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inside *your* co-op

Published for members of Choctaw Electric Cooperative

■ TOP STORY

Eighty Strong

CEC anniversary salutes co-op's fascinating history

Too much trouble. Not enough people. There's no money in it. Just a few of



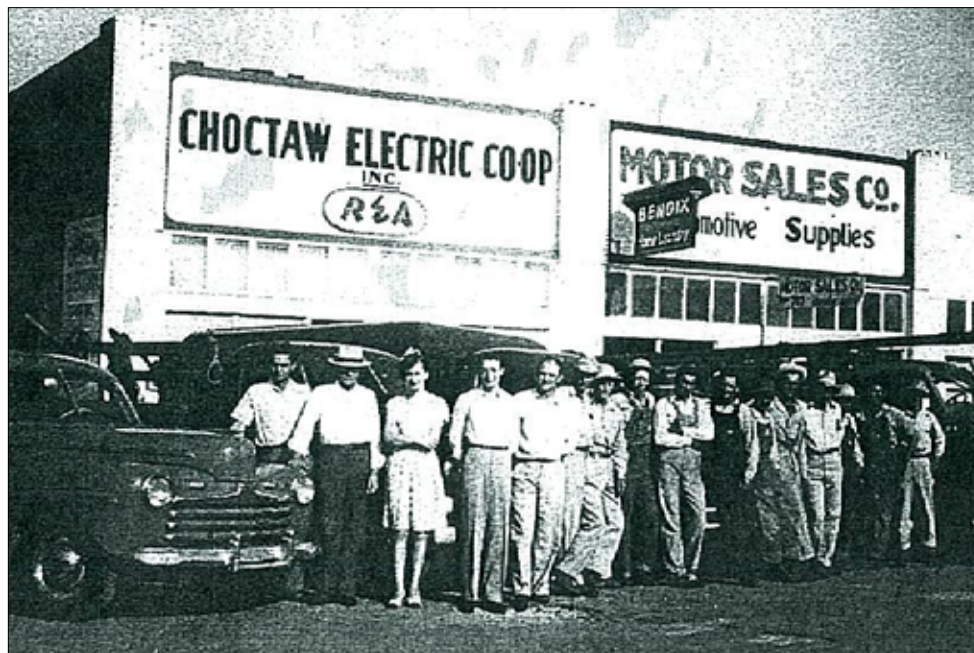
the reasons put forth by electric companies who scoffed at the opportunity to serve southeast Oklahoma's rural residents. Before 1940, farms and homes in and around Haworth, Battiest, Tom, and other locations seemed destined to remain in the dark.

That changed when the federal government made financing available to people who agreed to form their own electric cooperatives and bring electricity to their rural areas. In Hugo, seven men met on June 8, 1940, paid their \$5 each membership fees, and signed the incorporation papers establishing Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC).

"Every member should feel proud about where their co-op come from and confident about where we're going."

—KOONEY DUNCAN, CEO

This year, CEC celebrates 80 years in business and a remarkable history of ups and downs, growth and prosperity, political strife, and disastrous storms.



CEC's original office building opened for business in March of 1941. The building still stands at 116 N. Second in Hugo.

To honor this milestone, the co-op is planning a number of events throughout the year. Kooney Duncan, Choctaw Electric CEO, said the anniversary honors CEC and the many people who played a role in its accomplishments.

"From the beginning the odds were stacked against rural electric cooperatives, but the fact that we're still here speaks volumes about our mission, our employees, and our membership," Duncan said.

The celebration kicks off in January with an employee wellness challenge. The goal: Walk 80 miles in 80 days. Other events include an 80 Pints for 80 Years Blood Drive, an 80 Gallons in 80 Days Water Challenge, and

an 80 for 80 Food Drive. CEC Member Appreciation Days and a special Anniversary Celebration With Your Co-op will also highlight the 80th year.

"Choctaw Electric has made a lot of very important contributions to this area. Every member should feel proud about where their co-op came from and confident about where we're going," Duncan added.

