



LIVE WIRE

Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc. Vol. 10, NO. 1

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JANUARY 2005

Live Wire is a monthly newsletter published for members of Choptank Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 430, Denton, MD 21629

Toll Free:

1-877-892-0001

Outage Reporting:

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At-Large

A co-op life 'working for the members'

To listen to Tom Ireland as he gives the location of a part of Choptank's system is a lesson in what a cooperative is all about.

You won't need to look at a map because he doesn't mention route numbers or highways. He'll tell you that a particular line is near where Mr. Smith's daughter and her husband built their house - you know the one with the yellow siding that sits next to the Jones's dairy farm with the big red barn.

Tom will officially retire on February 16 as Manager of System Operations at Choptank Electric, and to say he knows the system would be a major understatement. The retirement date marks 42 years at the utility he first joined in February 1963 on a temporary basis as the "rod man" for stakers in the Engineering Department.

He should know the territory after 42 years, but the knowledge comes from more than just having a good memory. Ask what the best thing about working for a co-op is and Tom says "it's being owned by the members and working for the members instead of shareholders. It's about the good relationships you establish along the way."

And the secret to his giving of directions is simple: "Before we had every pole and transformer numbered, you'd go by directions as to who lived where - you can zero in on a person pretty close that way. I still don't know all the numbers, but I do know all of the territory."

He joined the lineman's apprentice program six months after coming to the co-op. From there it's been a steady climb through the ranks from Journeyman to Chief Lineman in 1969, Supervisor of Construction in '79, Supervisor of Operating Services in '83, Operating Services Superintendent in '90, Manager of Electric Operations in 1991 and



TOM IRELAND

Manager of System Operations in 1999.

Taking a reflective look back on a long career, Tom says, "In 1968 I was the first journeyman lineman to work on a bucket truck at Choptank and did the first 'hot work' ever at the co-op." The co-op had no bucket trucks prior to that time and pole work was done by climbing.

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Co-op to file with PSC for rate increase

When the State of Maryland approved electric customer choice legislation in 1999, state utilities were required to cap rates for specified periods. At Choptank Electric Cooperative, that rate cap will come to an end June 30, 2005 for its 45,000 residential and business customers.

Price caps were lifted in July of 2004 for investor-owned utilities.

"We know minimizing costs is important to our members and their business or family budgets," said Mike Wheatley, senior vice president and chief financial officer. "Since we are a not for profit cooperative we always bear that in mind.

"The price of wholesale power for Choptank has increased since the rate caps have been in place. There were two increases in both 2003 and 2004, but due to the caps, there has not been a way for the co-op to pass along those increases."

Mr. Wheatley said Choptank has not had a base rate increase since 1992, and in fact had small base rate decreases in 2002 and '03. "The efforts of the

board, administration and employees at the co-op have allowed us to improve system reliability and build for the future while containing ever-increasing costs within the operations of the cooperative. However, with the cost of wholesale power continuing to rise, the co-op must now pass those increased costs along to the users of this service.

"After much deliberation, we filed a base rate increase with the Maryland Public Service Commission in early January, that if approved, will be effective on July 1, 2005. All of the information on the proposed increase has been presented to the PSC and must now be approved by them. The commission's staff will analyze the filing and render a decision, probably in two to three months."

The co-op will announce the exact amount of the increase after the lengthy deliberation process at the PSC is completed and approval is received.

A consulting firm completed a cost of service study for Choptank in early December.

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NOMINATING COMMITTEE — The Choptank Electric Cooperative Nominating Committee met in December to nominate three incumbent directors for upcoming elections in 2005. Standing, from left, Milton Malkus Jr., George Weaver, Jack Elliott, Richard Cook. Seated, from left, Nathan Pearson, Judy Miles, Patsy Wilson, Virginia Davis, Edward Collins. Absent was Paul Bounds. Nominated were Fred Schrader, Cecil County, Jeffrey Rathell, Talbot County, and Carl Widdowson, Somerset County.



One of three rapid oil spill response trailers developed by the co-op.

New trailers meet EPA standards

Choptank Electric is a good steward of the environment. So that the co-op continues its commitment to protecting the environment, three oil spill response units have been purchased and developed by Choptank Electric to comply with federal regulations.

