

THANK A LINEWORKER

April 18 is officially Lineworker Appreciation Day, giving us all a great opportunity to properly thank and appreciate our lineworkers. It's safe to say that without these highly skilled, highly trained, teamwork driven individuals, none of us would enjoy the freedoms and conveniences of electricity here on the rural sides of The Eastern Shore.

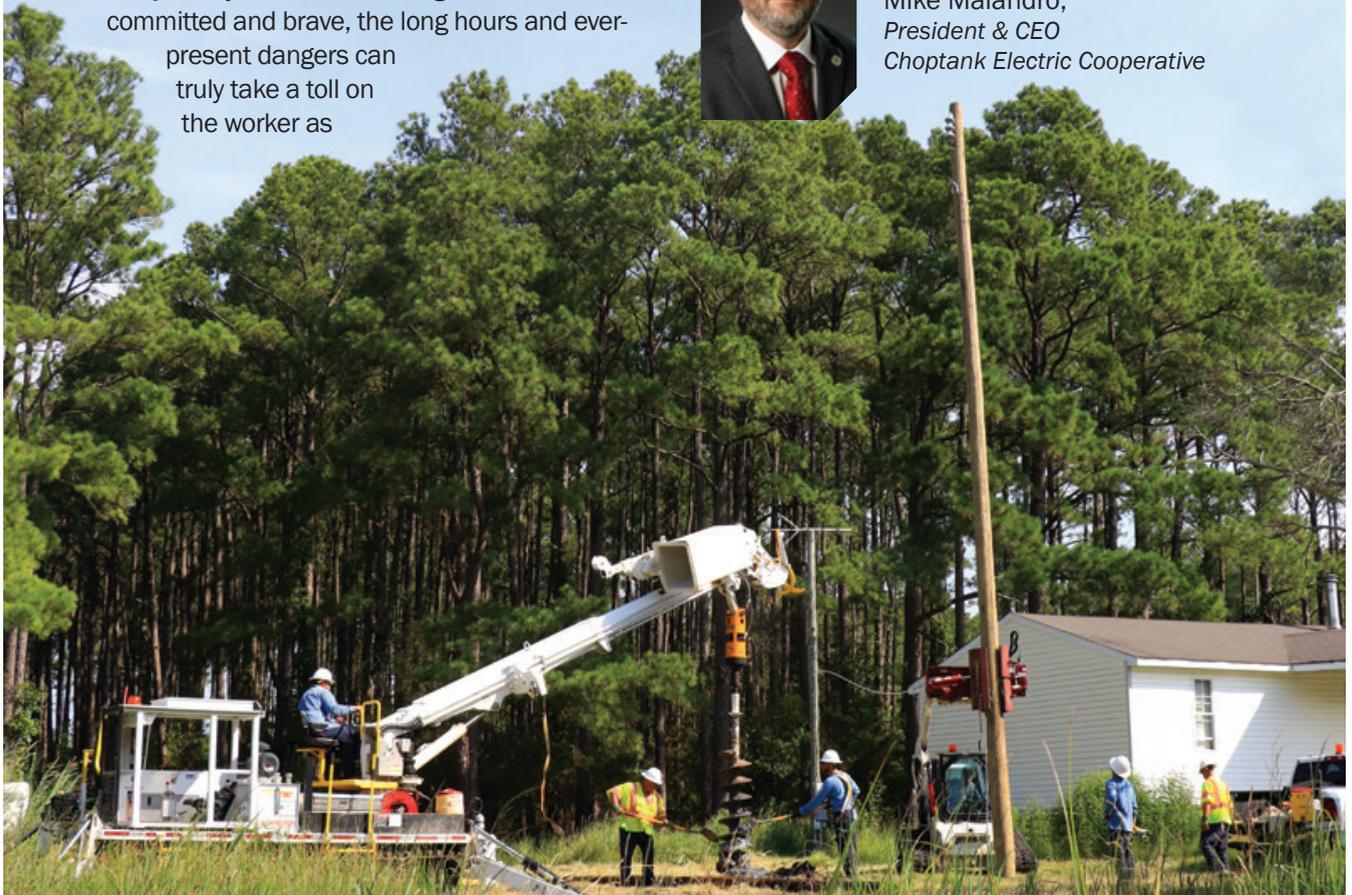
It goes without saying that a lineworker's job is not easy. The job of keeping power flowing at all times for 55,500+ members across 6,345 miles of line is no small task. And we often need them most when the conditions are at their worst. Rain, snow, wind, storms, flooding, etc. ... our lineworkers have seen and worked through it all. It takes 8,000+ hours of on-the-job-training and 600 hours of related course study to reach journeyman status. A tough career for the committed and brave, the long hours and ever-present dangers can truly take a toll on the worker as

