

CHELCO NEWS

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A Touchstone Energy[®]
Cooperative 

CHELCO Annual Meeting goes virtual



VP of Member Services and External Affairs Emily Cowan (left) and production manager RJ Murdock prepare to film a portion of the meeting.

Due to the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, CHELCO held its annual meeting virtually for the second consecutive year, Saturday, April 17.

CHELCO CEO Steve Rhodes said that while last year's annual meeting was very unusual, we've become accustomed to the "new normal," but anticipate things getting back to normal very soon.

"What a strange and challenging year it's been," Rhodes said, addressing a crowd of viewers watching from home. "Safe to say it was a year most of us will never forget. Like all of you, we're tired of the pandemic and want to get back to normal life. The good news is that it appears we are getting close to that point."

During the meeting, Board Attorney Jeff McInnis announced the results of the Board of Trustees election, with incumbents Lee Perry of District 1 and Bert Prutzman of District 7 being re-elected to the board for three-year terms. In District 9, Dwayne Davis defeated incumbent Burt Cosson, who served on CHELCO's board since 2009.

Rhodes updated the membership on the co-op's efforts to excel in all fields, highlighting that CHELCO ranks in the top 25% of 850 electric co-ops nationally in cost control, service reliability and member satisfaction.

In what he called the "best news of the day," Rhodes announced that beginning with the May billing, CHELCO will reduce rates by \$1.2 million, or 1%.

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CHELCO Charity Golf Tournament is May 20

CHELCO's annual Charity Golf Tournament is Thursday, May 20 at Blackstone Golf Course. Sign up sheets for teams and sponsors are available on CHELCO.com.



CEO Insights: Your electric bill just got lower!

I'm sure you've seen the graphics comparing the prices of gasoline, milk and eggs to times of old. A common theme is to see the price rise astronomically as the years progress. Thinking back to only a few decades ago, gas was less than a \$1 per gallon. Now, especially in recent months, we've seen it climb to more than \$3 per gallon. I remember when milk was just over \$1 per gallon in the late 1980s, and eggs were 75 cents per dozen.

Thankfully for all of us, the cost of electricity has proven not to follow the same trend. In fact, I'm happy to announce that we'll soon be rolling out a distribution cost adjustment (DCA) reduction. We last reduced

the DCA rate for November and December 2015, and I'm proud we're able to do it once again five years later.

This year, our margins are higher than initially budgeted, and we're paying it back to you, our members. There are several reasons for our excess margins. Thanks to our efforts to reduce controllable expenses, and with your participation in energy saving programs like Beat the Peak, we've avoided some wholesale power costs.

Beginning with the May billing, we will reduce rates by \$1.2 million, or 1%. This is our second rate decrease

since 2015. Not many electric utilities can say the same.

Unlike the price of most other essentials, the cost of electricity remains steady. I'm thankful for our great team of employees and members who work together to reduce controllable expenses, which allows us to give back to our members through things like our DCA reductions and capital credit retirements. While it's not a life-changing amount of money, we're proud to be able to reduce your electric bill any time we can.

Steve Rhodes,
Chief Executive Officer

Now is the time to start preparing for hurricane season

Hurricane season officially begins June 1, and there are several preparations you can make before then to safeguard your home and family.

The first step to making sure your family will be safe during hurricane season is creating a plan. While you'll likely receive direction from local and state governments, it's never a bad idea to create your own evacuation plan to include primary and alternate routes well before a disaster strikes.

Stocking up on supplies is another crucial step you can complete ahead of time. Save a three-day supply of non-perishable food, water and other essentials. You'll also want to have sufficient hygiene and

sanitation supplies on hand. Make sure your first-aid kit has plenty of bandages, pain relievers and other medical supplies, and check that all prescriptions are up-to-date.

At CHELCO, we're doing our part to prepare for hurricane season too. We have many specialized duties for hurricanes, and we can call on additional personnel if needed. Throughout the year, we review our hurricane plan to guarantee everyone knows their role before, during and after a hurricane.

We also perform frequent maintenance on our system to ensure our equipment is ready for the season. Our poles are inspected often and are replaced when

necessary. Our subsidiary Southland Utility Services performs preventative right-of-way clearing to help limit outages caused by fallen limbs. In 2020, we added three new sites to our feeder automation system, which helps minimize outages for members by allowing us to restore power to a portion of the affected members instead of waiting for the entire outage to be restored.

As we are gearing up for the hurricane season, we encourage you to plan ahead too. If you follow all of these pre-season steps, when storm season arrives, you'll have all the essentials taken care of, and you'll be ready to work your plan if it becomes necessary.

Annual Meeting goes virtual (from p.1)



CEO Steve Rhodes delivered a review of 2020, lots of good news and hope for the future in his address to the CHELCO membership during the meeting.

