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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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This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

## As convenient as possible



**AN ARRAY OF** elements comes into play with regard to the cooperative's mission of providing quality service. The most obvious measure would be how reliable we are in physically delivering electricity to each member's location.

That's a big part of the picture and, consequently, much of our effort is focused on continuing to raise that level of dependability.

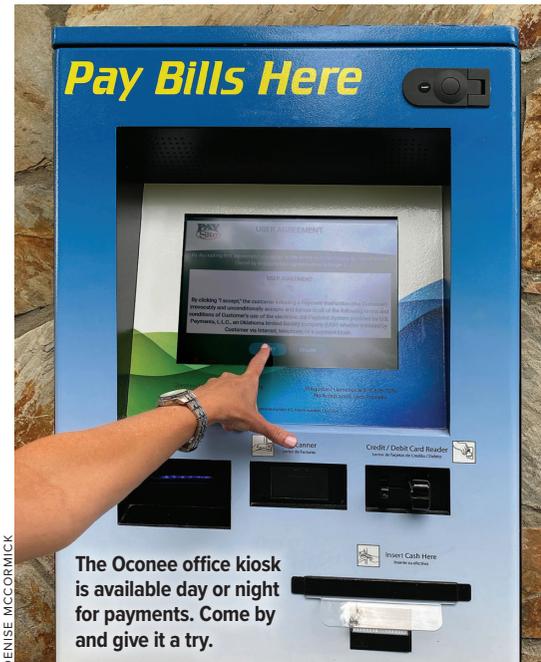
In this month's report, I want to emphasize our commitment to ensuring that transacting business with Blue Ridge is as convenient as possible for our members. Convenience definitely should be recognized as one of the ingredients that contributes to our overall effectiveness in serving our members well.

One area where we seek to accommodate those we serve is in the payment of their monthly power bills. Co-op members have at their disposal a menu of payment options:

- ▶ Online credit card
- ▶ Online e-check
- ▶ Credit-card draft
- ▶ Bank draft
- ▶ In-office visit
- ▶ Mail-in payment

Today, use of credit cards online is proving to be the most-popular means of remittance. One reason for its popularity is the ability to pay online through the Customer Portal or after hours by calling the IVR. Many members also are enjoying the convenience of paying with their credit card using the BREC app.

However, each of the other categories has its loyal subscribers. Just in the last three years, the number of members utilizing bank draft has increased by



more than 40%.

Most importantly, I want every member to select the option that suits them best. I'd encourage contact with our member service center to obtain more information about any of those items on our payment menu.

One other bit of information I'd mention is that Blue Ridge now has a kiosk in operation at both our Oconee and Pickens offices. These convenient, well-lighted kiosks are there for those who want to stop by after hours or use this self-service method to make a payment during the day. Access to our night-deposit box at each location also continues to be available.

Our bottom line, always, is that we're here for you. Please let us know how we can be of assistance.

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
 President CEO

## Lineworkers resume training at Hoyt Williams Center

WHEN COVID-19 presents challenges, South Carolina's electric cooperatives seem to find ways to overcome them.

The pandemic—and the social distancing required to prevent its spread—forced a temporary halt to in-person classes at the Hoyt L. Williams Training Center, the facility operated by the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina where many of the state's lineworkers develop their skills and knowledge and earn lineman certifications. Throughout April, May, and June—a period typically ideal for outside training due to milder temperatures—classes were exclusively administered online.

“We shut everything down after the first week of March,” says Justin Tedder, director of the training center. “But a lot of these guys are in the Lineman Apprenticeship program. They’ve got 10 tests they’ve got to complete every year. The online classes allowed us to help them get through

those modules, so they didn’t get behind.”

The Lineman Apprenticeship program, which follows the Northwest Lineman College curriculum, ensures that cooperative linemen are trained to perform a variety of tasks and duties associated with the operation and maintenance of facilities.

Tedder explains that participants miss out on a crucial portion of the training when they're not able to come to the center.

“We weren’t able to do any climbing (of poles) or bucket work,” he says. “Even with our classroom instruction portion, it’s so much better for them to be able to put their hands on the equipment, tools and material.”

By July, ECSC re-opened the facility under strict conditions. Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative had five linemen at the center going through the Apprenticeship II program—Chad Baker, Peyton Frisbee,



JOSH P. CROTZER

Jake Gravely, Kolt Nabors, and Braden Adams. The cooperative sends about 15 employees to the training center each year.

“We line our training up at the first of the year, so we had everything set in motion before COVID hit,” says Sam McMillan, vice president of operations for Blue Ridge Electric. “But I’m glad that they did what they did for everyone’s safety. I was also glad to see it opened back

**Braden Adams receives valuable instruction as he continues to develop his skills as a lineman during his time at the Hoyt L. Williams Training Center.**

up. They get a lot out of the virtual classes, but it’s not the same as being with your peers.”

The Hoyt L. Williams Training Center is a 12-acre site in West Columbia established to promote safety and develop career-oriented training for electric cooperative employees.

## A Cool Deal on a Smart Thermostat!

Blue Ridge Electric's **Smart Thermostat Program** offers members the opportunity to purchase an **Ecobee 3** or **Ecobee 4** smart thermostat at a discounted rate. As a participant, the member will allow the cooperative to control the thermostat during peak periods.

**Receive a discount on a smart thermostat...**

Ecobee 3: \$85 *Retail Price: \$169*

Ecobee 4: \$145 (w/Alexa) *Retail Price: \$249*

Installation fees: \$50 for 1 thermostat; \$75 for 2

**... and help your co-op with power costs.**

*\* Member reimbursed after 36 months*

*For additional information or questions, please call 800-240-3400 and speak with an energy expert.*



 ecobee

  
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