



**Ghoptank Electric
Cooperative**

A Touchstone Energy
Cooperative



January

Members First. Every day.



Shannon B.

For your dedication to taking care of others...
We cannot thank you all enough!
God bless you all!!!!



True southern hospitality, friendships, delicious food,
and an amazing sunset saw our crews return home
safe and sound after volunteering to aid
restoration efforts in Alabama.



By Elizabeth Hallett
Manager of Marketing & Communications

The Spirit of the Cooperative Business

The Co-op aids Alabama power restoration after Hurricane Sally demolishes territory.

The Facts

Choptank Electric Cooperative sent 20 linemen and two supervisors to aid Baldwin EMC in their efforts to restore power to thousands of members who were without power due to Hurricane Sally. Headquartered in Summerdale, Alabama, Baldwin EMC serves over 78,000 members throughout Baldwin County and southern Monroe County in southwestern Alabama and is located between Mobile, Alabama, and Pensacola, Florida along the Gulf. It is the largest electric cooperative in the state of Alabama.

Taking Alabama and the gulf shore by surprise, Hurricane Sally hit the coast early on Wednesday, September 16, 2020. Originally predicted to reach a maximum of 80 mph, Sally exceeded 130-mph winds, with flooding in certain areas over 30 feet. Baldwin EMC's linemen had just arrived back from Louisiana – helping other cooperatives that had been hit by Hurricane Laura.

Baldwin EMC sent out a distress call that day, reporting that their entire system was down without power, and Choptank Electric Cooperative was one of over 100

cooperatives that answered that call.

The Drive

Eleven line trucks assembled in Denton and left early Thursday morning to make the over 1,000-mile drive to Baldwin County.

“The drive was probably the most dangerous part of our trip,” said Terry Soley, Serviceman from Berlin District. “We saw many accidents including one with a bucket truck that had been on its way to Alabama.”

Our crews, thankfully, only encountered a blown tire, two dead batteries, and two headlight issues during the entire trip. Between traveling there and back, all the linemen remarked that traveling in smaller groups made it easier for pit stops, gas stops, and maneuvering in traffic.

Not Scared of the Work

Arriving on Friday night, our crews started working right away on Saturday in the mid-eastern part of Baldwin territory, right on the edge of the Alabama/Florida line – restoring power to hundreds of members through Wednesday. While sparsely populated, the area encompassed over 20 miles of

lines that needed to be completely replaced, including lengthy taps, or wiring, that sometimes exceeded 1 mile, and only restoring one member at a time.

Most of the circuit and taps were on hilly ground, with roads completely washed out and out of reach for our trucks. While our crews restored power, managers coordinated crews, prioritized jobs, prepared and circulated materials, and walked the lines in advance so they could be prepared for the next day.

Continued on Pages 20-22



P.O. Box 430 | Denton MD | 21629

Toll-Free: 1-877-892-0001

Outage Reporting: 1-800-410-4790

Automated Member Service: 1-866-999-4574

Cooperative Business Continued

“The ‘bird dog’ (locator) we were appointed was the serviceman assigned to that area,” said Allen Slaughter, Assistant Manager of Safety, Training, and Compliance. “After the first day when he saw we took safety seriously and worked so well together, he told us he would leave us to it, and he did. It was a compliment, but at the same time, a hindrance because we didn’t have a map of their system, the poles weren’t labeled, making the task of finding taps impossible.”



With thousands of miles of lines down due to winds, and hundreds of trees toppled, it was no wonder there were so many members without power.

“The damage was extensive,” said Slaughter. “The largest trees you didn’t think would come down, came down, and billboard signs were torn to pieces, like little pieces of paper instead of metal. Trees and poles were down everywhere, but our guys got in there and worked hard nonstop to restore power for those members.”

The Devastation Was the Hardest Part

The toughest work that our linemen performed was the first day when they had to replace seven spans of downed wire and poles which had been toppled by trees. Of course, it was pouring down rain all day.

