

CHELCO NEWS

POWERED *by* YOU

OCTOBER 2026 | VOL. 31, NO. 10



CEO Insights: National Co-op Month Built on Trust, Powered by You



CHELCO employees connect with members at the Third Annual Senior Citizen Appreciation Day in DeFuniak Springs, answering questions and providing personalized assistance.

October is National Co-op Month.

Across the country, cooperatives exist for one reason: to serve their members. At CHELCO, that principle guides every decision we make because the people we serve are not customers, they are member-owners. That means accountability, transparency, and a commitment to always acting in the best interest of our members.

CHELCO recently refreshed its **Mission and Values**, reaffirming our commitment to the members and communities we serve. These aren't simply words on a page. They are the standards by which we operate every day, and they're displayed in various areas throughout our area offices to remind us of such.

OUR MISSION

Enhance the quality of life for our members through the safe delivery of reliable and affordable energy with an unwavering commitment to our employees and local communities.

One of those values, **Honest & Trustworthy**, is especially important. Trust is earned through actions, not words.

Since CHELCO was established more than 85 years ago, we have built a longstanding trust within the communities we serve through hard work, consistency, and transparency.

(cont. on pg. 2)



As a member-owned co-op, CHELCO exists to serve the people and communities who rely on us every day.

OUR VALUES

Commitment to Safety
Honest & Trustworthy
Exceptional Member Service
Lead & Innovate
Community & Employee Focus
Outstanding Teamwork

CHELCO

A Touchstone Energy®
Cooperative

Inside

Page 2

National Co-op Month - Built on Trust, Powered by You

Page 3

Celebrating 40 Years in Santa Rosa Beach

Page 4

Right-of-Way Maintenance
Essential for Reliability

New Freeport Office Now Open

As a reminder, CHELCO's Freeport Member Services office has relocated from City Hall to its new permanent location:

**359 Co. Hwy. 83A West
Freeport, FL 32439**

If you are entering the address into your GPS or navigation app, make sure to include "West" so that you are led to the correct address.

We look forward to serving you from this new location! For more info, visit CHELCO.com.

National Co-op Month

(cont. from p. 1)

As technology continues to evolve and our systems become more sophisticated, occasional challenges can arise along the way. When they do, our commitment remains the same: identify the problem, communicate transparently, and make it right. **Maintaining your trust is one of our highest priorities.**

In today's world, many concerns are often voiced first on social media. We understand that people are passionate about issues that affect their homes, families, and businesses. However, social media rarely provides the full picture. That's why we encourage members to contact us directly whenever they have a question, concern, or issue.



We also recognize that utility bills can sometimes raise questions, especially when temperatures rise and energy use increases. CHELCO's role is to deliver safe and reliable electric service while maintaining responsible stewardship of member resources. Our rates are regulated through the Florida Public Service Commission. While some portions of your bill, such

listening when concerns arise. It means showing empathy during difficult circumstances. It means investing in local communities through programs like Operation Round Up, youth programs, economic development efforts, and community partnerships. Most importantly, it means remembering that every decision we make ultimately affects our neighbors because our members are our owners.

At CHELCO, we know trust is built one interaction at a time. Whether you visit one of our offices, speak with a Member Services Representative, submit a question online, or call during a power outage, our goal is the same: **to provide exceptional service rooted in honesty, integrity, and respect.**

This National Co-op Month, we want our members to know that we are here for you. We will listen. We will work with you. **We will always strive to do what is right.** Because that's what cooperatives do, and that's what it means to be Powered by You.

Steve Rhodes,
CEO

POWERED by YOU

We Want To Hear From You

(850) 892-2111 or (800) 342-0990

www.chelco.com/contact-chelco



Whether you have questions about your bill, a concern about vegetation management, energy usage, or any other matter, our team can often provide immediate answers or connect you with the subject matter experts who can.

If a concern comes up after hours or over the weekend, members can submit a request through the Contact Form on CHELCO's website. A representative will follow up as soon as normal business hours resume.

Of course, power outages are different. CHELCO's Energy Control Center is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

as the Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment (WPCA), vary by month and are determined outside of our control, our commitment to helping members understand their bills remains constant. **If something on your bill doesn't look right, call us.** Our Member Services Representatives can explain billing details, review usage information, and answer questions about rates and charges. When additional expertise is needed, we can connect members with a CHELCO Energy Advisor who can help identify ways to improve efficiency and lower monthly energy costs.

Being a cooperative means serving with a heart for people. It means

Celebrating 40 Years in Santa Rosa Beach



Oct. 1 marked the 40-year anniversary of CHELCO's first Santa Rosa office opening! Pictured above (left) are representatives of the Board, management, and guests gathered for the office's grand opening in 1986, when **Board President Johnie Courtney** cut the ribbon to officially open the facility.

Today, the Santa Rosa office is located at 3906 Hwy. 98 W and is home to CHELCO's longest-tenured employee, Pam Finch, who has worked at CHELCO since before the original Santa Rosa office opened!



Pam Finch, who has served at CHELCO for more than 40 years!

Live Line Crew visits Pleasant Ridge Christian Academy



CHELCO's Live Line crew recently visited Pleasant Ridge Christian Academy for a presentation on the power grid and safety around power lines, specifically if a car comes into contact with downed lines.

Register for Special Needs Shelter Status

The Florida Department of Health, in coordination with its county health departments and each local emergency management agency in the state, developed a registry for persons with special needs to register with their local emergency management agency to receive assistance during a disaster. The statewide registry provides first responders with valuable information to prepare for disasters or other emergencies. To complete the form, visit snr.flhealthresponse.com or scan the QR code below.

