



CHOPTANK ELECTRIC

Cooperative Living

CHOPTANK INSPIRES AT JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT CAREER FAIR Page 20





**Choptank Electric
Cooperative**

**Choptank
Fiber**

FROM THE DESK TO THE POWER LINES A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Spring into Energy Savings

Spring is a season of renewal — and a great time to refresh your energy habits too. As temperatures begin to warm and daily routines shift, a few small changes around your home can add up to meaningful energy savings. Choptank Electric is committed to helping our members use energy wisely while keeping homes comfortable year-round.

May is the perfect month to schedule maintenance for your heating and cooling system. Spring and fall checkups conducted by a licensed professional can help ensure your system is running efficiently, safely and reliably before the peak seasons begin. A well-maintained unit uses less energy, lasts longer and helps prevent costly breakdowns when you need it most.

If you're looking for a simple place to start saving, look no further than ceiling fans. During warmer months, make sure your ceiling fan blades are set to rotate counterclockwise. This creates a downward breeze that makes you feel cooler, allowing you to raise your thermostat a few degrees without sacrificing comfort.

Speaking of thermostats, adjusting the temperature just a few degrees can make a noticeable difference on your energy bill. Setting your thermostat slightly higher when cooling can reduce energy use while keeping your home comfortable, especially when combined with ceiling fans or open windows on mild, pleasant days.

Hot water use is another area where simple habits matter. Taking shorter showers can help reduce the amount of energy used to heat water, which makes up a significant portion of most energy bills. Cutting just a few minutes off each shower not only saves energy but also conserves water.

Finally, the time of day you use energy can also play a part in savings. When you run major appliances during off-peak hours (when energy demand is lower), you can help keep co-op rates down and reduce pressure on the electric grid. That's a win-win! Sign up for our free Beat the Peak program to receive email alerts for peak times this summer at choptankelectric.coop/beat-peak.

Choptank Electric is here to help every season, every step of the way. We offer energy-saving programs and resources designed to help you lower energy use for your home or business and manage costs. Learn more about energy efficiency offerings and programs at choptankelectric.coop/energy-efficiency.



*Mike Malandro,
President & CEO
Choptank Electric Co-op*

Write to us: P.O. Box 430 | Denton, MD | 21629

Member Service Center: 1-877-892-0001

Automated Member Service: 844-975-2746 **Outage Reporting:** 1-800-410-4790

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State Government at Work

By Valerie Connelly, Vice President Government Affairs & Public Relations



The 449th session of the Maryland General Assembly ended at midnight Monday, April 13, with the passage of significant new energy policy aimed at bringing down the cost of electricity. The General Assembly also adopted a \$71 billion annual budget for fiscal year 27 and reduced spending in the fiscal year 26 budget to address a \$1.5 billion revenue shortfall.

This is an election year for the governor and all members of the General Assembly. As is the tradition in an election year, no new taxes or fees were included in the budget.

The Utility Relief Act is an omnibus bill that combined portions of more than 20 separate energy bills introduced during the session. The final product changes the way investor-owned utilities establish their rates, implement energy efficiency programs, bring on large load energy users like data centers, while streamlining the permitting process to encourage new generation projects in Maryland.

As an electric cooperative owned by our members, Choptank was not impacted by many of the provisions of the Utility Relief Act. Our rates continue to be lower than those of investor-owned utilities. The legislature recognized that Choptank has no motive to increase rates beyond the actual cost of distributing energy and ensuring a reliable grid. We do



Sen. Steve Hershey, District 36, and Valerie Connelly in front of the Maryland State House in Annapolis during Session

not have stockholders. All our revenues are returned to members in the form of capital credits.

Choptank did work with legislators and other Maryland utilities, including our generation and transmission provider Old Dominion Electric Cooperative, to craft proposals to bring new reliable generation to the state. The greater the supply, the better the price for our members.

An overhaul of the Net Energy Metering Program for new rooftop solar constructed after July 2027 will ensure that all customers pay their fair share of maintaining the distribution system. The changes were made because the rooftop solar industry is considered “established” and no longer needs the incentives that were put in place to jump-start this distributed energy source.

Lawmakers also considered several broadband bills were also considered. Choptank Fiber is making great progress in serving previously unserved families on the Eastern Shore. Our team worked to ensure that changes to broadband rules do not set back the progress we are making. Fortunately, bills to establish unified rates for broadband service and regulatory authority for the broadband industry were significantly amended to address Choptank’s concerns.

