

Growing With You

Co-ops help local communities grow.

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For members of **Choctaw Electric Cooperative**

OCTOBER 2023

CEC *inside your* co-op

Spotlight

Guarding The Gates

CEC cybersecurity protects your data and your electric service.

Every day they come knocking—cyber thieves looking for a way to steal your money, hijack your computer, or otherwise disrupt your life. Their motives may differ, but none of them are good.

At Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC), the job of stopping cyber criminals falls to Rickey Bowen, manager of information technology. It is Bowen's responsibility to stay in front of the wave of ever-evolving computer viruses, ransomware, cyber scams, phishing schemes, and other strategies used by hackers from around the globe.

For utilities, cybersecurity is the all-important frontline defense that not only protects consumers' personal data, but also guards the infrastructure that controls the flow of electricity along the grid.

"At CEC, we do a number of things that help protect us and it's a continual process," Bowen said. "They never stop, so we never stop."

Like many utilities, CEC partners with a cybersecurity company that monitors its network around the clock. "If someone tries to get through our firewall or hack our system, they block it, get the IP address, and let us know," Bowen said.

Most attempts come from countries such as China, North Korea, Russia, Iran, and India. "They're always trying to get into stuff," Bowen added.

For that reason, CEC blocks anything with an IP address from these locations. They also limit online access for employees. "We're pretty tight about what people here can go to online. We have to be. If not something could slip by," he said.

CEC's antivirus program will shut down a computer from the network if it detects anything suspicious. All co-op email runs through a spam filter that scans attachments for malware and quarantines anything bad. "This blocks thousands of attempts a week," Bowen said.

If something should slip by, that's where CEC's investment in cyber awareness training and testing pays off. "Our employees know not to open or click on anything if they don't recognize where its coming from," he said.

Co-ops and other utilities also use information sharing to their advantage.

Bowen monitors a co-op listserv where Oklahoma electric co-ops warn one another about scam attempts. He also participates in an online forum where utility professionals from across the country discuss cyber vulnerabilities and how to repair them.

The willingness to share tools, resources, and training information helps CEC and other electric utilities harden and improve their overall cyber landscape. As a result, co-op members and other consumers can rest easier knowing the reliability of the electric grid remains safe. ☺

To visit with your co-op about cybersecurity, please call **800-780-6486** or email questions to customerservice@choctawelectric.coop.



MANAGER'S REPORT



Growing With You

Co-ops help local communities grow

BY KOONEY DUNCAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

October is National Co-op Month, and its arrival so soon after Choctaw Electric's Annual Meeting is excellent timing. Our meeting is a perfect example of what electric co-ops are all about: We are member owned, member controlled, and we exist to serve the interests of our members.

At Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC), our priority is to provide affordable, reliable energy to the residents, businesses, and communities of Southeast Oklahoma. More specifically, I'd like to focus on the many ways "Co-ops Grow."

Co-ops Grow Communities. Since CEC's humble beginning in 1941, the power it delivers has made growth possible throughout our area. Today, we continue to help our communities grow by promoting economic development, providing jobs, and encouraging community leadership, and participation. From the Little League field to Sunday School, and our local festivals and parades, you won't have to look far to find a CEC employee volunteering their time and skills.

While CEC provides an important local service, we also rely on other local businesses and services as much as possible. The dollars we spend on fuel for our vehicles, equipment parts, office supplies, vehicle maintenance and more stays here at home.

So does the money you spend on electricity.

Every month, 65 percent of your electric bill goes to pay for power generated by Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC). The remainder goes to us. Like CEC, WFEC's Hugo Plant provides jobs that support local families and our local economy.

CEC also powers several of our region's major industries—Tyson, Huber, Pan Pacific, and

two huge rock quarries. We are proud to serve these and other businesses who keep so many local folks employed. We strive to serve their commercial needs just as we do those of our residential members. Small or large loads, our members are more than just customers to us. That's why my door at CEC is always open and we encourage you to attend our meetings and events. We want to hear from our members so we will know best how to serve them and help our area thrive.

