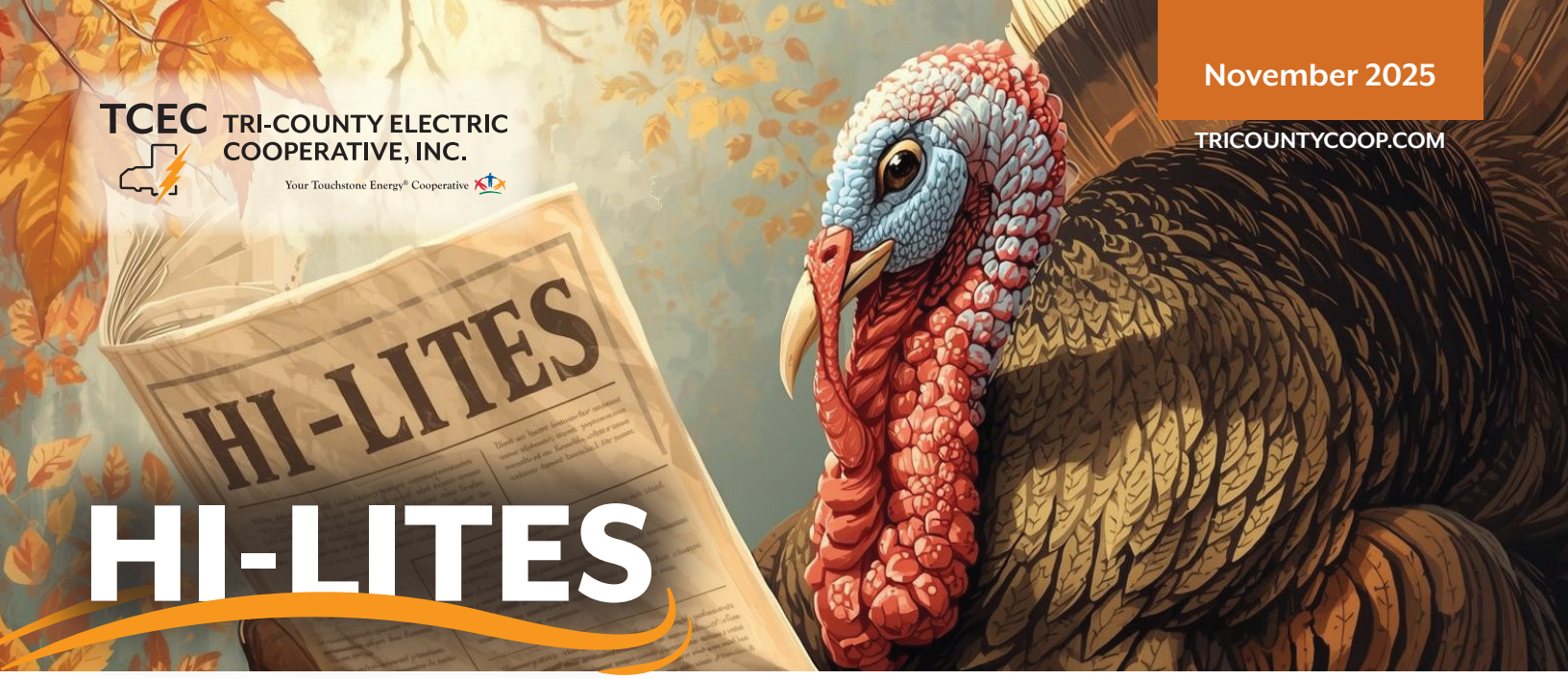
TCEC TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

November 2025

TRICOUNTYCOOP.COM




# HI-LITES

## Behind the Switch (Volume 2): Frequently Asked Questions

In September, we shared answers to some of the most common questions members ask —and there was an overwhelming amount of positive feedback! Thank you to our members that reached out, encouraging us to continue this newsletter series. As your electric cooperative, we believe no question is too small when it comes to understanding your power, your bill, and your membership. In this edition, we're continuing the conversation with another round of frequently asked questions that help shed light on how electricity works and how we serve you every day.

**Q: Can I use batteries to power my home?**

A: Batteries don't create electricity — they store it. Think of them as containers that hold energy until you need it. A common home battery, like the Tesla Powerwall, stores about 13.5 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity.

The cost varies depending on location, installation complexity, and available incentives, but a typical price range is $9,000–$10,000 before incentives and taxes. Thanks to the federal tax credit in place until December 31, 2025, which covers both the batteries and installation, you may be able to reduce that cost by 30%.

For context, the average U.S. household uses about 30 kWh per day, so a single Powerwall could power essential appliances for roughly half a day. Keep in mind that high-energy appliances like hot tubs, space heaters, or multiple large devices can drain a battery much faster. Batteries are most commonly used for backup power during outages or to supplement energy from solar panels, rather than running a home indefinitely on their own, certainly drain the battery much faster.

