

# LIVE WIRE

Inside

Thermostat myths, p. 2

TOY TRUCKS!,  
p. 3

Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc. Vol. 10, NO. 11

**DECEMBER 2005**

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**Toll Free:**  
1-877-892-0001

**Outage Reporting:**  
1-800-410-4790,  
toll free,  
24 hours/ day,  
7 days/week.

**Automated Customer Service Line:**  
1-800-311-8556, toll free  
410-479-4206  
(Caroline Co.)

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www.choptankelectric.coop

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## Choptank's 'buried' secret for reliable service

Everyone is used to seeing miles of overhead electric lines strung between poles along highways and streets, but in Choptank Electric's distribution system, it's what you don't see that's making a big difference.

Choptank has the distinction of being second in the country among cooperatives in miles of underground (UG) electric cable with between 2,500 and 2,700 miles.

Only Cass County Electric, which serves eight counties in frosty North Dakota has more.

Since Maryland's Eastern Shore doesn't usually battle the fierce ice storms of North Dakota, how has Choptank Electric ended up with so much underground cable?

Part of the reason, according to co-op planning engineer Todd Bireley, is Maryland law requires UG in all new subdivisions and for new commercial and industrial customers. The overriding reason is it just makes good sense for member reliability and an eye on the bottom line.

"A study of underground based on operations and maintenance costs showed a substantial amount of money is saved over the life of the system in avoided outages, maintenance and right of way expenses," said Bireley. Most overhead maintenance expenses go to replacing poles, while tree trimming for overhead right of way is performed every two to five years depending on the species of tree.



Examples of underground electric cable used by Choptank. The wire is surrounded by ethylene propylene rubber (EPR).

Choptank's experiences with UG cable have not all been happy ones. "The co-op experienced problems when it first began installing UG in the 1970s," said Bireley. "The product was based on a fairly new technology at the time and it didn't last longer than six to ten years. We had lots of underground problems in the '70s and '80s."

Most of the old cable has now been replaced with a new design. "We have had some of the new design in service for over 20 years without a failure," Bireley noted.

The cable is wire surrounded by ethylene propylene rubber (EPR) - the "secret" to a long lasting product, according to Bireley. Most of what Choptank uses is made by Pirelli, a noted tire manufacturer that can boast its tires last for over 80,000 miles.

Most of the co-op's new construction is now UG, and if it is a reconstruction job, it is evaluated to see if some should be run underground.

"Most utilities seem to avoid building underground, but I don't think they're looking at the long-term cost of ownership," Bireley commented. "The benefits we've seen are less tree trimming, maintenance costs are way down, there is less overtime for linemen because of fewer call-outs and most importantly, greater reliability for our members."

Continued on page 2

## Seasons Greetings

**From all of us at Choptank Electric!**  
**Offices are closed Dec. 23, 26 and Jan. 2.**  
**Remember the Warming the Hearts of Delmarva winter coat collection will run through Jan. 6 at the Berlin, Salisbury and Denton offices.**  
**Have a safe, healthy, happy 2006!**

# Debunking the myth of the thermostat

Your home's thermostat controls how long your heating or cooling system operates. You can save energy and money by learning how this simple device operates.

One myth our energy analyst at Choptank Electric really wants to explode is that of the efficiency of setting your thermostat down when you don't need heating or cooling, such as at night or when no one is home.

This myth states that a furnace works harder than normal to heat your home back to a comfortable temperature after the thermostat has been set back, resulting in little or no savings. This is not true, as has been proven by years of research and field observations. The longer your house stays at a reduced temperature when heating - or at an increased temperature when cooling - the more energy and money you'll save.

This is because your heating or cooling cost depends mostly on the temperature difference between indoors and outdoors.

