



# LIVE WIRE

Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc. Vol. 13, No. 1

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JANUARY 2008

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

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7 days/week.

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A Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperative

Have a safe 2008!  
Please buckle your  
seat belts.

## Reliability, Rates and Relations

Questions and Answers with Fred Hubbard, President and CEO



HUBBARD

We recently sat down with Choptank's President and CEO and got his thoughts on a variety of topics to share with our members.

**Q:** Back in school the "Three R's" meant "Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic," but for you the Three R's mean something different.

**A:** That's right. At Choptank Electric we place a lot of importance on things we know mean a lot to our membership. Members have told us they want high reliability at reasonable rates. They also want to be treated well in our relationships with them.

**Q:** How is the Cooperative making out on the reliability aspect?

**A:** We work hard each and every day to make our system as reliable as possible. As you may be aware, Choptank is in all nine Maryland counties on the Eastern Shore so we have a significant service territory with thousands of miles of lines and equipment to maintain.

**Q:** What is the overall condition of the system?

**A:** Our system is in very good shape. We have been replacing old infrastructure with new each year. The new equipment we have been installing is among the most technologically advanced available on the market. At one time we had a significant issue with failing underground cable, but we have replaced just about all of this underground with a more modern cable that has proven to be extremely reliable. We have also replaced over 50 deteriorating switchgear cabinets throughout many areas on the Shore this year. We have identified other cabinets to be replaced in subsequent years.

**Q:** What about system design?

**A:** We built the system so in the majority of areas we can distribute power from more than one direction.

This enables us to minimize outage times if Delmarva Power has outages that impact our substations.

**Q:** How much infrastructure replacement has taken place?

**A:** At the end of 2003 we had \$121 million in net utility plant. Since the beginning of 2004 we have installed over \$88 million in new plant for a combined total of over \$209 million. This is a 73% increase in plant in just 4 years!

**Q:** What other investments have been made to enhance reliability?

**A:** The Cooperative will spend in excess of \$2 million on tree trimming and vegetation management this year. This investment pays dividends each year. We must keep tree limbs from encroaching on the lines, which helps to reduce the blinks our members experience. This also helps to keep the power on when we have significant storms.

**Q:** What do you see in your crystal ball about rates?

**A:** I wish I could tell you rates would stabilize or start to go down, but that is not going to be the case. The power supply side of the member's billing (the right side of the bill) has increased over the past few years and shows no sign of letting up. In this region of the country a great deal of the power we procure is produced by fossil fuels such as coal, natural gas and oil. As everyone knows from their trips to the gas pump, the trend has been upward and doesn't appear to be heading downward anytime soon. Fortunately for us, Old Dominion Electric Cooperative (ODEC) has been doing a good job of purchasing our power far in advance and the generation assets we collectively own, including nuclear power, are some of the best in the country. Despite ODEC's best efforts, we expect to see an increase to the Power Cost Adjustment portion of rates in February which will increase the overall average residential bill approximately 5 percent.

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## Power Cost Adjustment effective Feb. 1

Choptank Electric will increase its Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) on member bills effective February 1. The PCA is a line item on all electric bills that is a direct reflection of the fluctuating costs of fuel used to make electricity.

A residential member using 1000 kilowatt hours per month will see an increase of \$6.82 per month.

Fuel prices are being driven up by world demand and tight world oil markets. Average winter-season (October 1 to March 31) prices and expenditures for all space-heating fuels are projected to be higher than winter 2006-2007. The \$90-plus per barrel projected crude oil prices are likely to result in historically high prices for the major petroleum products. Residential heating oil prices are projected to average \$3.23 per gallon this heating season, a 30-per-

cent increase over the previous heating season. Both motor gasoline and diesel prices are projected to average well over \$3 per gallon in 2008, with gasoline prices peaking at over \$3.40 per gallon next spring.

On average, electricity expenditures during the winter are projected to rise by 4 percent due to increased consumption and prices. Expenditures for households in the Northeastern United States are projected to rise 7 percent from last winter.

