

CHELCO NEWS

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CHELCO crews lend a hand to fellow co-ops



Manager of Operations Kevin Wilkerson (left) sends off Chance Pitts, Dan Paul, Josh Mathis, Tarrant Bowles, Dusty Brackney, Kale Gomillion, Trevor Bell, Andrew Thomas, Aaron Wright, and Tyler Matthews to South Carolina.



CHELCO recently offered Mutual Aid assistance to York Electric Cooperative in South Carolina and Yazoo Valley Electric Power in Mississippi.

In anticipation of the major ice storms that swept across the southeastern United States, our first crew departed for York Electric Cooperative early on the morning of Saturday, Jan. 24. Thankfully for our crews and York Electric Cooperative, the storm did not cause widespread outages as initially forecast, and mutual aid support was ultimately not needed. Our crew returned safely home late on Monday, Jan. 26.

Then, less than a week later, another CHELCO crew answered the call and departed for Yazoo Valley Electric Power Association in Mississippi. This time, the storms had already impacted thousands of Yazoo Valley members. Our crew worked hard for eight days, helping restore power following major damage, before a safe return home. Yazoo Valley Manager of Operations Brett Cerda said that CHELCO's crew was extremely helpful to their power restoration efforts.

"I'm proud of our crews for willingly leaving home to help hundreds of families they'll never know," said Matthew Avery, CHELCO SVP and COO. "Most importantly, our crews returned home safely. I'm thankful that we were able to help a fellow cooperative in need."



CHELCO's mutual aid crew assisting Yazoo Valley Electric Power: Chance Pitts, Cole Hatcher, Dusty Taylor, Cody Dickey, Tyler Heintzleman, Chad Smith, Seth Divelbliss, Cole Sorrells, and Jake Fain.



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1,500 Days of Safety

We are proud to announce that CHELCO recently surpassed the 1,500-day mark in our "No Lost-Time Injury" streak, now extending more than four years and approximately 1.4 million employee hours worked.

"Safety is our first and highest priority at CHELCO," said CEO Steve Rhodes. "We want everyone to work safely and go home at the end of the day the same way they arrived in the morning—safe and sound. Over the last few years, we have compiled an incredible streak that has never been matched in the history of our co-op. It's even more impressive when you consider how many more employees we have now than we did 10, 25, 50, or 85 years ago."

Proud to be CHELCO!



CEO Insights: Utility scammers on the rise; protect yourself from becoming a victim

It's unfortunate that I feel the need to write on this topic in my monthly column, but here we are. Far too often, we receive reports from our members reporting suspicious calls and other scam attempts, using CHELCO's name to try and cheat our members out of their money. This month, I've worked with our IT and Member Services departments to gather some tips to help you avoid becoming a victim of a utility scam.

CHELCO will NEVER call to demand immediate payment

The most important rule of thumb is to remember that **CHELCO does not call our members to collect overdue payments.** If you ever receive a call from individuals posing as CHELCO and asking for banking or credit card information, hang up immediately and call us at our main line, (850) 892-2111 to report it.

Additionally, be careful with trusting caller ID, because modern scammers have the ability to "spoof" or make it appear that a certain number is calling you. Even if it appears a call may be coming from CHELCO, if the caller initiates a request for personal financial information, do not let the phone call go any further.

If your account is overdue, you will receive a written notice from CHELCO, not a direct phone call demanding immediate payment. If anything ever feels off, please hang up and call us directly.

Convenient payment options to set your mind at ease

If you enjoy maximum convenience, nothing is more convenient than enrolling in automatic bank draft so you don't have to remember to pay your monthly bill. If this is something

that interests you, it's also a great way to protect yourself should you receive a scam attempt claiming your bill is overdue.

Additionally, we are excited to roll out a new way to pay conveniently at various retailers. CheckOut by PayGo allows you to pay any amount on your energy bill at stores such as Dollar General and CVS Pharmacy. With the multitude of participating retailers throughout our service area, this is a convenience to our members who may not live close to a CHELCO office and wish to pay manually.

Visit **CHELCO.com/ways-pay** or scan the QR codes below if you'd like to learn more about payment options available to you.



Look for the CHELCO logo

Not all scam attempts come in the form of a phone call. From time to time, we receive reports of individuals claiming to represent CHELCO, promoting certain services, such as rooftop solar or whole-home surge protection. While door-to-door sales pitches can be an annoyance, they are not all scams. However, be aware that anyone knocking on your door representing CHELCO will be able to provide a photo badge displaying the CHELCO logo, their picture, and job title. Additionally, all CHELCO vehicles are clearly marked with our logo. Anyone who is legitimately representing CHELCO will be able to provide proof.

This is one reason you will not find CHELCO distributing apparel items featuring our logo to the general public. While many members would be happy to wear the CHELCO logo in support of their cooperative, we cannot risk our logo falling into the wrong hands, potentially being used with ill intent.

Avoid all types of scams

While we hope you avoid utility scams, we also want to make sure you are taking steps to avoid all types of scams; especially those perpetrated by cyber criminals.

Scammers and cyber criminals look for weak points to exploit before software companies can fix them. Update programs on your computer, tablet, and mobile phone as soon as possible whenever a new version becomes available. Software updates often contain critical patches and protections against security threats. To make it easier, most devices have features that will automatically update your security software, internet browser, operating system, and other applications.

