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MISSION STATEMENT

Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative will operate as a competitive provider of energy services and a partner with local communities, with a focus on safety, service and integrity.

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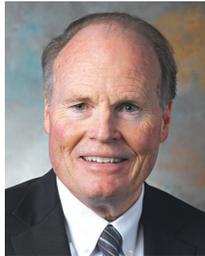
Jim Lovinggood

This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Members can choose between Levelized and Budget Billing



IN THIS PART of America, we typically welcome “leaf season” by early November. That’s the time when the many trees in South Carolina’s mountains and foothills are at their peak with glorious autumn colors. By month’s end, however, the trees are nearly bare, we’ve probably

already experienced several frosts, and the prospect of some considerably colder weather lies immediately ahead.

At Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative, we have a strong awareness of our area climate’s ups and downs. We recognize that residential members’ electric bills are mostly weather-driven. Energy consumption is generally higher—usually noticeably so—in the “winter” months (December through March) and the “summer” months (June through September). During what we call the “shoulder months” (April-May and October-November), household power use usually drops off quite a bit.

The cooperative has two separate, voluntary programs that can prove helpful to managing family finances. We call them Budget Billing and Levelized Billing.

A true-up payment

Budget Billing was introduced just last year. This program enables a member to pay a flat power-bill amount for 11 consecutive months and then make a true-up payment on month number 12. Members have demonstrated their approval of Budget Billing by signing up for it in impressive numbers.

Levelized Billing is a similar offering,

and it has been available to Blue Ridge members for many years. Through leveling, the member would pay a monthly amount that equals a rolling average of the previous 12 months of actual billings. The payment number would vary a little from month to month. Members who use Levelized Billing also never have a month in which the payment would need to be trued up.

Based on billing history

The Budget Billing and Levelized Billing formulas are both based on members’ billing history. Therefore, any member interested in signing on should have been receiving service from Blue Ridge for at least one year. A credit approval would also be part of the sign-up process.

Each of these programs presents certain advantages. If you should be interested in learning more, I encourage you to contact the cooperative’s member services department.

Speaking of November, on Thursday the 22nd, our country will observe the Thanksgiving holiday. My family and I look forward to joining on that day with our fellow citizens in acknowledging our gratitude to God for all His blessings. This is my last report to you in 2018. I, therefore, want to take this opportunity to wish for you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a New Year that brings you even more blessings.

JIM LOVINGGOOD
 President and CEO

Holiday Schedule

Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative will be closed for the holidays November 22-23, December 24-25, and January 1.

Oconee office is growing

BLUE RIDGE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE made a commitment to Oconee County when, in 1986, it opened its doors on the new structure that would serve the surrounding communities. The building was constructed by Thrift Brothers and offered customer service areas complete with drive-thru; floor space for linemen, dispatch, and other operations folks; and a warehouse and small truck shed. System-wide, Blue Ridge served 35,247 mostly rural members at that time and had 38 employees working from the new Oconee District office.

Fast forward to September 2017, when Hurricane Irma came inland, much of our system was damaged and plagued with outages that lasted almost four days. “One thing that became apparent to us during the 2017 hurricane and the 2005 ice storm was our lack of space to house and feed outside crews during a multiple-day outage,” explains Sam McMillan, vice president of operations. “Since this Oconee office was opened, our membership numbers have increased to 66,000, and we routinely have 55 or more employees operating out of the Oconee facilities.” During a storm, those numbers can swell to include 100-400 extra crewmen, based on what the situation might demand.

With those numbers in mind, plans have been underway for several years to expand the Oconee campus. In addition to eliminating the shortage of space, CEO Jim

Lovinggood explains that our emergency plan requires us to be provided the needed redundancy for operating the entire co-op from either the Oconee or Pickens location. “The last time I met with Rural Utility Services (RUS) officials, I was reminded that we are limited in the scope of workers we can handle in Oconee. When you think of the numbers of trucks and equipment that come with 300 additional operations folks, the logistics for projecting them into the field, with the necessary gasoline for the day, are substantial.”

Trehel Corporation is now clearing trees and otherwise preparing the site for a new operations center and meeting room that will be located



DENISE MCCORMICK

beside the existing office and joined together by a corridor. Additional warehouse space will be added to the current structure, and a small portion of the truck facility will be enclosed and used for maintenance and repair of vehicles. New facilities will also be dedicated to pole

Trees have been cleared, pavement removed and dirt moved as preparation is made for the Oconee office expansion. Adding a new operations center adjacent to the current facility will provide current employees with much needed space and allow for the influx of additional crews during storm emergencies.

and transformer storage. The addition will take about a year to complete. Before its conclusion, the cooperative’s current administrative building will also get a facelift.

Lovinggood is proud of the investment being made in the Oconee office. “As the Blue Ridge membership continues to grow, we also have to enhance our commitment to service. We don’t have the luxury of serving densely populated areas; however, when a storm emergency hits our area, our power restoration efforts consistently compare favorably to those of neighboring utilities. We want to keep it that way. Having a facility that meets the requirements of our growing membership, while providing adequate space for our workforce, will help to keep us in a top spot.”

Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony
Tuesday, November 20 at 5:15 p.m.
 Join us as we light the tree on the lawn at the co-op office in Pickens. Reverend Jamie Duncan from East Pickens Baptist Church will present the devotional, and President and CEO Emeritus Charles E. Dalton will light the tree. Light refreshments will be served.