

# CHELCO NEWS

POWERED *by* YOU

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A Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperative 

## Drones, infrared technology keep power safe and reliable



*Pictured above: A CHELCO Power Quality Technician captures a heat anomaly thanks to a drone equipped with infrared technology.*

Electric cooperatives, including CHELCO, are increasingly turning to drones with infrared technology to enhance the safety and reliability of power supply. While CHELCO has long utilized infrared cameras to spot anomalies on equipment, the innovations with drones, equipped with high-resolution cameras and infrared sensors, provide a cost-effective and efficient solution for monitoring vast and often inaccessible power line networks.

Drones can conduct regular inspections of power lines, poles and substations, quickly identifying potential issues such as damaged equipment, vegetation encroachment and structural weaknesses. Their ability to capture detailed images and thermal data allows for early detection of problems that could lead to power outages or safety hazards. Infrared technology plays a crucial role in this process. Infrared sensors

can detect heat anomalies that are invisible to the naked eye, such as overheating transformers or faulty connections. By pinpointing these hot-spots, maintenance crews can address issues before they escalate into critical failures.

Integrating drones and infrared technology also enhances the safety of maintenance personnel by reducing the need for manual inspections in hazardous locations. This approach minimizes the risk of accidents and ensures that inspections are conducted more frequently and thoroughly.

At CHELCO and many other cooperatives, drones with infrared technology are revolutionizing the maintenance of power supply networks, leading to more reliable service, reduced downtime, and improved safety for our members, employees and the general public.

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## Did you know...

CHELCO's mail-in payment address has changed and will no longer be going to the Birmingham address. Going forward, please mail all payments to the following address:

CHELCO  
PO Box 71281  
Charlotte, NC 28272-1281





## CEO Insights: What if a major hurricane impacts CHELCO?

I'm sure many of you have seen the forecasts for this year's Atlantic hurricane season. This year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has predicted "above-normal" storm activity. According to NOAA, conditions favor storm formation primarily due to the warm waters in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, development of La Nina conditions in the Pacific and reduced Atlantic trade winds.

Now that we are entering the season's peak, I'd like to use this month's column to reaffirm that CHELCO is prepared if a hurricane should make its way toward us.

### You can count on CHELCO.

At CHELCO, we prepare for hurricane season well before it starts June 1. Annually, we hold special meetings and work sessions to review, update and improve our hurricane plan. In short, when we enter "storm mode," everyone has a responsibility. Some of these are beyond the typical role of an employee at a cooperative. For instance, we have a key coordinator assigned to the food services. In their role, they ensure all staff, both in the office and out in the field, receive snacks and meals. This allows

CHELCO staff to focus on the task at hand - restoration to our members. Ultimately, we're owned by our members, so we must act accordingly.

### What if a Category 4 or 5 hurricane impacts CHELCO's service area?

This is, without a doubt, the event that we most hope to avoid. However, we can't go through our preparations as if it will never happen. If a Category 4 or 5 hurricane were to strike Okaloosa or Walton County directly, we would likely face widespread outages, with tens of thousands of members without power for multiple days. As always, safety is our first priority.

### Patience is pivotal.

After a storm, CHELCO must first determine the extent of damage. Crews assess the damage to our transmission lines, substations, and distribution lines and then identify the equipment and personnel required for a quick and safe power restoration effort.

### Crews will make repairs in the same order that power is delivered to you.

Once damaged transmission lines and substations are repaired, crews focus on restoring power to essential facilities (fire stations, hospitals,

grocery stores, etc.) and the greatest number of members in the least amount of time.

### We've been there, and we're talking about it.

It can be scary to think about the potentially life-threatening danger of hurricanes, but our staff are well-versed in how to respond. If you want a little more peace of mind that CHELCO is ready for hurricane season, I encourage you to listen to our episode titled "Hurricane Season at the Co-op" by visiting our website at CHELCO.com/podcast or by scanning the QR code below.



Pictured above: On the Grid co-hosts look on as Member Service Representatives recount past storm experiences.

### Make a plan.

Storms are a part of living where we do, but the best thing you can do is stay weather aware. I encourage you and your family to make a plan to ensure you are prepared for evacuation, prolonged power outages and damage to your home. If you need some guidance with this plan, visit Ready.gov. Additionally, our website is an excellent resource for outage information and storm prep.

**Steve Rhodes,**  
Chief Executive Officer



#### 1. High-Voltage Transmission Lines:

Transmission towers and cables supply power to transmission substations (and thousands of members), and they rarely fail. But when damaged, these facilities must be repaired before other parts of the system can operate.

#### 2. Distribution Substation:

A substation can serve hundreds or thousands of members. When a major outage occurs, our line crews inspect substations to determine if problems stem from transmission lines feeding into the substation, the substation itself or if problems exist further down the line.

#### 3. Main Distribution Lines:

If the problem cannot be isolated at a distribution substation, distribution lines are checked. These lines carry power to large groups of members in our local communities.

#### 4. Tap Lines:

If local outages persist, supply lines (also known as tap lines) are inspected. These lines deliver power to transformers, either mounted on poles or placed on pads for underground service, outside businesses, schools and homes.

#### 5. Service Lines:

If your home remains without power, the service line between a transformer and your residence may need to be repaired. If you experience an outage, please give us a call so we can isolate the issue.

**Hurricane Season  
at the Co-op**

Scan to  
listen now:



## CHELCO promotes Jones and Blaich

CHELCO recently promoted two employees to serve in elevated management roles at the cooperative. Kevin Jones has been named Director of Engineering, and Chelsea Blaich has been promoted to Manager of Communications and Community Affairs.



