



inside *your* co-op

Published for members of Choctaw Electric Cooperative

TOP STORY

HORSING AROUND

Improving service for co-op members puts CEC technician in curious company



Ricky Bowen, CEC IT manager, offers a little on-the-job training to a curious horse. PHOTO:DALE SMITH.

When Rickey Bowen hired on as manager of information technology (IT) at Choctaw Electric Cooperative, he never dreamed his work would be intriguing to a horse. That changed when he was called out to fix a technical issue at a meter point south of Clayton.

The job required Bowen to carry his computer to the meter pole, which is located in the middle of a horse pen.

“When I got there I pulled out my lap top, and the minute I sat down, the horse came over and starting looking over my shoulder,” Bowen said, laughing. “I was trying to do my job, but he kept nudging me and biting my pants leg and pulling at them.”

Bowen said he moved several times to get away, but the horse refused to take the hint. Every time he shifted position, the horse followed. Normally, the technical issue is a quick fix, he explained, but all the horsing around slowed the process a bit.

“It took 30 minutes for me to finish,” he said. “Usually, it takes about 10 minutes.”

Most people assume co-op technical professionals spend their time behind a desk, staring at a monitor. The truth is their work may require them to travel to co-op substations or other locations in the field. Sometimes it leads them to the middle of a corral.

“I was warned about the horses before I got there, but that’s life in rural Oklahoma,” said Bowen. ☺

MANAGER'S REPORT

New Year, New Goals

Strategic plan helps CEC zero in on critical commitments

Happy 2019, everyone. Just saying it reminds me that time flies like a Nolan Ryan fastball. To keep us on track at Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC), we prepare a strategic work plan. The plan highlights the goals we hope to accomplish over the next 12 months. We decide on these goals based on the recommendations of your elected trustees and our co-op mission to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy services. As a CEC member, you should know what your co-op is focusing on in 2019 and why.

Right of way. CEC will continue its push to improve system-wide reliability through intensive right of way clearing and maintenance. We sprayed and trimmed more than 1,700 miles of right of way last year. Weather permitting, we aim to cover 1,600 miles this year. This work isn't cheap or easy. Sometimes it requires trimming back your favorite trees, but it is absolutely necessary. The payback is a system that is safer for employees and the public, and electric service with fewer blinking lights, reduced outages and faster response times. We know these things matter to you, and we appreciate your cooperation with our crews.

Managing Costs. Keeping the power flowing to 13,000+ members over 3,590 miles of line costs a lot of money. Since 2014, CEC reduced its debt by \$19 million with no loss in the quality of service. We aim to continue our commitment to efficient operations at every level. We do this while collecting revenues from an average of 5.24 members per mile. Investor-owned utilities collect money from an average of 48 customers per mile.

That's not apples to apples. Yet, CEC continues to deliver power on a budget that amounts to a shoestring compared to the big guys.

Safety. I'll keep it short and to the point: The safety of our employees and members is priority one. We won't sacrifice safety for savings or any other reason—ever.

Community Involvement: CEC is a cooperative. Co-ops believe in serving their local communities. We do this by providing electric service. We also encourage our employees to get involved in local organizations that work toward bettering lives, improving schools, helping local businesses, supporting youth groups, and more. This commitment to community drives CEC programs such as Youth Tour, Kilowatt Kids Camp, school safety programs and AARP safe driving classes, but it's a lot deeper than that. It's why we're here. It's who we are—and we're going to keep doing it.

Thank you all for your support. It's going to be a good year. 🍀



BY KOONEY DUNCAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Choctaw Electric Cooperative

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

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24 Hour Outage Hotline

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Lucky Acct #6393301 (\$25) If this account number belongs to you, contact CEC by the 10th of the month to claim your \$25 bill credit. Unclaimed bill credits will roll over each month by \$25 for a maximum credit of \$100. To claim your credit, please call 800-780-6486, ext. 207.

OFFICIAL MINUTES OF YOUR CEC BOARD MEETING

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 and online at www.choctawelectric.coop.

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



CO-OP YOUTH

Is Your Teen A Leader?

Encourage them to enter CEC's Youth Tour contest

Choctaw Electric Cooperative is looking for three high school juniors with leadership potential to participate in the 2019 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. Students selected for the trip will spend the week of June 13-20 touring Washington DC with more than 60 students from across the state.

"This is a special experience that these kids will remember for the rest of their lives," says Jia Johnson, Choctaw Electric director of member services. "We love it that we are able to offer this opportunity. It's inspiring for the kids and for us, because we see how much they gain from it."

Each day of the tour is packed with activities and site-seeing. Highlights include stops at the National Monument, Vietnam Memorial, Arlington Cemetery, Smithsonian Museums, US Capitol, the White House, and more. An evening cruise on the Potomac River and a trip to Baltimore's Harbor Place Mall, and



2018 Youth Tour winners Katelyn Loftin, Serenity McGuire, and Kasey Alford snap a selfie on the steps of the US Capitol.

other social events round out the fun. All expenses are paid by Choctaw Electric.

