

# CEC inside your co-op

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THIS WINTER

## GET CHEEP!

Find proven ways to lower your energy costs using the Cooperative Home Energy Efficiency Program (CHEEP).

It doesn't take rocket science to figure out that a more energy efficient home helps reduce home energy costs.

The problem is many homeowners are unable or unwilling to pay the upfront price for added insulation, duct repairs, weather stripping and other upgrades. But what if the cost of these improvements was cut by half?



It's possible with Choctaw Electric's Cooperative Home Energy Efficiency Program (CHEEP). CHEEP offers a path to lower energy costs by paying rebates for the estimated saving of energy efficient improvements based on a professional analysis of your home. See "How It Works," below, for program details.

### HOW IT WORKS:

**1** CHEEP begins with a free energy assessment of your home. Energy professionals conduct a thorough inspection of your home, inside and out, and a visual inspection of attic insulation. They also perform a blower door test to determine how well your home is sealed and duct blasting to check your ductwork.

**2** Following the evaluation, you receive a list of suggested upgrades that includes the projected longterm energy savings and estimated costs for each improvement. You are under no obligation to make the suggested improvements, but members who do receive the biggest benefit.

**3** If you choose to make one or more of the suggested improvements, you receive a rebate of \$1 per watt of estimated savings, up to \$1,000 maximum. All work is performed by Precise Building Performance, a company specializing in energy-related services and quality installations for homeowners.

"Whether you choose to make any improvements or not, you still benefit by learning where your home is losing energy," says Brad Kendrick, CEC energy use specialist. "The evaluation alone is worthwhile, but those who follow through with upgrades will enjoy the immediate rebate, plus the longterm energy savings."

To sign up for CHEEP, please visit [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop) and click on Member Services/Home Energy Efficient Program. To visit with a CEC representative about the program, please contact Brad Kendrick at 800-780-6486, ext. 209, or email [bakendrick@choctawelectric.coop](mailto:bakendrick@choctawelectric.coop).

A monthly newsletter of  
Choctaw Electric Cooperative.

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24 Hour Outage Hotline

**800-780-6486**

MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

# Restoring Your Power

*When a storm strikes, there's a method in the madness.*

On October 22, a storm packing 80 mph winds moved through Choctaw Electric service territory, leaving 4,182 co-op members without power.

The situation reminds us that power outages aren't comfortable—for you or your co-op. As our crews slog through the night, you wait in the dark and wonder why your co-op isn't working faster. To make matters worse, you see a CEC truck drive right past your home without stopping. Can we not see that you are suffering?

The answer is yes, and we hear you, too. We understand the inconvenience and discomfort of a power outage because Mother Nature doesn't discriminate. Often, co-op employees who aren't working the storm are sitting home in the dark just like you.

These situations make many a lineman say they wish more consumers understood what's going on out there after a storm. A major outage is much like a military operation: When the boots hit the ground, line crews follow a battle plan that ensures power is restored to everyone in the shortest amount of time possible.

In an age of instant gratification, it's easy to forget there's no magic switch that flips



**BY KOONEY DUNCAN**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

the power back on. Crews must identify what poles and lines are damaged, or if a problem occurred at the substation. The line running to your home may look fine, but the source of outage is three miles down the road. When a truck passes your home, we're not ignoring you; we're going to the source of the problem or checking the line to ensure no other problems exist.

Remember, too, that poles and wires may look the same, but serve different purposes. Our priority is to locate the problem causing the greatest number of outages and repair it first. As we work through the system, our crews continue to focus on this priority. This procedure is followed by every electric utility in the nation because it is the safest and most effective plan of action.

Due to unexpected situations and tough working conditions, precise answers are hard to provide during a major outage. We urge members to monitor the restoration process via CEC's online outage map at [outages.choctawelectric.com](http://outages.choctawelectric.com), or check for updates on our Facebook page. Outages test the limits of everyone's patience. Please remember, we're working as hard as we can.

OFFICIAL



MINUTES

Scan this code with your smartphone or tablet to read the monthly minutes of your co-op board meeting. Minutes are also available at any CEC location.