“From the Little League field to Sunday School, and our local festivals and parades, you won't have to look far to find a CEC employee volunteering their time and skills.”

Co-ops Grow Together: Co-ops are all about cooperation, not competition. We work together to share lessons learned, successful strategies and better ways to serve our members. When disasters strike, we step in to lend a hand to help our fellow co-ops. That cooperation and shared knowledge makes us better able to grow and serve you.

Co-ops Grow Tomorrow's Leaders: Electric co-ops serve as fertile ground for growing tomorrow's leaders. At CEC, we encourage teen leadership through programs such as Energy Camp and Youth Tour. These opportunities help local kids learn and thrive at home and beyond.

CEC was formed many years ago to fulfill a uniquely local purpose. We've come a long way since then. As the needs of our members and our communities continue to evolve, CEC will continue to grow and change to meet those needs. That's a promise.

Lucky Acct #38863842. If this is your account number, please contact CEC by the 5th of the month to claim your \$50 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. 207.

Choctaw Electric Cooperative

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

Monday-Friday • 8 am - 5 pm

HUGO OFFICE

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Hugo, Oklahoma 74743
Toll Free: (800) 780-6486
Local: (580) 326-6486
FAX (580) 326-2492

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Idabel, Oklahoma 74745
Toll Free: (800) 780-6486
Local: (580) 286-7155

ANTLERS OFFICE

HC 67 Box 62
Antlers, Oklahoma 74523
(One mile east of Antlers)
Toll Free: (800) 780-6486
Local: (580) 298-3201

and
On the Web:

www.choctawelectric.net



24 Hour Outage Hotline
800-780-6486

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Brent Franks, *President*

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MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

Kooney Duncan, *Chief Executive Officer*

Jennifer Boling, *Executive Assistant*

Jia Johnson, *Director of Public Relations*



Keep Your Contact Information Up To Date

Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC) representatives may be calling you this month to update your contact information. It's important that CEC have your correct phone, email address, and mailing address. For members, keeping this information current offers a number of benefits:

1. When you call, our outage management system will recognize you immediately. This saves time when reporting outages or other problems.
2. With the correct contact information on file you will be able to receive alerts about planned outages by phone, email or text.
3. Our ability to contact you during an outage or other service problem helps us resolve your problems more quickly.

Easy Ways To Update Your Records

- Drop by any CEC office or call **800-780-6486**.
 - Email info to customerservice@choctawelectric.coop. Be sure to provide your account number, your old address, and the new information.
 - Visit CEC's Smarthub and click Contact Us. From the menu, choose Address Change Request and enter the correct information.
4. The correct contact information ensures you receive your capital credit notices and refunds, as well as billing reminders and important notices about co-op services and events.

Drawing Ends December 31.

Win a
\$100 Bill Credit!



Enroll in CEC's paperless billing.

Enroll in paperless billing and your name will be entered in our monthly drawing for new paperless accounts. Enroll using Smarthub's payment options, or sign up by phone at **800-780-6486**.



CHOCTAW ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

2023 Board Meetings

The Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC) board of trustees meets at **9 am** on the **last Tuesday** of every month at co-op headquarters in Hugo. Meetings are open to the public. Meeting minutes are available at www.choctawelectric.net or at any CEC location. To read the minutes on your smartphone or tablet, please scan the bar code to the right.

- October 31
- November 28
- December 21



NOTICE OF PATRONAGE ALLOCATION

This Notice of Patronage Allocation is issued in accordance with the Bylaws of Choctaw Electric Cooperative, Inc.

After reviewing the 2022 year-end financial statements, CEC allocated \$4,901,618.77 in excess margins. Margins are calculated each year by subtracting total operating expenses from total operating revenues. These margins are allocated to members' capital account first based on their specific revenue classes gross margin and then on their total KWH of electricity purchased from the Cooperative during 2022. This allocated patronage capital is combined with total patronage capital that has not been retired (paid) and provides working capital for the Cooperative.

