

CHELCO news



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ONLINE NOW

We are here to help! Members who are experiencing hardships due to COVID-19 should call **(800) 342-0990** to discuss payment options or account status.



A Touchstone Energy
Cooperative



CHELCO offices closed to the public

At CHELCO, we provide an essential service to our members and our communities. To comply with local, state and federal guidelines and CDC recommendations, our offices will be closed to the public effective Thursday, March 19. They will tentatively reopen May 11. Until then, we will remain completely open for business - just without the handshakes.

Annual Meeting to be held virtually in wake of COVID-19 concerns

The CHELCO Annual Meeting will be held virtually (no in-person attendance) via Facebook Live at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 18, due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19.

The scholarship drawing originally scheduled for the Annual Meeting will still go on as planned, and winners will be announced during the Facebook Live broadcast and notified within the next business week.

Our decision is based on both the Florida and Federal declared public health

emergency in response to COVID-19 developments and in accordance with the advisories of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to prevent further risk of exposure in a large event like the Annual Meeting.

The broadcast will be posted to the company's Facebook page (Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative) and CHELCO.com after the meeting. Visit CHELCO.com for updates and information on how you can join the Facebook Live broadcast.

Board approves \$1.4 million retirement of capital credits

It pays to be a CHELCO member! The CHELCO Board of Trustees has approved a special retirement of \$1.4 million in capital credits to members because our margins exceeded budget in 2019.

What is a capital credit?

Electric cooperatives are not like other utilities. We are not-for-profit businesses, and you are a member and an owner. At the end of each year, after expenses are paid, CHELCO has margins remaining. These margins are allocated to each person who was a member during that year. The amount depends on how much business that

member did with CHELCO. Normally, these capital credits are used to build and replace electrical facilities and are not returned to members immediately.

However, this year, because margins were greater than budgeted, the Board of Trustees approved retiring capital credits from 2019 sooner than our usual practice. Margins were more than budgeted due to CHELCO's cost-saving measures, which resulted in more efficient operations.

We hope you enjoy this benefit of being a member of a not-for-profit cooperative!

Alternative ways to pay your CHELCO bill

Due to office closures to the public through May 11, tentatively, CHELCO members will need to use alternative ways to pay their monthly bills.

Our CHELCO Connect app offers many features, including the option to pay your monthly bill. The app is available for download on Google Play and the iTunes App Store. Simply log in with your CHELCO account information to access many helpful features, including bill payments.

Another option is to mail in your payment. We recently started using

a lockbox service in Birmingham, Alabama, to increase efficiency. Your mail-in payment can be sent to CHELCO, Dept. 3049, PO Box 11407, Birmingham, AL, 35246-3049. You can also pay over the phone by calling (850) 892-2111.

Although our area offices will remain closed to the public, CHELCO payment kiosks will remain open. Our 24/7 kiosks are located at the DeFuniak Springs, Bluewater Bay, Santa Rosa, Auburn and Freeport offices, and each area office has a drop box on the outside of the building for members to drop off payments quickly and conveniently.

The online account portal is another useful feature that allows you to safely make payments from your computer using your checking account or credit card. You can also update contact information, monitor your energy usage, report an outage and receive notifications on when your bill is due. Now is the time to establish an online account to access all of these features.

We thank you for working with us in this trying time, and we hope to reopen our offices as soon as possible to continue serving you.

- Website/Online**
Set up your account portal and take control of your CHELCO account.
- CHELCO Connect App**
Available on iTunes and Google Play stores.
- Kiosk**
Available at most area offices. Open 24/7- Cash and credit cards accepted.
- Mail-in payment**
Mail payments to CHELCO, Dept. 3049, P.O. Box 11407, Birmingham, AL 35246
- Direct Deposit**
Payments are automatically deducted from a bank account.
- E-Check**
Register your account on www.chelco.com to pay your bill online by e-check with no service fees.
- Pay by phone**
Credit card-Call 850-307-1212 and put in account number to pay. There is a fee for credit/ debit card transactions. Check by phone- Call (850) 892-2111 to pay.
- Drop Box**
Your monthly bill will be the average of the eleven months prior.

CHELCO appoints Shaw Vice President of Finance

Robin Shaw was recently promoted to Vice President of Finance. Robin has been with CHELCO for over six years cumulatively and was previously the manager of accounting. She was promoted to her current role after the retirement of Chief Financial Officer Wayne Thompson.

Robin will be responsible for overseeing the CHELCO finance division, which includes accounting, meter services, revenue and billing, and purchasing and materials.

"CHELCO is such an exciting place to work," said Shaw. "My job is constantly evolving as the cooperative environment changes, and I enjoy the challenge. But I

also enjoy working with a team that is so committed to service to our membership."

Robin graduated from Florida State University with two bachelor's degrees in accounting and finance and received her CPA in 2002. Robin previously worked at Emerald Transformer as chief financial officer.

CEO Steve Rhodes said that Robin has big shoes to fill in Wayne's retirement, but that he's confident she can handle the task.

"Robin is very deserving of this promotion and I know she will do an outstanding job in her new role," Rhodes said.



