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**FOR ALL YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE NEEDS**  
 Call Toll-Free (800) 240-3400

**AUTOMATED OUTAGE REPORTING**  
 1-888-BLUERIDGE

**PICKENS**  
 P.O. Box 277  
 734 West Main St.  
 Pickens, SC 29671

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 P.O. Box 329  
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 Westminster, SC 29693

**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

## Rural and urban tradeoffs



**A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO** in this report, I highlighted some results from a study conducted by the S.C. Department of Natural Resources. That study determined that 56% of the land area served by Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative would be

classified as “mountainous.”

The mountainous character of our territory presents your cooperative with a list of service challenges that are largely outside the experience of the rest of South Carolina’s power suppliers. I’m not going to list those challenges in this report, but the next time you make a trip to any mountain destination within South Carolina, take a look around you and realize that those power lines you see belong to Blue Ridge. It’s an eye-opening testimony to what our co-op has achieved.

In truth, terrain is but one aspect of our work that tests our determination to deliver reliable service to our members. For example, I could also point to the “density” factor. Currently, Blue Ridge is distributing electricity to our 68,000-plus members over more than 7,100 miles of power lines. That translates into just 9½ members per power-line mile. Investor-owned utilities average 25 to 30 customers per mile. For municipally owned systems, the customers per mile would number in the 40 to 50 range. This translates to additional time for outage restoration as well as reduced revenue per service mile.

The truth is that much of the geography our cooperative serves is rural. Blue Ridge does provide service to some densely populated communities; however, there are multitudes of lonely and lengthy rural electric lines that might serve only one or two members.

This is why we exist. Your co-op was organized in 1940 because for-profit utilities were unwilling to bring electricity to this region’s countryside—much like high-speed internet service, which is unavailable to many of you today.

Folks who choose to live out in the country do so for any number of reasons. They enjoy the scenic beauty, the fresh air, the privacy, farm life and the like. I am a rural dweller by choice. In addition to my co-op job, I enjoy raising cattle and horses. Cows or no cows though, I like living in the “country.”

I’m also keenly aware that those many miles of rural lines face much more exposure to the elements than facilities located in urban areas. Recently, I spent part of a day riding the lines in northern Oconee County with our Vice President of Operations, Sam McMillan. When you ride our system and really pay attention to the location of our power lines and the surrounding countryside, it’s easy to see why service interruptions can occur.

In the end, there are tradeoffs associated with both rural and urban life. Our goal is to keep raising the bar when it comes to supplying quality service. In addition to supplying electricity, that goal includes providing high-speed internet to every member who wants it. As our pilot program begins bringing that service to outlying areas, I again see Blue Ridge providing a service that no one else would. Rest assured that we are committed to making your life as fulfilling as possible wherever you choose to live.

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
 President and CEO



AMANDA MACHEN

**Be sure of what you're getting when you install rooftop solar. Talk to one of the trusted energy advisors at your electric cooperative.**

panels. They have a contract ready in hand and press for a commitment with signature on the spot.

While they may deliver a product, their claims are false, and they rarely are around to answer questions about the installation and “guarantees” that are untrue.

### **Use trusted sources**

If you're considering solar for your home, make sure you work with a reputable company.

Because this is still an emerging industry with evolving technology, there has been a proliferation of pop-up companies in the market to make a quick buck. Representatives of rooftop solar companies may have more sales experience than knowledge of the energy industry, and their primary goal could be making a sale and moving on to the next prospect.

The Energy Services Department at Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative can offer a candid assessment to determine whether rooftop solar is right for you. If this technology can achieve energy and cost savings, there are reputable installers available to do the job and do it right.

In this ever-changing environment, it's important to remember you have a trusted energy advisor—Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative. We are a community-focused organization that works to efficiently deliver affordable, reliable and safe energy to our members.

**Remember, we're just one call or click away, so please reach out with any questions about your electric service or bills—we're here to help.**

## **Don't be a victim**

### **Know how to avoid common utility scams**

**THE ENERGY INDUSTRY** is undergoing rapid change, and technology is paving the way for innovation in the way energy is used, produced, stored and shared. Members are interested in green energy alternatives while smart homes and apps make managing energy use and paying your electric bill more convenient than ever.

While the changing energy market has created more options for consumers, it also has resulted in more utility scams and misleading information, particularly related to the installation of solar panels.

Utility scams are common because consumers are understandably concerned with the threat of disruption to their electric service. Second, new products and services in the energy industry provide an opening for scammers and pop-up companies to provide misleading information or shoddy products and services.

### **Avoid phone scams**

A common phone scam typically begins with a phone call that appears to be from a valid utility company.

The scammer will claim you have a past due account and threaten to disconnect service or take legal action. The scammer will typically demand that you use a prepaid debit card or money order, often within a very short, urgent time frame, to pay the “past due” amount.

You can combat this scam by being aware of the status of your account. Never give your banking or personal information over the phone to someone you did not call.

If you have a question or concern about your energy bill, call us directly at (800) 240-3400. Do not use the phone number given by the scammer.

### **Avoid solar scams**

Another scam we're seeing more frequently is connected to rooftop solar. High pressure salesmen go door-to-door making promises of eliminating all utility bills with the installation of solar