*Continued Page 2*

*Luke Johnson*
**General Manager**

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*Behind the Switch: Frequently Asked Questions*

**Q: Do you offer rebates?**

A: Unlike investor-owned utilities, we don't offer traditional rebates — and here's why. Investor-owned utilities often include a line item on your bill that collects money for programs like rebates or energy efficiency. That money goes into a formal system — basically a program you have to pay into whether you use it or not.

As a member of a co-op, you don't have to pay into that type of program. We don't have a "pot of money" for rebates, but that's a good thing: your monthly bill goes directly to providing reliable, local service and investing back into the community, instead of funding a program you may never use.

**Q: What are capital credits, and how do I get mine?**

A: Capital credits are one of the ways your electric cooperative gives back to its members. When the co-op earns more money than it needs to operate for the year, those extra funds are allocated to members as capital credits — essentially a share of the co-op's profits.

You don't have to apply for them. As a member, your share is automatically tracked based on the amount of electricity you use. Capital credits are returned to members annually. This year, we retired capital credits from 2002. You can expect to start receiving your capital credit checks after you've been on the line for 25 years. This system allows the co-op to use the funds for operations and improvements first, keeping rates low, while still returning profits to members over time. Please make sure that your contact information is updated, especially if you move, to ensure proper retirement of your capital credits.

**Q: What uses the most electricity in a normal household?**

A: In most homes, the biggest users of electricity are heating and cooling systems — furnaces, air conditioners, and heat pumps can account for nearly half of a household's energy use. Other big contributors include:

- Water heating (about 15–20%)
- Large appliances like refrigerators, freezers, washers, and dryers
- Lighting and electronics, which add up quickly depending on how many devices are plugged in or left on.

Every home is different, but if you're looking to lower your bill, focusing on heating, cooling, and hot water is usually the best place to start.

A lot of electricity is also quietly used by "vampire loads." These are devices that draw power even when turned off or in standby mode, like TVs, cable boxes, phone chargers, and gaming consoles. While each one uses only a little, together they can make a noticeable dent in your monthly bill. To reduce vampire loads, unplug devices when not in use or use power strips to switch off multiple devices at once.

**Q: What are the most common causes of power outages in our area?**

A: In 2024, our outages were caused by several factors, listed from greatest to least contributors:

1. Trees – branches or falling trees hitting power lines
2. Storms – severe weather like heavy rain, ice, or snow
3. Vehicle and large equipment accidents – cars or machinery hitting poles or lines
4. Animals/birds – curious critters interfering with equipment

**Q: Why are trees the number one cause of outages in our area, and what is TCEC doing to prevent that?**

A: Trees are the leading cause of outages here because much of our electric system runs through wooded and rural areas. When branches grow too close to power lines — or when storms, ice, or high winds bring limbs down — they can interrupt service.

To reduce tree-related outages, our cooperative has a vegetation management program. This includes:

- Routine tree trimming along rights-of-way,
- Removing dangerous or dying trees that threaten lines,
- Using contractors and specialized equipment to safely manage growth, and
- Planning long-term line clearances to stay ahead of fast-growing vegetation

While we can't prevent every tree from falling, consistent tree trimming and right-of-way maintenance are some of the most effective ways we protect reliability and keep the lights on.

**Have a question for your Cooperative?**
Email us at editor@tricountycoop.com — your question might be featured in the Hi-Lites!

Cooperative offices will be closed on:

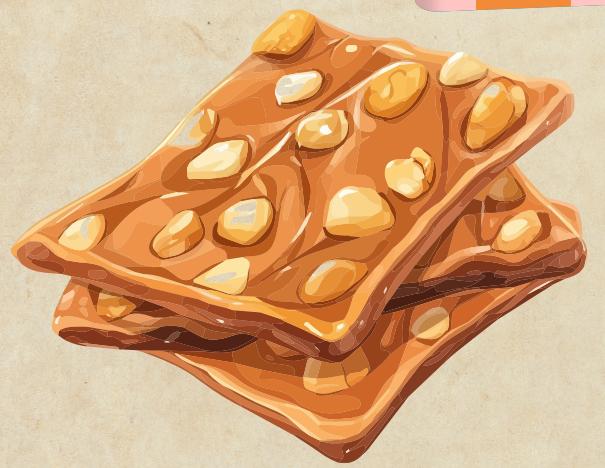
**Nov. 11th - Veteran's Day**

Thank you for your service, Veterans!

**Nov. 27th-28th - Thanksgiving**

Have a safe and Happy Thanksgiving!

