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### Saving Lines and Saving Lives

Everyday all across our country certain people go out to save lives and help keep us safe...they are our first responders. When hearing the words "first responders" you probably think of EMT's, police, and firefighters; however, there is a group who are continually overlooked, but definitely deserve this title. That's right, our Electric Linemen! While many just see them as the guys who go out and turn our electricity back on, they are missing all the times these very men have risked their lives to save others.

Imagine driving your normal routine on your way home after a long day. Now imagine the weather is swirling, the skies are dark, and the road seems like it's moving because it's so slick. Our family friend was in this exact situation not long ago, and without the WCEC electric linemen he may not have made it. After veering off the road and crashing into a utility pole, he soon realized he was stuck and in dire need of help. Even after the arrival of the EMT's, fire department, and police, there was still an issue. Wires from the poles had fallen onto his vehicle and were hot, making it impossible for the first responders to save his life. Immediately they decided to call our very own WCEC electric linemen who were quick to show up and precise in executing their job to insure the safety of our friend. After it was all said and done, the police did their report, the ambulance carried him away, and the linemen stayed to repair the line and return the community's electricity back to normal. Honestly, had it not been for the linemen, he certainly would have died. His body was trapped not only under the wires and under the vehicles but also it had been raining and the impact of the crash had him partially

trapped under the vehicle. The entire vehicle was "electric" and the only people that could save him were our linemen. The job was dangerous and tedious, yet they worked with every second counting and they saved our friend. To them we will forever be thankful and to us they will forever be heroes.

When Hurricane Harvey broke through our coast with record high flood waters along with horrid winds, it made it unsafe for anyone to leave their homes. Even with these unsafe conditions electric linemen still went out and risked their lives in order to keep electricity flowing for the community. It was estimated that 336,000 people lost power during this storm, but those numbers didn't scare the over 4,000 linemen who were brought in from around the country to help not only our community but others survive the devastating effects of the storm. While most of us were glued to our televisions we never stopped to realize that the only reason we were able to see what was going on was that some lineman somewhere was out in the elements making sure that we did have power through the storm. Truly being a first responder not at this point to lives, but to the lines that we need to stay connected. As I watched the people in Houston wading through waist deep water, I kept seeing electric lines down and I remember asking my dad "what if the lines are hot"? I remember him saying, "the linemen know their jobs and they know how to save the people...they won't go in where it isn't safe", yet as I watched the crews moving in the background of the camera crews I thought...oh my gosh, please be careful. They were the silent conductors in the background of the chaos helping keep the whole situation under control. I saw them quietly working when we went into Wharton to help a family gather items from their

water damaged home. I thought...here are these men, these brave men, who are out here in the rain, the cold, and the extreme storms all so that we can all hopefully return to normal. They help us find the light after the storm. They are heroes and we owe them a debt of gratitude. Linemen throughout our state have always stepped in as first responders, because they are the only ones who can restore power after accidents and hurricanes, therefore making them a crucial part of our community. These men and women have worked hard to earn not only their job, but they also have earned and deserve the title of a first responder.

First responders are defined as people who are “ designated or trained to respond to an emergency” and in my eyes, and many others, this is exactly what an Electric Lineman is. These men and women continually train to endure harsh conditions and execute precise work that test their knowledge and skills. To our friend, they will forever be the angels that saved his life, but to our community they will always be our electric linemen, our heroes, and most importantly our first responders.