“We got it all done in one day, though,” said Sterling Brown, Serviceman for Denton District. “We were really happy about how well we all worked as a team to get that three-phase line back up in one day. Our bird dog was impressed.”

The other tough part wasn’t the work though. It was seeing the devastation of the communities.

“Seeing toys destroyed, furniture sitting outside

homes severely damaged, homes, properties, and families’ entire lives devastated by the extreme flooding that occurred, that was the hardest thing for me to see,” said Ray Layton, Serviceman for the Berlin District.

“These people lost a lot in this hurricane, but they were all so sweet, so kind, and always so appreciative of the work we were doing and asking if we needed anything.”

The work ran smoothly, all thanks to the linemen in the field reporting damage and quickly restoring power to members. “Baldwin EMC’s linemen ran their system control, and they wouldn’t have it any other way,” said Slaughter. “It allowed them to see the work, report it in, know who needed to be turned on first, and overall, just made power restoration for us and them more efficient.”

Eat, Sleep, Breathe, Repeat

With over 100 cooperatives on site to help restore power, Baldwin EMC enlisted the help of Storm Services, a contract company who specializes in the day-to-day needs of the workers.

“We called it ‘Tent City,’” said Slaughter.

“The services were incredible,” said Andrew Benson, Journeyman for the Berlin District. “Everything from the food tents, bunk trailers, bathrooms and showers, and even a laundry service. They had buses that transported you from Tent City to the parking lot full of everyone’s trucks and every night they would run fuel tanks around to make sure that everyone’s vehicle was full for the next day.”

“There were over 2,200 linemen there restoring power,” said Nathaniel Smith, Chief Lineman for Denton District. “And it was really tough navigating the camp





because it was so large — you remembered your trailer number, 54, pretty quickly.”

‘Tent City’ was still a 40-minute drive to their assigned service territory during their stay, and that meant longer restoration times overall.

Bobcats, Fire Ants, Snakes, Oh My!

On top of all the regular line work that had to be accomplished, our crews had to worry about all the crazy critters running around, such as fire ants, alligators, bobcats, and poisonous rattlesnakes.

“We were told to watch out for rattle snakes by the locals,” said Tom Simpson, Serviceman for Chestertown District. “We were trying to look up and assess damage, but also keeping an eye out for snakes on the ground.” They never saw actual bobcats or alligators that the locals spun stories about, yet, seeing tracks in the woods of a “big kitten” was enough to keep them on their toes.

“There was no trouble getting volunteers for the buckets while we were back in the woods,” chuckled Jeff Coppage, Serviceman for Cambridge District.

The only snake they saw was captured by a member while they completed repairs at his property. Supposedly, the snake was hidden in the outside shower!

Southern Hospitality at its Best

The members of Baldwin County were so thankful for our crews’ help!

The men restored power to a radio station tower the first day and throughout the week they praised the ‘Choptank Electric Co-op from Maryland’ for getting them back on the air. They reported outage-restoration details throughout the day and shut down a few people who tried to call in and comment negatively about the restoration efforts.

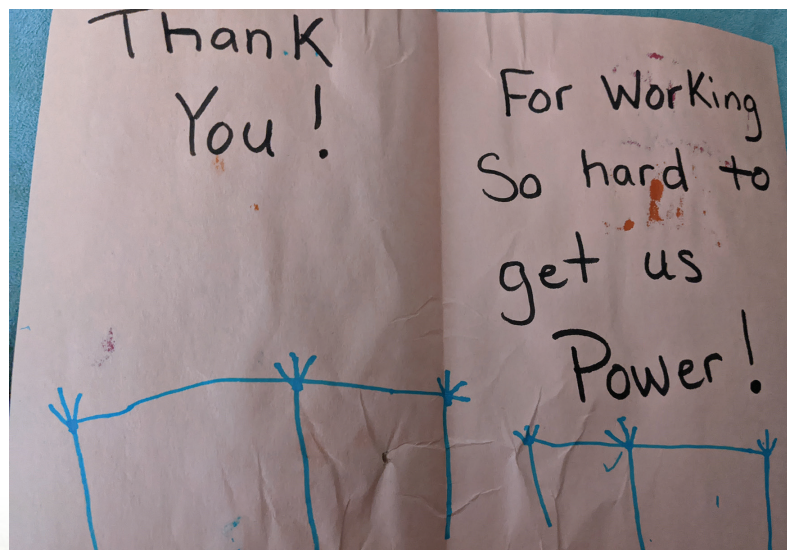
“Everyone was so appreciative,” said Jeff Thomas, Journeyman for the Salisbury District. “They would offer everything from drinks, food, golf cart rides to different outage locations, everything. Not a single person we