Vice President of Finance
Robin Shaw



We are prepared: COVID-19

There are many times we have to plan for emergencies in the electric co-op world. Being prepared for hurricanes and other natural disasters is something that CHELCO always takes seriously, and the essential service we provide means that we work through the toughest of conditions.

In the wake of COVID-19 concerns, we have begun to prepare for a different and unusual type of emergency. Following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHELCO offices closed to the public March 19 and will remain closed until May 11, tentatively.

While you won't be able to make your bill payments in person during this

time, we offer several other payment options, including kiosks, drop boxes, phone payments, online account portal payments, the CHELCO app and mail-in payments.

The safety and well-being of our members and employees is our top priority. Since we do provide an essential service to our members, we remain fully staffed and dedicated to serving as usual, but we have taken several precautions to keep our employees safe. Visitors, outside meetings and other face-to-face interactions with those outside of CHELCO have all been suspended until further notice.

We continue to monitor national news and comply with CDC and government orders to do our part in fighting back against COVID-19.

Planning for a health emergency is unique from other business continuity planning. It requires businesses to prepare to operate with a significantly smaller workforce, a threatened supply chain and limited support services for an extended period until an unknown date in the future. While we haven't yet reached that stage, rest assured we will be prepared if we must implement a more drastic set of actions.

For more information on COVID-19 and how you can take appropriate steps to prevent it, visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov). For regular updates on CHELCO's day-to-day operations, visit [CHELCO.com](https://www.chelco.com) or follow us on Facebook and other social media platforms.

CHELCO Youth Tour winners selected

Four area high school juniors have won a trip to Washington, D.C., this June.

CHELCO recently selected four high school juniors to attend the week-long Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C., in June. Lauren Adams (Baker High School), Daniella Sanchez (Crestview High School), Victoria "Cheyenne" Eubanks (Paxton High School) and Amanda Brannon (Rocky Bayou Christian School) were chosen to represent CHELCO at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Youth Tour, where they will join students from other co-ops around the country.

Winners were selected from a pool of students who attended the statewide Youth Tour in Tallahassee in February.

Students were interviewed by a panel of three judges not affiliated with CHELCO and were judged on the criteria of subject knowledge, speaking ability, personality and poise, and their essay on the history of electric cooperatives.

The Washington Rural Electric Youth Tour is a group of high school juniors from around the country who come together for one week in June to learn more about American history, government and the role of electric cooperatives. Youth Tour started in 1958 with 34 students and has since grown to over 2,000 yearly participants.



Left to right: Amanda Brannon, Cheyenne Eubanks, Daniella Sanchez and Lauren Adams.

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.

Body-B-Healthy

- 2227 S Ferdon Blvd, Crestview
- Phone: 850-682-8893
- 15% off vitamins & supplements

Primerica

- 505 Popcorn Ave, DeFuniak Springs
- Phone: 850-225-5379
- Free financial needs analysis (\$700 value)

Sarge's Cellular Repair, Inc.

- 98 S John Sims Pkwy, Valparaiso
- Phone: 850-389-4301
- 10% off any repairs, not including prepaid refills. Not valid in combination with any other offer.

For more information, or, if you own a business and want to sign-up to offer CHELCO's 56,000+ member accounts a discount, email marketingservices@chelco.com or call CHELCO's energy services department at (850) 307-1122. You can find all the local and national deals by searching co-op connections at CHELCO.com or download 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.

Burford - 9000114716

Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 13

As April arrives, it brings with it potentially dangerous weather, which so often causes unplanned power outages. When these storms strike, most of us can ride out a storm from the comfort and convenience of our homes. However, one group of professionals can't hide from the storms. Instead, they spring into action to help keep the power flowing to homes and businesses. Electric lineworkers work a demanding job to ensure that thousands of people still have access to power, rain or shine, day or night.



National studies consistently rank lineworkers as one of the most high-risk jobs in the country. Laboring high in the air wearing heavy equipment and working directly with high voltage creates a dangerous task for lineworkers, but they are up to the task.

Equally important as their years of experience and knowledge is their reliance on a strong support system. To be a successful lineworker, there must be a certain level of trust among their peers. A strong support system at home is another necessity for most linemen. A lineworker's family understands and supports their loved one's commitment to the greater community during severe

storms and power outages. Even though lineworkers often make significant sacrifices to keep the lights on, their support system keeps them going through the most demanding of tasks.

"I appreciate our linemen's dedication to our members, each other and the community," said Matthew Avery, SVP of Engineering and Operations. "They sacrifice time away from their families and work through all conditions to keep our members' power on."

Cooperative Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 13. Given the dedication of CHELCO's lineworkers on and off the job, take a moment and acknowledge the many contributions they make to our local community.

BENEFITS OF TREE TRIMMING

Clearing trees and overgrown vegetation is vital to provide safe, reliable power to our consumer-members.

We clear certain areas in our service territory, known as the right of way, to:

- Keep power lines clear of tree limbs
- Restore power outages more quickly
- Keep crews and members of our community safe
- Avoid storm-related outages from falling limbs.



Southland Utility Services performs CHELCO's right-of-way clearing.