

Greetings, Choptank Electric Members

Fall is officially here. We welcome the cooler temperatures and changing colors with harvest activities here on the Eastern Shore. As we enjoy the bounty of our local farms, I'd be remiss not to remind you to practice safe driving while sharing the roads with harvest equipment, and if you're operating farm machinery, to be on the lookout for overhead communication and power lines along the roads.

In our community's rural areas, many members enjoy recreational hunting of waterfowl and forest species this season. As your electric co-op, we encourage hunters to be on the lookout for utility poles and power lines when discharging a firearm, and for experienced hunters who are familiar with the area to help identify locations of electrical equipment to the younger, less experienced hunters. Tampering with or misuse of our fiber and electric lines can not only put you in danger, but will also affect all other members that are down-line.

October is special for us as we celebrate National Cooperative Month and acknowledge the contributions made by the members and employees of local cooperatives. Check out page 21 to learn

more about the seven Cooperative Principles that make us unique; they're the heart of everything we do for you and our community!

This month is also Breast Cancer Awareness Month – a recognition of the research and resources put toward finding a cure for this disease that impacts so many. Read about our support for breast cancer awareness and research on page 19 as Choptank goes pink this October.

Join us on social media during Careers in Energy Week from October 16-20 to highlight the important work our team dedicates 24/7 to keeping your lights on. Follow along on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter as we feature some of the many jobs at Choptank Electric!

Happy Harvest,



Mike Malandro,
President & CEO
Choptank Electric
Cooperative



Choptank Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy[®] Cooperative 

Choptank Fiber

P.O. Box 430 | Denton, MD | 21629
Member Service Center: 1-877-892-0001
Automated Member Service: 1-866-999-4574
Automated Outage Reporting: 1-800-410-4790
Text "OUT" to: 1-800-410-4790
Use SmartHub to Manage Account,
Track Usage and Report Outages →



WWW.CHOPTANKELECTRIC.COOP



What Does It Take to Get the Lights Back On?

A Lineman's Perspective

By Brandon Keese, Journeyman Lineman, SEMO Electric Co-op

“How long is it going to take?”

Those are familiar words to all who work in the electric industry. It's a phrase I've been asked thousands of times in my career. I've been asked by phone, through car windows, from front porches, sidewalks, bicycles, gas pumps, and diners. I'm pretty sure I've even been asked by children in car seats. It's the first thing people think when the lights go out. It doesn't take long sitting in the dark to realize how dependent we are on electricity. How much it makes our lives better and easier.

As a lineman, it's always a good feeling to help people get those lights back on. I can remember times when I've been on storm or extended outages re-energizing neighborhoods and heard people in their homes cheering as their lights came on for the first time in days. No matter how tired I am or how long I've been working, that feeling will always make it worth it.

But what does it take to get those lights back on? Why does it sometimes take so long? Most people don't get to experience or witness the work that goes into ending outages. Hopefully after reading this, you will have a better understanding of the process and the work that your lineworker are doing to restore your power.

The electricity you use travels a great distance and goes through several steps to get to your home. It starts with a power plant. Power plants use fuel to produce power. That fuel

could be natural gas, diesel, coal, hydro, wind, solar, or nuclear. A power plant typically produces voltages of less than 30,000 volts. That voltage needs to be “stepped up” so it can travel long distances. That process starts next door in the power plant's substation and switchyard. In the substation, a transformer will step the voltage up to 345,000 volts, or sometimes higher, and send it out on transmission lines to another substation.

At the next substation we start to get closer to our final destination. Here we start stepping the voltage down. In this second substation, a transformer will step the voltage down to 69,000 volts and send it out to smaller local substations.

These local substations are the final substation before the electricity reaches your home. Here it is stepped down, again with a transformer, to the 7,200 or 14,400 volts that can then be delivered to the poles outside your home. Once it arrives outside your home, it is stepped down a final time, yes, by another transformer. This final transformer will step the voltage down to 120/240 volts that operate all of the devices that power your lives.

What I just described is hundreds of miles of line and thousands of poles. That's a lot of exposure for something to happen and cause an outage. Just like your home, our system has breakers. Our breakers help us reduce the exposure of the line and allow us to split our system into sections. Doing so helps limit the size of the outages and allows us to

keep as many people on as possible. Breakers also help to protect equipment on the line. Ever wonder why your lights blink a few times before going off? That's the breaker. They operate a few times trying to give the fault a chance to clear the line before they open for good.

