



## Clearing the Way for Reliable Service

Trees enhance the beauty of our region, and they seem harmless on a calm, sunny day. Add a bit of wind on a stormy night, however, and those swaying, towering Georgia pines may threaten your home's electric supply.

There are things we can't stop—storms, freezing rain, hurricanes—but we do what we can to prevent other outage culprits from robbing us of power. To decrease the chances of tree-related problems and provide safe, reliable service to our members, Coweta-Fayette EMC operates an aggressive right-of-way (ROW) maintenance program throughout the year.

ROW refers to a strip of land underneath/around power lines that the EMC has the right and responsibility to maintain. Trees must grow far enough from conductors where they will not cause harm or disrupt electrical service. Specifications vary, but a general guideline is 15 feet of space on either side of primary conductors and 20 feet of clearance above the highest wire on the pole. (Primary wire runs along roads/rights of way; service wire runs to meters, yard lights, etc.) ROW and easement agreements allow Coweta-Fayette EMC to access private property to maintain our distribution system.

ROW clearing is critical: to keep members' lights on and power flowing to homes and businesses, we

must outsmart Mother Nature by anticipating problems before they occur. Essentially, we trim trees to cut down on future outages. As part of a system improvement strategy, our contractors from Trees, Inc., Thompson Contracting, Inc. and Townsend Tree Service look for overhanging branches, foliage growing under/into power lines, leaning trees or any other type of "danger" vegetation that could pull down a wire. It's a job that's never done: by the time crews finish all the trimming along our 6,000+ miles of line, foliage has grown back at the starting point.

In 2016, we removed a total of 1,400 dead trees. The areas targeted for trimming are mapped out by substation; the Sharpsburg/Brooks vicinity can expect crews soon! (Members are normally notified by phone or in person; for regular trimming and maintenance, we use an automated mail-out.)

When investigating the causes of power interruptions, it's been found that an average of 15 percent occur when trees, shrubs or bushes grow too close to electric lines. If a tree encroaches on the safe distance, our vegetation team trims back branches or brush using chainsaws, bucket trucks, tree climbers, brush chippers and mowers. How much they trim depends upon the type of tree—if it's fast-growing, they trim branches

*continued inside*





## The President's Message

Chris Stephens  
President and CEO

As I recently completed my 21st year with Coweta-Fayette EMC, I began to reflect upon the many valuable lessons I have learned in the co-op world. One of the most outstanding things I have witnessed repeatedly (and will again, I am sure) reaffirms what I was taught as a child: help those in need.

The good deed of assisting others has never been more apparent than over the last couple of months, when a number of Georgia cooperatives experienced significant system damage from severe weather. In early September, Hurricane Hermine made landfall along the Gulf Coast and raced across South Georgia before reaching the Atlantic. Only a few short weeks later, Hurricane Matthew struck, traversing the East Coast and wreaking havoc. Each storm left destruction in its wake, and as a result, electric cooperatives joined forces to help our neighbors in need. With existing mutual-aid agreements in place between our co-op and others, Coweta-Fayette EMC sent linemen to help restore power.

The selfless act of helping people is reciprocal, and it is often rewarded. Here at Coweta-Fayette EMC, we have an emergency response plan in place should we face a crisis or major storm that threatens wide-

spread outages as a result of significant damage to our distribution system. Each year, we complete a tabletop drill that simulates an event and helps us prepare; this year, however, we put plans into action as a result of January's Winter Storm Helena.

We began monitoring the storm early and taking all the necessary steps to prepare. The initial forecast did not predict a major threat, but we did understand the potential. We notified all our employees, vendors and neighboring cooperatives in the event we were impacted. On the eve of the storm, we received notice that our area could see as much as half an inch or three-quarters of an inch of ice: this would not be a "significant" weather issue, this would be catastrophic.

In response, we activated our emergency response plan. We mobilized contractors and fellow co-ops to come to our aid. We also enlisted the help of Storm Services, a contractor providing meals for employees necessary to the power restoration process. We were prepared for the worst, but hoping for the best. As Helena passed, we were blessed to experience only minor damage and roughly 2,000 outages. The key here is that as we prepared for disaster, many of those we had helped in recent months were here to assist us.

Whether it is a storm or some other crisis, we will continue to help others in need. This is just who we are—it's one of the many services we provide, one of our cooperative principles. So as you prepare for emergencies, take comfort in the knowledge that we are also planning and working with others to help restore your service as quickly as possible should the need arise.

