

# CHELCO NEWS

POWERED *by* YOU

APRIL 2021 | VOL. 26 NO. 4

# CHELCO



A Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperative 

## ANNUAL MEETING REMINDER

Don't forget to watch the 2021 CHELCO Virtual Annual Meeting at 10 a.m. April 17. Tune in to catch our CEO and President's reports, trustee election results, prize giveaways and scholarship drawings! To view the meeting, visit [CHELCO.com](http://CHELCO.com) and click the Annual Meeting banner at the top of the home page. If you missed the meeting, don't worry! It will be posted in full length on our website to view at your convenience.

## Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 12

If you've been out and about in the CHELCO service territory, you've probably seen our linemen hard at work on lines, poles and other equipment. One of the co-op's most visible employees, lineworkers work tirelessly to ensure our members receive reliable power.

Linework is listed as one of the top 10 most dangerous jobs in the U.S. Regardless of the time of day or weather conditions, linemen work with high-voltage power lines, climb poles high above the ground and often carry heavy equipment to get the job done.

Being a lineman is not a glamorous or easy profession. It takes years of specialized training, ongoing education, dedication and a sense of service and commitment. Our lineworkers work closely with each other and other departments to keep our co-op running and the electricity flowing. Thankfully, they have a strong support system, both at work

and at home. Their families support their commitment to the greater community, and we thank our linemen and their families for the sacrifices they make to keep the lights on.

"Our lineworkers exemplify what it means to be a cooperative," CEO Steve Rhodes said. "I'm proud to lead a team of excellent employees at CHELCO. Whether they're working around the clock during storm restoration or performing a routine upgrade in the field, their dedication is evident, and I thank them for all that they do."

We are proud of our lineworkers and their dedication each day, and they deserve all the recognition that comes their way on Lineworker Appreciation Day. On April 12, and any time you see them, join us in thanking our linemen for their exceptional service and commitment to our members.

## Inside

### Page 2

CEO Insights: Annual meeting is virtual... again

### Page 3

Linemen rescue passengers from I-10 wreck

### Page 4

Could the Texas blackout situation happen here?

## Announcement

### CHELCO Charity Golf Tournament is May 20

CHELCO's annual Charity Golf Tournament is Thursday, May 20 at Blackstone Golf Course. Sign up sheets for teams and sponsors will be available by April 1 on [CHELCO.com](http://CHELCO.com).



## CEO Insights: Annual meeting is virtual... again

Each year in April, I encourage our members to “Come on out to our annual meeting!” It’s usually a fun day for the whole family, with door prizes for all ages, entertainment and more. Now, for the second year in a row, COVID-19 has forced me to change my invitation a bit. Now it’s, “Tune in to our annual meeting,” which just doesn’t have the same ring to it. This year, the meeting begins at 10 a.m. April 17 on CHELCO.com, and I invite you to “tune in” for a report from myself and Board President Gerald Edmondson, results from the trustee elections, prize giveaways and the scholarship drawing.

This time last year, we were carefully evaluating and planning for a pandemic-safe version of our annual meeting. With the short amount of time we had to prepare, I’m proud of how well our team pulled it off.

Looking back at last spring, the pandemic was new and foreign to all of us. In March, we began sending employees home who could still perform their duties while out of the office, and soon after, we closed our offices to the public with a tentative reopening date of May 11. Initially, this seemed like sufficient time to learn about the virus and prepare for a safe reopening. Following guidance from the CDC and our local and state officials, we pushed this date back and eventually reopened offices to the public June 15, with measures in place to protect employees and members.

I say this as a reminder of how far we’ve all come in just a year and how COVID-19 has become such a significant part of everyday life. It’s now second nature to stand 6 feet away from others, spend that extra bit of time washing our hands

thoroughly and hide our coughs so that we don’t get menacing glares from strangers. Taking elevators alone now is just a part of everyday business. Without a thought, we throw on a mask when sharing a vehicle with other employees. It’s amazing how much can change in just a year.

With vaccines becoming widely available, I feel hopeful that life will begin to feel more and more like the old normal. In fact, by the time you read this column, I expect to have my first shot. Let’s hope that next year I’ll finally be able to drop the phrase, “Tune in to our annual meeting,” and return to my old favorite, “Come on out!” If you missed watching what I hope will be our last virtual-**only** meeting April 17, a replay of the internet stream will be available on our website.

**Steve Rhodes,**  
Chief Executive Officer

## CHELCO welcomes new Manager of Member Services



**Graham Campbell-Work**

CHELCO recently welcomed a new Manager of Member Services, Graham Campbell-Work. He was previously the administrator at the Chautauqua Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in DeFuniak Springs.

Campbell-Work will be responsible for overseeing the member service and credit departments.

“Graham certainly has some big shoes to fill, but I’m confident he will be an asset to our team,” said Emily Cowan, Vice President of Member Services and External Affairs.

“Graham has established himself as someone who cares about his community, and he reflects this through his civic involvement and leadership.”

Campbell-Work is a board member for the Walton Area Chamber of Commerce, a member of the

DeFuniak Springs City Planning Board and is involved with many other community organizations.