met had a bad thing to say.”

On their first day on the job, an older lady stopped on the road and told our crews that she was cooking dinner for them, where to go, and asked when she would expect them. From that night forward, she and the Gateswood Volunteer Fire Dept. volunteers made special meals for our crews. Catfish, hush puppies, potatoes, and cheesecake were on the menu one night, while on their last night in town they were served a fantastic steak dinner, in true Southern hospitality fashion.

“We are so grateful for the food and their hospitality. It was so kind and generous,” said Jason Gaskill, Manager of District Operations for Berlin at the RSC. “They couldn’t thank us enough for helping to restore their power, but it’s our job and passion. We are here to serve members, regardless of where they are located, and it’s what we love to do.”

The crews began to return home on Wednesday, stopping for the night in Georgia before returning to Maryland Thursday evening. Baldwin finished restoring power to all of its members on Friday, September 25.



Cooperative Business Continued

To top off this large-scale achievement, our crews were recognized by Governor Larry Hogan, Comptroller Peter Franchot, U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, U.S. Senator Van Hollen, and Congressman Andy Harris. “I would like to commend the line workers of the Choptank Electric Cooperative who heeded the call to action and helped in the relief efforts of Hurricane Sally in Alabama,” said Gov. Larry Hogan.

Volunteer crew as pictured on page 21 (left to right): Pat Short, Chief Lineman (Chestertown); Sterling Brown, Serviceman (Denton); Cole Herr, Apprentice Lineman (Chestertown); Clint Mills, Apprentice Lineman (Chestertown); Jeff Thomas, Journeyman (Salisbury); Tom Simpson, Serviceman (Chestertown); Matt Semans, Journeyman (Chestertown); Greg Harman, Journeyman (Salisbury); Terry Soley, Serviceman (Berlin); Ray Layton, Serviceman (Berlin); Andy Kauffman, Chief Lineman (Salisbury); Jason Gaskill, Manager of District Operations (Berlin); Dean Samuel, Journeyman (Cambridge); Jeff Coppage, Serviceman (Cambridge); Scott Smart, Apprentice Lineman (Denton); Wayne Daubach, Journeyman (Denton); Wade Harris, Appren-

tice Lineman (Cambridge); Nathaniel Smith, Chief Lineman (Denton); Brandon Thompson, Apprentice Lineman (Salisbury); Andrew Benson, Journeyman (Berlin); Allen Slaughter, Assistant Manager of Safety, Training, & Compliance; Ethan Wallace, Apprentice Lineman (Berlin).



A Much Different Legislative Session for 2021

Coalitions of like-minded citizens and businesses will be more important than ever.



By Valerie Connelly
Vice President of Government Affairs
and Public Relations

The Maryland General Assembly session that begins on the second Wednesday in January will be unprecedented in appearance and operation. The 442nd convening of our state legislature must fulfill constitutional responsibilities while balancing COVID-related protection of members with the obligation of transparency and citizen participation.

In a normal year, the 90-day session brings together 188 elected officials and thousands of citizens and their lobbyists to consider almost 3,000 bills. In 2021, members will convene in House and Senate Chambers on January 13th in socially distanced, plexi-glass protected desks. Their hours together will be purposely limited. Committee hearings will be

conducted by Zoom and legislators will work from home for several weeks, into early February.

There will be no organized dinners, receptions, or opportunities to gather. Buildings will be closed to the public.