## Right of Way *continued*

more than they would for slow-growing varieties. As our crews trim limbs, they are chipped into mulch and removed. Sometimes, once the limbs are on the ground, they are simply mown over with a tractor.

If you're planning a landscaping project, remember to leave enough room between new plants and overhead power lines. You don't have to give up your dream of a shaded yard; simply choose the right tree for the right place. Plan for the mature height of the tree, and think about how wide the branches may spread.



For trees that are already established, ROW clearing keeps your family safe by ensuring the branches do not make contact with a downed power line. These wires can carry up to 25,000 volts, and an energized tree branch is incredibly dangerous—even deadly. Be mindful when you are around trees close to power lines, and make sure your children know the extreme dangers of climbing them. Ice can also weigh branches down until they are in danger of touching power lines. Thunderstorms or heavy rains can cause limbs or a tree itself to fall on overhead lines, taking out the power to your neighborhood. This can also cause energized lines to fall to the ground, posing a safety hazard to anyone nearby. If a power line is on the ground, stay away from it and notify us. If it starts an electrical fire, contact your fire department.

Vegetation clearing is one more way Coweta-Fayette EMC seeks to provide members with affordable electricity in the safest way possible. Please let us know if you see trees or branches that might pose a risk to our lines. Never attempt to trim them yourself! Call 770-502-0226 to find out more on our clearing program.

# Pay Your Way!

Member satisfaction is a top priority at Coweta-Fayette EMC, therefore we are continually seeking innovative ways to make your life easier and improve the overall customer experience. By offering a variety of convenient payment methods for our members – including the latest in online billing services – it's our way of saying, "Pay YOUR way at Coweta-Fayette EMC!"



### Bank or Credit Card Draft

Tired of trying to remember if you paid your bill? A bank or credit card draft will automatically pay your balance on the due date listed on your power bill.

### In Person

Walk in our offices at one of the following locations and pay by cash, check, money order or credit card.

### Offices:

#### Headquarters

807 Collinsworth Road  
Palmetto, GA 30268  
Phone: (770)502-0226

#### Newnan Office

14 Hospital Road  
Newnan, GA 30263  
Phone: (770)502-0226

#### Fayette Office

103 Sumner Rd.  
Fayetteville, GA 30214  
Phone: (770)502-0226

### Levelized Billing

A levelized bill is the average of your bills over the past 12 months. It brings your highest

bills down and your lowest bills up to nearly the same amount each month. By smoothing out the bills, you won't have to deal with higher payments during the air conditioning season, the heating season and the holidays.

### Mail

Use the bill stub and envelope included with your statement, and pay by check or money order.

### Online

Take charge of your account with our co-op customer service portal – it gives YOU the power!

With convenient payment options (VISA, MasterCard, Discover and e-check), account history, graphical data, email reminder sign-up and much, much more, this secure program provides members an easier way to manage bills and energy usage 24 hours a day from the comfort of home or while traveling. Call a customer service representative today to apply for your Personal Identification Number (PIN) for access to your account online at [Utility.org](http://Utility.org). We are doing everything in our power to make life easier for you.



### Phone

Call and talk to a customer service representative Monday-Friday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m., or use our automated system any time of the day or night to pay by credit or debit card.



### Senior Citizen Discount

Those over 65 with an annual household income of \$15,000 or less are eligible for a \$6.50 monthly bill waiver. The electric service account must be your principal place of residence, individually metered and in your name. Proof of income will be required.

### Senior Citizen Billing Cycle

Our senior members are eligible for a special billing cycle that generates bills at the beginning of each month. If you have any questions concerning payment methods, please contact an EMC customer service representative at (770)502-0226.



### PrePay

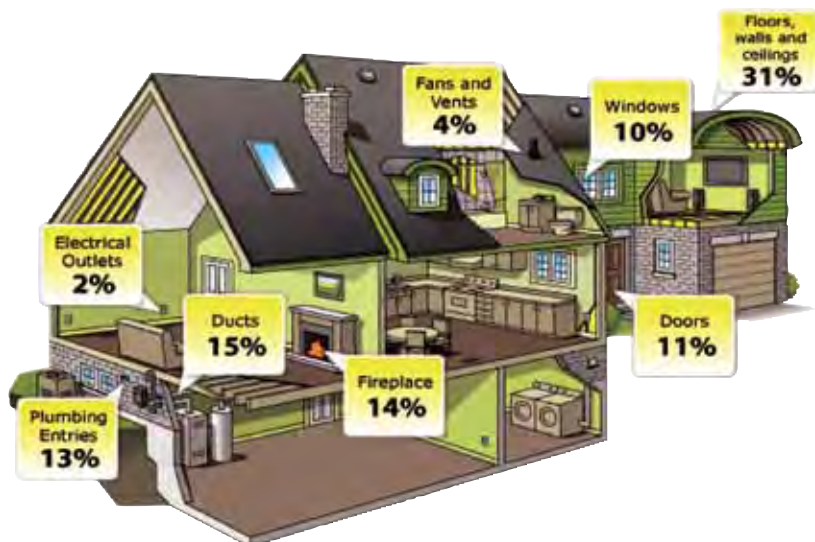
PrePay offers our members a plan with no deposits or late fees and no monthly bills. With PrePay, you can choose your own payment schedule and monitor your electric usage to help keep your energy costs down.