well as their families. A lineworker's job is considered one of the most dangerous, only behind loggers and farm laborers. On top of that, today's lineworkers must be experts in the latest technologies, enabling them to effectively restore and perform preventative maintenance by pinpointing outages and troubleshooting problems, all in real time.

A properly run electric cooperative takes many fine people and our lineworker crews are at the heart of it. They are the power behind our power. Thank you to all lineworkers, especially to our Choptank Electric Cooperative crews. You wholeheartedly deserve it.



Mike Malandro,
President & CEO
Choptank Electric Cooperative



Choptank Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Choptank Fiber

P.O. Box 430 | Denton, MD | 21629
Member Service Center: 1-877-892-0001
Automated Member Service: 1-866-999-4574
Automated Outage Reporting: 1-800-410-4790
Text 'OUT' to: 1-800-410-4790
Use SmartHub to Manage Account,
Track Usage and Report Outages →

WWW.CHOPTANKELECTRIC.COOP





Maryland State Legislature Winds Down

By Valerie Connelly, VP Government Affairs and Public Relations

The 2023 Maryland General Assembly will draw to a close in just a few days after a 90-day session that featured new leadership at the state level as Governor Wes Moore was sworn in and his administrative staff was confirmed by the Senate. House and Senate Leadership priorities included action on issues like recreational cannabis legalization, criminal justice reform and education funding.

For Choptank Electric Cooperative, the motion to adjourn “sine die” on Monday, April 10, at midnight will bring final action on bills that impact electric members and broadband customers alike. Our team in Annapolis has been working to pass the following bills:

HB 678 – Sales and Use Tax – Electricity for Agricultural Purposes – This bill exempts electricity from the 6% sales and use tax when used for agricultural purposes. This includes raising livestock or poultry; preparing, irrigating or tending the soil; or activities to plant, service, harvest, store, clean, dry or transport seeds or crops. The bill would add this new exemption to the list of items already



exempt from sales and use tax when used for agricultural purposes.

Under current law, farmers who operate buildings and equipment on a residential rate with an electric utility company are exempt from sales and use tax. Farmers who have installed new meters to help with distant irrigation or fans in livestock and poultry barns are considered “commercial” and are subject to the tax under recent rulings from the Office of the Comptroller. Passage of the bill, which was introduced by Del. Sheree Sample-Hughes of the mid-Shore, would bring clarity and fairness to the use of electricity for agricultural purposes.

HB 551 – Broadband Expansion Incentive Act of 2023 – This bill allows a broadband company, like Choptank Fiber, to put all grant money received toward the construction and installation of broadband service to customers rather than pay income tax on the grant funds. The bill also makes the purchase of network equipment used to provide internet service exempt from the sales and use tax. Based on equipment purchased by Choptank Fiber in 2021, not paying the tax would have allowed us to reach an additional 300 unserved members with our state grants. If passed, this bill, which was in Governor Moore’s first



Matt Tefteau of Government Affairs testifying in support of HB 551.



We have been busy making sure our members are fully represented



legislative package, will help close the broadband divide faster for Choptank members who are waiting for high-speed internet service.

Capital Budget for Fiscal Year 2024 – Choptank staff worked closely with the Rural Maryland Council to secure authorization in the new Capital Budget for up to \$100 million for broadband infrastructure, which is expected to pass through from the federal government under the new Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program later this year. Authorization in the budget will allow the Office of Statewide Broadband to issue funds through

its competitive grant process without delay. Fewer delays in funding allow Choptank Fiber and our contractors to continue working to connect the next member. The Eastern Shore Delegation weighed in with a letter to the Appropriations Committee to secure this very important funding for the residents of the Eastern Shore.

For more information on final actions in the Maryland General Assembly, log onto:

> mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite



Valerie Connelly and Matt Tefteau of Government Affairs presenting to the Eastern Shore Delegation in February.