Choptank is not profiting financially from this increase. The PCA is solely used to meet the rising cost of purchasing fuel used for electricity generation. The Maryland Public Service Commission ensures we do not charge one cent more than our actual fuel costs.

## Stay in contact with your legislators

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410-749-3184/410-376-3052

## Co-op scholarships available to students

High school seniors, graduating juniors or first semester graduating seniors whose parents or legal guardians are members or employees of Choptank Electric are eligible to apply for college scholarships awarded by the Choptank Electric Trust, Inc.

Six \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded in May 2008. Recipients are chosen based on a competitive screening process. The



scholarship funds are sent directly to the educational institution the student will attend and will be placed in the student's account.

The deadline to apply for a Choptank

Electric Trust Scholarship is March 31, 2008. Applications, a scholastic information form and a financial information form must be sent by the deadline along with an essay as outlined in the application and a transcript of the student's grades to: Choptank Electric Trust Scholarships, Attn: Anne Whaples, P.O. Box 426, Denton, MD 21629.

The application packet will be made available through the guidance offices at area high schools sometime in late January. Applications will also be available at [www.choptankelectric.coop](http://www.choptankelectric.coop) at about the same time.

High school seniors whose parents or guardians are members of Choptank Electric are also eligible to apply for college scholarships awarded by 33100th the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives (VMDAEC) Educational Scholarship Foundation.

Scholarships of \$1,000 each will be awarded in 2008. Recipients are chosen based on a competitive screening process. Applicants must provide evidence of acceptance in a post-high school educational institution or program. The scholarship funds are sent directly to the educational institution and placed in the student's account.

The deadline to apply for a 2008 VMDAEC Educational Foundation Scholarship is April 1, 2008.

Applications are available online at [www.vmdaec.com](http://www.vmdaec.com) and at [www.co-opliving.com/community/scholarship](http://www.co-opliving.com/community/scholarship). Applications are also available by mail by writing to VMDAEC Scholarships, P.O. Box 2340, Glen Allen, Va. 23058-2340.

Since its inception in 2000, 179 students from Virginia, Maryland and Delaware have received VMDAEC scholarships. The number of scholarships awarded is based on the funds available.

The VMDAEC is the trade association that provides training, communications and other services to Choptank Electric and the 15 other electric cooperatives that serve the three-state Mid-Atlantic region.

## Q & A with the CEO *continued from p. 1*

**Q:** What does the distribution portion of the rates pay for?

**A:** The distribution side (the left side) of the member's bill covers our cost of doing business. It pays for new lines and equipment, system improvements, for maintaining our system when there are outages and it pays for our employees. We must also make an operating margin so we remain financially viable and keep our lender happy.

**Q:** What have you done to forestall the need for a distribution rate increase?

**A:** We have taken a number of steps. We have maintained the number of employees at the same level as October 2006 despite having added almost 5,000 new members; we have taken the initiative to increase our productivity in a number of areas, most significantly with installation of automatic meter reading equipment; a new initiative is the automation of how we stake, manage and map our new plant installations.

**Q:** What is causing the 275800 pressure to increase distribution rates?

**A:** As I have mentioned, we have invested a tremendous amount of money in our infrastructure to provide the reliability our members expect. Secondly, the cost of infrastructure continues to increase so \$1 million in purchasing power does not get you what it could even a few years ago. The cost of basic raw materials like steel that go into cabinets and the cost of some of our conductor have increased dramatically due to global demand from India and China. Thirdly, we have seen cost increases in areas such as operating our vehicle fleet, our labor and contractor costs. Finally, in order to keep the Cooperative financially sound and to keep our lender happy, we must maintain certain

financial criteria each year, primarily having to do with the level of operating margin and the ability to service our debt expense.

**Q:** Do you have an estimate of the amount of increase needed?

**A:** Yes. The estimated increase is expected to be an amount that will raise the overall average residential bill from 5% to 10%.