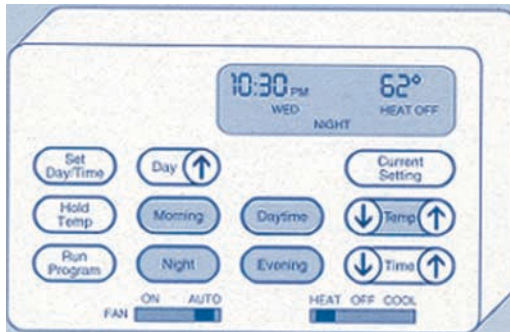
When you adjust your thermostat down in the winter - or up in the summer - you simply reduce this temperature difference. If you set your temperature back 10 to 15 degrees for 8 hours while you're asleep or at work, your energy savings can be 5% to 15% on your energy bill.

Another common myth is that the higher you set your thermostat when you return home, the faster your furnace will heat up your house. This isn't true since most furnaces deliver heat at the same rate no matter how high the thermostat is set. So just set your thermostat at the temperature you'd like, and your furnace will heat your home as fast as it can.

You can install a setback thermostat that automatically adjusts your home's temperature at pre-set times, but you can achieve the same savings if you faithfully remember to

change your thermostat whenever you leave home or go to bed.

Programmable thermostats automatically adjust your home's temperature settings,



**Programmable thermostats are fairly inexpensive and easy to operate.**

allowing you to save energy while you're away or sleeping.

These thermostats:

- are more convenient and accurate than manual thermostats and improve your home's comfort;
- contain no mercury;
- save energy and save money on utility bills - when used properly, about \$100/year;
- are better for the environment, since using less energy helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy production;
- are easy to operate.

Programmable thermostats earn the ENERGY STAR label by meeting strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the government. These units save energy by offering 4 convenient, pre-programmed temperature settings - settings that try to anticipate when it's convenient for you to scale back on heating or cooling.

If you are like many homeowners and work outside the home during the day and

have a different schedule on the weekend, a programmable thermostat can offer many benefits, and the return on your investment is usually within 1 year.

On the other hand, if you are home throughout the day, seven days a week, then a programmable thermostat will offer limited benefits.

A programmable thermostat is simply a clock combined with a thermostat. The clock switches the thermostat temperature back and forth between an energy-saving setting and a comfort setting. Once you have these thermostats set, you shouldn't need to change them often. Although all programmable thermostats are a little different, most have similar functions.

Most programmable thermostats can change the temperature setting four times a day. Often there are also two types of days: weekdays and weekend days.

If you purchase a programmable thermostat, be sure it is compatible with the type of heating system you have at home. There are different models for furnace heat, electric baseboard and heat pumps. Generally, most manufacturers also offer corresponding models for heat pumps with backup auxiliary heat. If you have this type of heat pump, you must install a two-stage pump model or you will end up with little savings.

For more information about programmable thermostats, you may go to [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov) or [www.choptankelectric.coop](http://www.choptankelectric.coop). On the Choptank Electric homepage, there is a link to EFI (Energy Federation Inc.), which offers many energy saving items, including programmable thermostats for all home heating sources. Most programmable thermostats retail for under \$100.

*Source: John Krigger, a nationally recognized author of numerous energy efficiency books. [www.residential-energy.com](http://www.residential-energy.com)*

## Going underground — cont. from p1

Bireley admits there is a major cost up front for UG with the purchase of the cable, trenching and boring, "but once you're done, you don't spend anything for many years."

Estimated life of the cable is 50 years; splices and fittings are expected to last 25 to 30 years.

Like Cass County Electric discovered, having so much underground has been a benefit in major weather situations. "In the '94 ice storm and during Hurricane Isabel, it certainly kept us from having many more outages than we did. For example in Ocean Pines, where everything is underground, we had almost no outages during Isabel except for problems caused by flooding."

Bireley said that with overhead lines "it is a constant battle against Mother Nature — trees, broken branches, high winds, rain saturated ground which allows healthy trees to

uproot, acid rain corrosion, UV radiation, salt spray. . .plus there's no end to critters."

The majority of problems experienced with underground cable are due to contractors digging into the lines. Sometimes a pad-mount cabinet housing UG equipment is hit with a vehicle, but there is less chance of that than a utility pole being struck since there is more flexibility for where a cabinet can be placed and utility poles are found every 300-400 feet.

