

### Cooperative Principle #3

Discover the seven principles that guide the way we do business.

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For members of **Choctaw Electric Cooperative**

APRIL 2024

# CEC *inside your* co-op

## Agritourism in southeast Oklahoma

### Explore the great outdoors in springtime!

If southeast Oklahoma is known for one thing—perhaps more than any other—it's our trees. Each year, visitors flock to the area to spend time outdoors. Part of the appeal, says Jia Johnson, director of public relations for Choctaw Electric, is the feeling of being in the woods.

Choctaw Electric's service territory has an abundant variety of trees, from pines, to hardwoods, and in the spring, blooming redbuds and dogwoods. The flowering trees can be enjoyed while hiking one of many trails in Beavers Bend State Park, or along the main streets in towns like Idabel.

Each spring, Idabel hosts a Dogwood Days Festival, which highlights the beauty of the community in springtime. This year's festival, April 5-8, will celebrate another natural wonder—the solar eclipse.

"This year it was decided to combine Dogwood Days with the weekend of the solar eclipse, making it a four-day festival," Johnson says. "The Dogwood Days/

Eclipse Festival is going to be a one-of-a-kind event for this area."

Visitors can expect a family friendly atmosphere including a classic car parade, pageant, glow in the dark Easter egg hunt, downtown shopping, food and craft vendors.

Make plans to join in the fun, but know you won't be alone! Brad Kendrick, member service representative at Choctaw Electric and co-chair of the festival, says up to 70,000 visitors are expected for the solar eclipse.

Johnson says plans for hosting eclipse visitors have been three years in the making. The April 8 eclipse will begin over southeast Oklahoma around 12:28 p.m. The full eclipse will start at 1:45 p.m. and last for about four minutes.

Whether you head outdoors for the trees or the celestial event, you can take pride in the rich agritourism the area has to offer—and help welcome visitors who come to enjoy the beauty of southeast Oklahoma. ☘



For eclipse viewing locations, visit <https://facebook.com/2024solareclipseemccurtaincounty>

## MANAGER'S REPORT



## Cooperative Principle #3

### Members' Economic Participation

BY KOONEY DUNCAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

We continue our series exploring the Seven Cooperative Principles with the third principle — Members' Economic Participation. Cooperatives are unique in the way they operate because the members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative.

As a not-for-profit electric utility, a portion of our year-end revenues are invested back into Choctaw Electric to help us maintain and improve the co-op. One way the co-op has been able to strategically utilize our surpluses is to expand our lines and serve more members, which in-turn, benefits the co-op. An example of this is our growth in Hochatown; we had power availability in place before the economic boom that has happened there.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of co-op membership is that we return all excess revenue to our members, in the form of capital credits. In 2022, we returned \$1.6 million to our members, and since 2017 your cooperative has returned over \$5 million.

Another way we contribute dollars to the community is through our annual

gross receipts taxes. Gross receipts taxes are returned back to schools in our service territory, based on the amounts of lines in those school districts. In 2022, Choctaw Electric contributed \$2.1 million to 27 local schools.

Choctaw Electric employs more than 60 men and women who are also contributing economically to our communities. With 70% of CEC's costs each year going to Western Farmers Electric Cooperative for power generation, some of that expense makes its way back into our local economy by the way of WFEC employees who also live in our communities. We further support our communities by using local vendors and contractors whenever possible.

If you're interested in the economic workings of the cooperative, I encourage you to take a look at our Annual

Report, published each September. Always feel free to reach out if you have questions about *your* member-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperative. ☺



Scan here to read CEC's  
most recent Annual Report.

**Lucky Acct #38866423** If this is your account number, please contact CEC by the 5th of the month to claim your **\$25 bill credit**. Unclaimed bill credits roll over each month by \$25 for a maximum credit of \$100. To claim your credit, please call 800-780-6486, ext. 241.

## Choctaw Electric Cooperative

*Serving members in Choctaw,  
Pushmataha, Atoka, McCurtain,  
Bryan and LeFlore counties.*

Monday-Friday • 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

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**24 Hour Outage Hotline**  
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Emma Bundy



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## Congratulations, Youth Tour winners!