**Q:** You had mentioned member relations as an important construct for the Cooperative.

**A:** Absolutely. We always try to be as responsive as we can to our members' requests and desires. This year we have added more member-friendly services. We have instituted electronic or "E-billing" solutions, where the members can go on line, review and pay their bill on line by check or credit card, and not have to pay for a stamp or envelope or the cost to drive a payment to one of our offices. We have already mentioned how we try to be as responsive as possible to outages and to requests for tree trimming. We also added an electrical safety demonstration trailer to our toolkit for educating school children and others on electrical safety. Our Choptank Electric Trust funded by Operation Round Up recently passed the \$1 million mark in providing grants to needy individuals and groups for worthy Eastern Shore community projects.

**Q:** Any concluding comments or other "R" words?

**A:** I would be remiss if I didn't add a resounding "Rah!" for our employees and directors, who day in and day out share our values of providing the most reliable power in a safe manner within the most reasonable rates we can offer. They are truly the engine that drives the Cooperative "R" train.

## Collier is certified as arborist

Robert E. Collier Jr., supervisor of right of way management for Choptank Electric, has successfully completed the Certified Arborist/Utility Specialist examination administered through the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA).

The purpose of the ISA Certification Program is to improve the level of knowledge and standard of practice within the tree care profession. It is designed to assist the public in identifying those professionals in arboriculture who have a thorough knowledge of tree care practices through the ISA examination and education program.



**COLLIER**

The International Society of Arboriculture is a scientific and educational organization devoted to information on the care and preservation of shade and ornamental trees.

The certification program is designed to promote the professional development of those involved in the field of arboriculture or tree care.

Mr. Collier joined the management staff of Choptank Electric in 2002 following a 30-year career with Asplundh Tree Experts.

### Choptank Trust awards for Nov.

- Rock Hall Volunteer Fire Company – up to \$4,640 for 8 sets of medical responder gear.
- Horizons at Kent School – \$1,000 towards sponsorship of summer campers.
- Inspiring Women Project – \$1,000 for printing of journal of inspirational women in area
- D.A.T.E.S. Group (disabled teens) – \$124 for winter camping
- 7 needy individuals, health care needs - \$11,614
- 6 needy individuals, home care needs - \$8,362

### Watt's Your Number?

"Watt's the Answer" is on hiatus. The Live Wire is now giving you two chances to win a \$10 credit on your bill in our new monthly contest. Readers will need to search the newsletter for two hidden account numbers within the text.

If you find your Choptank Electric account number, let us know about it by the fifth of the following month, you'll win a \$10 credit on your bill!

Look through the Live Wire and if you find your account number, send your name, address, account and phone numbers to: Anne Whaples, Watt's Your Number?, Choptank Electric, P.O. Box 430, Denton, MD 21629 or [annew@choptankelectric.coop](mailto:annew@choptankelectric.coop).

### Resolutions: Use energy and resources wisely

From the paper you take notes on to the food you eat at dinner, you are surrounded by things that require tons of energy and resources to produce. Checking this list of facts about energy and resource use. It will give you lots of food for thought in making those New Year's resolutions.

- If the price of gas is \$3.00 per gallon, each 5 miles per hour you drive over 65 miles per hour is like adding \$0.21 per gallon of gas.
- More than 25% of energy consumption in homes goes to lighting.
- A ton of recycled paper equals or saves 17 trees in paper production.
- Production of recycled paper uses 80% less water, 65% less energy, and produces 95% less air pollution than producing paper from new trees.
- Recycling one glass bottle saves enough energy to light a 100-watt bulb for four hours.
- LEDs (light emitting diodes) could cut national energy consumption for lighting by 29 percent in 20 years.
- If left on constantly, an LED light could last for up to 50,000 hours, or 6 years, which is 50 times longer than a regular 60-watt incandescent bulb.
- Only about 10 percent of the energy used by a bulb creates light. The rest of the bulb only creates heat, which is not good.
- If every American made sure that their car tires were properly inflated, an estimated 4 million gallons of gas could be saved every day, and there would be 30% less used tires in landfills.
- A heavy coat of dust on a light bulb can block up to half of the light.
- Across America, home refrigerators use the electricity of 25 large power plants every year.
- A hot water faucet that leaks one drop per second can add up to 165 gallons a month. That's more than one person uses in two weeks.

