CHELCO NEWS
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CHELCO
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Isaias brings widespread damage to the Emerald Coast
How CHELCO stood together to overcome the hurricane

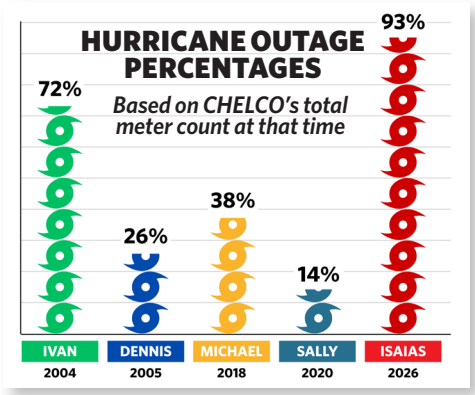


CHELCO Line Technician Chad Smith makes repairs following Hurricane Isaias.

The Emerald Coast is no stranger to powerful hurricanes. From Eloise in 1975 to Opal in 1995 and Ivan in 2004, Northwest Florida has endured its share of historic storms. On Friday, Oct. 9, 2026, Hurricane Isaias added its name to that list.

According to the National Weather Service, Hurricane Isaias made landfall near Destin around 8:30 PM as a Category 2 hurricane with sustained winds of 105 mph, and it brought destructive winds, damage, and widespread power outages across CHELCO's service territory.

By the time the storm had passed, more than 71,000 of CHELCO's approximately 76,000 meters were without power, representing more than 93% of the cooperative's entire system. **It was the largest number of meters out at one time in CHELCO's 86-year history.**



In total, Isaias caused more outages than Ivan, Dennis, Michael, and Sally ***combined.***

Countless downed trees, more than 200 broken poles, and over 40 miles of damaged power lines stood between CHELCO and a full power restoration. But behind the scenes, an extraordinary response was underway.

Preparing long before the storm

Although Isaias arrived in October, CHELCO's preparation began much earlier. Every year, before the official start of hurricane season, CHELCO conducts an extensive hurricane planning meeting involving representatives from all departments.

When a direct impact from Isaias became increasingly likely, CHELCO worked the plan, coordinating with fellow electric cooperatives, contractors, and other mutual aid partners to assemble the workforce necessary for large-scale restoration.

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Hurricane Videos and Pictures

CHELCO documented nearly every step of the restoration journey with pictures, videos, interviews, and more.

To view our full collection of Hurricane Isaias content, visit CHELCO.com.





CEO Insights: Thankful for many things after Hurricane Isaias

It's a tremendous relief to be on the other side of Hurricane Isaias, and I know many of you feel the same. As the leader of this organization, I could not be prouder of how our team responded to this historic hurricane and the destruction it left behind.

Safety First
My greatest source of pride is that not a single CHELCO employee sustained an injury during restoration efforts. Despite the long hours, difficult conditions, and physically demanding work, our commitment to safety never wavered. That is an accomplishment everyone at CHELCO can take pride in.



Safety Officer Matthew Mitchell visited crews in the field to promote safety above all else.

Our Employees
I've expressed my gratitude to our employees many times before, during, and after the storm, and I cannot thank them enough. Thanks to preparations made well before hurricane season, every employee understood their role and was equipped to carry it out.

During the week of restoration, CHELCO employees worked an average of 83 hours. That's more than twice their normal work week, which meant sacrificing time away from their families and in many cases not being home during daylight hours for an entire week. Even after restoration was complete, they faced the challenge of catching up on their regular responsibilities. Their ability to transition from daily operations to an all-hands storm response and back again speaks volumes about their dedication and professionalism.

Mutual Aid and Contractor Support
CHELCO has never undertaken a storm response of this scale or level of coordination. A major part of that effort was CHELCO's first-ever activation of a storm response base camp, which supported 1,000 visiting lineworkers, right-of-way crews, and other support personnel from across the country.

I am deeply grateful to everyone who traveled to our area to lend a hand. In recent years, CHELCO has answered the call to assist other cooperatives following disasters. This time, we were on the receiving end of that same generosity. One of our Seven Cooperative Principles, Cooperation Among Cooperatives, was on full display throughout the recovery.

Our Members
If you're a CHELCO member, there's a good chance you were one of the more than 71,000 who lost power.

Throughout the restoration, we informed members that we could not consistently monitor or respond to social media comments and messages. However, that didn't stop us from seeing many of the encouraging thoughts shared through social media, direct messages, and calls to our Member Services team.

Under normal circumstances, we can provide a reasonably accurate estimated time of restoration (ETOR). However, during an outage of this magnitude, a reliable estimate is not possible until damage assessments are completed, crews begin repairs, and restoration progress becomes clearer. I sincerely appreciate your patience and trust as we worked to provide an accurate ETOR, which became available Sunday afternoon.

To our members, thank you for the encouragement and support you showed us throughout this difficult time.

Our Community Partners
Our recovery would have been much more difficult without the support of local organizations, including our local first responders and emergency management agencies. Their work to protect our communities, clear roadways, and maintain safe conditions allowed our crews to focus on restoring power.

Special thanks also go to the Walton County School District for allowing us to use Maude Saunders Elementary School to serve meals to personnel working outside the base camp, and to The Depot in Florala for providing hot meals throughout the week.

There are many others, far too numerous to list here, that supported us during the restoration efforts. For a full list, visit **CHELCO.com/Isaias**.

Thankful for the Good
Every day, I consider myself blessed to work at a cooperative like CHELCO. We are a good co-op, made up of good people serving good members.