**Kevin Jones**  
Director of Engineering

After serving with another electric cooperative, Jones joined CHELCO in 2019 as the Manager of Engineering, a role that oversees Engineering Design and Power Quality. In his new role as the Director of Engineering, he will also oversee the the GIS and Easement Departments.

"Kevin has done a great job in managing our Engineering and Power Quality departments," said Matthew Avery, Senior Vice President of Engineering and Operations. "We determined the best organizational structure was to include GIS and Easements under his direction to keep all engineering functions under one director. I'm confident that Kevin will step into this role seamlessly and continue to be a great leader at our co-op."

## New Kiosk Operational at Bluewater Office

A new member payment kiosk has been installed at our Bluewater Bay office. This kiosk replaces the previous kiosk, which had intermittent issues due to moisture caused by humidity. The new payment kiosk is available around the clock, seven days a week, for your convenience. For those wishing to make a night drop, the deposit box is located on the building next to the teller window.



**Chelsea Blaich**  
Manager of Communications and Community Affairs

Blaich joined the CHELCO team in January 2023 and has served as the Communications and Community Affairs Supervisor during her time with the co-op. She oversees the Communications Department, responsible for member communications, event coordination, advertising, and more. Emily Cowan, Vice President of Member Services and External Affairs, says her promotion to Manager is well-earned.

"Since joining CHELCO, Chelsea has empowered her staff to accomplish great things," Cowan said. "As this department grows under Chelsea's leadership, I look forward to the contributions this department will make to our members and community."

## CHELCO achieves Top 5 score in Member Satisfaction



CHELCO recently earned a 91 in member satisfaction surveys, placing the co-op in Touchstone Energy's "Top 5" for all electric cooperatives that participated in the surveys, outpacing Investor-Owned Utilities (74) and the average Cooperative Energy Utilities (78). "This is a great accomplishment, and I'm thankful that our members recognize our team's efforts," said CEO Steve Rhodes. "Proud to be CHELCO!"

## Recipe of the Month



**Meatloaf**

Take on a classic that will feed the whole family! Learn this recipe and more at [CHELCO.com/recipes](https://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.

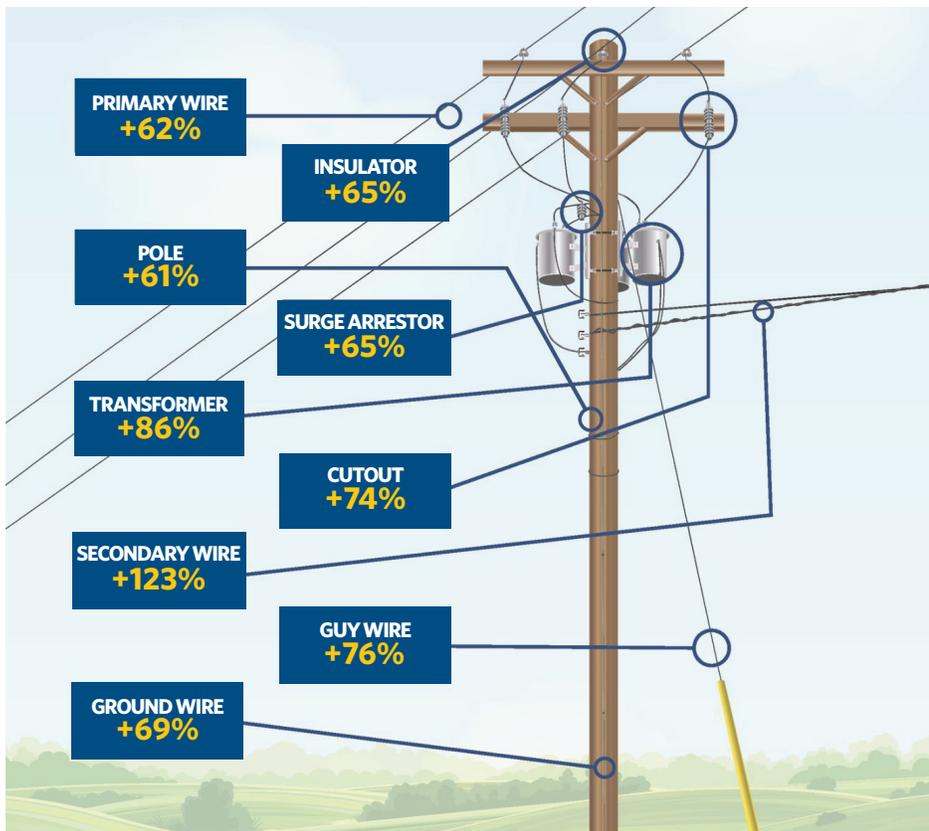
## Rhodes speaks on successful member engagement, elected to NCSC Board



Recently, CHELCO CEO Steve Rhodes was invited to speak at the Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) Forum, where he shared CHELCO's tactics for successful member engagement. The same week, he was elected to the affiliated National Cooperative Services Corporation (NCSC) Board of Directors as Board Vice President during the organization's Annual Meeting.

## Four-Year Inflation Affects Material Prices

January 2020 to June 2024



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

## SWITCH TO SAVE

Last month, we introduced our new and improved Switch to Save program, offering members monthly bill credits for installing a load control switch on their electric water heater. This month our Energy Advisors are in North Okaloosa installing switches for those wanting to save.

To learn more or schedule your appointment, email [energyservices@chelco.com](mailto:energyservices@chelco.com), call (850) 307-1122 or scan the QR code below.



## A TIP TO BEAT THE SUMMER PEAK

Are your recent energy bills higher than what you have come to expect? Extreme summer heat is the most likely culprit. Reducing home energy use during peak hours can result in lower electric rates for our members. Visit <https://www.chelco.com/energy-savings-beat-peak> to learn more about easy ways to save.

## 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:

**Rayford - 9000155368**