Keep your eye on CEC's newsletter and Facebook page for more details on the 80th celebration. Happy birthday, CEC! 🎂

MANAGER'S REPORT



Preparing For Tomorrow Starts Today

BY KOONEY DUNCAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

There's nothing like a new decade to remind us how quickly time flies. For me, anyway, the evaporating years make planning for the future seem even more important.

For electric utilities, planning years and even decades in advance not only makes good business sense, it's also vital to the security and economic well being

“Granted, mistakes have been made over the years, but the big picture is hard to ignore: CEC is still here. Not only that, we are thriving.”

of our country. Failure to plan can result in higher and more volatile prices, not to mention blackouts, brownouts, and other hallmarks of unreliable service. This sets off a cascade of ill effects that occur when the flow of electricity

is interrupted and life as we know it comes to a screeching halt. While the future will always hold unforeseen and often unpleasant surprises, utilities who fail to keep their eyes on the horizon and prepare for the unexpected usually find themselves in perpetual crisis mode or out of business.

This year, Choctaw Electric Cooperative celebrates its 80th year in operation. It's a remarkable achievement, especially

when you consider that 66 percent of small businesses in the U.S. fail within the first 10 years. With nearly a century under our belts, I'd say we are doing something right. Granted, mistakes have been made over the years, but the big picture is hard to ignore: CEC is still here. Not only that, we are *thriving*.

Consider these facts: Since 2014, we've managed to reduce our debt by roughly \$25 million while growing our equity level to 51 percent. Over the past three years, we've cut our controllable expenses by 13 percent with no sacrifice in the quality of service. This includes shaving \$300,000 from our right of way budget while increasing the number of miles cleared and trimmed.

These financial and administrative achievements aren't just good for our current members today, they are good for tomorrow's co-op members, too. Because of the efforts and hard work of your board of trustees and dedicated staff, CEC now operates from a position of strength. This allows us to make the right decisions today that will ensure CEC navigates the next 80 years with confidence. [†]

Lucky Acct #6211701 (\$50)

If this account number belongs to you, contact CEC by the 10th of the month to claim your \$50 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.



Choctaw Electric Cooperative

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

Monday-Friday • 8 am - 5 pm

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www.choctawelectric.coop



24 Hour Outage Hotline

800-780-6486

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Need Help With Winter Heating Bills? Call Us.

Winter is here and that means shorter days, cold weather and higher utility bills. If the cost of staying warm is causing you financial hardship, please contact Choctaw Electric (CEC).

Our customer service representatives are happy to help you find assistance through programs such as the Oklahoma Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). LIHEAP works through the Department of Human Services (DHS) agencies to provide bill payment assistance to eligible residents. Open enrollment for the program began on December 10 and will run until funds are dispersed.

You can apply for LIHEAP bill payment assistance at your local DHS office or online at www.okdhslive.org. When applying, You will need your most recent utility bill, personal identification, social security

number, and verification of income. CEC service representatives are happy to provide you with a copy of your electric bill, or download a copy using CEC's SmartHub.

LIHEAP provides a one-time vendor payment to cover one heating bill during the winter months. To qualify, a household must:

- Be responsible for paying home heating and cooling costs.
- Be a U.S. citizen or have been legally admitted for permanent residence.
- Have the following or less in reserves: \$2,000 for one person; \$3,000 for two persons; and \$50 for each additional person in the household.
- Meet specific income guidelines.

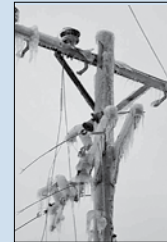
To visit with a CEC representative about LIHEAP and other assistance, please call **800-780-6486**. Remember to ask about CEC services that can help you eliminate late fees and lower your home energy costs.



REMINDER

Youth Tour entries due February 12, 2020. For details, please visit www.choctawelectric.coop, or call Jia Johnson at 800-780-6486.

Winter Storm? Stay Informed.



It's an unfortunate fact of life in Oklahoma that sometimes storms happen. When hit with a major weather event, Choctaw Electric tries its best to keep you informed of the situation.