Students interested in Youth Tour are encouraged to enter CEC's Youth Tour contest. Rules, guidelines and application forms are available online at www.choctawelectric.coop, or call your co-op at **800-7890-6486**. The deadline to enter is February 16, 2019.



Brad Kendrick

As Choctaw Electric's energy use specialist, Brad Kendrick gets an up-close look at how co-op members use electricity. Kendrick makes an average of six on-site visits every month to perform home energy audits or help members

with high bill complaints locate the source of their problem. His energy sleuthing skills turn up some interesting culprits, from malfunctioning well pumps to rat holes in duct work.

Because many of these problems are common across our system, we're sharing them with you through our new Energy Detective section. Be sure to read it each month for clues from actual cases in co-op territory. It could help you avoid similar problems in your home.

Questions about your energy use? Please call Brad Kendrick at **800-780-6486** or email bakendrick@choctawelectric.coop.



THE HOME

Energy DETECTIVE

By Brad Kendrick, CEC Energy Use Specialist

During winter months, make sure your thermostat is **not** set on **Emergency Heat (EmHeat)**. This easy-to-make mistake is the culprit behind many of CEC's high winter bill complaints, so be careful when adjusting your thermostat!

OUTAGE TIMES

CEC members experienced an average outage time of **two hours** in 2017.

That's **11 MINUTES**

longer than the U.S. average, which excludes outages caused by winter storms and hurricanes. These catastrophes push the national average to

7.8 hours.



— SOURCE: US ENERGY INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION
ANNUAL ELECTRIC POWER INDUSTRY REPORT

What's At Stake

Planning a new home? Call CEC first to avoid costly delays

Members call the co-op daily with questions about establishing new electric service or extending lines to additional buildings near their home or barn. Sometimes they've already located their new shed or laid out the plans for their new home before they call Choctaw Electric. This can create problems if the assumed line location is unsafe or otherwise impossible for CEC to bury or erect.

CEC staking engineers make sure power lines are located to ensure the most reliable service, protect the member and their property from possible accidents, and offer safe access for co-op employees who may need to work on the line.

Before you plan a new home or building or locate a storage shed or other structure on your property, please check with your CEC staking team first. You'll save money and headaches by avoiding unexpected changes in your construction plans.

Schedule an appointment with CEC staking engineers by calling **800-780-6486**, or send an email request to customerservice@choctawelectric.coop.

Pay Your Bill While You're Out And About



Paysite kiosks are ready to accept your electric bill payment at the following locations, or use the online paysite kiosk locator at <http://paysitekiosklocator.com/> to locate a kiosk near you.

Save A Lot Grocery, Hugo.
OPEN SUNDAY, 9 AM - 8 PM.
MON.-SAT. 7:30 AM - 9 PM

Country Market, Clayton.
OPEN 6 AM -10 PM, 7 DAYS/WK

Choctaw Travel Plazas in Atoka, Antlers, Broken Bow, and Idabel. OPEN 24 HRS.

CJ's Corner Store, Smithville
OPEN MON.- FRI. 6 AM-7 PM;
SAT. 6:30 AM-7 PM; SUN. 9 AM-5:00 PM

RECIPES



Slow Cook Chicken Taco Soup

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 onion, chopped | green chilies, undrained |
| 1 (16 oz) can chili beans | 1 (1.25 oz) pkg taco seasoning |
| 1 (15 oz) can black beans | 3 skinless, boneless chicken breasts |
| 1 (15 oz) can corn, drained | Shredded Cheddar cheese |
| 1 (8 oz) can tomato sauce | sour cream |
| 1 (12 fluid oz) can beer | tortilla chips |
| 2 (10 oz) cans diced tomatoes w/ | |

DIRECTIONS

Place the onion, chili beans, black beans, corn, tomato sauce, beer, and diced tomatoes in a slow cooker. Add taco seasoning; stir to blend. Lay chicken breasts on top, pressing down slightly until just covered by the other ingredients. Set slow cooker for low heat, cover, and cook for 5 hours.

Remove chicken breasts from the soup; allow to cool slightly. Stir shredded chicken back into the soup, continue cooking for 2 hours. Top with shredded Cheddar cheese, a dollop of sour cream, and crushed tortilla chips, if desired. Source: allrecipes.com

GENERATOR *safety*

CEC Choctaw Electric Cooperative

FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO ENSURE EVERYONE'S SAFETY:

- Make sure there is **nothing plugged into the generator when turning it on**. Use a **heavy-duty** extension cord to connect appliances to the outlets on the generator.
- Always operate the generator on a stable, dry surface **outside the home**—and well away from garage, doors, windows, and vents leading into your home. Generators produce **deadly** carbon monoxide.
- **Never** connect your portable generator to the home directly. This **can result in potentially deadly backfeed**, which happens when electricity is fed back through the electrical system onto power lines, creating a serious hazard for line workers and others.



Learn more at