Another plus for Bireley is there are no geographical limitations on the Eastern Shore to running underground lines, except for installing cabinets in low-lying areas where they can be flooded. Even this problem is being addressed by using new design switchgear cabinets which are "deadfront" meaning all the high voltage connection are hermetically sealed.

## New regional customer service manager named

Claire Robertson has been promoted to the regional customer service manager for Choptank's Central Region which includes the Salisbury and Cambridge districts.

Mrs. Robertson joined the co-op in 1999 as a general clerk and then became an office specialist. She moved to the Cambridge district office in 2001 as a regional customer service representative.

The new manager spent 12 years in the banking industry, including five as a branch manager.

She and her husband, Bobby, reside in Preston with their sons, Bobby and Garet. Mrs. Robertson will begin her new duties in December.



**Robertson**

# Energy tips for those lighted decorations

Did you ever wonder what it was costing you to light up your home, business or facility in that colorful cascade of decorative bulbs every holiday season? Here are some resources to look at the potential costs associated with different types of bulbs.

Decorating efficiently makes sense. It will save our energy resources and help with your electric bill.

If you are using the large older standard bulbs, replace them with midget bulbs. These are small tubular-looking bulbs that use less electricity than standard bulbs (20 watts for a 35-bulb strand compared to 5 watts for one large bulb). They also produce less heat, so they are safer to use.

If you are using some of the larger traditional colored lights, you will find that they use about 10 watts per bulb. A 25 bulb string of these lights burning 150 hours a month would use 37.5 kwh a month. Multiply your kwh usage per string times the number of strings and then times your residential rate to determine what that is costing you. For example, a person whose residential rate is \$0.10 per kwh, would pay \$37.50 a month to operate 10 strings of these lights.

Miniature lights are among the favorites for

outside decorative lighting. The average miniature light uses 0.4 watts per bulb. A string of 100 miniature bulbs would only use 6 kwh per month. Ten sets of these lights operating at \$0.10 per kwh would cost you \$6 per month.

If you are using the popular icicle lights, which use the same amount of energy per miniature bulb, you should be aware that a string of icicle lights with 100 bulbs will cover

a much shorter distance than a straight string of miniature lights.

Each midget bulb produces less brightness than the larger bulbs, but with so many on a strand, the overall decorative effective can be much greater. This is especially true if you use ornaments with reflective surfaces.

Replace a midget bulb in a strand when one burns out, even if the others stay lit. If you don't, the life of all the bulbs may be shortened. Bulbs are different depending on how many are in the strand. You can usually divide 120 by the number of bulbs to determine the proper bulb

voltage.

There are some newer types of energy efficient lights that are very attractive. Plug-in or battery-operated LED (light emitting diode) strands of lights are very energy efficient. You can use two-rechargeable batteries for a strand of 20 bulbs. The LED bulbs last for more than 10,000 hours and use only 0.04 watts per bulb or 1/10th the amount of miniature bulbs. These bulbs are more durable and safer. Ten sets of 100 of these LED bulbs would cost you \$0.60 per month to operate.

Another efficient option is rope lighting that you plug in. It is usually available in 12- and 24-foot lengths and sections can be connected to more than 100 feet. There is an efficient mini-bulb every inch inside the clear or colored rope and each foot length of lighted rope uses only three watts.

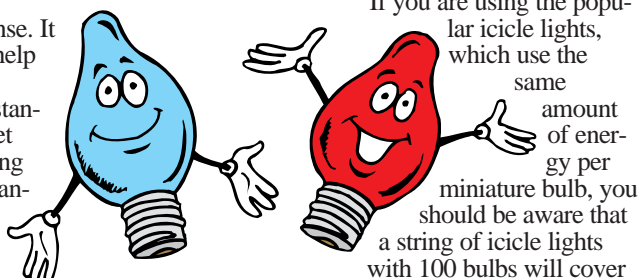
*Find out more by visiting:*

## Choptank Electric Trust awards for October

Character Counts Mid-Shore, Easton, newsletter assistance, \$2,500  
Cambridge-S. Dorchester Music Boosters, band instrument, \$3,500  
Down Under Boxing Club for youth, Salisbury, TV sets for club use  
Pemberton Elementary School, Salisbury, Pemberton All-Stars program, \$1,000  
Crossroads Community, Cambridge facility, renovations, \$5,000  
Sudlersville United Methodist Charge Food Pantry, \$1,274  
Five disabled individuals, various equipment and home assistance, \$6,772  
Grant applications are available by calling 1-877-892-0001 or on the co-op website at [www.choptankelectric.coop](http://www.choptankelectric.coop).