Be vigilant

The best way to avoid becoming a victim is to simply be aware that scams are happening every day. Trust your suspicions, play it safe, and call us if anything seems fishy.

I hope this information has been helpful, but I also hope that you never have to use it. If you ever need us, we're always an email, phone call, or office visit away.

Steve Rhodes,
Chief Executive Officer

Local juniors visit Tallahassee, meet with State Legislators



CHELCO brought 22 juniors from 10 local high schools to Tallahassee to visit the state capitol, meet our legislators, and learn more about electric cooperatives for the annual FECA Youth Tour program.

CHELCO recently participated in the Florida Electric Cooperatives Association's annual Youth Tour program, bringing 22 local high school juniors nominated by their schools to Tallahassee for an all-expense-paid, two-day experience learning about state government functions and electric cooperatives while meeting with state legislators alongside their peers from around the state.

Students represented Baker, Crestview, Freeport, Laurel Hill, Niceville, Northwest Florida Collegiate, Paxton, Rocky Bayou, South Walton, and Walton High Schools on the trip. These students will compete for a weeklong trip to Washington, D.C., in June. Four will be selected by judges unaffiliated with CHELCO via video submissions to attend the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Tour program alongside nearly 2,000 students from around the country.

For more information on the Youth Tour program, please visit [CHELCO.com/Youth-Tour](https://www.chelco.com/Youth-Tour).



Grace Fitzgerald (Crestview HS) presents a bill idea in a mock session in the Florida Senate.



Representative Shane Abbott (FL-5) speaks with Youth Tour students in the House Chamber.



Representative Nathan Boyles (FL-3) speaks to students about his first term in the Florida House.



Senate President Ben Albritton made a surprise visit and spoke to students in the Senate Chamber.

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; Ronnie Jones, District 5; Gerald Edmondson, President, District 6; Bert Prutzman, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, District 7; Gayle Hughes, Secretary/Treasurer, District 8; Dwayne Davis, District 9. For more information, please visit [CHELCO.com/board-trustees](https://www.chelco.com/board-trustees).

CHELCO announces elevated titles for Execs



CHELCO recently announced that the members of its Executive Team have each received elevated titles.

Senior Vice President of Engineering and Operations Matthew Avery was promoted to Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, and Vice President of Finance Robin Shaw was promoted to Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer.

Additionally, Vice President of Member Services and External Affairs Emily Cowan and Vice President of Administration Scott Seay have received "Senior Vice President" titles.

"At CHELCO, much of our success begins with the strong leadership of our Executive Team," said CEO Steve Rhodes. "Matthew Avery, Robin Shaw, Emily Cowan, and Scott Seay each lead teams of hardworking, motivated employees. These promotions and title changes are well-deserved and better represent their leadership. I am proud to work alongside each of them to serve our members."

CHELCO Board of Trustees elections: Make Your Voice Heard and Your Vote Count!

Each year, CHELCO members have the important opportunity to participate in one of the key principles that sets cooperatives apart: Democratic Member Control.

Our Board of Trustees elections ensure that the voices of the membership continue to guide the direction of your cooperative. As a member-owner, your vote helps shape the leadership that oversees policies, financial stewardship, and the long-term vision of CHELCO.

Be on the lookout for your ballot packet in the mail, including a Notice of CHELCO's Annual Meeting, which will feature bios on all of the following candidates in our Board election.

District 3

Tim Braddock
Brantlee Lawrence

District 5

Ronald "Ronnie" Jones (*Unopposed*)

District 8

Gayle Hughes
Shane Weddle



Elections are at-large, and members are encouraged to vote in ALL districts, regardless of the district in which you live or if a candidate is running unopposed. To learn more, visit [CHELCO.com/elections](https://www.chelco.com/elections).

The results of the Board of Trustees election will be announced at the **CHELCO Annual Meeting, Saturday, April 18, at Freeport High School.**

Doors will open at 8:00 AM for family activities and breakfast, and the business meeting will begin at 10:00 AM. We hope to see you there!

Annual Meeting: Join us April 18!



We are excited to invite all CHELCO members to our Annual Meeting for a day of family fun, prizes, and updates on the co-op.

When?

Saturday, April 18

8:00 AM: Doors Open

8:00 to 9:45 AM: Activities

10:00 AM: Business Meeting

11:00 AM: Scholarships, Prizes

Where?

Freeport High School

12615 US 331 Bus., Freeport, FL

What?

- Free Breakfast and Coffee
- Live Entertainment
- Bucket Truck Rides (16 & under)
- Educational Demos
- Business Meeting
- Prizes & Scholarships

For more info, please visit [CHELCO.com/Annual-Meeting](https://www.chelco.com/Annual-Meeting).



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PAY WHERE YOU SHOP

Thanks to **CheckOut by PayGo**, CHELCO members can pay their bills at various convenient locations, and it's as easy as 123. Scan the QR code to learn more or visit [CHELCO.com/CheckOut-PayGo](https://www.chelco.com/CheckOut-PayGo).



FAST & EASY BILL PAY NOW AVAILABLE AT SELECT RETAILERS NEAR YOU

For unclaimed capital credits, visit [CHELCO.com/capital-credits](https://www.chelco.com/capital-credits).



\$25 BILL CREDIT

If the account number below matches yours, call (850) 892-2111 to redeem a \$25 bill credit on your next power bill!

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