Now that the lights have blinked, your breaker has opened, and the power is off, what happens?

The Outage Begins 6:35 p.m.: Your local lineworker gets a phone call. When I answer the phone, I'm told that we have an outage. My first question is, “Is this an individual or a line outage?” A line outage will be a large section of line and several people. An individual will be just a single transformer or pole. If it's a line outage, my next thought and question is, “What's the lowest pole number?” This is why it's important to report your outage. It verifies the outage, and it helps the lineworker decide where to go. So, if I'm told the lowest-reported outage is at pole 135, I'm mentally sectionalizing the line in my head. I know that there is a set of breakers at pole 100. So, if the lowest member to call in is at pole 135, that tells me that most likely the breaker at pole 100 is open, and whatever caused the outage is past pole 100. So, pole 100 is where I'm heading.

Heading Toward the Outage 7 p.m.: The drive. An after-hours outage requires your lineworker to respond from home. Depending on where the outage is, the drive alone can sometimes take an hour.

7:45 p.m.: Arrival and line inspection. I often see people outside when their power is off, sitting on their porch or working in the yard. Sometimes I drive by several times. I often wonder what they are thinking when they see me driving by so often. Do they think I'm just driving around? Do they wonder why I'm not getting their power back on? But that's exactly what I'm doing. The first time you see me, I'm most likely driving to the breaker. I need to go to the breaker to verify that it's open. The second time you see me drive by I'm visually checking the line for what may have caused the outage. Checking the line can take some time. It's one of the more time-consuming steps we take, but also one of the most important

parts of restoring an outage. We can't just simply flip a switch and restore the power. That can be dangerous for many reasons. The outage could be a line down in someone's yard, or it could have been caused by equipment failure. Re-energizing the line under those two examples would be very dangerous to the public and could cause more damage and just extend the outage longer. So it's very important to visually check the line before trying the breaker. Several things can cause an outage. A few examples of things I'm looking for are fallen trees, tree limbs, old line repairs that have failed, car accidents, lightning, animals, and equipment failure.

Another factor that can add time to inspecting the line is terrain. We try to put poles along the road, but that can't always be accomplished. Electric co-op lines go where they are needed, and that might be in extremely remote places. While poles and lines that run along the

road can be inspected and repaired faster, terrain and direction of the line sometimes require us to run the line off-road. If it's not along the road, the line must be checked on foot. If it's dark, that can make this job even more difficult and time-consuming regardless of where it's located.



Always on call, our lineworkers work hard to keep your power reliable

The Process of Repairs 8:30 p.m.:

Outage cause located, but first safety. Once we find the cause of the outage, there are safety steps that must be taken before we can start the work. These safety procedures add time, but they are vital. It's how we survive in a dangerous job. It's how we ensure lineworkers are protected and everyone goes home to their families. The most important thing we have to do is isolate and ground the line. This is an important step for many reasons. One reason is to protect from back feed. Lineworkers always try to be aware of their surroundings. An important thing to listen for and to be aware of are home generators. The transformer on your pole that drops the voltage down can also work in reverse. Your home generator, if installed wrong, could back feed through your transformer and put primary voltage back on the line. To protect lineworker from this, we install grounds as close to the work location as we can on both sides of the work.

These grounds connect the neutral wire to all primary wires making them all the same "grounded potential: and safe to work on." The final safety step is the safety briefing. During the safety briefing, the job plan is discussed and explained, hazards are identified, and everyone is made aware of the grounds, their location, and the location of the breaker.

9 p.m.: All the safety procedures in place. We can begin the work. Let's say for this outage it was a tree. A 50-foot-tall oak tree fell through the line. It's off the road, but we got lucky — it broke a crossarm, but the pole is good. The wire isn't broken either but is currently under the oak tree. We've got to cut up the tree and get the wire free. This will take some time.

Anyone who has cut up a downed tree will understand the danger. You have to be careful and pay attention to the tree and how it's sitting on the ground. Downed trees can shift, and roll while being cut. And here you also have powerlines under tension, pinned down by the tree adding an extra layer of danger. Special care and awareness must be used. Sometimes the powerlines must be tied down, so that they can be let up in a more controlled manner once the tree is cut. While we work to clear the tree from the line, new material is on the way. We are going to need a crossarm, crossarm braces, new insulators, bolts, and ties to tie in the wire.