CHOPTANK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

ANNUAL MEETING

TALBOT COUNTY COMMUNITY CENTER
Route 50 at 10028 Ocean Gateway in Easton

THURSDAY, APRIL 27
Doors open at 4:30 p.m.
Business meeting begins at 6 p.m.

Meal and goodies for members who attend

10 Luck of the Draw Scholarships will be handed out!

DON'T FORGET TO CAST YOUR VOTE on the Bylaws amendment. Ballots were mailed, or emailed, to members at the end of March.

> www.choptankelectric.coop/annual-meeting-0



Vegetation Management: Think Before You Plant

By Katie Luckett, Marketing, Communications, Education Manager

Spring is finally here, and with that comes outdoor activities and chores. If planting and digging are on your to-do list this season, we encourage you to follow the safe vegetation management practices outlined below to avoid harm, power line damage, and costly repairs.

If you're planning to plant new trees around your property, there are important things to consider before selecting the location and type of tree. Determine first where the tree will be planted, then how tall the potential tree will grow, if it will interfere with any overhead power lines, and how far the roots will travel. You may need to adjust the location of the tree if it will interfere with utility lines or choose a different type of tree that

won't grow as tall or wide.

Tall trees, such as maple, oak, spruce, and pine, need to be planted 50 feet apart from one another and will most likely grow taller than overhead utility lines. Small trees, such as redbud, dogwood, and crabapple, can be planted 20 feet apart from one another and should not grow taller than overhead utility lines at 25 feet high.

To be sure the area selected to plant the tree is safe, another vegetation management practice is to call the national call-before-you-dig phone number by dialing 811. This will aid in selecting where to plant your trees by requesting the marking of approximate locations of buried utilities with paint or flags, so you don't unintentionally dig into an

underground utility line. Once all utilities have marked

their buried lines, you can dig carefully around any utility marks and relocate projects that are close to buried utilities, considering that tree roots travel over time as well.

An improperly placed tree causes nearly 15% of all outages on our system. Proper vegetation management provides reliable electricity to the Cooperative's members. Additional activities such as tree trimming, tree removal, mowing, and herbicide application to clear non-compatible vegetation from within and around the varying utility resources maintained by Choptank Electric keeps all lines, equipment and staff safe.

Following sound vegetation management techniques that meet all local, state and federal regulations while enriching the natural resources of the Eastern Shore of Maryland, vegetation management



represents the largest portion of Choptank Electric's Right-of-Way budget. This provides maintenance activities for all nine counties in a three-year maintenance cycle.

Invasive species are an immediate threat to our electrical system. Once a tree is dead it becomes structurally unsound, increasing the likelihood that the tree could uproot, break off, and/or shed large branches. This could seriously damage our distribution system and result in a loss of power to

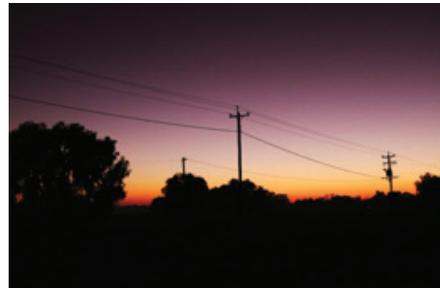
members. We recommend treating your trees with insecticides that can prevent Emerald Ash Borer infestation and reporting invasive plant infestations to your local land management agency.

Choptank Electric also supports pollinator health and protection on the Eastern Shore. Homeowners are encouraged to plant a pollinator garden, choose plants that flower throughout the year, and plants that are native to your local area to attract pollinators.

Visit choptankelectric.coop/vegetation-management to learn more about proper tree planting and vegetation management, and choptankelectric.coop/you-dig-miss-utility to learn more about marking underground utility lines. Our Member Service line is also available to call Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. with additional questions at 877-892-0001.

Scan for more guidance on Vegetation Management





**SEE A DOWNED LINE
OR DAMAGED POLE?
LEAVE IT ALONE
AND REPORT IT BY
CALLING 911**

Pole Replacement is Essential

By Bobby Schaller, MultiMedia Manager

One hundred years ago, utility poles and power lines were a rare sight. A “unicorn,” if you will. These days, folks don’t typically pay much attention to the towering structures. Lining most roads and driveways, they have become as commonplace as, well, the lightbulb. And that’s just fine, because that’s our job. It is our business to pay very close attention to our utility poles. We hold them in the highest regard, as these poles are essential to a reliable and safe electrical system for our members and for life as we

know it here in 2023.

