



GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
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Yee-Hah! It's the Texas Lineman Rodeo!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, July 3, 2001

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SEGUIN-Come rain or shine, electric utility linemen from throughout Texas will be in Seguin on Saturday, July 14 for the Sixth Annual Texas Lineman Rodeo. But don't expect to see bronc riding or calf roping. This rodeo tests linemen's skills in a team building, controlled environment with safety and job knowledge as the judging criteria.

The Rodeo is free and open to the public. It starts bright and early Saturday morning with a 6:30 a.m. opening ceremony at the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority's Nolte Island Recreation Area. Team competitions begin at 7 a.m. and winners will be announced at the 5 p.m. awards presentation. A variety of concessions will serve breakfast tacos, lunch items and beverages so bring your appetite, lawn chairs and sunscreen and spend the day watching some exciting competition among the top electric linemen in Texas.

Team events at the Lineman Rodeo include pole climbing, hurt man rescue, using an insulated hot stick to replace electrical components at the top of poles, line splicing, knot tying and ten other competitions designed to test team and individual safe line work practices. The pole climbing and hurt man rescue events draw the largest crowds and loudest cheers. Pole climbers must ascend and descend a pole without breaking the raw egg each competitor carries in his mouth. In the hurt man rescue, a 150-pound dummy must be 'rescued' from the top of a 40-foot pole.

Teams from throughout the state will be competing to see who is "Best in Texas." Competitors will represent one of four divisions: Investor-Owned Utilities, Contractors, Municipal Utilities or Electric Cooperatives. Teams are already registered from Austin, San Antonio Bryan/College Station and the Guadalupe-Valley Electric Cooperative in Gonzales. Houston will also be sending a number of teams including those from the Mid-South Electric Cooperative and the Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, while the Dallas/Ft. Worth area will be represented by Denton, Garland, Hillco and Panola-Harrison.

Last year's event attracted more than 40 three-person teams plus 30 apprentice linemen. "We expect at least this many to compete on July 14 in Seguin," said Bobby Christmas, GVEC acting operations division manager and Rodeo chairman. "We're planning for up to 500 people, including contestants and their families."

"Safe work is the number one priority at the Lineman Rodeo," said Texas Electric Cooperative's (TEC) director of loss control Larry Baker. "The events are competitive, so speed and skill are very important. But we place the greatest emphasis on safety. When working, linemen literally put their lives on the line. There's no room for error."

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Baker has been coordinating the rodeo since its beginning six years ago. Previous rodeos were sponsored by the Texas A&M Engineering Service but this year's event is being sponsored completely by TEC for the first time. Other area entities helping to coordinate the event are the Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative (GVEC), the Guadalupe-Blanco-River Authority (GBRA) and the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA).

Another first for this year's rodeo is location. "We're excited to have shade trees," said Baker, noting that mid-July in Central Texas can be blistering hot. For the past five years, the Lineman Rodeo was held at a treeless site south of San Antonio. This year, the GBRA Nolte Island Recreation Area just south of Seguin will be the Rodeo's new permanent home.

"GBRA has operated a Hydroelectric Division since the 1960's so we have a first-hand appreciation of the skills required to be a top lineman," said GBRA general manager Bill West. "We are delighted to be hosting this year's Rodeo and invite everyone to come out and enjoy the competition and the beautiful setting along the Guadalupe River."

Nolte Island offers Rodeo competitors and spectators access to picnic facilities, RV sites, camping and a children's playground. To reach Nolte Island, Take IH 10 to Exit 610 (Highway 123 Bypass). Go south on 123, across Highway 90A (East Court Street) to the next light (Wal Mart on right). Turn LEFT at the intersection and stay on FM 466 (Capote Road). Just before the bridge across the Guadalupe River, turn RIGHT at the marked entrance to Nolte Island and follow the road past the hydroelectric plant into the park.

Local camping and RV information is available from: River Shade RV Park, 3995 S. State Highway 123 Bypass (830) 379-8826, 1-800-364-7275 or on the web at www.woodalls.com/a/00825_rivershade.html; also Bryan's Country RV Park, 14070 FM 725 (830) 379-5945; Circle H RV Campground, 3260 U.S. Highway 90, (830) 379-9855; Dusty Oaks RV Park & Campground, 119 Tschoepe Road (830) 372-0203; or McQueeney Marina RV & Boat Launch, 1901 Terminal Loop Road (830) 557-9900.

CUTLINE:

Utility linemen scramble up poles in the hurt man rescue competition, while 150-pound dummies 'hang around' waiting to be saved. This and other competitive events will be featured at the Texas Lineman Rodeo on Saturday, July 14 at the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority's (GBRA) Nolte Island Recreation Area in Seguin. Rodeo competition begins at 7 a.m. with an awards ceremony at 5 p.m. The rodeo is free and open to the public with food and beverage concessions on site.