Each year, CEC invites high school juniors to participate in an essay contest. Winners receive an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital, where they tour cultural and historic sites and have a chance to meet with Oklahoma's congressional leaders. This year's Youth Tour winners are Emma Bundy, Juannae Lewis and Claire Burris. The three delegates will represent Choctaw Electric in Washington, D.C., June 14-20. Congratulations! 🎉



## #ThankALineman

On April 25, Choctaw Electric will celebrate Lineman & Employee Appreciation Day. If you want to join us in showing appreciation to the linemen who work diligently to ensure you have power, use the hashtag #ThankALineman on social media. 🎉



## Choctaw Electric hosts state legislators

On March 8, CEC hosted state legislators and staff from the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperative (OAEC). We enjoyed hearing updates from the second session of the 59th Legislature and sharing about issues that impact CEC and our members. Among those in attendance were (above, from left) OAEC CEO Chris Meyers, Sen. David Bullard, Rep. Eddy Dempsey, 2023 Youth Tour Delegate Kate Clifton, Rep. J. J. Humphrey, OAEC Director of Government & Regulatory Affairs Jim Reese and Choctaw Electric CEO Kooney Duncan. We greatly appreciate you taking time to visit Choctaw Electric! 🎉



## Batter up for Buddy Ball!

Grab your baseball cap and head to the bleachers! You're invited to join us for Buddy Ball, a sporting event designed for children and adults with special needs. In cooperation with several local sponsors, CEC will host the inaugural Buddy Ball game on April 20. To learn more, contact Choctaw Electric at 800-780-6486, ext. 241. 🎉



# Power in planning

## Be ready when a storm strikes

**S**pringtime is a beautiful season in Oklahoma, but it can also produce dangerous weather. Do you know what to do in case of a severe thunderstorm or tornado? While you can't predict the weather, you can plan ahead so when a storm strikes, you have the tools and resources to effectively weather it.

### Before the Storm

Have a plan. Talk to your family about what to do in the event of a severe storm or tornado. Point out the safest location to shelter, like a small, interior, windowless room on the lowest level of your home. Discuss the dangers of severe thunderstorms—lightning can strike 10 miles outside of a storm. Remember, when you hear thunder roar, head indoors.

Make a storm kit, including a three-day supply of non-perishable food and water for each family member, a manual can opener, sanitation and hygiene supplies, a first aid kit, flashlights and extra batteries, prescriptions, baby supplies and pet supplies. Store the kit where it's easy to access if the power goes out.

### During the Storm

Pay attention to local weather alerts—either on the TV, your smartphone or weather radio—and understand the types of alerts. A thunderstorm or tornado watch means these events are possible and you should be prepared; a warning means a thunderstorm or tornado has been spotted in your area and it's time to take action.

In the event of an outage, turn off appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert damage from a power surge, and will also help prevent overloading the circuits during power restoration. Leave one light on so you will know when power is restored.

If utilizing a small household generator, do so safely. Never run a generator inside. Don't connect it to your home's electrical system, as it could backfeed into the grid, which can be deadly to co-op crews.

### After the Storm

Stay off the roads if trees and power lines

are down. Lines and equipment can still be energized, posing life-threatening risks to anyone who gets too close. Allow ample room for utility crews to safely perform their jobs—including on your property. Avoid walking through flooded areas where power lines could be submerged.

Never drive over a power line. If a power line comes into contact with your vehicle, stay in the vehicle and call 911, unless it's unsafe to do so. If you must leave the vehicle, jump out, landing on both feet, and shuffle away. When you're at least 10 yards away, call 911.

Advance planning for severe storms or other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and can lessen the impact of the storm's effects. Act today, because there is power in planning! ⚡

**For resources to help you prepare for major weather events and natural disasters, visit [www.ready.gov/make-a-plan](http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan).**

# Spring into efficiency

## Optimize your home for a season of savings

**S**pring cleaning isn't just about tidying up; it's about ensuring your home operates efficiently. Follow this checklist to save money while increasing your home's comfort.

- ✓ Begin by scheduling a thorough HVAC check-up, ensuring your unit is ready to handle the upcoming seasons. Regular maintenance not only extends the lifespan of your HVAC system but also ensures it operates at peak efficiency.
- ✓ Don't forget to replace air filters. This small step can significantly enhance airflow, improve air quality and reduce energy use.

✓ Extend your efficiency efforts to the kitchen by cleaning refrigerator coils. Dust and debris can accumulate over time, causing your refrigerator to work harder than necessary. A quick vacuum not only improves efficiency but also extends the life of your appliance.

✓ Incorporate strategic planting on the north and west sides of your home. Opt for shade-providing trees like oaks to cool your home during the summer months. Windbreaks, especially for manufactured homes or those on pier and beam foundations, can significantly reduce energy consumption.

✓ Evaluate your home for potential updates. If your HVAC unit is more than 15 years old, it may be time for an upgrade. Replace leaky windows with energy efficient options like Low-E vinyl argon gas windows. Choctaw Electric offers efficiency loans to help finance these updates. Learn more at <https://choctawelectric.net/energy-efficiency-program>.

✓ Lastly, as the temperatures rise, consider reducing the temperature of your water heater to 120°F. And don't forget to unplug space heaters that might be running in well sheds! ⚡

