

LIVE WIRE

Celebrating
80
1938 2018
Years of Service



Choptank Electric Cooperative
A Touchstone Energy
Cooperative



Vol. 23, No. 1

JANUARY 2018

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

Automated Member
Service Line:
1-866-999-4574, toll free

www.choptankelectric.coop

President and CEO
Michael I. Wheatley

Board of Directors
Olin S. Davis III
Chairman, Kent Co.

Jeffrey D. Rathell Sr.
Vice Chairman, Talbot Co.

John J. Burke Jr.
Secretary-Treasurer, Cecil Co.

Francis A. Callahan Jr.
Caroline Co.

Robert E. Arnold
Queen Anne's Co.

David W. Bruning, Sr.
Worcester Co.

Matthew R. Holloway
Wicomico Co.

Carl R. Widdowson
Somerset Co.

Douglas D. Scott
Dorchester Co.

Robert B. Thompson
Ocean Pines District



Your secure, online bill payment system

Bundle Up for Winter Storms

By Abby Berry



Are you ready for winter's cold grasp? Snow and ice are inevitable when dealing with winter storms, but being prepared can make a world of difference. Choptank Electric Cooperative recommends the following tips to help you prepare for wintry blasts.

Winterize your home

Winter storms wreak havoc on your home. By winterizing your living space, you'll be prepared for extreme cold and hazardous conditions.

- Remember to maintain and inspect heating equipment and chimneys every year to ensure they're working safely and properly.
- Caulk and weather strip doors and windows to make the most of your heating system.
- Freezing temperatures often cause water pipes to burst. Remember to insulate pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic. Allow faucets to drip during extreme cold to avoid frozen pipes.
- Consider installing storm windows for better insulation. You can also cover windows with plastic (from the inside) to keep the cold out.
- Make sure everyone in your family knows where the home's fire extinguisher is located and how to use it properly. House fires occur more frequently during winter months, as people tend to use alternative heating methods that may not be safe.

See Winter Storms
Continued on Page 3



Straight Talk with your CEO

How can we better serve you in 2018?

It's amazing what we learn through listening and observation.

New products and services are more likely to gain the satisfaction of consumers when their introduction follows market research.

Here at Choptank Electric Cooperative, we've provided members with SmartHub, our secure online payment system, which enables you to go paperless, pay your bill online via web or app, report outages, view real-time energy use data, and much more.

Choptank Electric Cooperative members are using the app to conduct routine business with us, like online bill payments, reporting and viewing real-time outage updates, and looking at energy usage. Of our 53,000 members, 51% of our members have signed up for SmartHub since 2011.

See Straight Talk
Continued on Page 3

Rate Case Filed with the Maryland Public Service Commission

Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc. has filed an application to revise its rates and charges for electric service, resulting in a 6.56% overall increase to revenues, at the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC).

The overall revenue increase of \$8.3 million dol-

lars, if approved by the PSC as filed, would result in a residential member using 1,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) per month to see an increase of \$9.10 per month, and would be effective in 2018.

Proposed tariffs may be found on the website, www.choptankelectric.coop.

Questions to Ask Solar Contractors Before Signing A Contract



As with any major home improvement project, purchasing from the right installer/contractor is every bit as important as the product you are purchasing. Due diligence is critical to ensure you get the best system, for a fair price, and that it's installed correctly and on time.

Questions to Ask About the Contractor's Background

1. How long have you been in business?
2. Are you licensed to do business in my state?
3. How many PV systems have you installed? Can you provide a list of consumer references in my area? Can I talk with former customers and also see successful installations?
4. Who will do the installation at my site? Are they employees or subcontractors? If you involve subcontractors, do they work with a number of other employers, too? Have these subs worked on many of your installations?
5. What training have you and your installers had, and what, if any, certifications do you and your installers hold? Do you have an installer with

a Master Electrician license, and is there an installer on your team licensed to install solar?

6. Does your company carry these types of insurance: general liability for at least \$1 million, professional liability, workers compensation, other types?
7. Have you ever been involved in a legal dispute involving a solar installation?

Ask these questions to be sure the contractor knows the business thoroughly and has satisfied other customers. Also, be sure to request copies of insurance documents, certifications and licenses, so you know that the contractor and installers have gone through required training. Be sure to call former customers and check out other installations the contractor has completed. You should query local Better Business Bureaus and your state Attorney General's office, and check online rating services for comments about the contractor and the equipment you plan to purchase.

For more information, visit our website at www.choptankelectric.coop, and click on the new Solar/Renewable Information button.

Winter Storms

Continued from Page 1

Prepare a winter survival kit

Severe winter storms often bring heavy accumulation of ice and snow, which can lead to downed power lines and extended outages. Choptank Electric Cooperative crews will work hard to restore power, but having a winter survival kit on hand is a smart idea.

