

CHELCO NEWS

POWERED *by* YOU

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CHELCO to invest \$20M in system reliability



Improving CHELCO's system reliability is one of our top priorities. Our roadmap to accomplish this is our Construction Work Plan (CWP), an annual document outlining projects across our service territory. This year, just over \$20 million is budgeted for system improvements to increase the co-op's reliability and maintain existing facilities spanning over 4,300 miles of line.

"As a not-for-profit electric distribution cooperative, we have a responsibility to build and maintain our power distribution system with our members' best interests in mind," said CHELCO CEO Steve Rhodes. "Our Board of Trustees and staff understand this, and every project we plan is carefully considered to ensure we are making the most efficient use of our members' resources."

New Service

Over 3,000 new services may be added this year, 75% being underground. We will also install infrastructure in dozens of new residential and commercial

developments throughout our service area.

Equipment Upgrades

Upgrading overloaded and aging equipment is essential to improve reliability and plan for future growth. In 2024, CHELCO will upgrade 9.8 miles of line to serve future growth and reduce outages. We will add over 700 new transformers and replace 200 to increase capacity. Additionally, 650 poles whose lifecycles are over will be replaced.

Technology Investments

Various devices will be installed at strategic locations to improve reliability by limiting the number of members affected by an outage. These devices will also improve outage response and operational efficiencies.

Investments like these must be made for us to continue safely providing quality services to our members. For updates throughout the year, follow @myCHELCO on Facebook and sign up for our newsletter at www.chelco.com/chelco-news.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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2024 CWP Highlights

- 2,500 underground services
- 510 overhead services
- 31 new developments
- 9.8 miles of power lines upgraded
- 721 new transformers
- 205 transformers replaced
- 650 poles replaced
- 1,700 outdoor lights
- 173 surge protection
- 550 load control switches



CEO Insights: I hope to see you at the Annual Meeting

CHELCO's Annual Meeting is one of my favorite times to meet and interact with our members. This event allows our staff and trustees to meet our members in a setting we don't often get. These interactions help guide our decision-making throughout the year.

The fun starts early on Saturday, April 6, at Freeport High School, with everything kicking off at 9 a.m. Our team works hard to make this event fun and informative for all in attendance. Members are invited to attend the free event and enjoy indoor and outdoor exhibits, plus some fun and games before the business meeting, scholarships and prize drawings.

Our partners from the Walton County Sheriff's Office, Walton County Fire District, and Walton County Emergency Management will be onsite with information and giveaways.

Once again, we are excited to offer bucket truck rides and two bounce houses for children.

One of our most popular exhibits is the Live Line Safety Trailer. Our crew uses a life-sized mock-up of electric wires, poles and components to demonstrate the danger of power lines and educate viewers on safety, specifically when faced with downed lines. Part of the demonstration includes the dangers of making contact with a 7,200-volt live line. Line technicians simulate this with a hot dog in a punctured glove.

Don't worry about the hot dog, though. We will have additional food available. We will provide a complimentary breakfast, including biscuits, donuts, and fruit, served in the cafeteria. Plus, our Coastal Coffee Bar friends will return with their mobile coffee cart.

The business meeting portion of the day will begin around 10:30 a.m. with opening entertainment from the Voices of Northwest Florida, an ensemble group from Northwest Florida State College.

We will announce the Board of Trustees election results for District 1, 7 and 9 seats. Members should

expect to see the ballots in their mailboxes soon.

During the annual meeting, we will share information on the activities of the co-op, our financial report, and other items I think you'll find interesting and informative.

Be sure to stick around following the conclusion of the business meeting. This is when our staff will draw the six recipients who will each receive a \$1,000 CHELCO Scholarship to use towards their higher education. After the scholarship announcements, we will give away thousands in prizes, including gift cards to local restaurants, merchandise and electronics.

For those unable to attend in person, we will record and publish a video of the annual meeting.

Exercise the benefits of your cooperative membership by joining us for the annual meeting on April 6. I hope to see you there!

Steve Rhodes,
Chief Executive Officer



ANNUAL MEETING DETAILS

Date: Saturday, April 6

Location: Freeport High School, 12615 US-331 BUS, Freeport, FL 32439

Schedule of Events

9:00 - 10:30 a.m.

**Indoor & Outdoor Exhibits
Complimentary Breakfast**

10:30 - 10:45 a.m.

Local Entertainment

11 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Business Meeting

12 p.m.