10:30 p.m.: The tree has been cleared and the material has arrived. As I mentioned, the pole is off the road, so that means we can't get a bucket truck to it. We will have to climb the pole. One of our linemen will put on his belt and hooks and

(continued on page 18)

(continued from page 17)

climb to the top of the pole. He'll bring all the tools he'll need with him. One thing he will take with him is a handline. It's a rope in a pulley that's long enough to go from the top of the pole to the ground in a loop. This



Choptank crews worked to restore power on Elliott Island this past August after severe storms hit

will be used to lift material and other objects to the lineman that were too heavy or awkward to take up in his belt. Once he gets to the top of the pole, he will get to work. He'll start by removing all the broken material. He'll also inspect the top of the pole for damage we couldn't see from the ground. Once he has it cleaned up, we will start sending up material on

the handline. He should have taken the crossarm bolt with him when he climbed and installed that in the pole. The lineman on the ground should have already put everything on the crossarm. Next, the lineman on the ground will tie the crossarm onto the handline in a way that will allow the lineman on the pole to just guide the arm onto the bolt as it's being lifted up. Once the new crossarm is on the pole and all the bolts are tightened, the wire will be lifted up, also with the handline, and placed on the arm. The wire ties will be sent up, again on the handline, and the lineman will tie in the wire. After completing all the work in the air, the lineman will send down the handline and then climb down. Once down, he'll remove his belt and hooks and pack them away. The lineman on the ground will now be "making up the handline," which just means he is getting it ready to store until it's needed again. We'll all carry the tools that we used back to the truck and get them packed away. Lastly, we will remove our grounds.

11:45 p.m.: Repairs complete. Now if you still happen to be outside in your yard or on your porch, you will see me drive by a third time. This is good news because you are about to get your power restored. I'm heading for the breaker. Once I get to the breaker, I'll call dispatch and get clearance to re-energize. I'll let them know who is with me and if they are in the clear. They will check to make sure no one else is working on the line and then give me clearance to try the breaker. At this time, I will close the breaker, and your power will be restored.

12:05 a.m.: Power restored. Outage over. Keep in mind this is just one scenario; not every outage is the same. Each outage varies in time for restoration. This example outage took around five-and-a-half hours to restore. If the tree had broken a pole, it would have been even longer.

1 a.m.: Lineman returns home — safe and sound.

We Work for You, Our Neighbors

We've become so dependent on electricity that every outage, whether it is a short outage or an extended one, can be stressful for those without power. The longer outages last, the more stressful and irritating it can become. I hope that I've given you a better understanding of the process so you have an idea what's happening while you wait. Just know that your co-op and its lineworkers are doing their best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible.

Your cooperative and its employees are members of your community. We live in the same neighborhoods. We shop at the same stores. Our kids go to the same schools. If your lights are off, there is a good chance ours are off too. We will always be committed to serving our members and communities by providing you with safe and reliable electricity—24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Editor's Note: Brandon Keese, a journeyman lineman for Sikeston, Missouri-based SEMO Electric Cooperative, wrote this detailed, step-by-step outage restoration essay in the co-op's local pages in the August issue of Rural Missouri, the statewide magazine. We thought Keese's compelling message to his co-op's members was worth sharing with our members here at Choptank Electric Cooperative.



'23-'24 MEMBER GUIDE NOW AVAILABLE
view online at > www.choptankelectric.coop



Choptank Goes Pink

By Katie Lockett, Marketing, Communications, Education Manager



As a cooperative, we have concern for our community and exist to serve those who live and work in our area. It is estimated that approximately 5,700 Maryland residents will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2023 (according to the American Cancer Society). Choptank Electric Cooperative is supporting those who battle this disease and who are impacted by breast cancer by going pink in October for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Be on the lookout for our crew and staff in pink hard hats this month!

The Choptank Electric Trust donated \$2,000 to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF) to further support breast cancer awareness and fund the important

research being conducted on this disease. BCRF is the largest private funder of breast cancer research—and metastatic breast cancer research—worldwide. Their mission is to prevent and cure breast cancer by advancing the world’s most

promising research.