# Cashew Brittle



**Ingredients**

- Non-stick cooking spray
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup light corn syrup
- 1 1/4 cups cashew halves and pieces
- 1 Tablespoon butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

**Directions**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F
2. Prepare your supplies. Line a large baking sheet with a silicone baking sheet or heavy-duty foil. Spray the foil generously with non-stick cooking spray Also, spray a 2-quart microwave-safe bowl and a table knife with non-stick cooking spray. Place the baking pan in the oven to heat it up, which makes spreading the brittle easier.
3. Combine the sugar and corn syrup in the prepared bowl. Stir until it's thick and sugary. Microwave on high for 3½ minutes until the mixture becomes clear and very light in color.
4. Carefully remove the bowl from the microwave and mix in the cashews. Microwave again on high for 3 minutes until the mixture turns light golden brown.
5. Remove the bowl from the microwave, add butter and vanilla, and stir. Microwave for another 1 minute until it turns a medium amber color .
6. Take the bowl out and sprinkle the baking soda over the mixture. Stir gently until the baking soda is just incorporated. The mixture will foam up and shift to a caramel color .
7. Remove the heated baking pan from the oven. Immediately pour the mixture onto the pan, spreading it thin with a non-stick sprayed spatula. Don't worry about tears or holes—it'll be broken into pieces later.
8. Cool the brittle completely, then lift the foil or silicone sheet from the pan. Break the brittle into pieces and store it in an airtight container.

From the kitchen of: *Marcia Scott*

## Mascot Pecans Have Arrived!

**In stock:**

**16 oz. Mammoth Pecan Halves $10.50**

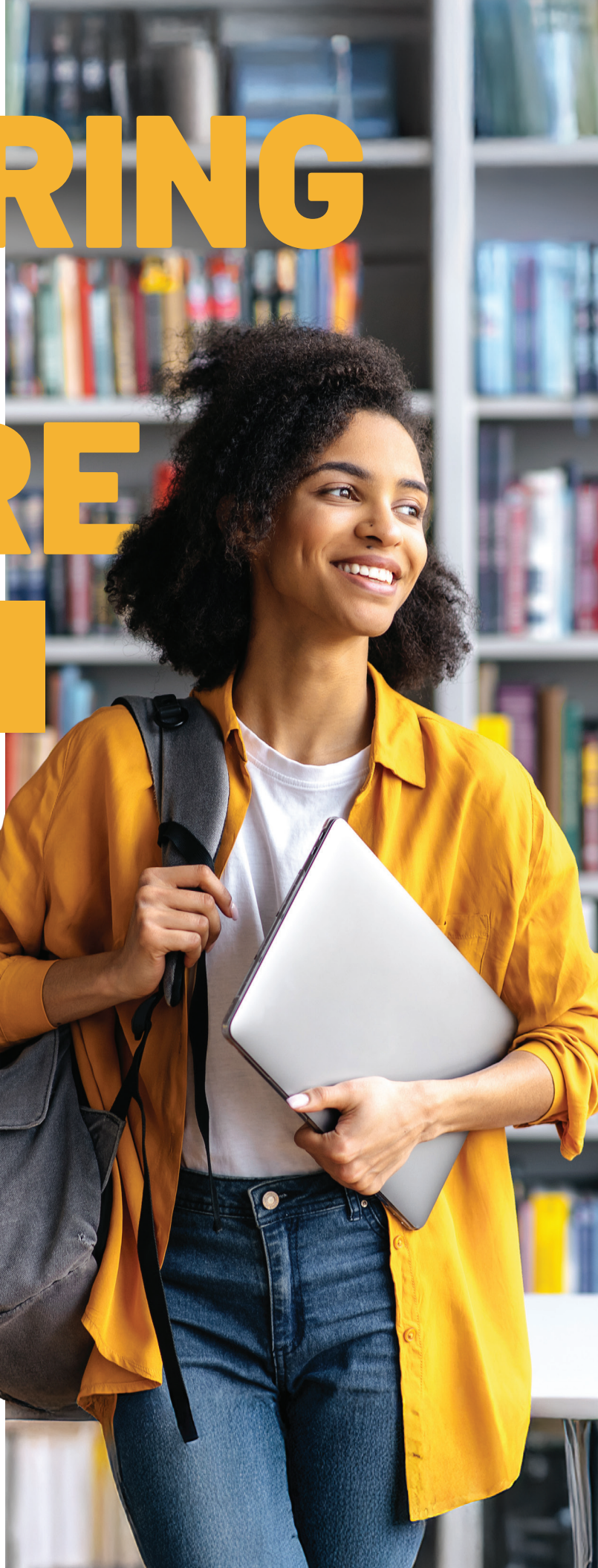
**16 oz. Medium Pecan Pieces $10.25**

Other nuts to be shipped in November include: Roasted & Salted Jumbo Cashews, Pecan Logs, Pecan Caramel Clusters, and Chocolate Covered Pecans

Nuts are available, while supplies last, during regular business hours at both office locations of the cooperative.

*Funds from the Mascot Pecan Fundraiser are donated to community organizations that serve the members of TCEC.*

# POWERING YOUR FUTURE



## **17** SCHOLARSHIPS
## **$3,000** EACH

**The electric cooperatives of Illinois are proud to offer scholarships to deserving students in our co-op family. Whether you're a high school senior planning to attend college or interested in a career as a lineworker, there's a scholarship opportunity for you.**

**Applications are now open for the 2026 Illinois Electric Cooperatives Memorial Scholarships. Apply by December 31, 2025, for most scholarships, or by April 30, 2026, for the lineworker scholarship. Scan the QR code or go to https://bit.ly/IECScholarships for more details.**

IEC MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS