

# CHELCO news



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## ONLINE NOW

CHELCO offers a variety of payment options to fit members' needs. Check them out at CHELCO.com.



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## Annual Meeting, scholarships and board elections are just around the corner

**CHELCO's Annual Meeting is April 18 at Freeport High School.** Activities will begin at 9 a.m. and the formal meeting will begin at 11 a.m. We hope you will come join us!

### Live entertainment and family fun

The Annual Meeting will feature bucket truck rides, safety demonstrations, activities for kids, breakfast, giveaways, scholarships, election results, co-op updates and a coffee station from Coastal Coffee Bar. **All members in attendance will receive a door prize and a \$5 credit on the next month's bill.** One bill credit per membership. In addition to these freebies, there will be a prize drawing valued at nearly \$5,000. Todd Sparks, a local musician, will perform onstage during the formal meeting.

### Scholarships at Annual Meeting

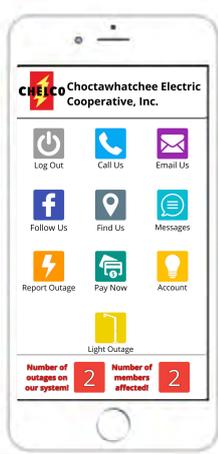
This year, CHELCO's scholarship program changed to simplify the process and allow for more recipients. In the past, CHELCO awarded three \$1,000 scholarships to members or member dependents who were actively in college or were high school seniors accepted to a college. This year, we've doubled the number of recipients to benefit six area students. **In order to win the scholarship, those who have applied must be present at the Annual Meeting.** The deadline to apply for scholarships is March 2. To apply, visit CHELCO.com.

### Board elections

One big ticket item at the Annual Meeting is the announcement of Board Election results. This year, Districts 3, 5 and 8 are up for election. **You should receive a ballot packet in the mail with instructions on how to vote and make sure your voice is heard.**

One of the seven cooperative principles is "Democratic Member Control." This means our members democratically elect their representatives on the Board of Trustees. For more information, visit CHELCO.com.

**Business office hours will be 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday-Friday effective March 2.**



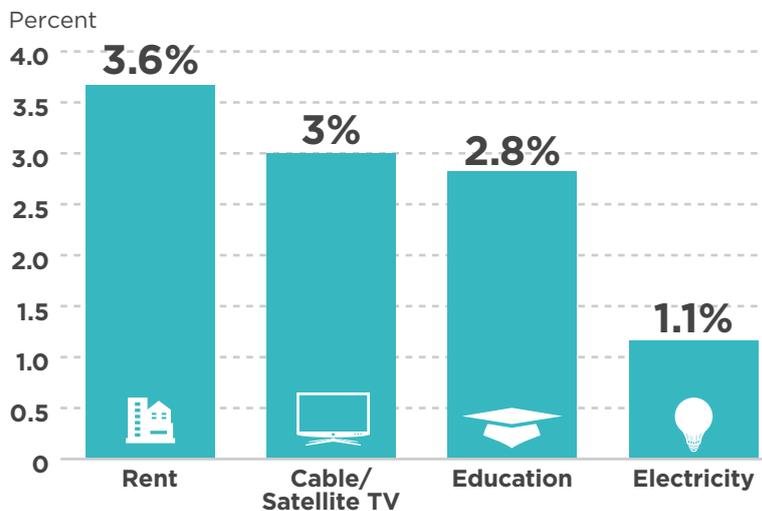
# CHELCO Connect app offers many features for members

Did you know you can pay your bill, review your energy usage, report an outage and more, all on the CHELCO Connect app? To install the app, search "CHELCO" in the iTunes or Google Play store. Once installed, simply log in with your member account information and you'll have access to all the features you need right at your fingertips!

## ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

The cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common expenses. Looking at price increases over the last five years, it's easy to see electricity remains a good value! **CHELCO base rates have remained stable since our last rate adjustment in 2015 and it was a rate decrease.**

Average Annual Price Increase 2013-2018 Nationally



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Consumer Price Index

## Tips for winter safety

It's no surprise that winter months bring increased potential for fire risks and electrical safety hazards. This makes sense because during the coldest months, consumers are using additional electrical devices and appliances, like space heaters and electric blankets

This winter, safeguard your loved ones and your home with these electrical safety tips from Electrical Safety Foundation International.

- 1. Don't overload outlets.** Avoid using extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliance connections—they should be plugged directly into a wall outlet.
- 2. Never leave space heaters unattended.** If you're using a space heater, turn it off before leaving the room. Make sure heaters are placed at least three feet away from flammable items.
- 3. Inspect heating pads and electric blankets.** Electric blankets that are more than 10 years old create additional risks for a fire hazard.

### TIP OF THE MONTH

Looking for an easy way to make your home cozier? Try using an area rug to increase the insulation levels of your floors. Area rugs are stylish and can keep air from entering through your floors. Your toes will thank you!

Stay up-to-date on all CHELCO happenings by following your co-op on social media! We are on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.





## Innovation will guide CHELCO through 2020

We've made many advancements at CHELCO in the past several years, which makes me proud of the CHELCO team, but we still have many new ideas and plans that we're excited to roll out in the coming months and years. We are always looking for the most efficient ways to serve our members. New technology helps us do just that in the electric co-op industry, and our work plan for 2020 revolves around serving our members in new and innovative ways.

We will continue to deploy new metering infrastructure, expand our capability to remotely monitor the electric system, and as always, raise safety awareness among CHELCO employees and members. Safety is and will always be our number one priority.

Maintaining our cybersecurity is at the forefront of our work plan. Protecting your personal privacy, the security of our line technology and our ability to communicate with you are important to us. We will use caution on any devices that may contain sensitive information, and we plan to implement two-factor

authentication to strengthen our device security going forward.

Effective March 2, our company-wide office hours will be 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Currently, many of our employees are on different schedules, so this change will help standardize our hours to make it easier to work together to serve our members.

We are excited to announce plans to construct a new headquarters and administration building at our West DeFuniak Springs campus on Hwy. 331 N. Once construction is complete, the majority of CHELCO employees will be in one location, allowing us to work more closely with one another to serve our members.

We will continue to focus on controlling costs. CHELCO ranks in the top (best) quartile in cost control nationally among hundreds of our peer electric co-ops.

We are working to find new ways to connect and engage with you, our

members. We will make sure your ideas and concerns are heard and work to answer your questions or comments. We will continue to educate our members and local students about energy efficiency, safety, energy generation mix and the cooperative difference through career days, CHELCO's Live Line safety demonstrations, solar energy exhibits, Youth Tour, scholarships, community involvement and classroom education. We recently purchased a Nissan Leaf, an electric vehicle with no carbon emissions. We will work to become a valuable knowledgebase for our members who are interested in this technology.

CHELCO is one of the fastest growing co-ops in the Southeast, and we expect a busy year in 2020 with continued growth. As always, thank you for your continued support as we prepare for another productive year. As these upgrades progress, we're dedicated to keeping your rates low and satisfaction high as we look to safely and efficiently serve you in 2020.



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## Go paperless billing

Cut the clutter and make handling your bills easier with paperless billing. We will send you an email when your bill is ready. It's especially helpful if you pay online or have autodraft. Call CHELCO at (850) 892-2111 or visit [CHELCO.com](http://CHELCO.com) for more information. If you sign up online, make sure your email address is correct.

## CONNECTIONS CORNER

The Co-op Connections discount program is another benefit of being a CHELCO member. Dozens of local businesses, plus thousands nationally, offer discounts to co-op members. There are also discounts available on prescriptions at participating pharmacies. Don't forget to download the Co-op Connections app!

This month, we highlight and thank the following businesses:

### **Bootleggers Mercantile, LLC**

(850) 835-2778  
Freeport  
*10% off purchase every  
Tuesday*

### **C&C Construction of Northwest Florida, LLC**

(850) 547-1001  
Florida, Southern Alabama and  
Southwest Georgia  
*\$50 off any roof purchase*

### **Emerald Coast Energy Solutions**

(850) 588-2870  
Santa Rosa Beach  
*Free energy inspections; \$75  
off radiant barrier installation;  
\$50 off blown-in insulation*

For more information, or, if you own a business and want to sign up to offer CHELCO's 53,000-plus member accounts a discount, email [marketingservices@chelco.com](mailto:marketingservices@chelco.com) or call CHELCO's marketing department at (850) 307-1122. You can find all the local and national deals by searching co-op connections at CHELCO.com or by downloading the Co-op Connections app.

## 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.

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## Common causes of high winter bills

Two of the most common questions during winter weather are, "Why is my electricity bill higher?" and "What can I do to lower it?" When the weather is colder, heating systems have to work harder and longer to maintain internal temperatures. On average, heating costs account for around 50% of your electricity bill. Those costs are incrementally higher as a result of lower than normal winter temperatures.

By taking a closer look at some causes of higher winter bills, you can potentially reduce your electric bill. Here are some examples:

- **Weather stripping on exterior doors and windows.** With a moderate amount of work, you can seal out the cold and save up to 10% on total heating costs.
- **Placing an insulated blanket on your water heater.** Water heaters benefit from additional insulation to prevent them from losing heat.
- **If you have a heat pump, avoid adjusting your thermostat too frequently, or by multiple degrees at a time.** Such adjustments can cause your system to go into a costly and inefficient supplemental heating cycle.
- **Install a programmable thermostat.** Programmable thermostats learn your schedule and temperature preferences. They adjust automatically when you're away to save energy, and again before you arrive home so that you walk into a warm, cozy home.

To obtain a projection of what to expect your winter bills to run, visit CHELCO.com and try out the residential energy calculator. You can also contact our energy advisors with any additional questions you might have at [marketingservices@chelco.com](mailto:marketingservices@chelco.com) or by phone at (850) 307-1122.

## Special needs shelter registration program

The Florida Division of Emergency Management, in coordination with each local emergency management agency in the state, developed a registry to allow residents with special needs to register with their local emergency management agency to receive assistance during a disaster. The statewide registry provides first responders with valuable information to prepare for disasters or other emergencies.

### **Why you should register**

- To receive important information from local emergency management officials about evacuations.
- It may save your life.

If you need assistance during evacuations and sheltering because of physical, mental, cognitive impairment or sensory disabilities, please register with the local emergency management agency.

### **Walton County Emergency management**

(850) 892-8065

### **Okaloosa County Emergency Management**

(850) 651-7150