Members can determine their amount of this allocation by selecting their Revenue Class and Rate Class (which can be found on their billing statement) allocation factor shown here

REVENUE CLASS	RATE CLASS	2022 ALLOCATION FACTOR
General Service	5, 7, 11, 95, 96	0.0139995547
Seasonal	14	0.0191567674
Small Commercial	10, 23, 56	0.0059080138
Large Commercial 1	34, 44	0.0124964552
Large Commercial 2	40	0.0033148531
Industrial	60	0.0009139043

and multiplying their designated factor by their KWH purchased from the Cooperative in 2022.

The amount of a specific allocation is available from the Cooperative upon member request. Refund of this amount, in full or in part, at any time, shall be based on the

decision of the Board of Trustees that the financial condition of the Cooperative shall not be impaired by making such refund.

If you have any questions concerning this allocation, please contact the Cooperative at 800-780-6486.



No Deposit. No Late Fees. Get The Prepaid Advantage

Imagine paying for your electricity like you pay for gasoline for your car. You pay for fuel before you use it. If you can't afford to fill up, you pay for what you can at the time.

CEC's prepaid billing program works much the same. You pay ahead for your electricity. You choose how much and when you'd like to pay. You can purchase small amounts every few days or "fill up" your account and not worry about it for several weeks. When your account gets low, you simply purchase more. The program is helping more than 800 CEC members eliminate the stress of mounting late fees and overdue bills.

"With prepaid, your account is never overdue. Members pay ahead and when their balance gets low, we notify them by text, phone or email in plenty of time for them to make a payment," says Hilary Pound, supervisor of CEC account services. "At that time, they can pay whatever amount they choose."

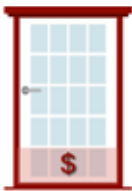
Over time, prepaid members learn a great deal about their electricity use patterns and what causes their usage to spike. By logging on to Smarthub, members are able to review their usage by the hour. Members who use this tool often learn ways to adjust their behavior so they use less.

Prepaid members can check their daily account balance by visiting www.choctawelectric.net and clicking on "Account list/Pay bill," and then "Prepaid acct. info."

Payments can be made over the phone using a debit or credit card, payment kiosks, or by calling 800-780-6486 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Online payments can be made 24 hours a day at www.choctawelectric.net.

Energy Savers

Seal Leaks Now For Winter Savings



They may seem small, but air leaks can cost a bundle on your heating bill. Air gaps are often found around doors and windows, attic hatches, basements, and floor joists. Other problem

areas include recessed lighting, outside water faucets, outlets, and door frames. Leaks are also rampant where gas piping, chimneys, or plumbing enters the home.

According to the Department of Energy, you can cut up to one-fifth of your heating bill simply by reducing drafts and sealing

leaks around your home. The following tips will help you locate problem areas:

- Take note of dirty spots in your insulation or carpet. This may indicate external air leaks.
- At nighttime, shine a flashlight through all potential gaps to see if you can see any light coming through. This will show larger cracks where air may be escaping.
- To identify smaller leaks, shut your door or window on a dollar bill. If you can pull it out, the gap is large enough to drain energy from your home.

Once located, apply caulk or weather stripping around leaking windows, doors and fixtures.

For more information on how you can reduce your energy use, please call your co-op at 800-780-6486, ext. 209.

CAPITAL CREDITS

Did You Receive Your Check?



Last month, CEC mailed capital credit checks to members who belonged to the co-op in 1993-94. If you haven't received your check, there may be a reason:

1. Your credit is less than \$10. It will remain in your account until it reaches \$10 or more.
2. We don't have your current mailing address. Contact us at 800-780-6486 and a check will be re-issued.
3. If your account closed with an outstanding balance, the capital credit is applied to the amount owed.

To learn more about capital credits, please visit www.choctawelectric.net, or call us at 800-780-6496.

