



Irma Barreled Across Entire EMC System

The warnings and preparations began days before Irma ever crossed the Georgia line. While weather forecasters were warning of the impending storm and urging people to prepare, Coweta-Fayette EMC activated their emergency response plan and began preparing for the worst and hoping for the best.

“With each change in direction, it became apparent the storm was going to move right through our service territory,” Coweta-Fayette EMC CEO Chris Stephens said. “We worked with our suppliers to bring in extra poles, transformers and other material and had those on hand before Irma arrived. We made arrangements to have additional crews on stand-by to assist once the weather conditions permitted us to begin restoration efforts.”

Our statewide association, Georgia Electric Membership Corporation, activated the emergency assistance program. Calls were placed from Texas to Wisconsin to line up additional crews as the extent of the damage became clearer.

As Irma arrived, reports of outages began coming in to our call center. The high winds and torrential rains caused trees to topple, breaking poles and wire and leaving a trail of destruction behind. The damage to the infrastructure of the electric system was severe.

As of 4:00 PM Monday, 9/11, we had 30,000 members without power. Crews worked 24/7 beginning Monday as the storm arrived. Linemen worked in the wind and rain except when the wind speeds became unsafe for them to safely operate and work out of a bucket. This continued until the last member was restored.

“We had over 50 broken poles and damage to some transmission lines,” VP of Engineering John Moore said. “Once we got the new poles in and made the repairs to the distribution feeder lines, restoration began to move much faster.”

Restoration efforts follow a plan. The first repairs are made to substations and the backbone of the grid. Then our attention is turned to services providing necessary community services, such as hospitals and water treatment facilities. After that, repairs are prioritized by the largest number of accounts restored in the shortest time.

“Once we can get power to the main feeder lines, or the lines that carry the power to large subdivisions and communities, we can begin working our way to the individual lines and taps,” Moore said. “When we start working on individual accounts the progress slows. We can work four hours and get a whole subdivision on by repairing the feeder line or it might take the same four hours to fix a single tap or line and just restore one account.”

continued inside





The President's Message

Chris Stephens
President and CEO

As I write this article, the benefits of the cooperative model are at the front of my mind. I am reminded one of the cooperative principles, cooperation among cooperatives. It seems it was just yesterday when I talked about this and for the same reason. The state of Texas and surrounding areas were recently devastated by Hurricane Harvey, and now Irma left a path of destruction across the Coweta-Fayette EMC service territory. These storms affect everyone in and around its path, but what comes out, is how people reach out and help others. This is never more apparent than when cooperatives step up and help each other. Our crews worked for four straight days alongside crews from Carroll EMC in Georgia, Fort Loudoun Electric Cooperative in Tennessee, Jackson Energy in Kentucky, MasTec, TCI, Trees Inc., and Pike Electric until every member who could receive power after Irma was restored. Our dedicated linemen leave the comfort of their homes to go and assist in often horrific conditions.



The cooperation among cooperatives extends past the Georgia state line into other countries. Electric cooperatives can be found all over the world. Globally, it is estimated that 1.2 billion people, or 16% of the global population, do not have access to electricity. This month, three of our brave linemen will be travelling alongside 12 other Georgia cooperative linemen to Bolivia to construct power lines to those who have never had access to electricity. Can you imagine living without basic lighting, running water, refrigeration or even a television? Access to electricity will soon become a reality for over 60 families, improving the quality of their life and enhancing their opportunities for education and economic development.

The month of October is Cooperative month. It's also the month we hold our Annual Meeting of Members. The Annual Meeting is an opportunity to demonstrate another of the cooperative principles, "Democratic Member Control". As a member, you have the opportunity to elect fellow members to represent you on the board of directors—the group that oversees EMC operations and works collectively to represent your best interests. You also get to participate in any election of any issue that is submitted before the membership requiring a vote. The Annual Meeting is also a time for us to show our appreciation for you.

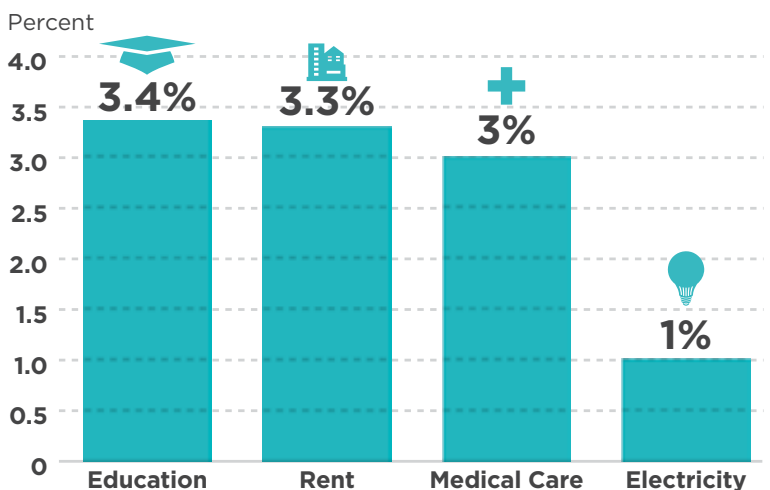
These are just a few benefits of the cooperative model that make me proud not only to be an employee of Coweta-Fayette EMC, but also a member. Any time severe weather threatens, just know that we are communicating with our sister cooperatives should we need their assistance and we'll work around the clock to restore power to those affected. I hope that you will be able to join us in celebrating the 70th Annual Meeting of Members this month.

ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

The cost of powering your home rises at a slower pace than many of your typical expenses. Compare the average price increase of these expenses each year over the last five years, and the value of electricity shines.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
Consumer Price Index

Average Annual Price Increase 2011-2016



Hurricane Irma

During a storm, it's not just the linemen working. It's all hands-on deck. Our agents answered 8,297 calls. And more than 17,828 calls were handled through our IVR and 4,611 were taken in our roll over call center. Other employees were assisting with delivering meals to crews in the field working and securing 36 rooms to provide lodging for the additional 72 line workers. Dispatch was tracking where crews were working, areas with broken poles and coordinating efforts to remove trees and lines from roads.

"We have a dedicated group of employees who truly care about our members," VP of Operations Wendell Webb said. "When there's a need, they respond. They go out in all conditions to get the power back to your homes and businesses."

Our employees were not the only ones working to get the power flowing again. Crews from Jackson Energy in Kentucky, MasTec, TCI, Trees Inc., Newnan Utilities, Fort Loudoun Electric Co-op in Tennessee, our neighbor Carroll EMC, and Pike Electric all joined in to help get as many members back on as quickly as possible.

"It takes a lot of coordination when you have crews who are not familiar with your service territory and area, but we are thankful that we have such a strong network to call on when situations like this occur," Webb said. "I'd also like to thank our local law enforcement agencies who helped keep our crews safe while working on the roadsides. They managed traffic and blocked roads so that our crews could get the job done."

We know it's an inconvenience when you are without power. We work hard to prepare and to inform you when situations like this are approaching.

"We began preparing our members for the potential damage Irma could cause on Friday before the storm arrived," VP of Communications Chellie Phillips said. "We know our members want information and we work hard to keep you updated throughout through Facebook, Twitter and our website.

Local media was also a tremendous help in getting the information out to everyone."

Using social channels is the fastest way to get information out to the largest number of members quickly. We know over 36,000 views took place on Twitter and 38,649 of our members were reached through Facebook. We want you to know that we appreciate all the encouraging words you posted to our crews and employees as they worked day and night to restore power.

We know this act of nature caused undue hardship for our members and our employees. Both groups deserve a thank you for weathering this trying time.

"To our members, we want to say that you are some of the most patient and understanding folks around," Stephens said. "We all understand how much we depend on electricity in our daily lives. To have to go without, for even a few hours can be tough. To have to go without for several days is beyond tough.

"Our members showed us what they're made of. Showing patience with our restoration efforts and expressing untold amounts of caring and support for our line workers and other employees are just some of the incredible responses you had during this tough situation.

"I can't say 'thank you' enough.

"And to our employees, it must be said, you are some of the best people to work with, and your dedication to serving our members earns my highest admiration. Most of our employees worked 12-16 hour days throughout the storm, rotating into overnight shifts to keep us staffed 24-7. That's a tough schedule for anyone. But when you add to that the fact that many of them—like you—did not have electricity in their own homes it's even more admirable.

"Not seeing your family, or your home, in the daylight for several days in a row can wear you down. Our employees demonstrated a dedication and willingness to serve that our members can be proud of."



Be careful with third party payment vendors

If you use a search engine to find C-F EMC's website to pay your electric account, please make sure you select the link to the cooperative's website (www.utility.org). Many members are unintentionally clicking a link from an online payment processor not affiliated with the cooperative. These companies may appear legitimate because they use our EMC logo and name. They design their payment pages to look official and mimic the EMC's actual web page. However, if you read the fine print, you'll see that they are not affiliated with us and most charge a fee for their service. Third party bill payment services such as doxo.com, allow you to pay your various bills online, but what they don't tell you is how long it takes for your payment to arrive at our office. Third-party payment systems are not integrated into Coweta-Fayette EMC's billing system and may take several business days longer to process.



Many times, these companies simply print out a physical check and mail it to us on your behalf. It's not an electronic transfer of funds. If that payment is made too close to the bill's due date, it may result in an avoidable late fee. Likewise, members who submit payments on a disconnect notice may run the risk of their payment not making it to our system before their service is cut off.

Always remember that C-F EMC's official website will show you your actual balance and we will not charge you a fee to pay your bill. As long as you are using the pay bill option through our app or on www.utility.org, calling 770-502-0226 or have an automatic bank draft set up to pay your bills, you can rest assured that your payments will always post the instant you make them.

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