For our farming members, a study of sales and use tax on electricity purchased by agricultural operations was ordered. This issue arises because some farms qualify for a utility company’s residential rate tariff while others are served under a commercial rate tariff. Under Maryland law, electricity purchased for residential or manufacturing purposes is exempt from the state’s 6% sales tax. Commercial entities must pay the tax. Del. Sheree Sample-Hughes of the mid-Shore and Del. Kevin Hornberger of Cecil County argued that many other farm inputs (livestock, feed and bedding, seed, fertilizer, herbicides, baler twine or wire, fuel for use in farm equipment and various other items) are exempt from the sales tax and electricity should be considered as a necessary input for the production of food and fiber in Maryland. Under the amended bill, the Comptroller must submit a report by December 15, 2026. This allows for additional action next January. *Continued on page 17*

Choptank's team in Annapolis is grateful to all the members of the Eastern Shore delegation serving in the House and Senate for their work. The 12 legislators who represent our service territory are active on various committees, but work in unity when it comes to protecting our quality of life here on the Eastern Shore.

Finally, we want to remind all Choptank members that the primary election in Maryland will be held on Tuesday, June 23. Early voting runs from June 11 through the 18. We constantly remind elected officials that co-op members vote. So please exercise your right to vote in the June primary.



Before You Jump In Consider Potential Electric Hazards This Summer

By Nathan Smith, Manager of Safety, Training & Compliance

As summer approaches, many homeowners are getting pools ready and uncovering hot tubs for the season. May also marks **Electrical Safety Month**, making it the perfect time to think about an often-overlooked risk — electrical safety around water.

If you own a pool or hot tub, maintenance usually focuses on water quality, but the electrical system is just as important. Because these areas involve wet skin and surfaces, the risk of electrocution increases when electricity is present.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) notes that electricity around pools and spas can come from underwater lights, pumps, filters, vacuums, extension cords, outlets, switches, nearby electronics and even overhead power lines.

To reduce risk, have your pool or hot tub's electrical system inspected and updated to meet local and national electrical code standards by a licensed contractor. Never install a pool where power lines are overhead or within 25 feet of the water.

Key safety tips:

- Install ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) on all pool and spa equipment and nearby outlets
- Test GFCIs regularly
- Keep electrical devices, cords and outlets at least 5 feet away from the water
- Use battery-operated devices when possible
- Keep hands dry when handling electrical equipment
- Keep long-handled tools away from power lines
- Clearly label and ensure easy access to power switches

For more information, visit safeelectricity.org.

Source: CPSC

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Know the warning signs:

Tingling sensations, muscle cramps, difficulty moving, sudden panic in the water or malfunctioning lights may signal electrical current in the water.

If you feel a shock, move away from the source and get out immediately, avoiding metal ladders if possible. If someone else may be experiencing a shock, turn off the power before attempting a rescue and call 911.

As you prepare for a summer of fun, taking a few simple precautions can help keep your pool or hot tub safe for everyone.



Connecting Your Home:

A Guide to Choosing the Right Choptank Fiber Package

By McKayla Kiernan, Communications Specialist

From video calls during the workday to streaming movies in the evening, reliable internet has become a part of everyday life. As more homes connect to smart devices than ever before, having the right speed is no longer a luxury – it is essential.

With multiple package options available from Choptank Fiber, customers have the flexibility of choosing a plan that fits their lifestyle. But what do those speeds really mean for the average household? Choosing an internet plan often comes down to how your household uses it day to day.



Standard Plan – Best for Everyday Use

Ideal for work, play and more for 1-3 users.

- Download an entire HD movie in under 6 minutes
- Great for browsing, streaming and working from home
- 5+ devices that can stream 4K video at the same time

If your household relies on the internet for everyday activities such as streaming, email and virtual meetings, this plan offers plenty of speed to keep everything running smoothly.

Gigafast Plan – Built for High Demand

For households with heavy internet use, this plan delivers the speed and reliability needed to keep everything running smoothly.

- Ideal for busy households, remote workers and gamers
- 10+ devices that can stream 4k video at the same time
- Download an entire HD movie in less than 40 seconds.
- Supports multiple high-bandwidth activities at once

This plan is designed to handle full households where everyone is online at the same time without interruptions.