Our donation will provide one full week of research and power the efforts of 255 scientists worldwide who are answering breast cancer’s

most difficult questions. On a local level, the Breast Cancer Research Foundation is currently funding eight researchers in Maryland at Johns Hopkins University and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

for continuing research to prevent and cure breast cancer.”

If you would like to support or learn more about the Breast Cancer Research Foundation please visit www.bcrf.org



Tim McGaha, Lisa DeSantis, Leroy Sverduk, Mike Malandro, Lance Lockerman, Valerie Connelly, Paula Bishop, and Sarah Dahl stand in support of all those affected by breast cancer

“We’re proud to contribute a portion of your Operation Round Up funds to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation this month,” says Tom Terry, Choptank Trust Board Chairman. “In line with one of our seven Cooperative Principles, Concern for Community, this donation will make an impact at both the national and local level



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



TOM SIMPSON

Assistant Manager of Safety, Training and Compliance

By Samantha Casale, Government Affairs and Public Relations Intern

When it comes to safety here at Choptank Electric Cooperative, Tom Simpson can easily describe its importance to our staff and our members. Tom has had a well-rounded career at Choptank Electric since he was hired in 1991 as a System Control Operator. He advanced to Operations Maintenance Person for four years, Storeroom Attendant for another four years, and Regional Accounts Representative for one year. He was an Apprentice Lineman, a Serviceman in St. Michaels and Chestertown, and now serves as Assistant Manager of

Safety, Training, and Compliance.

Within Tom’s role, safety and training are his primary concerns. Tom says, “Safety is a deep-seated thinking process that we encounter in every aspect of our lives.” As Assistant Manager of Safety, Training and Compliance, Tom gets to see and experience the behind-the-scenes work that keeps all our employees and members safe. For example, lineworkers need special training for the dangerous work they do. Tom makes sure that they can climb a pole, perform overhead and underground line construction,

and understand basic equipment operation. Job site observations are also key to keeping operations safe. Things like checking first-aid kits and fire extinguishers, making sure all crew members are wearing appropriate PPE, and following safety procedures are essential for our crews to perform their duties safely here at Choptank Electric Cooperative. When Tom was asked about the most rewarding part of his job, he said he would like to quote his father, “Son, if you enjoy your work to support your family, you honestly will never work a day in your life.”

Notice to Members - Proposed Rate Change

At its meeting on November 15, 2023, the Board of Directors plans to vote on the adoption of a revised electric distribution rate. Full details about the proposed change, which affects all rate classes, is available on the Rates page of the Cooperative website at <https://choptankelectric.coop/rates> under “Proposed Tariff Changes.”

Members will have the opportunity to comment on the proposed change and to attend the portion of the meeting in which the Board votes on the proposed change.

Comments shall be submitted in writing to the General Counsel (1) via email at rates@choptankelectric.coop or (2) by mail at P.O. Box 430,

Denton, MD 21629. Comments must be submitted by November 6, 2023.

Any member wishing to attend the Board meeting shall, by November 6, 2023, contact the CEO’s Administrative Assistant at 1-877-892-0001 (ext. 8551) to make arrangements to attend.



The Cooperative Difference

Happy National Co-op Month to All of Our Members!

By McKayla Kiernan, Communications Specialist

Electric cooperatives were established to provide electric service to primarily rural areas where investor-owned utilities were unwilling to serve, or where electricity was so highly priced, most residents could not afford it. Choptank Electric Cooperative was incorporated as Choptank Cooperative Inc. on Sept. 15, 1938, following the passage of the Rural Electrification Act. Its first 78 miles of line were energized in Caroline County on Dec. 15, 1939, serving 184 members. The Cooperative's name was changed to Choptank Electric Cooperative in 1942. Choptank Electric Cooperative is owned by its members, who each have one vote in deciding which co-op members will serve on the Board of Directors. We serve more than 56,000 members in Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Because we're a co-op, we operate

a little differently than other utilities. Choptank Electric Cooperative's decisions are made locally, by directors who also live right here in our community. Everyone who pays to receive electricity from the co-op is a member. When you pay your electric bill each month, your money stays here—to pay for the electricity used, or to make improvements to our local system to strengthen service reliability. The money you pay the co-op doesn't line the pockets of shareholders five states away. We're a co-op, and we exist to provide a service to you, our local members.