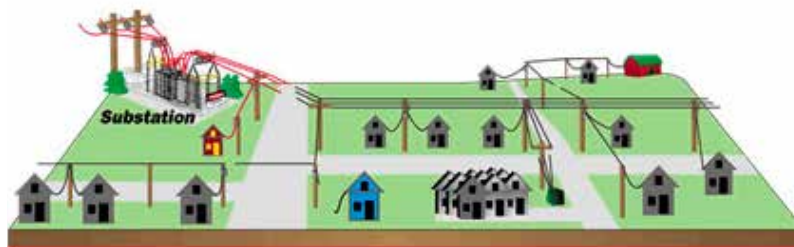
To scan the code, install a Bar Code Scanner app, available at the App Store.



WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT

## How Your Co-op Restores Power

In the diagram below, most of the countryside is in the dark. Fortunately, the substation serving the area is energized. It's receiving power from the transmission lines, shown in red (right). But a main distribution line from the substation to most of the area is damaged, leaving most of the consumers in this area without power.



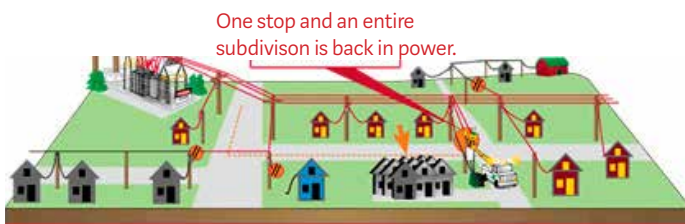
- 1** All repairs start with the main line. A large number of consumers down the line will have power returned once the main line is fixed. With the main line now fixed (now shown in red), the electric cooperative line crew can better isolate other damage and prioritize repairs.



- 4** Another tap line serving a number of homes and a farm on the hill is next on the list for this hard-working line crew.



- 2** Although a couple of repairs were closer, fixing the line into this subdivision down the road will get more consumers on faster.



- 5** By now, the folks in the blue house probably are wondering "what gives?" They see lights in the homes of their neighbors; they've seen co-op crews going by their home and working right across the road. And still they have no power! Electricity is coming to the pole outside the blue home (that happened with the first repair in Step 1), but the service line from the pole to their home is damaged. Repairs like these to individual homes come after crews have performed all the larger fixes.



- 3** Moving back down the road, the crew stops by this intersection to fix a damaged tap line. This repair restores power to the homes shown with orange arrows along this stretch of line.



Finally, all power is restored to the area. Crews may return in the following days or weeks to make long-term repairs and rebuild sections of damaged line or clear low hanging tree limbs. You may experience blinking lights or receive notice of planned maintenance outages. If you see crews working along the road, please slow down and give them plenty of room. Questions? Please call CEC at **800-780-6486**.



## HOLIDAY HOURS

Choctaw Electric will close on December 25-26 for Christmas and January 1 for the New Year holiday.

To report a service problem during this time, please call **800-780-6486** or report your problem using SmartHub.

Enjoy your holiday and stay safe!

## ARE YOU ON LIFE SUPPORT? CEC NEEDS TO KNOW.

CEC is asking members reliant on life support to please notify the co-op of their special power needs by filling out the life support form available at [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop). To be officially registered in our system as life support dependent, forms must be signed and returned to CEC. A portion of the form must be completed and signed by your physician.

CEC encourages life support members to prepare for outages by having an emergency plan in place and backup power available. During a prolonged outage, CEC will notify life support members if relocation is necessary. When reporting an outage, please mention your special health needs. Thank you!

## PROVIDE A METER ADDRESS AND YOU COULD WIN \$25

If a physical address is available for any or all of the meters listed on your electric bill, CEC would like to include this information in our files. The address is helpful for field employees who may need to locate the meter to make repairs or restore power.

You will receive a bill insert or email request with space to write in the physical address for each meter. Return the info by January 1, 2018 you could win a \$25 bill credit!

Updating the physical address will not affect your billing.