Performance Plan – Built for Busy Homes

Designed for larger families with more devices and higher demand. This is a strong choice if your home has multiple people online at once — whether that's streaming in one room, gaming in another or working remotely.

- Ideal for families and multi-user households
- Download an entire HD movie in less than 4 minutes
- 7+ devices that can stream 4K videos at the same time

Ultra Gigafast Plan – Maximum Speed, Maximum Performance

For those who want the fastest speeds available, this plan offers maximum performance for even the most connected homes.

- Ideal for home businesses, smart homes and power users
- Download an entire HD movie in less than 29 seconds.
- 10+ devices that can stream 4k video at the same time
- Delivers seamless performance, even during peak use

A Better Internet Experience

No matter which plan you choose, fiber internet is built to keep up with your daily life. From working to streaming your favorite shows, having the right speed makes all the difference. To explore all available packages and find the best fit for your home, visit [Choptankfiber.com](https://choptankfiber.com).

Choptank congratulates
the following employees
on their promotions:

Caitlyn Cawley
Member Service
Specialist 1st Class

Brian Postles
Apprentice Lineman
2nd Class

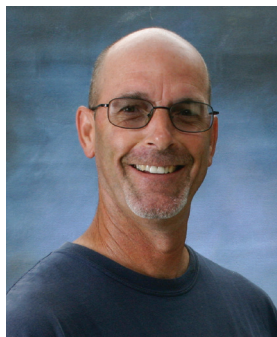
Scott Patrick
AMI Network and
Smart Grid Technician



Congratulations to Frankie Davis, DeShawn Gayle and Tyler Williamson on graduating from the Lineworker Technician Apprenticeship Program through the VMD Association!

THANK YOU, BROOKS TAYLOR, FOR 24 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE!

After 24 years as a lineman at Choptank Electric Cooperative, Brooks Taylor is retiring.



BROOKS TAYLOR

Chief Lineman

Brooks began his career at Choptank in 2002 as an Apprentice Lineman. In 2006, he became a Journeyman Lineman and was promoted to Chief Lineman in 2009, a role he held at the Salisbury district until his retirement in 2026.

As Chief Lineman, Brooks oversaw crew operations and mentored fellow linemen. Reflecting on his career, he says the most important lessons he learned were how to stay safe and calm during a task and how to communicate effectively with others.

To new employees joining the cooperative, Brooks offers this advice: "Communicate well and work hard."

"Brooks is a very dedicated and hardworking man. I have watched him work through some of the worst weather conditions imaginable, restoring power to the people he cares so much about," says supervisor Jason Gaskill. "He was a

respected leader in our shop and someone admired by many. Brooks has made a lasting impact on the employees here at Choptank Electric."

In retirement, Brooks plans to spend his winters in Florida playing golf. During the rest of the year, he will be at home helping with the family business. **We wish Brooks a very happy retirement.**

MEMORIAL DAY
REMEMBER AND HONOR

OFFICES CLOSED
MONDAY, MAY 25

CHOPTANK Choptank OUT IN THE FIELD

Our Denton crew replacing a triple-pole changeout in Federalsburg, Md.

On March 11-12, employees spent the day at the JA Inspire Career Fair at the Wicomico Civic Center, talking with more than 4,000 students about what we do at Choptank every day. At the event, students participated in immersive, hands-on activities, gaining practical experience with industry tools and equipment while engaging directly with business leaders from the Eastern Shore community.



SCAM TIP



Don't fall victim to power outage scams. When widespread outages occur, scammers may target affected utility customers. They may contact you via call, text or email, urging you to act quickly and provide personal information to restore service. We will never collect payment information over the phone. If you feel uncertain, hang up and call Choptank Electric directly.

Source: [FTC.gov](https://www.ftc.gov)



\$3 Million Returned to You in Capital Credits

By Katie Luckett, Director of Marketing, Communications and Education

Choptank Electric Cooperative's spring capital credit general retirement will average \$67 credited to May bills per eligible member.

A huge benefit of being a cooperative member is that you have ownership in Choptank Electric. Capital credits are a return on your investment in YOUR Co-op. Each month you pay your electric bill, you are contributing not only to the purchase and production of power, but also improvements to the distribution system that keep your lights on.

