

An Important Message from President & CEO Mike Wheatley



I am pleased to inform our members of a major undertaking that Choptank Electric will be implementing in 2015. Beginning in mid-June, starting in our St. Michaels district, we will be installing advanced meters as part of a major distribution system upgrade and technological advancement for the cooperative. The Choptank Electric Cooperative Board of Directors, management, and employees are confident in the many benefits this advanced technology will provide to both the Co-op and its members.

Why are we implementing this smart technology on our system?

Choptank Electric is proud to have a distribution system that has been upgraded and improved throughout the years with the advanced technology necessary to continually keep up with the daily demands of our members' electrical needs and increasing electric demands on our system. This meter upgrade is also a system-wide distribution platform. This improvement is a continuance of making certain that we keep power flowing reliably and safely into the homes, schools, workplaces, farms and businesses of our members, every day.

In the early 1990's, Choptank Electric implemented automated meter reading (AMR) a technology used in utility meters for collecting data needed for billing purposes. The communications delivery system in these meters is not as reliable as it once was, causing our meter readers to physically read them. This is an expensive practice for the Cooperative and its members. When Choptank Electric Cooperative was first established in 1938, one way members could help control costs for the Co-op was to read their own electric meters each month for billing purposes. Seventy-seven years later however, over half of the meters on our system are read by meter readers, and not our members. Hiring additional meter readers or replacing the AMR meters are expensive options that do not solve the issues or keep up with the modern and more advanced technology that is available to us. Implementing the advanced metering infrastructure throughout our distribution system provides us with a more robust, modern system for our members now and for many years to come.

What exactly is an advanced, or smart, meter?

Advanced meters are digital meters that can transmit, through a network interface card, energy consumption information to Choptank Electric on a scheduled basis. This two-way communications will also allow for members to retrieve their energy usage on an hourly or daily basis, which will enable our members to monitor energy consumption more precisely and make more informed decisions to manage their electrical usage.

Modernizing our distribution system with this advanced technology and implementing this two-way communications system offers numerous cost savings for the Cooperative and provides vital information to help improve reliability and power restoration response time.

The new meters offer many other advantages to our members, which surpass the current meters:

- Improves reliability by providing better system load monitoring
- Improves outage response time by helping to pinpoint power outages and confirms power restoration
- Helps improve member service by providing our members access to hourly and daily energy usage information and gives them the ability to better control and manage their energy costs
- Helps Choptank Electric save on labor, fuel and vehicle maintenance costs, as well as lowers emissions released into the environment
- Improves meter reading accuracy and consistency by allowing meters to be read remotely
- Increases Choptank Electric's ability to catch theft of electricity, a growing cost for which all members pay.

What does the deployment process involve?

Choptank Electric will begin the deployment of the new meters in our St. Michaels district in mid-June. This process is expected to be completed in approximately 4 – 6 weeks. Choptank Electric is contracting with Scope Services, Inc., a utility contractor, to assist our metering technicians with the installation of the advanced meters throughout our system. Scope Services will use their vehicles, which will be clearly identified as a Choptank Electric Contractor.

When the meter installation is complete in St. Michaels, we will proceed to the Ocean Pines area of our service territory. From Ocean Pines we will move to the most northern part of the system in Cecil County. The balance of the service territory will be changed out proceeding south. The full deployment process is expected to be complete by the summer of 2016.

Here are a few more details to be aware of concerning the deployment:

- A Choptank Electric representative will visit your home or business to replace your existing meter with a new advanced meter. You do not need to be present during the meter change-out as long as we have unobstructed access to the meter.
- All vehicles will be clearly marked with the Choptank Electric Cooperative logo and representatives will carry proper identification.
- Several weeks before the deployment, a post card will be mailed to members in the area where the deployment will be taking place, explaining the change-out details and contact information should you need to make special arrangements. As an additional reminder that we will be in your area, a few days before we come to your home or business you will receive an automated phone message. Please be sure that we have your most updated contact information, including preferred phone number and email address, so that you will receive these important messages.

- To complete the meter change-out, the representative will need to remove your existing meter. This may cause a brief interruption in power to your home or business. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.
- After our visit, you will find an informational door hanger to confirm that everything went as planned, or to inform you that your assistance is required to complete the installation.
- Once your new meter has been installed, it will no longer be necessary for you to read your meter yourself. It will also no longer be necessary to have a Choptank Electric Cooperative meter reader come to your home or business to read the meter each month. Instead, your monthly reading will be received electronically at the cooperative office.

As we move forward with the deployment of meters we will provide information through a variety of sources. Our monthly member newsletter, Live Wire, will feature a special section we are calling "AMI CORNER." Here is where you will find the latest updates on the deployment process and other information. Our website, www.choptankelectric.coop, features an Automated Meter Information green button; click on it to link to informational videos, fact sheets, frequently asked questions and opt out information. Additional updates and information will also be provided through our social media channels: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. As always, if you need additional information, or more personalized service, our Member Service Center is available to you between 8am and 4:30pm, Monday through Friday by calling toll-free 1-877-892-0001. We hope you share in our excitement about this advanced technology!