Another feature that sets our co-op apart from a traditional utility is one of our core principles, Concern for Community. We partner with local organizations like Wor-Wic Community College for the Pre-Apprenticeship Line Worker Program, and other worthy programs and scholarships. We participate in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, where we take our community's brightest young people to Washington, D.C., for a week-long

immersion to experience democracy in action.

Please know that you, the members of Choptank Electric Cooperative, are at the heart of everything we do. Co-ops adhere to seven guiding cooperative principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness, and service. If you would like to learn more about the Seven Cooperative Principles, please visit > www.choptankelectric.coop/coop-difference

We exist to serve you and provide the quality, reliable, friendly service you expect and deserve. While we have grown over the years, we are still driven by the same guiding principles to serve our community. We hope you will think of Choptank Electric Cooperative as more than your energy provider, but also as a local business that supports this community and powers economic development and prosperity for the people. This co-op was created for you, the members. We hope to see or hear from you soon.

2024 Notice of Election of the Board of Directors

The deadline to deliver completed petitions is December 20, 2023

In conjunction with the 2024 Annual Meeting of Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc. there will be held an election of directors for Dorchester County, Kent County, and Queen Anne's County.

If you are interested in being a candidate for one of these positions, please complete, sign, and deliver a 2024 Petition for Nomination of Candidate for Director by 4 p.m. on Wednesday, December 20, 2023.

The completed petition must be delivered to the attention of the Credentials & Election Committee, c/o Dawn Bowie, Choptank Electric Cooperative either: (a) by hand delivery or courier to the headquarters office, 10384 River

Road, Denton, MD 21629; (b) by mail to P.O. Box 430, Denton, MD 21629; or (c) by email to Dawn Bowie at dawnb@choptankelectric.coop. Any applications received after Wednesday, December 20, 2023, will not be reviewed by the committee.

Members can obtain a copy of the 2024 Petition for Nomination of Candidate for Director, beginning November 2, 2023, on our website at www.choptankelectric.coop (under Member Benefits, Annual Meeting) or by calling our Member Service Center at 1.877.892.0001 to request a mailed copy.

Please review the Bylaws (under Governance on the website) for additional requirements regarding Board of Director positions. The election results will be announced at the 2024 annual member meeting, which will be held on Thursday, April 25, 2024, at the Fountains Conference Center located at 1800 Sweetbay Dr., Salisbury, MD 21804.



Choptank Electric Cooperative
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Choptank Electric, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is a not-for-profit, member-owned, electric distribution co-op serving approximately 56,000 residential, commercial, and industrial members in all nine counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

President & CEO

Micheal E. Malandro

Board of Directors

Douglas D. Scott
Chairman, Dorchester Co.

Robert E. Arnold
Vice Chairman, Queen Anne's Co.

John J. Burke Jr.
Treasurer, Cecil Co.

Matthew R. Holloway
Secretary, Wicomico Co.

Amy I. Brandt
Caroline Co.

Craig N. Mathies Sr.
Somerset Co.

Kristen E. Nickerson
Kent Co.

Jeffrey D. Rathell Sr.
Talbot Co.

Robert B. Thompson
Ocean Pines District

Donna R. West
Worcester Co.

Choptank Electric Trust Awards



The Choptank Electric Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation funded by Operation Round Up donations from members of Choptank Electric Cooperative. Funds from the Trust are distributed in all nine counties of Maryland's Eastern Shore.

AUGUST 2023

The total of approved applications for August was \$36,522, which included \$18,507 for individual home and medical expenses.

- Breast Cancer Research Foundation - \$2,000
- Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship - \$1,250
- Berlin Maryland Chamber of Commerce - \$1,500
- Eldorado Brookview VFC - \$1,000
- HomePorts, Inc. - \$900
- Humane Society of Somerset County - \$1,500
- Jesse Klump Memorial Fund - \$2,000
- Maryland Concerns of Police Survivors - \$2,500
- Park Lane Church of God - \$800
- Rackliffe House Trust Inc. - \$1,000
- Salisbury Christian School - \$1,600
- Women and Girls Fund of the Mid-Shore - \$1,965

To apply or to find out more about this program:

> www.choptankelectric.coop/operation-round-trust-fund



Choptank Fiber, LLC

Choptank Fiber, LLC, is a wholly owned broadband subsidiary of Choptank Electric Cooperative. Choptank Fiber's goal is to install true gigabit broadband with no data caps one community at a time until we serve all our members on the Eastern Shore.