“I’m very excited to start this new chapter in my professional career,” Campbell-Work said. “Growing up in DeFuniak Springs, CHELCO has always been a well-respected organization and has been an integral part of the community that I’m proud to call my home. I’m thrilled to be a part of the team here at CHELCO, and I look forward to serving our members and our ever-growing community for many years to come.”

## Linemen rescue passengers from I-10 wreck



L to R: Working Foreman Chad Holt, Senior Line Technician Dan Duncan and Apprentice Line Technician Michel Armbruster rescued three passengers.

In what seemed like a routine trip back to the office after working in the Holt area for the day, Michel Armbruster, Dan Duncan and Chad Holt had a sudden change of plans when they witnessed a single-vehicle accident on I-10.

A Tahoe pulling a camper trailer swerved and flipped in the eastbound lane, with Armbruster narrowly avoiding the incident.

"They were sliding in their lane, so I started slowing down as fast as I could and tried to get over, but there was a guard rail, so I couldn't go off in the median," Armbruster said. "They started coming over to my lane and finally stopped, and I'm still

moving. I ended up stopping 2 or 3 feet away from the top of their car."

Armbruster then ran to the front of the Tahoe to help the driver exit the vehicle safely. After the driver calmed down enough to explain how many people were in the vehicle, Armbruster and Duncan gave aid to the other two passengers, rescuing their two dogs and a rabbit in the process.

Using a digger truck, Armbruster, Duncan and Holt helped move the Tahoe and camper off the highway to open up the lane for emergency vehicles, another example of CHELCO employees going above and beyond.

## Track outages online and on the Connect app

Hurricane season will be here before we know it. We're all hoping for a quiet summer, but we're preparing like we do each year. You can prepare too, by downloading the CHELCO Connect app or by becoming familiar with our outage tracker on CHELCO.com. There, you can easily track outages and monitor estimated restoration times.

## CHELCO appoints new District 3 trustee



Dr. Reese Harrison

Dr. Reese Harrison was appointed as CHELCO's District 3 board trustee in February after Jim Bishop passed away in November.

Harrison has been practicing general dentistry for 20 years, and his dental practice is now in Santa Rosa Beach. He currently represents the Northwest Florida District on the Florida Dental Association board of trustees and has been involved in multiple local civic positions, including the Lynn Haven Planning Board and the Bay County Chamber of Commerce. In the aftermath of Hurricane Michael, Harrison and his wife helped found Hope Panhandle, which organized efforts to help the damaged areas with food and other essential supplies.

Harrison will serve as the District 3 trustee until the term is up in 2023, at which point he will be eligible for re-election.

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; Burt Cosson, District 9.

## Could Texas blackout situation happen here?



Most of us watched Texas battle severe winter storms in February, leading to widespread power system failures, high costs passed on to the consumers and sadly, more than 50 deaths. Understandably, this situation left much of the country wondering if a similar situation could ever happen to them.

In Texas, 85% of the state has access to energy choice. This means the market is competitive and not federally regulated, leading to compromised reliability in exchange for slashed energy prices. Their power grid is also independent, powered almost entirely in-state. This creates an energy-independent system and puts Texas on an electric grid island.

When the severe winter storms swept across Texas in February, much of their generation, transmission and distribution systems were frozen. With nowhere to import energy from, they were at a standstill until things thawed out and allowed them to resume generating and transmitting power.

Here in Florida, we are a regulated energy state without energy choice. State regulations keep rates and policies fair for all and provide oversight to ensure companies are taking proper precautions to prepare for disasters similar to the one Texas recently faced.

Additionally, CHELCO can rely on a regional energy grid to provide electricity if necessary. We purchase our power from PowerSouth, a generation and transmission (G&T) co-op owned by CHELCO and several other distribution co-ops and municipal systems in Alabama and Northwest Florida. PowerSouth is connected to a regional grid throughout the Southeast, and they can rely on that grid as a safety net should their generation and transmission capabilities temporarily fail.

Although we can't guarantee anything in this industry, we can confidently say that a similar situation at CHELCO is highly unlikely due to our climate, system oversight and interconnectivity to the regional grid. Here, reliability will always be the top priority.

## Connections Corner

The Co-op Connections discount program is another benefit of being a CHELCO member. Local businesses, participating pharmacies and thousands nationally offer discounts to co-op members. Don't forget to download the Co-op Connections app!

This month, we highlight and thank the following businesses:

### Mills Heating & Air

225 Green Acres Rd., Ft. Walton  
(850) 862-4796

10% discount on repairs or new installation, \$49 preventative maintenance

### Nonie's Ark Animal Encounters

30 1st St. SW, Ft. Walton Beach  
(850) 862-9588

25% off hostess party

### Drew's Computer Repair

199 Rachels Rd, DeFuniak Springs  
(850) 401-1541

10% discount on all services

For more information, visit [CHELCO.com](http://CHELCO.com), email [energyservices@chelco.com](mailto:energyservices@chelco.com) or call CHELCO's Energy Services department at (850) 307-1122.

## 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.

**Carr - 201014362**