

# Case Study: Having a Certified Cooperative Communicator on staff pays big dividends.

*When Hurricanes Rita and Ike were bearing down on Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, they were glad to have a CCC on staff and ready to respond.*

In 2002 when Kyle Kuntz became CEO of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative in Livingston, Texas, he committed to creating a first class communications program at the 67,000 meter cooperative.

R.J. Enard was hired as Sam Houston EC's first communications specialist, and his first day on the job was spent flying to the 2004 Connect Conference in Columbus, Ohio. R.J. hit the ground running. He learned about the CCC program at Connect and became certified within a year. Almost immediately, R.J.'s CCC training began paying big dividends. He put his new knowledge to work preparing a crisis communications plan, creating a Storm Central section on the Cooperative's Web site, and implementing an internal communication strategy.

When Hurricane Rita slammed into Sam Houston EC's service territory, they were ready. Lines of communication to members, media, emergency personnel and elected officials remained open and operational. The end result was rave reviews for how the Cooperative communicated before, during and after the hurricane.



*Karen Combs (center) presents the 2009 Edgar F. Chesnutt Award to Sam Houston Electric Cooperative staff, from left: Kyle J. Kuntz, CEO; Mary Kate Scott, communications specialist; Keith Stapleton, chief communications officer; and R.J. Enard, engineer.*

R.J. has since taken his engineering degree and communications experience to Sam Houston EC's engineering department, but not before handing the reins over in 2008 to Mary Kate Scott, the cooperative's new communications specialist. Within weeks after her arrival, Hurricane Ike struck East Texas, and Sam Houston's system was devastated again.

Building on the foundation established by R.J., Mary Kate, who is currently in the process of becoming a CCC, coordinated communication efforts throughout the 12-day recovery process. Customer satisfaction actually rose following the hurricane, to over 90 percent and Sam Houston EC was awarded the 2009 Edgar F. Chesnutt Award for their Hurricane Ike communications efforts.

"Sam Houston EC's commitment to the CCC program has paid big dividends," said Kyle Kuntz, Sam Houston's CEO and 2005 J.C. Brown Communications Leadership Award recipient. "I can't imagine facing even the smallest communications challenge without having a Certified Cooperative Communicator on staff."