

CHELCO News



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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Online now

Fast info: Check out all the CHELCO's payment options on chelco.com under the member services tab, then payment options.

Check us out on Facebook

For outage updates, search Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative.

Upcoming: CHELCO trustee elections

Every year, three positions on CHELCO's nine-member Board of Trustees are open for election. This year, Districts 2, 4 and 6 will be elected by mail, and the winners will be announced at our annual meeting Saturday, April 16. Members interested in running for the board should submit applications by Feb. 1.

Each seat represents a geographic area of CHELCO's service territory, and any member seeking election to the board must reside in the district they are running for. All members are encouraged to vote, regardless if their district is up for re-election. Those interested in running may pick up a trustee election application packet at any CHELCO office or access it at chelco.com under About Us, Trustees and Elections. A board-appointed nominating committee will review

applications and select candidates. Members may also use a petition process, which is described in the bylaws on the website, to become a candidate.

The incumbents are:

- District 2: Terry Pilcher, Freeport
- District 4: James Hagen, DeFuniak Springs
- District 6: Gerald Edmondson, Crestview

Important dates:

- Feb. 1: Applications to CHELCO by 5 p.m.
- Feb. 12: Candidates' names posted
- March 1: Deadline for nominating by petition
- March 11: Election ballots mailed
- April 11: Ballots received by CHELCO
- April 16: Annual meeting

CHELCO scholarship applications available

The 2016 CHELCO scholarship program is back this spring. CHELCO will accept applications Jan. 1 through March 15.

Adults, current college students and high school seniors can apply. All applicants must be a CHELCO member or the dependent of a member. Applicants must live on CHELCO's lines.

Applicants will be evaluated on academic achievement, school and community activities, financial need and the ability to communicate in writing and an interview. Judges from area colleges will evaluate the applicants. Three \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to three area students in May.

Applications and rules can be downloaded from chelco.com under Community, then Scholarships.

Feeder automation will strengthen reliability at CHELCO

One of CHELCO's newest projects, distribution or feeder automation, will strengthen CHELCO's reliability. Although the project will take time to fully implement across CHELCO's service area, it brings operational and engineering analysis technology together to create a smarter electric grid.

The following is a Q&A with Engineering Services Supervisor Mike Kapotsy.

What is feeder automation?

The technology automatically detects

any disturbance that causes an outage and redistributes the power by remotely activating switches that restore power to as much of the affected outage area as possible. It takes about 90 seconds. Not everyone will have power, but fewer members would be out of power because electricity is routed on different circuits to some of the members.

When will the project start?

The project has been in the strategic planning stage for several years, but in June of 2015, we actually formulated an

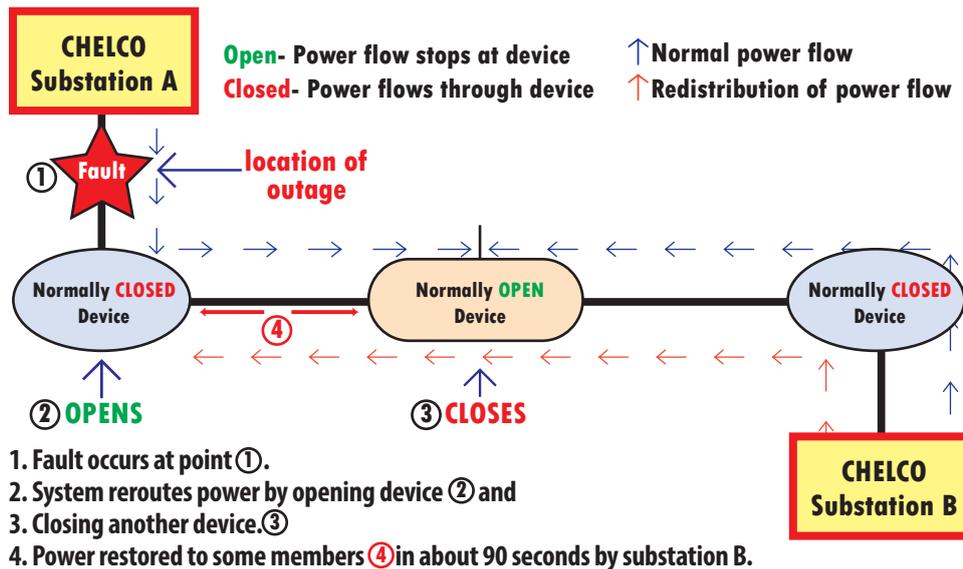
implementation plan. The first areas of our system that distribution or feeder automation will be implemented are the Glendale, DeFuniak Springs, Laurel Hill and Baker areas.

