

CHELCO NEWS

POWERED *by* YOU

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Working to serve you better in 2021



Here at CHELCO, we have plenty in store for 2021. In the Baker and Holt area, we are upgrading equipment to reduce losses, improve voltage, increase reliability and strengthen the ability to back-feed our system so we can isolate a problem then restore members' power sooner. That's just one of the many projects we have lined up for 2021.

Our generation and transmission cooperative, PowerSouth, will be adding a transformer to the Point Washington substation to increase capacity for our members at the south end of Walton County.

We will also be upgrading our SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) system with a new product that will allow us to more efficiently locate outages and control voltages on our lines.

Each year, we make updates to our feeder automation system that help

us quickly identify faults to reduce outage times, and we will continue our yearly upgrades in 2021.

It's no secret that drones have gained massive popularity in the last decade. From casual recreation and videography to military-grade utilization, drones have vast capabilities and nearly unlimited potential. Starting in 2021, CHELCO will use drones to inspect lines, locate the cause of outages, perform thermal inspections and assess damage in storm situations.

We will continue to perform frequent system upgrades, and we're excited about the items we have planned for the months ahead. Each of CHELCO's 160-plus employees are dedicated to helping you and your family have a positive experience with us, and we'll be here to power your life in 2021 and beyond.



A Touchstone Energy®
Cooperative 

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Announcement

Holiday Closure

CHELCO's offices will be closed Monday, Feb. 15, in observance of Presidents Day.

Save the date

Annual meeting is April 17.



CEO Insights: With 2020 over, we look ahead

In early 2020 we never could have imagined that a global pandemic would stop us in our tracks, but we overcame many unprecedented challenges to continue providing the highest level of service to our members. This first column of 2021 could be about how difficult the past year has been, how we have made sacrifices or had to miss life events, and how some of us may have even lost loved ones or been forced to isolate from those we once saw every day. Instead, let's leave the negativity behind us and focus on the great things we have in store here at CHELCO in 2021.

As you may have seen in our cover story this month, we have a year full of exciting system upgrades and construction projects ahead of us. As CHELCO's CEO, I am proud of all of our accomplishments, but I am especially proud when we are able to

make investments in our co-op without increasing costs to our members. All of our projects in 2021 will be completed without a rate increase, a feat that we can attribute to our ongoing companywide effort to reduce and/or stabilize controllable expenses.

Our biggest planned event of the year, the CHELCO Annual Meeting, is scheduled for April 17. This year, our goal is to safely welcome our members back to Freeport High School. However, it is unclear at this time if health guidelines will allow us to hold the meeting in person or if we will host a virtual format again. Watch CHELCO News for updates.

After breaking ground in October, work continues on the \$8.7 million Administrative Wing at our Technology Center. For decades, we have served our members from our

Headquarters on Baldwin Avenue in DeFuniak Springs, but we have grown so it is time for us to bid farewell to the "Old Brick Building" and the rest of our Baldwin Avenue campus. The good news is that the same friendly faces that welcome you into our offices are not going anywhere; they will be right there to welcome you into our new payment center when we open in early 2022.

These are just a few highlights ahead for CHELCO. There are detailed work plans for each and every department focused on providing safe, reliable and affordable energy. As we look to the year ahead with optimism, remember, we will be there to power your life every step of the way.

Steve Rhodes,
Chief Executive Officer



CHELCO Charity Turkey Chase raises \$2,500

CHELCO's first ever virtual 5K drew 29 participants and raised over \$2,500 to benefit the American Heart Association Heart Walk and Community Christmas. A big thank

you to our Turkey level sponsors, Southland Utility Services and Tri-State Utility Products. The Turkey Chase allowed participants to run or walk the 5K at their own

convenience and at their own pace. Thank you to everyone who participated and sponsored this charity event!

CHELCO's Board election season

Democratic member control is one of the seven cooperative principles that separates CHELCO from investor-owned utilities. Each member has a vote, and members are elected to represent their district on the Board of Trustees that governs CHELCO. The Board of Trustees establishes CHELCO policies and rates.

Each year, three of the nine positions on CHELCO's Board of Trustees are up for election. This year, members will elect trustees representing Districts 1, 7 and 9 through mail-in balloting. All members may vote in the election regardless of their membership district. Results will be announced at our Annual Meeting on April 17.