Coalitions of like-minded citizens and businesses will be more important than ever. Zoom testimony on bills in the Senate will be limited to four supporters, two with amendment, and four opposed. All others will testify in writing. This means those of us working to protect utility customers, broadband expansion and rural communities will have to work strategically to get our message delivered.

The Presiding Officers in the House and Senate have identified a few priorities for the 2021



session. By law, they must pass the state budget. Beyond that, they expect to work on COVID recovery, law enforcement reform, health disparities, and environmental and economic justice.

On behalf of Choptank Electric Cooperative, Matt Tefteau and I will review all bills introduced to identify those that may have an impact on cooperative members. Choptank Electric's goal continues to be affordable, reliable electric and broadband service to members. This year, we will likely weigh in on energy mandates that could drive up costs to members and work to protect funding for broadband expansion.

Choptank Electric Cooperative members can access our 2021 legislative guide and regular updates on our website at <https://choptankelectric.coop/legislative-news>. Stay safe and stay engaged.



Welcome to the Co-op, Jennifer!

Jennifer LeKites joins the Choptank Electric Cooperative teams as part of Engineering.



Jennifer LeKites (Jen) has a degree in Business Administration and previously worked with Aero Energy. She spent 14 years working with the company, and specialized in designing, developing, and maintaining propane gas systems all over Maryland and Delaware as part of their underground pipelines department. Her all-time favorite hobby is traveling; from concerts to islands and even road trips. LeKites currently lives

in Preston with her 16-year old son Clayton, and her significant other.

"I am looking forward to the opportunity to grow within the company. After one short week, I feel blessed to be part of an organization that everyone talks so highly of."

Welcome to the Co-op, Jen!

Happy Retirement!

James Driver and Brad Taylor retire from the Co-op. Congratulations!



James Driver
18 years of service

James Driver began his Cooperative career as a tree trimmer in August of 2002, and in 2011 became an Operations Utility Person.

Brad Taylor entered the Apprentice Lineman Program in March 1985 and became a Journeyman Lineman in September of 1987. Taylor remained a lineman until August of 2005, when he assumed the role of Operations Field Helper. In 2014, Taylor became an Operations Technician II at the RSC.



Brad Taylor
35 years of service

Don't Miss This \$2,000 Scholarship!

Nine \$2,000 Choptank Electric Trust scholarships are up for grabs in 2021.

If you are a high school or home-school senior whose parent or guardian is a member or employee of Choptank Electric Cooperative, you are eligible to apply and compete for the Choptank Electric Trust Scholarship, which is distributed by the Choptank Electric Trust Board, a 501(c)(3) organization. Applicants must be entering a post-high school educational institution or technical/trade School as a freshman in 2021.

The Choptank Electric Trust administers a competitive program that distributes nine \$2,000 scholarships. Scholarship recipients are selected based on a combination of the following criteria:

- Financial need
- Academic achievement
- Extracurricular and community activities
- References
- Personal essay

The required essay must be limited to two typed, double-spaced pages on the following topic: "Why I have chosen to continue my education and how this scholarship will assist me."

Reference letters are required. Letters may be from school administrators, teachers, civic leaders, clergy, or neighbors. There is a limit of three references per application. Letters may not be submitted from relatives.

The Academic Information section of the application must be completed by your guidance counselor or other appropriate school officials. You must submit the completed application to:

Choptank Electric Trust Scholarship

Attn: Beverley Ireland

P.O. Box 426

Denton, MD 21629

Incomplete applications will not

be considered. The application must be postmarked no later than, or hand-delivered to the Denton or Salisbury District offices, by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, March 15, 2021. Applications postmarked after this date will not be eligible for consideration. For additional information and the application, please call Beverley Ireland, 1.877.892.0001, ext. 8660 or visit our website at www.choptankelectric.coop and under Member Benefits, click on Scholarships.



Two Account Time-Savers to Streamline Your 2021

Start fresh this January and follow these tips to better manage your account.