## Recent outages on the co-op system

Barclay, 10/26, 12 hrs. 55 min., 25 members, accident  
Williston, 10/26, 1 hr., 37 members, cause unknown  
Costen, 10/31, 1 hr. 50 min., 39 members, contractor dig-in  
Millington, 10/31, 45 min., 248 members, cause unknown  
Earleville, 11/3, 16 min., 233 members  
New Hope, 11/5, 2 hrs. 5 min., 80 members, substation regulator  
Sinepuxent, 11/8, 35 min., 42 members, accident  
Sinepuxent, 11/9, 3 hrs. 30 min., 25 members, primary cable  
East New Market, 11/10, 1 hr. 40 min., 661 members, right of way problem  
Kingston, 11/10, 55 min., 32 members, cause unknown  
East New Market, 11/10, 10 min., 661 members, line sag



## Toy co-op trucks under the tree!

A great idea for that last-minute gift is the newest Choptank Electric model truck. The truck is die-cast metal with a 1:64 scale compared to the 1:32 scale trucks sold previously.

The model will be a bucket truck in Choptank colors with the co-op's logo on the doors. It has a detailed interior, a boom that rotates and elevates, and working outriggers.

The 2005 die-cast bucket truck will be available in December for \$21.95 at all co-op offices, or it can be ordered by mail or online for \$24.95 which includes shipping costs. Mail orders may be sent to Choptank Electric Cooperative, Model Truck, PO Box 430, Denton MD 21629; Phone orders may be

charged to MasterCard or Visa or to a member account and may be made by calling 1-877-892-0001; online orders are available at [www.choptankelectric.coop](http://www.choptankelectric.coop).

The 1/32nd scale plastic trucks for sale are the 65th anniversary bucket truck, big bucket truck, right of way truck and chipper, and stake body truck. Collectors — last chance! There is very limited supply of dump trucks and remote control bucket trucks available. For information, phone our call center or inquire at your local office. Some of the plastic models can be ordered online.

Sales of the model trucks will benefit various co-op programs.

## CHOPTANK SECURITY

Choptank Security offers the very best in wireless, supervised security technology, plus LifeGard, the personal home emergency system.

Yes, I am interested in a no cost home security/life safety analysis at my home. Please call me to set up an appointment:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Best time to call \_\_\_\_\_

Send me information about Choptank Security's maintenance program.

Send to: Choptank Security Systems, Attn: June Lederer  
P.O. Box 310, Denton MD 21629



Pine Steppers Square Dance Club workshop every Wed., 7 p.m., Ocean Pines Community Hall. 410-835-3534 or 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. 410-651-0904.

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

Bingo: Willards Fire Co., Thurs., 7 p.m., Lions Club Bldg., 410-835-8678; Pittsville Fire Co., Fri., 7 p.m. 410-835-2323; Federalsburg VFW 5246, Thurs., open 5:30 p.m., games 7:20 p.m. 410-754-5020. Hurlock Legion, Fri., 7:30 p.m., 410-943-8205; Denton Legion, Tues., 6 p.m., 410-479-2708; Redmen Lodge, Fruitland, Mon., 6:30 p.m. 410-742-6859; Willards Lions Club, Tues., 5 p.m., games 7 p.m. 410-835-2328;

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

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

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.

Disabled American Veterans Chap. 34, 4th Thurs., 1 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.

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, 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. 410-482-6994 or 302-945-2448.

TOPS weight loss: Tues., 6:30 p.m., 1st Baptist Church, Marydel, 410-482-2658; Christ UM Church, Salisbury, Thurs., 7 p.m. 410-749-9335 or 543-9039; Church of God, Washington St., Easton, Thurs., 6 p.m. 410-822-2630 or 673-2248.