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Regulations were enacted to prevent spilling of oil into both navigable waterways and ground water.

The "fast response" trailers were added to the co-op fleet in its three regions.

According to David Robinson, communications and technology engineer, mineral oil is added to electric transformers as an insulating medium. Outside factors such as damage in an accident or someone shooting a transformer with a gun, or an internal equipment failure that causes a transformer to overheat could cause an oil spill. There

have only been two small spills in substations in the 66-year history of Choptank.

To fall under the EPA regulations, there must be 1,320 gallons of oil in one location - there can be one transformer or several in a substation. Transformers that hang from utility poles hold about five gallons.

The trailers are equipped with rakes, shovels, protective equipment for employees, 55 gallon drums, and multiple types of absorbents for use with oil only or for oil and water. Although mineral oil is fairly environmentally friendly because it is biodegradable in sunlight, it still can interfere with the ecosystem.

Choptank is pursuing even more environmentally friendly oil alternatives that are seed-based for use in transformers.

Co-op employees are trained in how to respond to and clean up an oil spill. This is part of the linemen's training program.

Recent outages on co-op system

- 11/11, Rts. 611 & 376, Berlin area, gas company cut primary, 576 members, 4.5 hrs.
- 11/12, Conectiv dropped power to Sinepuxent sub, 1205 members, 1.5 hrs.
- 11/15, Hillsboro-Cordova, equipment problem, 373 members, 2 hrs.
- 11/16, Princess Anne, contractor work, 952 members, 30 min.
- 11/15, Earleville, rat in cabinet, 189 members, 1 hr. 45 min.
- 11/23, Ocean Pines, underground cable, 1497 members, 2 hr. 20 min.
- 11/24, Williston & Allen subs, tree on 3-phase line, 505 members, 1 hr. 15 min.
- 11/25, E. Salisbury area, wind damage, 24 members, 1 hr. 15 min.
- 11/25, Barclay, tree on Conectiv line, 1211 members, 45 min.
- 11/26, Pocomoke area, equipment on pole damaged by gun shot, 250 members, 2 hrs. 25 min.
- 12/01, Airey, Earleville, Edgewood, Kennedyville, Mardela Springs, Mount Olive New Hope subs affected by wind damages, 389 members total
- 12/01, Barclay, phases open, blinks, 503 members, 1 hr.
- 12/04, Royal Oak, repair equipment on transmission line, 462 members, 5 min.
- 12/13, Hurlock-Preston-E. New Market, cause unknown, 236 members, 1 hr.

Watt's the Answer?

Win a \$10 credit on your bill in our monthly trivia contest. Readers who send in the correct answer will be entered in a drawing. Entries must be postmarked or dated by February 5.

Watt's the Answer for January: Hi ho, hi ho, what are the names of Snow White's seven little buddies?

Send to: Watt's the Answer? Choptank Electric, P.O. Box 430, Denton MD 21629 or email: anew@choptankelectric.coop. Please provide account or phone number.

After some deliberation, we decided there were three possible correct answers for the November question about Thanksgiving. Three presidents were involved: George Washington named the first national day of Thanksgiving in 1789, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November as the official Thanksgiving Day, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt proclaimed the third Thursday in November as the official holiday.

We decided to throw all entries naming those three presidents in the roasting pan for the drawing. Michael Saggio, who hails from Philadelphia, and has a co-op membership in Cecil County, was the winner. We're thankful for all of the good answers!



Scholars sought for awards

The Choptank Electric Trust Scholarship Program will give four scholarships to graduating high school students in May. The \$1,000 scholarships are available to students whose parents or guardians are Choptank Electric members or employees.

Scholarships are open to graduating high school seniors, graduating high school juniors or graduating first semester high school seniors if they have fulfilled the requirements of their school system.

To be considered for a scholarship, students must submit an application, essay and financial information. A Scholarship Advisory Committee selects students based on grade point average, school and community activities, and other criteria.

Applications are available at guidance departments at all area high schools, at co-op offices, by calling 877-892-0001 or at www.choptankelectric.coop. Applications must be postmarked by March 31, 2005.

Rates

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This was performed to analyze or break down the cost to provide service to the different rate classes. "We will use the cost of service study to set the rates so everybody is paying an equal share," said Mr. Wheatley.