We offer several ways for members to report problems quickly and stay in the loop about restoration efforts. To avoid busy signals that may occur during a major outage, report your outage:

- Online at www.choctawelectric.coop.
- Using the SmartHub app. The app allows you to report trouble using your smartphone, iPad or tablet. Outage texting is also available.

To follow the restoration process as it happens, visit CEC's online outage map and storm center at www.choctawelectric.coop. As red dots on the map turn green, you'll know how quickly the effort is progressing. CEC's SmartHub alerts offers another for members to stay informed. Use the app to sign up for alerts and you can choose how you wish to be notified—by text, email or telephone.

The aftermath of a big storm is a hectic and uncomfortable time for everyone. We hope these tools will help you and your family weather the worst with fewer worries.

New Member?

Find helpful information about your electric service, service applications and more at www.choctawelectric.coop.



FIND IT ONLINE

THE HOME Energy DETECTIVE

By Brad Kendrick, CEC Energy Use Specialist

A Purrfect Reason For High Bills

When I visit homes with high bills, I run across some interesting things. Last month, I visited a manufactured home where the problem clearly stemmed from the heating unit. After investigating, I found little to no air flow in different rooms. I could also hear kittens mewling. The owner said they had kittens, but wasn't sure where they were located. That's when



I saw it—a kitten in the duct! Finding loose ductwork, the kitties had crawled inside to stay warm.

If you have ductwork under your home, remember that animals love to rip it apart, rob your home of heat, and leave you with a high bill. Be sure to check your ductwork periodically to avoid problems.

Do you have questions for CEC's energy sleuth? Please call Brad Kendrick, CEC energy use specialist, at **800-780-6486**, or email questions to: bakendrick@choctawelectric.coop.



Calling All Cooks: We Want Your Recipes For CEC's Anniversary Cookbook

Attention food lovers: Choctaw Electric Cooperative is planning a special 80th anniversary cookbook featuring recipes from CEC members.

If you have a favorite recipe to share, please submit it by March 31, 2020. To ensure your recipe is included in our cookbook, please type or handwrite your recipes using the format below. Handwritten recipes should be easy to read. Recipe must include:

1. Name and hometown of person submitting the recipe.
2. Name of recipe
3. List of ingredients in the order of use. Be sure to include the exact measurement and volume of each ingredient along with any other preparation instructions. Example: 1 cup butter, melted; 2 tablespoons onion, chopped; 2 apples, peeled and sliced.

4. Break the ingredient list into sections if necessary. (Pie crust, filling, icing, etc)
5. Directions for preparation. Directions should be clear and easy to follow. Be sure to include temperatures, baking times, and any other important details, suggestions or tips for successful preparation.

Please submit your recipe by mail or email by March 31, 2020.

Submit recipes by mail to:

Choctaw Electric Cooperative
Attn: Recipes
PO Box 758, Hugo, OK 74743

Submit recipes by email to one of the following:

Jennifer Boling
jboling@choctawelectric.coop

Jia Johnson
jjohnson@choctawelectric.coop.



Talk To Us. We Appreciate Your Opinion.



When you have a question or comment about any aspect of your CEC service, we want to hear from you! You can message us via our website at www.choctawelectric.coop or visit our Facebook page. To chat by phone, please call **800-780-6486**, or stop in and see us during regular office hours. Your opinion matters.



Easy Ways To Pay

- Pay online using SmartHub at www.choctawelectric.coop.
- Pay by phone 24 hours a day using a major credit card at 800-780-6486.
- Pay via smartphone, iPad or tablet using the SmartHub app. Download the free app at www.choctawelectric.coop.
- Pay in person or use CEC's drive-through drop box, available 24/7.

Or use the Pay Site kiosk at the following locations:

- ▶ Choctaw Travel Plazas in Atoka, Antlers, Broken Bow, Hugo, and Idabel. OPEN 24 HRS/7 DAYS A WEEK.
- ▶ Pruet's Food, Atoka
MON-SAT, 7 AM - 9 PM; SUN, 8 AM-7 PM.