**Scholarship Drawing
Prize Drawing**

Operation Round Up (ORU) Spotlight: A Bed 4 Me

A Bed 4 Me Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization with a mission to ensure that children have a place of their own to sleep each night understanding the critical role of sleep in a child's development, health, academic performance and self-esteem. A Bed 4 Me qualifies each child and provides a bedding kit at no cost to the families.

A Bed 4 Me Foundation serves children ages 2-18 from low to middle income families within the Okaloosa and Walton County area. After a referral and introductory visit are completed, we provide new bedding (twin mattress, bed frame, pillow, sheet and comforter set) to children who do not have beds due to economic struggles and lack of financial resources as well as displaced families starting over due to domestic issues.

For more information, visit abed4me.org/ or call 850-280-5519.



"Our teams have found children sleeping on floors, sofas, recliners, floor pallets or crammed into beds with siblings or parents. You can touch the life of a child in one moment that will carry on for years to come by providing a place for them to sleep, dream and feel cherished."

- Diane Freeman Executive Director of A Bed 4 Me Foundation

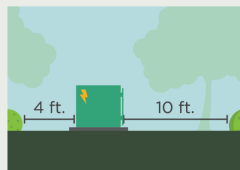
3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them. Here's how you can help:

1. Plant trees in the right place. Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



2. Don't block pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.



3. Report dangerous branches. If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.



**Trimming improves safety for all.
Let's work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.**

About Operation Round Up (ORU)

Thousands of CHELCO members have opened up their hearts and joined our Operation Round Up program to donate a small amount of change each month to benefit organizations in our service territory.

Members who participate in Operation Round Up choose to round their monthly electric bill to the next whole dollar amount, and the spare change is distributed to non-profit organizations in our communities. The average contribution for members is around \$6 per year, and every penny goes to these worthy organizations.

To donate or apply for funds up visit www.chelco.com/operation-round-up.

Recipe of the Month



Stuffed Peppers

Classic stuffed peppers make an easy weeknight supper. Learn this recipe and more at CHELCO.com/recipes.

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; Ronald 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.

Energy Expert: Is surge protection right for you?



CHELCO Energy Advisors speak with a member during a surge evaluation.

Surge protectors are a relatively inexpensive solution that can be used on all types of buildings, particularly in areas like ours where a great deal of lightning strikes occur. When used alone, meter-based devices provide protection against lightning which might travel power lines attempting to enter your home through your incoming power service. In combination with other surge protection devices designed to protect electronic devices, the combination is capable of handling a broad range of electrical surges.

Although nothing can protect you from a direct lightning strike, our products were tested by simulating a lightning strike in a surge protection testing laboratory. Therefore, we can

confidently say that we can help protect your investment in appliances and electronics with our program.

We offer two types of surge protectors.

- Meter-based surge protector to protect your motor-driven appliances, such as your washer and dryer, air conditioner, etc.
- Point-of-use, or plug-in, protectors for sensitive electronics, such as your computer and televisions.

To request a surge protection evaluation, contact CHELCO's Energy Services Department at 850-307-1122 or energyservices@chelco.com. The \$25 evaluation fee includes installation.

CHELCO Scholarships Deadline March 22

CHELCO's annual college scholarship program is designed to help members or their dependents with college expenses. Six recipients will receive \$1,000 to use towards their higher education. In order to be eligible for the award, applicants must be a CHELCO member or the dependent of a member and have a GPA of at least 2.50. Applicants may be either graduating high school seniors or students currently attending a college or university. The 2024 CHELCO Scholarship winners will be drawn on April 6, 2024, at the CHELCO Annual Meeting. Applicants must be in attendance to win.

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

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Area rugs are an easy, cost-effective solution to cold floors. Adding area rugs to hard-surface flooring can add warmth to any room and keep your feet cozy on cold winter days.

Choose rugs made from wool or other natural fibers and plush or high-pile textures for the most insulation. Place rugs in areas where you need additional warmth, like the foot of a bed or under a coffee table. Area rugs can enhance the aesthetic of your home and keep you cozier.

For more on Energy Efficiency, please visit our website www.chelco.com/energy-efficiency

Niceville Member Appreciation

Save the date for our Member Appreciation event at the Niceville High School baseball game on Thursday, April 18. The Eagles will take on the South Walton Seahawks at 4 p.m. (JV) and 6:30 p.m. (Varsity). Stop by our tent for a chance to win a bill credit and some giveaways.

IS \$25 YOURS?

If the account number below matches yours, call us at (850) 892-2111 or stop by any CHELCO office to claim a \$25 credit on your next bill! This month's winner is:

Stubbs - 9000064898