The cost of wholesale electricity has been the biggest influence on the proposed rate increase. Wholesale electricity is the bulk power that generating companies make available to utilities and marketing entities for resale to their customers.

Recently, a number of marketplace factors have caused an increase in the cost of wholesale power, which Choptank purchases through its power supply cooperative, Old Dominion Electric.

On the wholesale level, electricity is a commodity much like wheat or natural gas. It is influenced by market pressures such as supply, demand, weather and the price and availability of fuel and power generation facilities.

Choptank Electric Trust awards

The Choptank Electric Trust distributed funds through Operation Round Up in November. Applications are available at co-op offices, by calling 1-877-892-0001 or at www.choptankelectric.com.

- Sudlersville Volunteer Fire Dept., \$8,000, generator for engine bay
- San Domingo Youth/Quinton Foundation, \$2,400, equipment for history program for museum
- Worcester Co. Garden Club, \$400, send two youth to camp/program supplies
- Worcester Co. Developmental Center, \$7,174, computer equipment
- Easton High School Class of 2005 After Graduation Program, \$300
- Habitat for Humanity of Talbot Co., \$4,391, masonry work

Ireland retires

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For him, the biggest change he has seen was "going to underground (lines) in the '70s and all the challenges that has presented." His most satisfying job while a chief lineman was completing and energizing the transmission line to the Ocean Pines Substation.

Of course any conversation with a long-time lineman has to include the weather. Without hesitation Tom names the ice storm of 1994 as the hardest weather challenge "and the most devastating." Another memory is from the early '80s "when we were getting ready to go to a New Year's Eve party and I got called in and didn't get home again for five days - I've missed a few Christmases and New Years along the way."

He casts a somewhat philosophical eye on the changes in the lineman's job over 40 years. "The biggest difference is that the lineman's job is so much more technical now. You need less brawn, more brains, more finesse. That's one of the reasons the apprentice program was changed from two and a half to four years.

"Unfortunately in today's utility industry we're not getting enough young people interested. We really rely on the vo-tech programs to provide good people."

Speaking of this type of work Tom says, "The reason I wanted to get into management was to improve what we were doing as linemen. I wanted to capture the equipment and technology we needed to do a better job.

"Some things have been controversial, but I feel satisfied because we now have better equipment and technology. I'm very proud putting all of our servicemen in bucket trucks (2002-03). It allows them to do more work and stay better rested."

As for the immediate future, Tom plans to spend a lot of time working on the house he and wife, Beverley, are building, and fox hunting with his hounds. He's also thinking about going back into the (standard-bred) horse business in which he was once involved.

A last thought? "I've probably hired as many people here as anyone and I've probably supervised as many, except maybe for (CEO) Fred Hubbard. I'm going to miss the people the most - we have a lot of good people at Choptank."

Fred Hubbard, president and CEO of Choptank, says Tom joined the company about four years after he did. As he moved up the corporate ladder, Tom took several positions of increasing responsibility.

"There was absolutely no question as to who would be chosen," he says. "Tom brought such a great deal of experience with him and brought so much to Choptank. It was a real pleasure to work with him.

"We will greatly miss the hard work and know-how Tom has brought to his various roles Choptank. He has been an excellent example of what the co-op is all about."

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Mark your
calendars now!
Choptank
Electric
Cooperative
Annual Meeting
March 12
Sailwinds Park,
Cambridge, MD

Pine Steppers Square Dance, 4th Sat., 8 p.m., \$5; Begin-PLUS every Wed., 7 p.m. Ocean Pines Community Ctr. 410-208-3286/ 208-6777.

All-You-Can-Eat Country Breakfast Buffet, Crumpton Firehouse, sponsored by Ladies Auxiliary, 2nd Sun., 8-11 a.m.

Vietnam Vets of America, 1st Thurs., 7 p.m., Easton VFW. 410-943-1374. Lower Shore, 3rd Thurs., VFW 194, Salisbury. 410-651-0799.

Bay Country Chorus (barbershop), every Mon., 7 p.m., Miller Hall, behind Trinity Cathedral, Goldsborough St., Easton. 410-770-8262.