When will it be completed?

The expected completion date is 2024. We outlined a 10-year plan primarily to keep costs spread out over a longer period of time.

How much will the project cost?

We expect the total cost to be approximately \$3 million, of which \$1.5 million are dollars that we had already planned to spend on equipment over the 10-year period. In exchange for that expense, the membership will receive a more reliable distribution system and will experience fewer sustained outages. We will also save money on labor because the system will help to pinpoint the location of the disturbance, thereby allowing power to be restored more quickly without line trucks and personnel having to search for the fault.



InBrief

CHELCO reduced bills again in December

Members' saw a reduction in their bills for the last two months of 2015 due to higher than budgeted margins. CHELCO reduced member bills by six-tenths of a cent per kilowatt-hour on the distribution cost adjustment. The result was nearly \$700,000 in member savings.

CHELCO closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day

CHELCO offices will be closed Monday, Jan. 18, in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Kiosk and bank draft winners named

Thank you all for participating in the kiosk and bank draft drawing. Everyone using the kiosk in November was entered in a drawing. All members using bank draft to pay monthly bills were in another drawing. In each case, 10 lucky winners received \$50 bill credits. If you sign up for bank draft now, you can be in the next drawing.

Co-op sponsoring Chautauqua speakers

CHELCO is sponsoring the Thomas Edison and Henry Ford presentation during the Chautauqua Assembly on Jan. 28-31. Visit florida-chautauqua-center.org for more information.

This newsletter is published monthly to provide information on news, events, services, energy advice and safety tips to the member/owners of CHELCO. Comments and questions should be directed to newsletter@chelco.com or (850) 892-2111.



Insights



STEVE RHODES
Chief Executive Officer

Thankful for line crews in the New Year

Another year has passed, and it is officially 2016. Some are focusing on New Year's resolutions while some don't tend to give another new year much thought. As we start off this year, I'd like us, as members of this cooperative, to take the time to consider what it takes to keep our homes powered.

cold, rain and wind, all while wearing layers of protective gear. When we are taking cover from storms and bad weather, linemen hit the road to go to work so that we can enjoy the comforts and conveniences that electricity provides us.

Along with many other utilities, we have dedicated employees working in potentially dangerous jobs to bring light and comfort to our homes. CHELCO's line crews are called upon at all hours, often waking up at 2 a.m. during a storm to repair an outage so we can stay warm, cozy and asleep in our beds. Many days they work in extreme conditions, heat,

I am thankful for the perseverance, bravery, hard work and strength that our CHELCO linemen show each day. Safety is important for all CHELCO employees, but, when it comes to line work, there is an extra measure of risk. That is why safety is the top priority for CHELCO. It is the only way that they can be assured of being alive and healthy at the end of the day when they go home to their families.

Please join me and thank a lineman next time you see one eating at the local diner or picking up groceries on the way home from a long day. I know they are proud to work for our members. Let them know you are proud of them too.