Pine'er Craft Shop, Ocean Pines Community Center, 239 Ocean Parkway, open every Sat. & Sun., 10 a.m.-2 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.

Activity Singles Klub, Easton, 2nd Wed., 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.

Eastern Shore Stamp Club, 1st Tues., Wicomico Library, Salisbury, 6:30 p.m. 410-208-2929; Tidewater Stamp Club, 2nd & 4th Tue., 7 p.m., 14 S. Harrison St., 2nd fl., Easton. 410-822-6471.

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.

Duplicate bridge: Riverside Homes, Salisbury, Mon., 7p.m. 410-835-8343; Tred Avon Club, Wed., noon, Chesapeake by Del Webb clubhouse, Dutchman's La., Easton. 410-226-5126.

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

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

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

Lower Delmarva Genealogical Society, 116-1 N. Division St., Salisbury, open Wed., 1-4, help with family research. 410-749-6158.

All you can eat breakfast, Eldorado-Brookview Firehouse, 3rd Sun., 7:30-10:30 a.m. \$6. 410-943-0216.

Overeaters Anonymous, every Sat., 10 a.m., Christ UM Church, Ed. Bldg., Salisbury. 410-376-0164.

Friends of the Ocean Pines Library, 2nd Mon., 10 a.m., main mtg. room of library. 410-208-2760.

Merry Widows & Widowers Social Club, 3rd Tues., 2:30 p.m., Ocean Pines Community Hall. 410-208-6207.

Beach Singles social club for age 45+, last Tues, 6 p.m. For info./mtg. place, 410-208-3974.

M.O.P.S. (Mothers of Preschoolers), 1st Tues., 9 a.m., Greensboro Baptist Church, 401 Sunset Ave., through May. Free. 410-482-8601.

Cambridge Women's Club Candlelight Tour, **Dec. 11**, 4-7, featuring 5 houses, musical program, refreshments. Tickets, 410-901-2274 or 228-5701.

Coastal Hospice luncheon, Atlantic Hotel, Berlin, **Dec. 15**, 1 p.m. RSVP 410-208-6207.

Living Nativity, Bates UM Church, Snow Hill, **Dec. 17**, 6 p.m. 410-632-1319.

Federalsburg VFW shrimp/chicken dinner, **Dec. 16**, 5-7, karaoke follows, silent auction, cookie walk. 410-754-5020.

Coastal Hospice Grief Support, Ocean Pines library, **Dec. 29**, 11 a.m. 410-742-8732.

Tales the Tombstones Whisper, Michael Dean, historian, Caroline Co. Library, Greensboro, **Jan. 13**, 7 p.m. 410-479-1343.

Nautical & Wildlife Art Festival/North American Craft Show, Ocean City Convention Ctr., **Jan. 14**, 10-5, **Jan. 15**, 10-4. 410-524-9177.

John Cocuzzi Quintet "Swingin' and Burnin'", **Jan. 21**, 7 p.m., Caroline Co. Library, 410-479-1343.

Capitol Brass, Caroline Co. Library, Denton, **Jan. 27**, 7 p.m. 410-479-1343.

East Coast Commercial Fishermen's & Aquaculture Expo, Ocean City Convention Ctr., **Jan. 27**, 11-6, **Jan. 28**, 10-6, **Jan. 29**, 10-4:30, Ocean City Convention Ctr. Seminars included. 800-421-9176.

## Watt's the Answer?

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

**Watt's the Answer for December: What anatomical problem does the Grinch have that makes him so mean?**

Send to: Watt's the Answer? Choptank Electric, P.O. Box 430, Denton MD 21629 or [annew@choptankelectric.coop](mailto:annew@choptankelectric.coop). Please provide account or phone number. There was no contest in October.

### SEND EVENTS TO:

Shore Good to Know, Choptank Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 430, Denton, MD 21629; or [annew@choptankelectric.coop](mailto:annew@choptankelectric.coop) two months prior to event if possible. Include phone number.