Bingo, Willards Fire Co. every Thurs., 7 p.m., at Lions Club. 410-835-8678; at Pittsville Fire Co. every Fri., 7 p.m. 410-835-2323.

Peninsulaires barbershop chorus, every Tues. 7:30 p.m., Wicomico Civic Ctr., Flanders Rm., Salisbury. 410-641-8927 or 410-543-8628.

Overeaters Anonymous/HOW, support group, every Sat., 10 a.m., Ocean Pines Community Ctr., Rm. 2. 410-208-0335.

Federalburg VFW Post 5246, bingo every Thurs., doors open 5:30 p.m., games 7:20 p.m. 410-754-5020.

Ocean Bay Chorus, Sweet Adelines, every Mon., 7 p.m., Wicomico Civic Center, Flanders Room, Salisbury. 410-749-0991.

Bingo, Hurlock Am. Legion, every Fri., 7:30 p.m., 410-943-8205; every Tues., 6 p.m., Post 29, Denton, 410-479-2708.

Atlantic Coast Md. Saltwater Sportsfishermen, 4th Wed., Ocean City Marlin Club, 2nd fl., Rt. 50, 7:30 p.m. 410-208-0567 or 647-8218.

Ocean Waves Square Dance Club workshop, every Tues., 7 p.m., Wicomico Civic Ctr., Salisbury. 410-742-2398 or 883-3723.

Delmarva Chorus, Sweet Adelines, every Mon., 7 p.m., Ocean Pines Community Center. 410-641-8088 or 208-9722.

Disabled American Veterans Chap. 34, 4th Thurs., 8 p.m., Meuse VFW Post 194, Salisbury. 410-749-4518.

Chesapeake Christian Riders Chap. of CMA, 4th Sat., Golden Corral, Easton, 9-11. All welcome. 410-943-8325.

Pinochle Group, every Wed., 9:45 a.m., 410-641-8836, Bridge Club, every Wed., 10 a.m., 410-641-7667, Ocean Pines Yacht Club.

Pepper Steppers Square Dance, 2nd Sat., 8 p.m., First UM Church Hall, Chestertown. 410-758-1454 or 778-4578.

Bingo, Redmen Lodge, Fruitland, Mon., 6:30 p.m. 410-742-6859.

Wellness Community-Delmarva, weekly support groups for cancer patients/families, Talbot, Worcester, Wicomico. 888-806-0756.

Heartland Quilt Guild, 1st Thur., 7 p.m., Denton Library, large classroom. Info., 410-482-8131,

Women Supporting Women (breast cancer group), 3rd Wed., 7 p.m., Atlantic Business Ctr., Ste. 213, Berlin, 410-641-2849.

US Submarine Vets, 3rd Sat., Dover DE, for info call 410-482-6994 or 302-945-2448.

Willards Lions Club Bingo, every Tues., 5 p.m., games 7 p.m., meals served. 410-835-2328.

TOPS weight loss, Tues., 6:30 p.m., Immaculate Conception Hall, Marydel; Thurs., 6:30, Wesleyan Church, Greensboro, 410-482-2658.

Pine'er Craft Shop, Ocean Pines Community Center, 239 Ocean Parkway, open every Sat. & Sun., 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Line dance, Eastside Men's Club, Alexander Ave., Salisbury, every Fri. Beginner's lessons at 6 p.m. 410-749-1981.

National Assn. of Retired Federal Employees, 3rd Thurs., English's South, Rt. 13, Salisbury. 410-749-6635 or 742-8073.

Old Wye Mill, water-powered grist milling, every 1st & 3rd Sat., Rt. 662, Wye Mills. Flour for sale. 410-827-6909.

Activity Singles Klub of Easton, 2nd Wed., covered dish social follows. Info., 410-822-7468.

South Dorchester Folk Museum, 1st Wed., 7 p.m., Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge Visitors' Center, near Cambridge.

First Saturday Writers Group, Ocean Pines Branch, Worcester Public Library, all welcome. 410-641-5515.

Children's Health Program, for pregnant women & children to age 19. Kent, 410-778-7035, QA, 410-758-0720, Talbot, 410-819-5670.

Low cost spay/neutering for pets, Caroline Co. residents only. Traci Haas, Caroline Humane Society, 410-820-1600.