Give back with Members Helping Members

Colder weather is here to stay for the next couple months. You may have some friends, neighbors or relatives who need help paying their power bills when temperatures drop. CHELCO's Members Helping Members program is designed to assist members with their electric bills during times of financial hardship. To

make a contribution, contact a member service representative at (850) 892-2111. You can make a one-time contribution, or you can sign up to contribute an amount each month. If you are in need of assistance, contact the Council on Aging at (850) 892-8165.

CHELCO gives teacher grants

CHELCO is not only a big supporter of helping local students but also our local teachers. CHELCO's \$6,000 donation to the Walton Education Foundation was matched by the Consortium of Florida Education Foundations and provided 11 mini grants ranging between \$937 and \$1,500 each to Walton County school teachers. CHELCO will attend the Walton County School board meeting on Jan. 19 where the teachers will receive recognition for the awards.

CHELCO also provided grant money to the Okaloosa Public Schools Foundation, and the teachers will be selected for those mini grants soon. There will be five \$500 mini grants awarded this year as the foundation had already set aside a portion of the funds for another project.

Sign-up for the Co-op Connections card

All CHELCO members automatically receive a free Co-op Connections card, and when they show the card at any participating business, they receive a discount. It's that easy. Need a new card? Call the CHELCO Marketing Department at (850) 892-2111 or email marketing@chelco.com. If you wish to research local and nationwide offers, go to chelco.com, Programs, Co-op Connections card.

Businesses participating in the Co-op Connections card reap great benefits too! Your business will be exposed to 47,000 area members through various CHELCO marketing efforts. Offering a small discount can lead to expanding your customer base.

CHELCO is governed by a nine-member board of trustees: Pat Carlyle, District 1; Terry Pilcher, District 2; Jim Bishop, District 3; James Hagan, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, District 4; Ronald Jones, President, District 5; Gerald Edmondson, Vice President, District 6; Bert Prutzman, District 7; Gayle Hughes, Secretary/Treasurer, District 8; Burt Cosson, District 9.





**Energy Advisor
Kevin Campbell**

Ways to save during the colder months

Brrrrr....the cold weather is upon us and can mean higher electric bills if you don't take the proper precautions and protect your wallet. There are a few simple things you can do to keep your electric bill reasonable.

- By using less energy during peak hours, you get way ahead of the game and help keep wholesale power costs down. In the winter, peak hours are in the early mornings. Take your showers at night, and bundle up in a cozy robe and slippers while you prep for your work day so the thermostat can be set lower.
- Check your windows and doors for leaks. Weather stripping is cheap and easy to install on doors where you may see the daylight shining through. Caulking around your window frames is a great way to keep excess cold air from entering your home.
- Use your winter blankets! Lower the thermostat 8 to 10 degrees while you sleep. You will save about 10 percent off your electric bill.

Remembering CHELCO and hurricanes

Hurricanes don't always offer the best memories. Destruction and the long road to recovery are hard to digest. CHELCO's history with a few major hurricanes stirs up those memories, but more importantly, we can recall how great our members and fellow cooperatives are.

In 1975, Hurricane Eloise struck Florida with a vengeance. Fallen poles covered Highway 331. The beach was washed out. There were 12,000 members without power. The linemen were working day and night to get the roads cleared of CHELCO poles and lines. Twenty years later in 1995, destructive Hurricane Opal hit the CHELCO service area just as fiercely. Some CHELCO members were out of power for more than a week. Linemen from co-ops all over the country

came to help. Again, they were working day and night.

The good memories CHELCO employees and trustees have of our members come from the compassion and support shown to our hardworking linemen and other employees. While line crews were rebuilding lines after Eloise, members were fetching food and ice to keep their energy going. After Opal, when linemen quickly kicked on the power at a local elementary school that was near a substation, the school staff came to work to feed them breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Our community pulling together in times of despair and worry lifts spirits when so much has been lost.



Aftermath of Hurricane Eloise in South Walton.

Tip of the month

Save energy and money by lowering your water heater thermostat to 120 degrees. This will also slow mineral buildup and corrosion in your water heater and pipes.