Each trustee represents a geographic area of CHELCO's service territory, and they must live in the district they represent. Trustee election

application packets will be available by mid-January at any CHELCO office or online at CHELCO.com.

A nominating committee reviews the applications and selects candidates. Members may also use a petition process, which is described in the bylaws on our website, to become a candidate.

Your district number can be found on your bill to see if you are eligible to run this year.

Important Dates

- **Feb. 4:** Applications to CHELCO by 5 p.m.
- **Feb. 16:** Candidates' names posted in offices
- **Feb. 26:** Deadline for nominating by petition
- **March 12:** Election ballots mailed
- **April 12:** Ballots must be returned
- **April 17:** Annual Meeting

CHELCO Trustee District 3 Vacancy – Special Appointment

CHELCO's District 3 board seat is vacant due to the unexpected passing of long-time Board Trustee Jim Bishop. The board of trustees will appoint Mr. Bishop's replacement to serve the remainder of his term through April 2023.

This notice serves as a call for candidates from District 3. If you would like to be considered for CHELCO's District 3 seat on the Board of Trustees, please apply for

this vacancy by Feb. 11. Application packets for this seat will be available by mid-January at any CHELCO office or online at CHELCO.com. Your district can be found on your CHELCO bill or feel free to call our member service center.

Please see CHELCO's bylaws (available online at CHELCO.com/CHELCO-bylaws) for more information on Trustee Qualification requirements.

CHELCO's 2020 COVID-19 recap

Last year challenged us in many ways we never could have planned for. At CHELCO, we were deemed an essential service, allowing us to continue working to provide electricity to our members. Many small businesses in our community struggled, and we made every effort to help businesses and their employees make it through the year. Through employee donations and CHELCO support, we contributed over \$25,000 to locally-owned restaurants where business was brought to a screeching halt during the outbreak of COVID-19. We closed our offices to the public in March through mid-June to slow the spread. We recognized the efforts of local first responders and health care workers with pizza and cookies. We worked with members who were struggling to pay their bills and suspended cutoffs. But most of all, we continued to serve you each and every day.

CHELCO has angels among its members

This year, CHELCO has received more anonymous donations than ever before to help members pay their monthly electric bills. To those of you who have given any amount this year, thank you.

CHELCO is governed by a nine-member board of trustees: Lee Perry, District 1; Terry Pilcher, District 2; OPEN, 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.

When only the best will do: Energy Star



Looking for the ENERGY STAR label is a simple way to save you money and protect the environment. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers an ENERGY STAR Most Efficient distinction recognizing products that deliver cutting edge energy efficiency along with the latest in technological innovation.

EPA announced the final recognition criteria for the ENERGY STAR Most Efficient 2021 products a few months ago and began highlighting the products on their website at www.energystar.gov/mostefficient on New Year's Day.

The most efficient ENERGY STAR products in 2021 are from 12 product categories: Air Source Heat Pumps and Central Air Conditioners, Ceiling Fans, Clothes Washers, Dryers, Computer Monitors, Freezers, Furnaces, Geothermal Heat Pumps, Refrigerator-Freezers, Room Air Conditioners, Ventilation Fans, and Residential Windows and Sliding Glass Doors. The proposed criteria for Dishwashers and Televisions are expected to be released once the

associated ENERGY STAR specification revisions are nearing completion bringing the Most Efficient category count to 14.

Energy Star is a program run by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Energy that promotes energy efficiency. The program provides information on the energy consumption of products and devices using different standardized methods.

ENERGY STAR® is the government-backed symbol for energy efficiency, providing simple, credible, and unbiased information that consumers and businesses rely on to make well-informed decisions. EPA ensures that each product that earns the label is independently certified to deliver the efficiency performance and savings that consumers have come to expect.

To learn more about the Energy Star program and products visit energystar.gov.

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:

Computer Works

(850) 687-3161
174 Watercolor Way #103,
Suite 264, Santa Rosa Beach
Free anti-virus for any computer

Emerald Coast Dumpsters

(850) 393-4515
73 Eastern St., Freeport
10% off weeklong dumpster
rental

Granny's Attic

(850) 682-3041
337 N. Main St., Crestview
10% off sewing/craft supplies

For more information, visit CHELCO.com, email 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.

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