Rhodes also provided an update on the construction of the 25,000 sq. ft. addition to the Technology Center in DeFuniak Springs.

“Once construction is completed, all of our office facilities in DeFuniak Springs will be located at one campus, thereby making our operation more streamlined and efficient.”

In closing, Rhodes restated a promise he has made to the membership over the past several years.

“Just as we’ve done for the past eight years, and over the many decades prior to that, we’ll work

hard and we’ll do our very best to keep your rates affordable and your electric service top-notch,” Rhodes said. “We look to the future with great expectations, and we look forward to the challenges that lie ahead. In the meantime, we’ll keep the lights on.”

Following the business portion of the meeting, prizes were drawn for those who voted in the board election and six scholarships were drawn for CHELCO members and member dependents.

If you were unable to tune in live, a full recording of the annual meeting is posted to CHELCO.com to view at your convenience.

Thank you to everyone who tuned into our virtual annual meeting!

ACRE supports co-ops around the country

When you think of the hundreds of electric co-ops around the country and the millions of Americans they serve, you probably don’t think of their political influence. However, co-ops from coast to coast have the support of the Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE) to help implement policies that are beneficial to cooperatives and their members.

Founded in 1966 by the approximately 1,000 consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives of the NRECA, ACRE supports candidates for the U.S. House and Senate - those in office now and those running for office - who will speak for and protect the interests of electric co-ops and their member-owners.

ACRE contributions from candidates are backed by over 36,000 eligible members across 47 states with an average contribution of \$65, making it truly a grassroots political action committee (PAC).

For more information, and to learn how you can get involved to make sure your co-op is represented fairly in office, visit electric.coop/acre.

CHELCO is governed by a nine-member board of trustees: Lee Perry, District 1; Terry Pilcher, District 2; Reese Harrison, District 3; Brady Bearden, Vice President, District 4; Ronald Jones, District 5; Gerald Edmondson, President, District 6; Bert Prutzman, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, District 7; Gayle Hughes, Secretary/Treasurer, District 8; Burt Cosson, District 9.

May is safety month at the cooperative



Each May, we emphasize the importance of safety at the cooperative. While our employees have to put safety first in every aspect of their jobs, we encourage our members to become familiar with general safety as well, especially around electrical equipment.

In your home

You're most likely to deal with small electrical equipment in your home, so these may be more practical for your everyday life. First, make sure you aren't overloading electrical outlets, and never plug an extension cord into another extension cord. If you are using too many power strips, it may be time to install additional outlets to reduce the risk of overload.

If you do experience an electrical overload, it's likely you'll need to know which breakers to flip in your breaker box. Take a few minutes to label your circuit breakers, so you'll know exactly which breakers are connected to the different circuits in your home.

Light bulbs may seem harmless, but play it safe and read the labels before you use them. To be sure that your bulbs are used safely, only use

bulbs that match the recommended wattage on the light fixture.

Around power lines

The best tip for being safe around downed lines is to avoid them at all costs. If you see a downed line, you should assume that it is energized and call 911 immediately. While we will de-energize lines as soon as we know they are down, it's always a good idea to use caution and assume they could be dangerous.

When the poles are standing strong and steady, it's still important to be safe around them. Be careful when cutting trees near lines, and make sure trees and their branches don't fall on lines. There's also electrical equipment underground, so if you need to dig for a project, call 811 before you dig.

Safety in your daily life

It can be easy at times to overlook small safety precautions, especially when your mind is on autopilot. Be safe by thoroughly completing all steps to whatever you're working on, and never cut corners when your safety could be at risk. Most times you'll be fine, but if you always skip a step, eventually it could come back to bite you.

Connections Corner

The Co-op Connections discount program is another benefit of being a CHELCO member. Local businesses, participating pharmacies and thousands nationally offer discounts to co-op members. Don't forget to download the Co-op Connections app!

This month, we highlight and thank the following businesses:

McLean's Florist & Gifts

161 State Hwy. 83 N, DeFuniak Springs

(850) 892-3432

10% off single gift item over \$50 (excludes florals and Sorelli)

Himes Signs Corp.

4 Commerce St., Destin

(850) 837-1159

5-20% off related products and services

Sleep Inn & Suites

17834 State Highway 285 S, DeFuniak Springs

(850) 307-9000

10% off best available rate

For more information, visit CHELCO.com, email energyservices@chelco.com or call CHELCO's Energy Services department at (850) 307-1122.

IS \$25 YOURS?

If the account number below matches yours, sign this page and mail it with your bill to CHELCO or drop it off at any office. You'll win a \$25 credit on your next bill.

Dalton - 9006874