And when I say *good,* I mean more than simply being good at what we do. I mean the character of our people, the values we uphold, and our willingness to stand shoulder to shoulder with one another during difficult times. To me, in that sense, being good means even more than being great.

As we enter the season of Thanksgiving, I am thankful for our employees, our partners, and each of you who make CHELCO such a special organization.

Proud and thankful to be CHELCO.

Steve Rhodes,
Chief Executive Officer

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A massive restoration effort begins

Restoring power following a major hurricane is a complex undertaking. Before repairs can begin, crews must assess damage throughout the service territory, identify lines that can be safely re-energized, and coordinate restoration efforts to bring power back to as many members as quickly and safely as possible.



CEO Steve Rhodes speaks at a press conference on Day Two of CHELCO's hurricane response efforts alongside Gov. Ron DeSantis and community leaders.

At the start of restoration, 16 CHELCO substations were offline due to transmission line failures. Restoring service to these substations brought power back to a significant number of members, but extensive damage to CHELCO's distribution system, particularly in the hardest-hit areas, required nearly 1,300 total workers to restore power.

While more than half of our members had their power restored within a day or two, others faced longer outages due to the severity of the damage.



CHELCO's base camp housed 1,000 visiting linemen and support personnel.

Unfortunately, some of the hardest-hit areas were also among the most sparsely populated, requiring extensive repairs to restore power to relatively few members.

Much of the damage resulted from fallen trees that brought down power lines and damaged electrical equipment. While CHELCO's ongoing right-of-way maintenance efforts have greatly strengthened system reliability, many of the trees responsible for outages fell from outside maintained rights-of-way, beyond the areas where CHELCO routinely trims and removes vegetation.

Many hands, one mission

All of CHELCO's more than 190 employees participated in CHELCO's Hurricane Isaias restoration effort, alongside nearly 40 Southland employees, 281 mutual aid workers from fellow cooperatives and municipalities, and 785 contractors. Supporting this workforce required extensive coordination. Before the storm's arrival, many mutual aid crews and contractors were already in the area with lodging arrangements in place. As the full extent of the damage became clear, CHELCO activated a base camp for the first time in its history, providing lodging, meals, laundry services and hot showers for 1,000 visiting workers, while others stayed in local hotels.

While lineworkers and tree crews restored power in the field, employees across CHELCO's departments coordinated logistics, materials, member communications, and other essential support. The response was truly an all-hands-on-deck effort.

A week that made history

Despite the tremendous challenge, CHELCO completed restoration to all members whose homes and businesses could safely receive electricity by Wednesday, Oct. 14.

While every hurricane presents unique challenges, CHELCO's response to Hurricane Isaias demonstrates the strength of our emergency preparedness, operational coordination, and mutual aid partnerships, as well as the resilience and determination of our people.

From more than 71,000 members without power to 99% restored in just four days, the numbers tell a remarkable story. But the people behind those numbers tell an even greater one.

PROUD to be CHELCO

STEPS TO RESTORING POWER FOLLOWING A MAJOR HURRICANE



1. Transmission Lines

2. Distribution Substations

3. Distribution Lines

4. Individual Service Points

CHELCO is governed by a nine-member Board of Trustees: Lee Perry, District 1; Terry Pilcher, District 2; Brantlee Lawrence, District 3; Brady Bearden, Vice President, District 4; Ronnie 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. For more information, please visit **CHELCO.com/board-trustees**.

Before You Dig, Make the Call to 811



Whether you're planting a tree, installing a fence, or beginning a major construction project, one call can prevent serious injuries, power outages, and costly repairs.

Underground utility lines can be located just beneath the surface, making it essential to know what's below before breaking ground. Striking an underground electric line can cause severe injury or death, damage equipment, and interrupt electric service to homes and businesses.

Before starting any digging project, **call 811** or visit **Sunshine811.com** at least two full business days in advance. This free service notifies participating utility companies, allowing them to mark the approximate locations of underground lines on your property.

Remember, even small projects can pose significant risks. Once lines are marked, use caution when digging near them.

Taking a few minutes to contact 811 can prevent dangerous accidents and unnecessary outages. Know what's below. **Call 811 before you dig.**

Holiday OFFICE CLOSURES

NOV. 26-27	DEC. 24-25	JAN. 4
THANKSGIVING	CHRISTMAS	NEW YEAR'S DAY

DEFUNIAK SPRINGS 655 US Hwy. 331 N. DeFuniak Springs, FL 24/7 Payment Kiosk	FREEPORT 359 Co. Hwy. 83A West Freeport, FL 24/7 Payment Kiosk	AUBURN 3097 Locke Lane Crestview, FL 24/7 Payment Kiosk
BLUEWATER BAY 1401 Cat-Mar Road Niceville, FL 24/7 Payment Kiosk	SANTA ROSA BEACH 3906 Hwy. 98 West Santa Rosa Beach, FL	BAKER 1351 Georgia Avenue Baker, FL

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For unclaimed Capital Credits, visit CHELCO.com/capital-credits.

High School Juniors: Apply for Youth Tour!



Calling all high school juniors! Are you interested in leadership, government, and making new friends from across Florida and the nation? **CHELCO's Youth Tour** program could be your ticket to the opportunity of a lifetime!

High school juniors whose parents or guardians receive electric service from CHELCO are invited to **apply through their school guidance counselor no later than Friday, Dec. 18.**

The adventure begins with a two-day trip to **Tallahassee on Feb. 10–11**. After the Tallahassee trip, participants will compete for one of four coveted spots on an **all-expenses-paid Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C., in June.**

Contact your school guidance counselor today or visit **CHELCO.com/youth-tour** for application information!



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