You will receive an email or text message when your PrePay balance is low.

Then simply make a payment by telephone, smartphone, online or in person during normal business hours.

More information on all payment methods is available at [Utility.org](http://Utility.org) or be calling 770-502-0226.



## Energy Audits: Small Measures, Real Savings

Warmer temperatures will be arriving soon, along with higher energy bills. A home energy assessment performed by highly qualified EMC technicians uses the latest technologies to inspect all areas of your home for energy loss, and includes diagnostic testing to measure air leakage.

Your energy assessment will provide a detailed analysis of cost-effective

home improvements to lower energy bills and increase comfort.

So don't wait for the warm weather to arrive, call Coweta-Fayette EMC today at 770-502-0226 and schedule your home energy audit. There are even rebates available once your energy problems have been corrected.

# Spring Into Energy Efficiency

Spring is the perfect time of year to make your home more efficient. Here are some quick tips that will save both energy and money. To learn about additional ways to cut your bill this spring, visit [TogetherWeSave.com](http://TogetherWeSave.com), or contact an energy expert at Coweta-Fayette EMC at 770-502-0226.



**Seal the cracks and gaps around your home.** Spring may be the right time to put away those storm windows, but it is also a good time to add weatherstripping and caulking around leaky window panes.

**Change filters regularly.** Changing furnace and air conditioner filters monthly can really help lower your energy bills. Dirty filters can restrict air flow and reduce the overall efficiency of your cooling system by making it work even harder on hot summer days.

**Clean the refrigerator inside and out.** Now is a good time to not only throw out the leftover fruit cake from the holidays, but also to check the temperature settings on your refrigerator. Ideally, a refrigerator's temperature should be between 37 and 40 degrees for maximum operating efficiency.

**Think sunblock.** By simply pulling the shades on your windows this spring and summer, you could save about \$35 a year. Your local hardware or do-it-yourself store has lots of inexpensive window coverings. Best of all, by blocking the sun, your house will stay cool and comfortable year-round.

Chris Stephens, President and CEO  
C. Bradford Sears, Jr., Attorney  
Douglas B. Warner, Attorney

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**POWER**lines

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**Coweta-Fayette**

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**www.utility.org**

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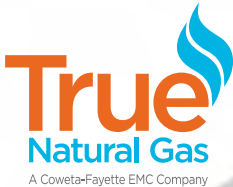


**You already have the best electric service...  
Now get the best in natural gas!**

As a Coweta-Fayette EMC member, you know what it's like to always have helpful, reliable service from people who know the power business. True Natural Gas, a subsidiary of Coweta-Fayette EMC, ensures you that same level of service as your natural gas provider. Enjoy consistently low natural gas rates and simple pricing plans.

Plus, we can send you just one bill for both your gas and electricity. Also, be sure to ask about our discounted charges for qualifying seniors. Please visit the Public Service Commission at [Psc.state.ga.us](http://Psc.state.ga.us) to evaluate how True Natural Gas compares to other marketers.

Don't wait – contact our Customer Service Department today at 770-502-0226 or you may sign up online at [Truenaturalgas.com](http://Truenaturalgas.com) and begin saving money!



**TRUE REWARDS**

The True Rewards program is our "Thank You." Other gas companies offer low rates to new customers – and their existing customers pay higher rates to make up for it.

True Rewards thanks loyal customers with incremental bill credits. The longer you stay, the more you save, and the savings are automatic. Stay long enough, and your monthly service charge could be as low as \$3.45 a month instead of \$5.95. You could save up to \$30 a year!



**"...True Natural Gas is my #1 choice  
for Natural Gas in Georgia"**

TrustDale's thorough analysis finds True Natural Gas at the top of the scale. If you are seeking a hometown choice, with experience and a commitment to providing your lowest price, with no gimmicks, delivered by friendly, well trained professionals, switch your service now!