La Leche League of the Mid-Shore, 2nd Fri., 9:30-11. 410-758-0682 or roenned@dmv.com for meeting place/directions.

Eastern Shore Stamp Club, 1st Tues., Wicomico Public Library, Salisbury, 6:30 p.m. All are welcome. 410-208-2929.

Tidewater Stamp Club, 2nd & 4th Tue., 7 p.m., 14 S. Harrison St., 2nd fl., Easton. Public is invited. 410-822-1371.

Wicomico Community Service Agencies, 3rd Tues., noon, Dove Pointe, Salisbury. Info call Jim Freeman, 410-219-9000, ext. 101.

First Monday, HIV/Aids support group in Salisbury, 1st & 3rd Mon. 5:30 p.m. 410-219-9000 ext. 101, 443-523-1745 or 443-523-1744.

Open duplicate bridge game, every Mon., 7 p.m., Riverside Homes, Salisbury. 410-835-8343.

Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary Unit 34, 4th Thurs., 8 p.m., Meuse Post 194, Salisbury. 410-749-4518.

Living with Cancer, 2nd, 3rd, 4th Thurs., 4-5:30 p.m., Kent & Queen Anne's Hospital, cafeteria meeting room. 410-778-5550.

Bingo, Caroline Post 29, Denton, every Tues., 6 p.m. 410-479-2708.

Eastern Shore Writers' Assn., 2nd Sat., place TBA. 410-482-6736.

Soup Day, Mallard Bay Nursing Ctr., Cambridge, 1st Wed., 10:30 a.m. - until. Benefits Relay for Life. \$3. 410-228-9191.

Coastal Hospice, grief support, 1st/4th Thur., 11 a.m., Ocean Pines Library. 410-742-8732.

Tred Avon Duplicate Bridge Club, every Wed., noon, Chesapeake by Del Webb clubhouse, Dutchman's La., Easton. 410-226-5126.

Mardela Middle & High School PTA Winter Carnival, **Jan. 15**, 10-2, all ages. 410-883-3706.

New Queen Anne's Chapter, Barbershop Harmony Society, every Wed., 7:30 p.m., Centreville UM Church, Rt. 213. 410-827-7993.

Carnival in Caroline, Circo Comedia, **Jan. 21**, 7:30 p.m., N. Caroline H.S., Joe Mayer's Big Three jazz, **Jan. 28**, 7 p.m. library, Denton, Piedmont Blues, **Feb. 4**, 7 p.m. Union UMC, Federalburg, US Army Brass, **Feb. 13**, 2 p.m., Col. Richardson H.S., comedy with Karen Gray, **Feb. 25**, 7 p.m., library, Denton. Free. 410-479-1343.

"BULLLY! Theodore Roosevelt," a Wheatfield Theatre Co. one-person show, Caroline library at Greensboro, **Jan. 14**, 7 p.m.

Nautical & Wildlife Art Festival/North American Craft Show, Ocean City Convention Center, **Jan. 15**, 10-5, **Jan. 16**, 10-4. 410-524-9177.

Bay Country Region Antique Auto Club of America Winter Parks Meet, Sailwinds Park, Cambridge, **Jan. 22**, 8 a.m. 410-228-0758.

Discussion, "Zora Neale Hurston: An American Life," Caroline Public Library, Denton, **Feb. 11**, 7 p.m. 410-479-1343.

Writers LIVE! at the Library, William S. Shepard, "Murder on the Danube," **Feb. 14**, 6:30 p.m., Caroline Public Library, Denton.

UMES Jazz, **Feb. 18**, 7 p.m., Caroline Public Library, Denton. Free. 410-479-1343.

Seaside Boat Show, **Feb. 18**, 12-8, **Feb. 19**, 10-8, **Feb. 20**, 11-5, Ocean City Convention Center. 410-632-3676.

Historical Society of Kent Co., free lecture, Still Pond Prize Fight, **Feb. 27**, 3 p.m., Betterton UM Church. 410-778-3499.

SEND EVENTS TO:

Shore Good to Know, Choptank Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 430, Denton, MD 21629; or anew@choptankelectric.coop two months prior to event if possible. Include phone number.