Completing the Florida Special Needs Registry does not automatically qualify the individual for a special needs shelter, nor does CHELCO receive any information from this form. For more information on your local options, please visit FloridaDisaster.org/planprepare/shelters.



High School Juniors: Apply for the Opportunity of a Lifetime!



2026 Youth Tour Winner Noah Seeliger
Collegiate High School at NWFS



High school juniors: Are you interested in leadership, government, and visiting historic places? **CHELCO's Youth Tour** program could be your ticket to the opportunity of a lifetime! Applications will be sent to guidance counselors in October. Check with your school or visit CHELCO.com/youth-tour for more information.

Dates to Remember

Dec. 18: Applications Due to School

Feb. 10-11: Tallahassee Trip

June 17-22: Washington Trip

Who is eligible?

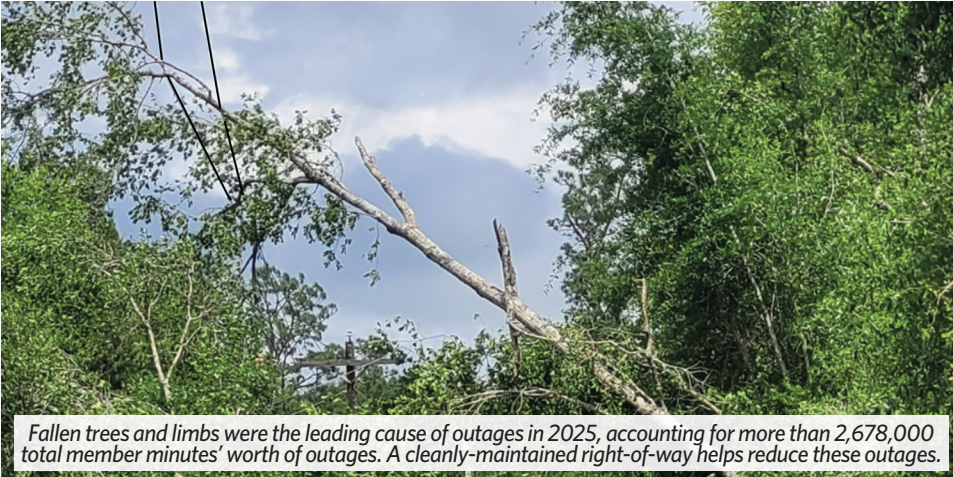
Up to two high school juniors from each school in CHELCO's service area who live on CHELCO lines.

How are participants chosen?

Each school has a designated Youth Tour contact who collects applications and forms a committee to select up to two students to represent their school. For most schools, that contact is a guidance counselor.

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.

Right-of-Way Maintenance Essential for Reliability



Fallen trees and limbs were the leading cause of outages in 2025, accounting for more than 2,678,000 total member minutes' worth of outages. A cleanly-maintained right-of-way helps reduce these outages.

When storms moved through our area on **August 18 and 19**, CHELCO crews responded to **147 separate outages** affecting more than **4,600 members**. Lightning caused many of those outages, but trees and branches also played a major role. In some cases, falling limbs damaged equipment or brought power lines to the ground.

Events like these are a reminder of why CHELCO invests in year-round right-of-way (ROW) maintenance.

Trees and Power Lines Don't Mix

Trees are an important part of our communities, but they can create serious problems when they grow too close to power lines. During normal weather, a branch may seem harmless. During high winds, heavy rain or lightning, that same branch can fall into a line, disrupt electric service and create a dangerous situation for members, motorists and crews.

Preventing Outages Before They Happen

CHELCO's right-of-way maintenance program is designed to address these risks before storms arrive. Crews regularly inspect power line corridors and trim vegetation away from energized equipment. This preventative work helps create needed clearance, reducing the

likelihood that trees will contact lines during severe weather.

Working Together for Reliable Service

CHELCO understands that members value the trees on their property. Our vegetation management team works to balance reliability, safety and environmental stewardship while maintaining rights-of-way across the service territory.

Leading Outage Causes - 2025

Trees & Limbs: 2,678,000 minutes

Lightning: 499,000 minutes

Squirrels & Critters: 275,000 minutes

Vehicle Collisions: 512,000 minutes

No electric system can prevent every outage caused by major storms, but proactive tree trimming remains a proven way to reduce service interruptions. The August storms showed how quickly trees and severe weather can impact the electric system. By keeping rights-of-way clear, CHELCO can improve reliability and restore power more efficiently when outages occur.

The next time you see a CHELCO contractor trimming trees near power lines, remember: that work is helping keep power flowing to you, your family and your neighbors.

Powered by Safety

Removing trees near power lines can be dangerous. Always assume power lines are energized. Never let children play in trees that are close to power lines. Do not attempt to remove a tree near or on a power line. **Questions? Please call (850) 892-2111.**

WHO: Southland Utility Services, CHELCO's wholly-owned subsidiary, performs all right-of-way maintenance at the direction of CHELCO's Right-of-Way Coordinator.

WHAT: Using proven methods such as tree trimming, tree removal, mowing, and herbicide application to clear non-compatible vegetation from within and around CHELCO lines.

WHEN: Scheduled maintenance is performed along the right-of-way on a five-year cycle. Additional removal is done before trees or brush touch power lines.

WHERE: Any vegetation within 10-15 feet of our lines is pruned. Right-of-way crews typically eliminate all trees, tree parts, and growth points beneath the wires and all weak, diseased, and dead limbs above the wires.

WHY: To prevent contact between power lines and tree limbs, which reduces the risk of safety concerns and tree-related power outages.



\$25 BILL CREDIT

If the account number below matches yours, call (850) 892-2111 to redeem a \$25 bill credit on your next power bill!

#9000098940 - SUMRALL

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