## HOT TOPIC

# Meter Tampering:

## IT'S NOT WORTH THE RISK.

**C**hoctaw Electric has a message for those who tamper with their meter: We're going to catch you. With advanced meters and other technology, that tends to happen sooner rather than later. When it does, power thieves pay for estimated usage plus a \$325 tampering fee. If meter damage occurred due to tampering, add another \$225. Because stealing electricity is a crime, it can also result in a fine or six months in the county jail.

Choctaw Electric investigated four cases of meter tampering in October. In each case, the co-op member interfered with the operation of their meter or jumped power to elsewhere to lower or avoid paying their electric bills.

"We've seen people do some dangerous things to get around paying for the power they use," explains Guy Dale, CEC director of safety and loss control. "Not only are these people stealing from their fellow co-op members, they're also risking their lives and those of our employees."

According to the Cooperative Research Network, power surging through a compromised meter can cause an electrical catastrophe. A short circuit could produce an arc flash bright enough to cause blindness and powerful enough to launch fragments of shrapnel-like, red-hot debris. Serious injury or death from electrocution, explosion, or fire often results from meter tampering. Only trained co-op personnel wearing protective clothing should work on meters.

"Anytime you get into a meter base, you run a risk," says Dale. "With an arc flash, somebody could get killed or seriously hurt."

Electricity theft is not a victimless crime. Choctaw Electric loses revenue and resources to investigate tampering. These

Meter tampering is a **crime** punishable by a **hefty fine** or **6 month imprisonment** in the county jail.



CEC defines meter tampering as **breaking a meter seal, opening a meter base, removing a meter, or altering an entrance cable** in any manner.

costs are then passed on to the entire membership. National estimates vary, but *The Washington Post* reports between \$1 billion and \$10 billion worth of electricity is stolen from utilities annually.

Since everyone pays for lost power, please let CEC know if you suspect meter tampering. If you think someone is using co-op power without paying their fair share of the costs, or if you have information related to electricity or materials theft, please call your co-op at **800-780-6486**.

Rest assured, we'll keep your name anonymous. Because you share in the ownership of Choctaw Electric, when people steal from the cooperative, they're stealing from you, too!



BUILDING A BETTER WORLD

# A little **Light** can change **Lives**

CEC lineman connects with co-op history —and gives thanks by giving back.



CEC Lineman Darren Frazier flanked by children in the village of Chi.

**T**o the Guatemalan children of Chiis, the linemen looked like giants. Towering over them in hard hats; some of the men sporting beards and facial hair the likes of which these kids had never seen. In a sense, the children were right.

The thirteen linemen participating in Oklahoma's Energy Trails project became mythical, bringing the magic of electricity to a place so remote one child walked two hours one way to reach school.

A veteran lineman with 23 years under his belt, CEC's Darren Frazier volunteered for the project because he wanted to connect with the experience of the original co-op pioneers who brought electricity —and a better quality of life—to rural residents. This yearning mixed with a desire to contribute his skills as a way of saying thanks.

"All of my life, I've been blessed. When I heard about the expedition, I thought, here's my opportunity to give back," Frazier says.

Working alongside villagers to build lines revealed an inspiring quality of their human spirit. "They are a joyful, animated people in spite of their poverty," he recalls, "And they have a very strong sense of community."

Excited about electricity, the villagers asked every day, "¿Cuántos días?" How many days? The team finished the project in three weeks, bringing power to sixty-six homes.

A 14-year old boy named Alfonso impressed Frazier. Alfonso walked two hours one way to attend high school. Electric lights, Alfonso said, would allow him to study in the evening. One day Alfonso hopes to become a doctor so that he, too, can give back. One light truly can make a difference.



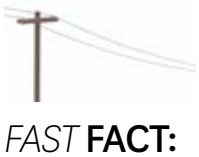
CEC's Darren Frazier (left) and Jason Childress of East Central Electric work alongside men from Chiis to set poles. The Energy Trails team formed a strong bond with the community despite the language barrier. On the day the linemen left, many of the children cried.





WFEC representative Tim Lisenberry explains some of the new features of the Hochatown substation to CEC employees. PHOTO/JENNIFER BOLING.

