Please note that the FELPS office will be closed on Sept. 6 for Labor Day. Regular office hours will resume at 8 a.m. the following day. To report outages, including on holidays and after business hours (Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.), please call 830-216-7000 and select sub-option 2. Report outages online at [www.felps.us](http://www.felps.us) and select the tab labeled "Report Outage."
- Your call is easy with the FELPS telephone system. When calling the office, first press 1 for English or 2 for Spanish. Then select one of five sub-options: 1 to make a payment or for Customer Service, 2 for outages or emergencies, 3 for new construction, 4 for street or security light repair or 5 for field service maintenance.
- Please note that before existing service can be transferred to a new owner's or tenant's name, FELPS must receive either a lease agreement or proof of ownership. FELPS will not transfer service into the new occupant's name unless all requirements are met. Likewise, FELPS must have an authorization form to add another person to do business on your account. Complete the authorization form at [www.felps.us](http://www.felps.us) under the customers tab, customer forms and then authorization form.
- Please note that customers must follow FELPS specifications when working on a meter loop. If FELPS staff must make a trip to a location to assist and then return a second time to connect the service, a \$100 fee is charged.
- Mark your calendar and plan to attend the 77th Annual Floresville Peanut Festival during the second week of October in downtown Floresville. Check online for information about activities for the whole family.

Customers will receive an automated call to alert them ahead of time to the drone team's presence. Property owners are requested to provide needed access for the inspections. Customers are encouraged to direct questions to the drone pilots in the field or to a customer service representative by calling 830-216-7000, sub-option 2.

## Reminder for Drop Box Payments

With the move to the FELPS office at 187 Highway 97 E, everyone is still getting accustomed to the new surroundings. Please note that office hours are Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. The lobby and convenient drive-through facility are available for customer business, including bill payment, from 8 a.m.-4:15 p.m.

Bill payments also may be dropped off in the designated box by the drive-through and should not be placed in the mailbox at the street. That box is only for mail handled by the U.S. Postal Service.

## Plan Ahead for Storm Outages

Summer weather usually means electrical storms that can cause outages. Plan ahead so you're ready when the electricity goes off.

Keep flashlights in areas where you can find them easily, even in the dark. And be sure they are ready with fresh batteries.

Your cell phone is another option for light, so try to keep it in a convenient location.

Put the FELPS phone number (830-216-7000) in your cell phone address book so you can use it to report the outage. Or you can report outages online at [www.felps.us](http://www.felps.us) and select the tab labeled "Report Outage."

Keeping your food in the refrigerator and freezer cold during an outage can be a challenge. The key is to keep the doors closed. Resist the temptation to check the temperature until the electricity is restored. Then you can use a thermometer specifically for a refrigerator.

Most refrigerators and freezers purchased during the last few years are insulated well enough that food will remain cool for several hours during an outage. You can check with the manufacturer to determine the standards for your models.

If frozen foods are partially thawed, they can be defrosted in the refrigerator and eaten within a couple of days. In most cases, frozen foods that have defrosted should not be refrozen.

## You May be Losing Cool Air

If you have a central air conditioner, the duct system represents an important source of potential energy loss. You may be wasting energy because of poorly insulated ducts that allow cool air from your air conditioner to escape into the attic. Joints in the ducts also can leak, allowing cooled air to be forced out or unconditioned air to be drawn into return ducts.

Minor duct repairs are easy to accomplish using sealing materials. First look for holes and for sections of ductwork that have separated. Cover the holes using tape with the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) logo to ensure the tape will not degrade, crack or lose its bonding capacity. The tape also can be used to join sections of ductwork that have come apart.

Insulation on ducts represents a big energy saver. Because replacing insulation can be a difficult job requiring not only the insulation but also a moisture barrier, plan to get professional assistance.

While looking for escaping air, check for cracks around doors and windows. Seal up air leaks with weatherstripping and caulk.

Other ways to reduce air conditioning costs include:

- Limiting heat-producing activities, such as hot showers.
- Doing laundry during the coolest time of the day and with the coolest water needed to clean your clothes.
- Using a microwave for cooking. It uses less electricity and does not increase heat in the kitchen.
- Closing blinds and drapes in areas where the sun shines directly into the room.

## Save on Electric Bills

The best way to save on electric bills in the summer is to monitor your air conditioning, since it represents the greatest user of energy during the year.

Set the thermostat on the central air conditioner at 78 to 80 degrees during the summer; then supplement the air conditioning with fans to move the air around. But remember to turn off the fan when you're not in the room. Fans cool people but not rooms.

Filters should be replaced every two weeks during the cooling season to ensure efficient operation of the air conditioner. A clean and well-maintained air conditioner also runs more efficiently, so costs less to operate.

## Contacting FELPS

187 Highway 97 E., Floresville, TX 78114

[www.felps.us](http://www.felps.us) Twitter: @FELPS\_Electric Facebook: [www.facebook.com/FELPS.OnLine](http://www.facebook.com/FELPS.OnLine)

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Business hours: Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Drive-through closes at 4:15 p.m.

The FELPS Board of Trustees meets the last Wednesday of each month at 8:30 a.m. in the utility offices, 187 Highway 97 E., Floresville.

**FELPS**