The amount received during a capital credit retirement is based on the amount of electricity a member purchased during the retirement years; in this case 1997 and 2024. This capital credit return will be distributed as a credit on eligible members' May electric bills, averaging \$67.34 per member. You can view your credit amount as a line item on your May bill that is either mailed to you or available on SmartHub.

"As your Board of Directors, it is our goal to operate efficiently enough to have positive margins to retire to our member-owners," says John Burke, Chairman of Choptank Electric Cooperative's Board. "We hope this \$3 million retirement will offer a bit of relief after a challenging winter for most."

Prolonged extreme cold during January and early February 2026, especially with Winter Storm Fern, drove extraordinary demand and caused natural gas prices and wholesale power costs to spike across the region. Due to the increased cost of energy supply, most members will see an increase in their monthly bills of approximately \$5.45 beginning this month.

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This is a direct pass-through of the cost of purchasing the electricity we distribute to you. Choptank's internal costs – the delivery portion of the bill – remain unchanged.

"As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, every dollar collected goes strictly toward the cost of providing reliable power — not shareholder profit," adds Mike Malandro, President and CEO of Choptank Electric. "We are doing everything we can to hold down internal costs, but we cannot control the increase in national and international energy markets."

Choptank is a member of Old Dominion Electric Cooperative (ODEC), a generation and transmission entity owned by 11 electric distribution cooperatives. We purchase 100% of our electricity from ODEC, which positions more favorably than many utilities. Choptank also owns generation facilities through our ownership of ODEC, which means we are less affected by daily power market fluctuations.

We hope this increase in energy prices is temporary. If the past is any indication, the cost of energy fluctuates from year to year. When the cost of energy stabilizes, we look forward to passing those savings on to members again.

Visit choptankelectric.coop/capital-credits to learn more about our capital credit retirement process and the benefit of your membership in Choptank Electric Cooperative.



THANK YOU FOR ROUNDING UP!

Last fall, the Choptank Electric Trust donated \$1,500 to **Holly Grove Christian School** in Westover, Md., to support supplies for its classroom greenhouse.

This school year marked the first full year of the greenhouse in Mrs. Webster's high school environmental class. About 25 students planted seeds in the fall including lettuce, tomatoes and green peppers and took ownership of their crops by checking on and caring for them during each class.

Throughout the year, the greenhouse provided hands-on lessons in responsibility, gardening and sustainable food practices. Students also incorporated their harvest into classroom activities, learning skills such as jarring

The Choptank Trust, a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation, awards organizations and individuals in all nine counties on the Eastern Shore with funds from Choptank Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up program. View recent awards below and learn more at:

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

March 2026 Trust Awards

- Talbot Humane \$2,500
- Baywater Animal Rescue \$3,649
- Denton Little League \$3,000
- Cecil County Ag Education Days Planning Assn. \$1,225
- Legacy Creative Arts and Athletics \$2,500
- Old Bohemia Historical Society \$1,500
- Hubbard Leverton Foundation Corp. \$4,000

The total of approved applications for March was \$24,899, which included \$6,525 for individual home and medical expenses.

and pickling. Funding from the Choptank Electric Trust helped purchase essential supplies including soil, seed packets, tools, pots, watering cans and wheelbarrows as well as a hydroponic system that will be introduced next school year.

"We sincerely appreciate the Choptank grant funding, which has made our greenhouse project possible and provided our students with valuable hands-on learning opportunities in science and sustainability," says Mrs. Webster.

During the final week of the school year, the greenhouse opens to the school community, allowing students to take home fresh vegetables they helped grow.



Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Choptank Fiber, LLC

Choptank Electric and Choptank Fiber exist to provide reliable and cost-effective services that improve the quality of life for our communities.

President & CEO

Micheal E. Malandro

Board of Directors

John J. Burke Jr.
Chairman, Cecil Co.

Robert B. Thompson
Vice Chairman, Ocean Pines District

Donna Richardson West
Secretary, Worcester Co.

Amy Ireland Brandt
Treasurer, Caroline Co.

Douglas D. Scott
Dorchester Co.

Kristen E. Nickerson
Kent Co.

Robert E. Arnold
Queen Anne's Co.

Craig N. Mathies Sr.
Somerset Co.

Jeffery D. Rathell Sr.
Talbot Co.

Matthew R. Holloway
Wicomico Co.