

CHELCO NEWS

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Watch: CHELCO Shares Hurricane Season Prep Efforts



Scan the QR code above to learn more about CHELCO's efforts to prepare for the Atlantic Hurricane Season, which runs June 1 through November 30 each year.

June 1 means one thing for those of us who live in the Southeastern United States: **Hurricane Season** is officially upon us and will be here **through November 30**.

CHELCO is Prepared

In late April, our team completed an extensive review of our **Hurricane Plan**, which includes work assignments, schedules, hurricane categories, pre-season preparation actions, pre-arrival phase actions, storm recovery actions, and much more. In addition to the review of the Hurricane Plan, **key coordinators** walked through an exercise in "**What-ifs,**" discussing and addressing a wide array of potential scenarios.



CHELCO's HR team meets to discuss their role in hurricane preparedness and response efforts.

Are You Prepared?

We also encourage our members to have a plan of their own and to become familiar with the essential resources available to get us all through the season together.

To prepare, we encourage our members to visit **Ready.gov**, which offers practical guidance on building emergency kits, planning evacuations if necessary, and tailoring your preparations to your unique needs, including a fillable hurricane plan you can email to yourself for safekeeping.

For tracking storms and staying up-to-date with official information, the **National Hurricane Center** and **NOAA.gov** are both reliable sources.

Learn More

Want to be better prepared for hurricane season? Check out <https://www.chelco.com/storm-center> to access helpful resources and preparedness information. You can also hear from **CHELCO CEO Steve Rhodes** and **SVP & COO Matthew Avery** in a video discussing the steps CHELCO is taking to prepare for the upcoming season.



A Touchstone Energy®
Cooperative 

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Hurricane Season Resources

Walton County Emergency Management

(850) 892-8065

<https://www.mywaltonfl.gov/1063/Emergency-Management>

Okaloosa County Emergency Management

(850) 651-7150

<https://myokaloosa.com/emergency-management>

Florida Division of Emergency Management

(850) 815-4000

<https://www.floridadisaster.org/>

Ready.gov

(800) 621-3362

<https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes>



CEO Insights: Powering Reliability Through Right-of-Way Maintenance

CHELCO, electric cooperatives, and other businesses around the country celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day in April and Engineers Week in February. And **June 8-14**, we are excited to celebrate **Right-of-Way Professionals Week** to recognize the hard, physically-demanding, and occasionally dirty work that our friends at Southland Utility Services perform for us every day.

If you are not familiar with our relationship, **Southland is CHELCO's wholly-owned subsidiary** specializing in **vegetation management and underground construction**. Additionally, you may have heard the phrase, "Call 8-1-1 before you dig." Southland handles **utility locate tickets** to ensure individuals and contractors performing underground work are doing so in a safe manner, preventing incidents with underground utilities. Southland also works closely with CHELCO's Meter Services Department to conduct **field inspections** on meters and related equipment.

This month, as we celebrate the right-of-way professionals at Southland, I'd like to share why it's important to



maintain vegetation around CHELCO's power lines and other equipment.

System Reliability

Reliability is the primary focus in our strategy to maintain vegetation around CHELCO's rights-of-way, and trees remain our most devastating opponent to meeting our goal of keeping your power on around the clock.

In 2025, tree-related outages accounted for more than **2,678,000 member minutes**, far more than motor vehicle accidents (**512,000**), lightning (**499,000**), and small critters (**275,000**) combined. The good news is that tree-related outages are one of the few types of outages that we can control or at least greatly impact.

Tree-related outages often take longer to restore because they can take down **large spans of line** and damage or destroy equipment attached to our poles. Furthermore, crews must safely **cut, remove, and clear heavy limbs or entire trees** before repairs can even begin.

Proactive, aggressive right-of-way maintenance reduces the likelihood of tree-related outages especially during **hurricanes and thunderstorms** and shortens restoration times when they do occur.

Improved Safety

Like CHELCO, **Southland's top priority** is the **safety** and well-being of its employees and the community.



Keeping a well-maintained right-of-way achieves that goal, while also keeping service reliable for our members.

Trees and power lines can be a dangerous combination, especially during storms. Limbs or trees that come into contact with **energized lines** can create **serious hazards**, including **downed power lines**, which are not just **inconvenient** for those who lose power, but **dangerous** for anyone who comes near them.

Maintaining accessible rights-of-way is equally important for the **safety of lineworkers and contractors**. During outages, crews often need direct access to reach poles and equipment quickly, often during difficult weather conditions or at night. Overgrown vegetation can delay **restoration efforts** by obstructing visibility and creating risks for those working to restore power.

While no system can be entirely storm-proof, proactive right-of-way maintenance is one of the best investments an electric utility can make to **strengthen safety, reduce hazards, and protect our workers and communities**.

Thank You, Right-of-Way Pros!

As we enter summer, now is a great time to thank those who work in hot, dirty conditions to help us keep our service reliable and safe. **Thank you, Southland Team!**

Steve Rhodes

Chief Executive Officer



CHELCO Co-Hosts NRECA Defense Summit



Honorable Dale R. Marks (third from left) served as the Keynote Speaker at the Defense Summit. Marks is the Deputy Under Secretary of War for Acquisition & Sustainment (PTDO) and previously served as the Executive Director of the 96th Test Wing at Eglin AFB.