POWERED UP



## FAST FACT:

Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) owns and maintains all substations in CEC service territory. The substations convert high voltage electricity from WFEC transmission lines to lower voltages more suitable for serving homes and businesses.

# Improved Service For Hochatown

**A**round Hochatown, new cabins are popping up like pine trees. Vacation homes, second homes, and permanent homes provide steady business for local builders. They also increase the power load for Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC).

Last year, CEC added 234 new accounts in Hochatown. Since 2013, the co-op counts 581 new meters in the area, or roughly 79 percent of CEC's total meter growth.

Because the expansion shows little sign of slowing down, CEC requested that power supplier Western Farmers Electric Cooperative make significant upgrades to its Hochatown substation. Crews completed the work in July.

According to Guy Dale, CEC director of safety and loss control, the substation upgrade included a new control system with advanced automation for improved safety and operation. Most important for co-op members in the area, Dale says the improvements more than doubled the substation capacity from 10.5 megawatts (MW) to 28 MW.

"With this upgrade and other things we've done, our members should experience improved reliability," he explains. "With the increased capacity, it should handle the growth in the area for quite some time."

**28** megawatts

Load capacity at Hochatown Substation.

**581** meters

The number of new accounts added in the Hochatown area over the past five years.

Hochatown is one of two substations in CEC territory that uses WFEC's new control system. The other is the Dominance-Huber substation that serves Dominance Industries and Huber Engineered Woods.

For more information on the Hochatown upgrade, please call **800-780-6486**.

## Three Ways To AVOID HIGH WINTER HEATING BILLS

It happens every winter: The temperature drops, heating bills go up, and the phones at Choctaw Electric begin to ring. To avoid the unpleasant bill surprises that come with frigid weather, please heed these tips from your co-op.

**1.** Make sure your thermostat is not set on Emergency Heat. It's easy to flip the thermostat to the emergency setting by accident. This forces your system to run nonstop, wastes energy and drives your bill sky high.

**2.** If you own a heat pump, make sure your heat tapes don't get stuck in the "on" position following a cold snap. This is the number one cause of CEC high winter bill complaints. When heat tapes remain on, rather than cycling on and off as needed, homeowners will notice a drastic increase in usage. Be sure to check them after every cold snap.

**3.** Space heaters are useful for providing a little extra heat as needed. But if you're not careful, that small appliance can add up to a big electric bill. Try an electric blanket instead.



### WHEN THE ENDS DON'T MEET

Choctaw Electric Cooperative keeps a list of agencies available to help families and individuals with winter heating costs. If you are struggling to pay your bill, please contact our office at **800-780-6486** to learn about utility bill assistance. CEC also offers payment plans that will help you avoid late fees.



### Community Events

Help us promote your event by sending [event details in advance](#). Please send event information to Jennifer Boling/Inside Your Co-op/ PO Box 758, Hugo, OK 74743; or e-mail info to [jboling@choctawelectric.coop](mailto:jboling@choctawelectric.coop). Events and dates are subject to change.

#### DECEMBER

- 1 City of Lights Christmas Parade, Idabel
- 1-2 Atoka Craft Show
- 1-3 Greatest Story Ever Told Drive-Through Pageant Church of the Nazarene Antlers
- 2 Santa's Gift Shop Fairgrounds in Antlers
- 2 Christmas Parade, Hugo
- 2 Atoka Christmas Parade
- 24 Christmas Eve
- 25 Christmas Day
- 31 New Years Eve

#### JANUARY

- 1 New Years Day
- 1 First Day Hike McGee Creek State Park
- 15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

**\$ Lucky Account # 38856262** (\$50 Bill Credit). If the account number above belongs to you, contact your co-op by the 10th of the month to claim your \$50 bill credit. Call Jennifer Boling at **800-780-6486**, ext. 207, or contact CEC via email or in person.

### BUDGET-FRIENDLY EFFICIENCY TIPS



**Lighting:**  
LED bulbs save 60 percent or more energy than incandescent bulbs and can now be purchased at box retailers for \$5 or less.



**Heating and Cooling:**  
Replace air filters every one to three months and seal/insulate ductwork to maximize the efficiency of your home's heating and cooling system.