Pine Steppers Square Dance Club workshop Wed., 7 p.m., Ocean Pines Community Hall. 410-835-3534 or 208-6777.

Vietnam Vets of America, 1st Thurs., 7 p.m., Easton VFW. 410-943-1374. Lower Shore, 3rd Thurs., VFW 194, Salisbury. 410-651-0904.

Bingo: Willards VFC, Thurs., 7 p.m., Lions Bldg., 410-835-8678; Pittsville VFC, Fri., 7 p.m. 410-835-2323; Fedsbg. VFW, Thurs., 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, Fruitland, Mon., 6:30 p.m. 410-742-6859; Willards Lions, Tues., 7 p.m. 410-835-2328; Denton VFC, Fri., 7:30 p.m.

Peninsulaires chorus, Tues. 7:30 p.m., Wic. Civic Ctr., Flanders Rm., Salisbury. 410-641-8927 or 543-8628. Ocean Bay Sweet Adelines, Mon., 7 p.m., same location, 410-749-1194. Delmarva Sweet Adelines, Mon., 7 p.m., Ocean Pines Comm. Ctr. 410-641-6876. QA Barbershop Chorus, Wed., 6:30 p.m., Centreville UM Church, Rt. 213. 410-827-7993. Bay Country Chorus, Mon., 7 p.m., Miller Hall, behind Trinity Cathedral, Easton. 410-770-8262.

Ocean Waves Square Dance, 3rd Sun., 6 p.m., Mid-Shore YMCA, 715 S. Shumaker Dr., Salisbury. 410-873-2027 or 822-7387.

Disabled American Veterans Chap. 34, 4th Thurs., 1 p.m., Meuse VFW Post 194, Salisbury. 410-749-4518.

Chesapeake Christian Riders CMA 453, 1st Thurs, Bob Evans Restaurant, Easton, 6 p.m. 410-943-8325.

Pinochle, Wed., 9:45 a.m., 410-208-0562, Ocean Pines Country Club; Bridge Club, 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. 410-810-0926 or 410-778-4578.

Heartland Quilt Guild, 1st Thur., 7-9, Choptank Electric mtg. rm., Denton, 410-482-8131.

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

Eastern Shore Bluegrass Assn., show & jam, 2nd Sun., 1 p.m., Maryland Fire Co. 302-674-3149 or 492-1048.

TOPS weight loss: Tues., 6:30 p.m., 1st Baptist, Marydel, 410-482-6694; 6 p.m., 418 Dutchman's La., Greensboro; 6 p.m., Caroline Nsg. Home sun room, 410-482-2658; 6 p.m., Worcester Co. Health Dept. Thurs., 7 p.m., Christ UMC, Salisbury, 410-546-4197/543-9039; Church of God, Easton; 6 p.m. 410-822-2630/673-2248.

Nat'l Assn. Active & Retired Fed. Employees (NARFE), Chap. 1261, Salisbury area, 3rd Thurs., 410-896-2671; Chap. 2274, Wor. Co. area, 4th Thurs., Jordan's Rooftop, Ocean City, 11:30 a.m., 410-641-5570.

Activity Singles Klub, Easton, 2nd Wed., 410-822-7468.

Medical coverage for pregnant women & children to age 19. Kent, 410-778-7035, QA, 410-758-0720, Tal., 410-819-5690.

E. Shore Stamp Club, 1st Tues., Wic. 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.

Duplicate bridge: Riverside Homes, Salisbury, Mon., 7 p.m., 410-835-8343; Tred Avon, Wed., noon, Talbot Community Ctr., Rt. 50, Easton. 410-226-5126.

Overeaters Anon., Sat., 10 a.m., Christ UM Church, Ed. Bldg., Salisbury. 410-376-0164; Fri., noon, Family Connection Ctr., 29 Broad St., Ste. 209, Berlin. 410-629-0679.

Friends of Ocean Pines Library, 2nd Mon., 10 a.m., 410-208-2760.

Merry Widows & Widowers Social Club, 3rd Tues., 2:30 p.m., Ocean Pines Country Club. 410-208-6207; Beach Singles 45+, last Tues, 6 p.m. 410-208-3974; Delmarva Singles, 50+, 1st Wed., 6 p.m. 410-742-8310 or jasuth@intercom.net.