Sign up for SmartHub

SmartHub is a valuable tool that makes it easy to manage your Choptank Electric Cooperative account from your desktop or smartphone. The SmartHub app puts control of your account in the palm of your hand with the ability to track your daily and monthly energy use, report a power outage, set up bill reminders, and pay your bill. The app is free and is available in the App Store and Google Play.

Want to get started today? Use your phone's camera to scan the QR code on this article. To register, you will need a valid email address and your Choptank Electric Coop-

erative account number.

SmartHub is also accessible through the web, just log onto www.choptankelectric.coop to learn more.



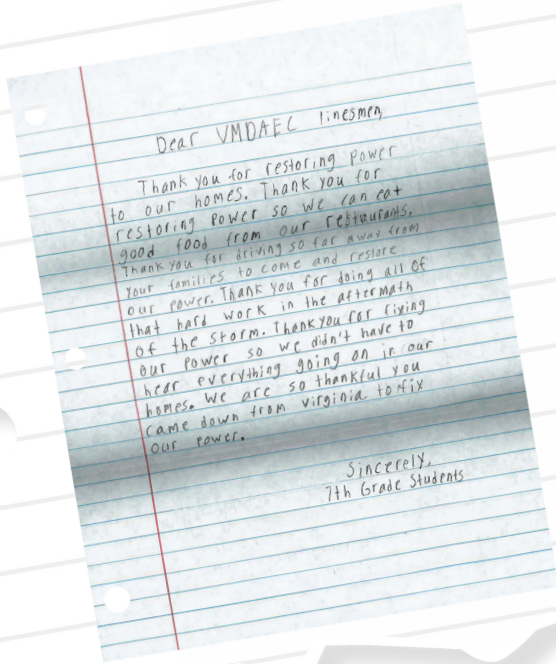
Update Your Account Contact Information

Your Co-op relies heavily on your contact information for a variety of situations; from planned outages to reporting power failures. If a member has changed their

contact information associated with their account, but has not informed the Cooperative, their ability to report an outage may be affected. For example, our System Control team utilizes member phone records to help locate issues with the Cooperative's electrical distribution system. Out-of-date phone numbers listed on member accounts can impact that member's ability to report an outage, meaning longer response times in some cases. If your phone number, email address, or mailing address has changed, contact our Member Service Center at 1-877-892-0001 to update your information.

Member Notes

Our members are the reason Choptank Electric Cooperative exists. Without their support, it would be hard for us to move forward with current or new initiatives. Whether on social media, on the phone, or via old-fashioned letters sent along with their paper bills, our members love to let us know when their Co-op is doing a good job!



Alabama 7th-grade students wrote to the volunteer crews for Storm Sally restoration efforts: *“Thank you for restoring power to our homes. Thank you for restoring power so we can eat good food from our restaurants. Thank you for driving so far away from your families to come and restore our power. THANK you for doing all of that hard work in the aftermath of the storm. Thank you for fixing our power so we didn't have to hear everything going on in our homes. We are so thankful you came down from virginia to fix our power.”*

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. Funds from the Trust are distributed in all nine counties of Maryland's Eastern Shore.

September 2020

- Kennedyville United Methodist Church - \$2,000 (building restoration)
- Community Civic League - \$1,500 (winter fuel and furniture)

The total of approved applications was **\$19,608.00**, which included **\$16,108.00** for individual home and medical expenses.

October 2020

- Camp Mardela - \$2,000 (roof replacement)
- YMCA - \$1,000 (community outreach)

- Chesapeake Culinary Center - \$6,000 (food bank purchases)
- Bethany United Methodist Church - \$2,500 (A/V system)
- 4 Steps Therapeutic Riding Program - \$2,000 (scholarships)
- Salisbury Jaycees Foundation Inc. - \$250

The total of approved applications was **\$39,683.64**, which included **\$25,933.64** for individual home and medical expenses.

Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Choptank Electric, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is a not-for-profit, member-owned, electric distribution Co-op serving approximately 54,000 residential, commercial, and industrial members in all nine counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

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