Throughout the year, our crews constantly patrol and inspect thousands of utility poles. A pole can/could have a lifespan of 50 years. Add in unforeseen circumstance, like weather, and it’s always the right time for a pole replacement somewhere on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

The photo above shows our Cambridge crew working on a complicated dual-circuit pole change in early January. With

our ever-growing broadband and electrical grids, this change is just one of many we will be performing throughout the year and well into the future.

A standard pole change takes approximately two hours. These usually coincide with a planned outage. Members affected will receive a phone call a few days prior to give them a heads-up. Please know that planned outages are a necessary part in bringing reliable and affordable electricity to all of our members.

Choptank Fiber
EASY AS 1, 2, 3.

SIGN UP & CHECK FOR SERVICE HERE

Choptank Electric Cooperative BUZZ

Choptank Welcomes New Employees



Todd E. Anderson
Apprentice Lineman
Denton District

Experience: Rock Creek Line Construction

Hobbies: Camping, boating, fishing, hunting

Looking Forward To: Providing & restoring service to members



Matthew P. Taylor
Apprentice Lineman
Cambridge District

Experience: Northwest Lineman College

Hobbies: Hunting, fishing, bowling

Looking Forward To: Climbing poles and keeping the lights on

⚡ Congratulations to **Bryan “Wally” Daubach**, who has been selected as the Manager of Denton District, and **Paul Miles**, who has been selected as the Manager of Chestertown District. Paul began his duties on February 6, and Wally began his on March 18.

⚡ Congratulations to **Josh McCafferty** and **Casey Butler** for being awarded the Chief Lineman positions at Denton District. Josh began his duties on February 14, and Casey began his on March 20.

⚡ Congratulations to **Michael Bender**, who has been promoted from Electronics Technician I to Electronics Technician II. Michael recently received his General Line Worker’s Program Certification from Northwest Lineman College.

MEMBER'S NOTES

Our members are the reason Choptank Electric Cooperative exists. Whether on social media, by phone, or through handwritten letters, we appreciate when members let us know that we are doing a good job!

Thank you, all!

Mrs. Connelly,

Thank you very much for your response. Please find attached our Letter of Support, to be used in the effort to service this area of Berlin. I have been comforted by speaking with you and knowing that you and Choptank are doing all that you can to fill the Great Broadband Divide. I have been trying to get broadband here since 2000, and now I'm finally hopeful to see this 23-year journey come to an end!

*Sincerely,
Theophilus Hobbs III*

Choptank Electric Trust Awards

The Choptank Electric Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation funded by Operation Round Up donations from members of Choptank Electric. Funds from the Trust are distributed in all nine counties of MD's Eastern Shore.

To apply, or to find out more about this program:

> www.choptankelectric.coop/operation-round-trust-fund

January 2023

- Benedictine School - \$6,391
- Blind Industries - \$5,000
- Church Hill Cemetery - \$1,075
- Chesapeake Housing Mission - \$5,000
- North Caroline High School Lacrosse Helmets - \$3,050
- Band Association of NCHS - \$550
- Kent Conservation and Preservation - \$750
- Caroline County Public Schools Food Services Blender Bikes - \$1,000
- Talbot Hospice - \$5,000

February 2023

- Adkins Arboretum - \$500
- Humane Society of Somerset County - \$700
- Life Crisis Center - \$2,500

The total of approved applications for January and February was \$59,317, which included \$21,300 for individual home and medical expenses.



Choptank Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Choptank Electric, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is a not-for-profit, member-owned, electric distribution Co-op serving approximately 55,500 residential, commercial, and industrial members in all nine counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

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Robert B. Thompson
Ocean Pines District

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Worcester Co.

Craig N. Mathies Sr.
Somerset Co.

Choptank Fiber

Choptank Fiber, LLC

Choptank Fiber, LLC is a wholly-owned broadband subsidiary of Choptank Electric Cooperative. Choptank Fiber's goal is to install true Gigabit broadband with no data caps one community at a time until we serve all our members on the Eastern Shore.