Denton AA, 105 Gay St., Thurs., 8 p.m.; Co-Dependents Anon., Sun., 6:30 p.m., Christ UMC, Salisbury. 410-376-0164; Dual Recovery Anon. Wor. Library, Pocomoke, Mon., 7 p.m.

Worcester Chorale, Wed., 7 p.m., Community Church, Rt. 589, Ocean Pines. 410-208-1999.

Wellness Community-Delmarva cancer support programs, Salisbury, Berlin, Easton. 888-806-0756.

Dorchester Swingers Square Dance, 1st Fri., 8 p.m., Maple Elem. Cambridge, Sept. - June '08. 410-822-7535.

Sons of Confederate Vets Maj. Gen. Arnold Elzey Camp 1940 & friends, 1st Wed., 7 p.m., Wic. Library, Salisbury 410-641-9305.

Pine'er Craft & Gift Shop, Ocean Pines Community Ctr., 239 Ocean Pkwy., every Sat. & Sun., 10-4.

Federalsburg VFC, breakfast 4th Sun., 7-10. \$6, Children \$3; under 3 free.

Md. Children's Health, medical coverage, pregnant women & children to age 19. Kent 410-778-7035, QA 410-758-0720, Tal. 410-819-5690.

Line dance, every Fri., Frat. Order of Eagles, 107 Alexander Ave., Salisbury, beginners 6 p.m., dance follows. 410-749-1981.

Free meditation group, Tues., 7 p.m., Sweetspot Arts, Ocean Pines, 410-641-6845 or susanbeverly2003@yahoo.com.

Preston Vol. Fire Co., AUCE breakfast, 1st Sun., 7-10, \$6.

Tri-County Bird Club (Wic., Som., Wor.) 4th Mon. (except Dec. & June-Aug.), Fox Rm., south entrance, Asbury UM Church, Salisbury. 410-742-5497.

Writers Bloc writers group meeting 3rd Sat., Wicomico Library, Salisbury, 1 p.m. 443-260-0790.

Missy's Quilting Bee, 1st Tues., 7-9, Choptank Electric mtg. rom., Denton. All welcome. 410-634-1163.

Dorchester Swingers Square Dance, Maple Elem. School, Egypt Rd., Cambridge, 1st Fri., 8-10. Refreshments. 410-822-7535.

Spaghetti Dinner, St. Luke's UM Church, St. Michaels, Jan. 18, 4:30-7. AUCE \$10, children 11& under, \$4. 410-745-2543.

Ballroom dance, Jan. 19, 8-11, early bird lesson, 7 p.m., Salisbury Elks Club. Admission. 410-749-4914.

"Musictales" presents "Pied Piper of Hamlin," music, dance, poetry. Caroline Co. Library, Denton, Feb. 1, 7 p.m.

United States Army Woodwind Quintet, Feb. 8, 7 p.m., Caroline Co. Library, Denton.

Books Plus, "Caravaggio: Painter of Miracles," presented by Judy Hodges, Caroline Co. Library, Deton, Feb. 11, 7-9.

Seaside Boat Show, Feb. 15, noon-6, Feb. 16, 10-6, Feb. 17, 11-5, Ocean City Convention Ctr. 410-632-1163.

Nat'l Outdoor Show, S. Dorchester Pre-K to 8 School, Golden Hill, Feb. 22, 5-12 p.m., Feb. 23, 10:30-noon. 410-397-8535.

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

## Fast Energy Facts!

- An energy-smart clothes washer can save more water in one year than one person drinks in an entire lifetime!
- Every time you open the refrigerator door, up to 30 percent of the cold air can escape.
- Every year, more than \$13 billion worth of energy leaks from houses through small holes and cracks.
- A crack as small as 1/16th of an inch around a window frame can let in as much cold air as leaving the window open three inches.
- Some new refrigerators are so energy-smart they use less electricity than a light bulb.

For more information on energy efficiency and electrical safety, go to [www.choptankelectric.coop](http://www.choptankelectric.coop).