**Appliances & Electronics:**  
Keep appliances and electronics free from lint and dust, and use a power strip to turn off electronics when not in use, avoiding "energy vampires."



# december

Best days according to Moon phases.



## Best planting days

Above ground crops . . .	1, 18-19, 23-24, 28-29
Root crops . . . . .	4-5, 11-14
Seed beds . . . . .	4-5, 13-14
Kill plant pests . . . . .	2-3, 6-10, 15-17, 20-22, 25-27, 30-31

## Best fishing days

☞ Best . . . . .	4-5, 23-24
☺ Good . . . . .	1, 13-14, 21-22, 29
☹ Fair . . . . .	2-3, 6, 8-10, 20, 28, 30-31
☹ Poor . . . . .	7, 11-12, 15-19, 25-27

## Best days to do other stuff

Quit smoking . . . . .	9, 14
Begin diet to lose weight . . . . .	9, 14
Begin diet to gain weight . . . . .	1, 29
Cut hair to encourage growth . . . . .	1, 23-25
Cut hair to discourage growth . . . . .	11-13
Go to the dentist . . . . .	9-10
Start projects . . . . .	19
End projects . . . . .	17
Go camping . . . . .	16-17
Plant above ground vegetables . . . . .	23-25
Plant below ground vegetables . . . . .	13-15
Destroy pests and weeds . . . . .	26-27
Graft or pollinate . . . . .	5-6
Prune to encourage growth . . . . .	26-27
Prune to discourage growth . . . . .	7-8
Harvest above ground vegetables . . . . .	1-2, 28-29
Harvest below ground vegetables . . . . .	9-10
Make sauerkraut, can, or pickle . . . . .	13-15
Cut hay . . . . .	26-27
Begin logging . . . . .	18-20
Set posts or pour concrete . . . . .	18-20
Breed animals . . . . .	13-15
Wean animals or children . . . . .	9, 14

—from the *Old Farmer's Almanac*

# Good Eats

IN SOUTHEAST OKLAHOMA

## Creamy Au Gratin Potatoes

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 russet potatoes, sliced into ¼ inch slices
- 1 onion, sliced into rings
- salt and pepper to taste
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups milk
- 1½ cups shredded Cheddar cheese



### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400°F. Butter a 1-quart casserole dish. Layer ½ of the potatoes into bottom of the prepared casserole dish. Top with the onion slices, and add the remaining potatoes. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

In a medium-size saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Mix in the flour and salt, and stir constantly with a whisk for one minute. Stir in milk. Cook until mixture has thickened. Stir in cheese all at once, and continue stirring until melted, about 30 to 60 seconds. Pour cheese over the potatoes, and cover the dish with aluminum foil. Bake 1½ hours in the preheated oven.

SOURCE: ALLRECIPES.COM

## ■ swap shop

FREE CLASSIFIED ADS FOR CEC MEMBERS

### ■ LIVESTOCK & PETS

Show and meat rabbits for sale. 580-982-8267.

Ark of McCurtain County offers discount spay/neuter services +mobile spay/neuter services. We also have dogs and cats ready for adoption. 580-236-2275.

HAVN low cost spay and neuter clinic in Fort Towson. To make an appt., please call 580-873-2771. Your call will be returned.

Sell your stuff here for free! To submit an ad, see info below.

### ■ MISCELLANEOUS

Volunteer Your Time to Change a Child's Life. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children, a volunteer-powered network of committed people from all walks of life who believe society has an obligation to these children. We believe every child has the right to be treated with dignity, to be safe, and to thrive in the embrace of a loving family. For more information, call 580-298-2921. Address: LDCAA, 603SW B Street, Antlers, OK, 74523.

SWAP SHOP ads are free for CEC members. Submit ads online at [www.choctawelectric.coop](http://www.choctawelectric.coop), email to [jboling@choctawelectric.coop](mailto:jboling@choctawelectric.coop), or mail ads to CEC *Inside Your Co-op*, PO Box 758, Hugo, OK 74743. Ads must include a telephone number or email address. Please provide your name, mailing address and CEC account number when submitting an ad.