CHELCO was proud to co-host the **NRECA Florida Regional Defense Summit**, held May 12-14 in Fort Walton Beach. In partnership with the **National Rural Electric Cooperatives Association (NRECA)**, CHELCO welcomed **cooperatives, Department of War, and Department of Energy** personnel from the Southeast and Washington, D.C., to this three-day event, which included a **96th Test Wing** mission briefing and tour of **Eglin AFB**.

The purpose of the Summit was to ensure Department of War installations are well-equipped to maintain mission assurance under the new energy landscape by bringing together **electric cooperatives, their member installations, and Pentagon-level personnel** to develop energy infrastructure projects.

The summit was funded by the **Department of Energy's Office of Electricity**, and NRECA led the project. In their first summit in Alaska, they learned that cooperatives and installations greatly appreciate hearing about service priorities straight from the source. The main objective of these summits is to ensure that installations and cooperatives can have an open dialogue about their **grid modernization needs** and identify opportunities to strengthen collaboration.

Tina Rushing, CHELCO Energy Services & Government Accounts Coordinator, played a key role in facilitating the conference in collaboration with NRECA, including securing **Deputy Under Secretary of War for Acquisition & Sustainment (PTDO) Hon. Dale Marks** as the event's keynote speaker.

CHELCO SVP & COO Matthew Avery said that CHELCO's strong relationship with **Eglin AFB** has garnered respect among electric cooperatives around the country.

"I'm proud of the relationship we have built with Eglin AFB, which has been enhanced through our **50-year utility privatization contract**," Avery said. "Our working relationship with Eglin is one that the Department of War looks to as a great example. I'm proud of our team's hard work on the contract, and I'm thankful for Eglin's trust in CHELCO to meet their needs and support their **critical missions** every day."



CHELCO SVP & COO Matthew Avery spoke at the NRECA Defense Summit in May.

Pole Inspections Essential for Reliable Service

At CHELCO, we partner with **Osmose Utilities Services** to perform inspections on our power poles every **eight years**. This year, the **Auburn area** is scheduled for inspection. In fact, you may have already noticed these inspections taking place. Work began in early May and should be completed within **four months**.

What determines if a pole passes inspection?

During routine pole inspections, trained crews evaluate each pole to determine whether it can safely remain in service for another inspection cycle. Here are some of the key factors inspectors consider:

- **Structural Strength**, including the ability to support lines and equipment, resistance to wind and storms, overall stability and straightness of the pole, remaining sound wood strength.
- **Decay and Damage**. The pole is checked for signs of deterioration both above and below ground. Inspectors check for internal rot or hollow areas, decay around the groundline area, large cracks or splits, and environmental damage.
- **Overall Safety and Reliability**. Inspectors verify whether a pole remains safe for crews and reliable for continued service. Poles must provide safe climbing condition for lineworkers, be in compliance with industry standards, and be reasonably expected to withstand the next eight years of service.



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](https://www.chelco.com/board-trustees).

Florida's Electric Co-ops Head to the Hill



Florida Senator Rick Scott (center) meets with representatives from electric cooperatives around the state, including CHELCO SVP Emily Cowan and District 2 Trustee Terry Pilcher.

Each April, leaders from electric cooperatives across the United States gather in Washington, D.C. to advocate for common co-op issues and improve service to members.

The **National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)** organizes the event and leads informational sessions preparing co-op leaders to discuss federal issues electric co-ops are currently battling.

CHELCO sent **Senior Vice President of Member Services and External Affairs Emily Cowan** and **District 2 Trustee Terry Pilcher** to join with other co-ops from around the state of Florida to visit with legislative offices, attend informational sessions, and network with other electric cooperatives to understand the issues and successes happening in their states and co-ops.

Cowan and Pilcher met with the office of **Congressman Jimmy Patronis** and **Senators Rick Scott and Ashley Moody**, to emphasize the electric cooperatives' support of **H.R. 4669, The FEMA Act**, which is a comprehensive bill revamping many aspects of FEMA while keeping the agency intact.

What Are the Issues?

- Co-ops support **The FEMA Act** which includes language to

reimburse interest expenses incurred while waiting years for FEMA to reimburse disaster-related power restoration expenses. Florida electric cooperatives have paid millions in interest in recent years while waiting for FEMA reimbursements.

- Permitting reform** is needed, as the overly bureaucratic federal permitting process imposes unreasonable timelines and drives up costs for essential infrastructure projects needed for Florida's continued growth.

Co-ops encourage congressional leaders to support policies beneficial to our consumer-members, continually advocating for our communities on the importance of safe, reliable, and affordable energy.



L to R: Emily Cowan (CHELCO SVP), Forrest Boone (FECA), Jack Williams (Rep. Patronis staffer), and Terry Pilcher (CHELCO District 2 Trustee) met during the Legislative Conference.

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

America's Electric Cooperatives PAC

The America's Electric Cooperatives Political Action Committee (AEC PAC) is a grassroots PAC that supports and advocates for co-ops nationwide. AEC PAC helps co-ops, like CHELCO, implement policies at the state and federal levels that benefit cooperatives and their members.

AEC PAC is non-partisan and supports candidates who support cooperatives through their policies.

Nearly 40,000 eligible members across 47 states back AEC PAC contributions to candidates.

Visit electric.coop/PAC for more information and to learn how you can get involved to ensure that your co-op is fairly represented in office.



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