- **Food:** Store food that does not require cooking, such as canned goods, crackers, dehydrated meats and dried fruit. Keep a large supply of water on hand. Ready.gov recommends five gallons per person.
- **Medication:** Be sure to refill all prescriptions in the event of a major power outage.
- **Identification:** Keep all forms of identification handy, such as driver's licenses, photo IDs and social security cards. Bank account information and insurance policies are also good to have on hand.
- **Other items:** First Aid Kit, blankets, flashlight, battery-powered radio and extra batteries.
- **Stay warm and safe**

BUILD YOUR EMERGENCY KIT <small>Waiting to prepare for a hurricane, severe storm or other natural disaster could be life-threatening. Make sure you have all the supplies you need in your emergency kit. Here's what we recommend you include:</small>	
WATER  <small>Include at least one gallon per person, per day. It's best to plan on a 3-5 day supply.</small>	FOOD  <small>Keep a 3-5 day supply of food in your kit. Check expiration dates every six months.</small>
FIRST AID KIT  <small>Pack basic first aid supplies, such as bandages, antiseptic wipes and hand sanitizer.</small>	EXTRA BATTERIES  <small>Include plenty of extra batteries or charging equipment for your devices.</small>
CLEANING SUPPLIES  <small>For sanitation, add cleaners, trash bags, moist towelettes and paper towels.</small>	FLASHLIGHT  <small>Pack a flashlight or battery-powered lantern in your kit in case of a power outage.</small>
CASH  <small>Set aside a little cash in case you can't use your debit or credit cards during an outage.</small>	PET SUPPLIES  <small>Include a 3-5 day supply of food, water and medications for your pets.</small>

If an outage occurs, you should plan for an alternate heating source. A fireplace, propane space heater or wood-burning stove would be sufficient.

Fuel and wood-burning heating sources should always be vented, and make sure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly. Always practice extreme caution when using alternate heating sources.

If you decide to use a portable generator during an outage, make sure it is placed outside the home for proper ventilation. Be careful not to overload the generator. Use appropriate extension cords that can handle the electric load.

Follow these tips, and your family will stay warm in the event of a power outage. For more information on preparing for winter storms, visit www.choptankelectric.coop.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service organization for the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

Straight Talk

Continued from Page 1

This online payment system and mobile apps are just a few new ways of how we are connecting with members, like the member services representatives you reach when you call us, or who greet you from behind the counters at our offices. They help us offer the quality services you expect us to provide.

Our goal is to find ways to help you control energy costs. That's why we communicate with you about energy prices and ways we can work together to help ease the burdens on your wallet.

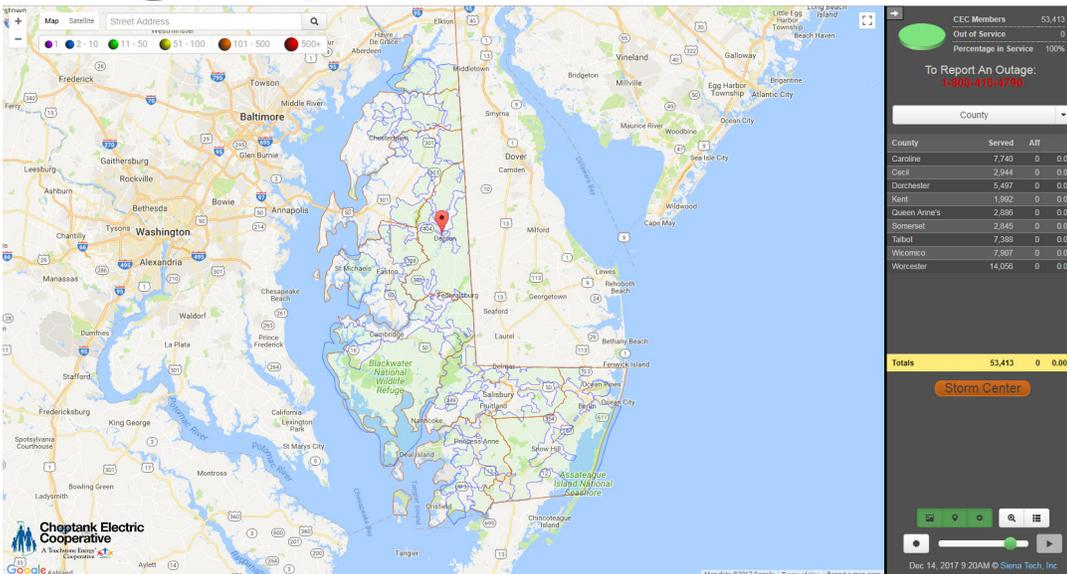
Listening improves understanding, builds trust, strengthens relationships and fosters cooperation. It's also crucial to collaboration and success. That's why Choptank Electric Cooperative still loves face time with our members. Our annual meeting is a

social event for our whole Co-op family. We hope you'll make plans now to join us on Thursday, April 26 at the Wicomico Youth and Civic Center for co-op business, scholarships, and prizes.

So, how do we serve you better in 2018? The same way many of us try to serve community, society and family better, each day—by listening. In our offices, on telephones, through social media exchanges and in our face-to-face meetings, we're ready to listen.

When you have questions about energy efficiency, electrical service or any of our products or services, just ask us. When we know just what you want, we're in a better position to deliver successful results. So, drop in and see us, we're always glad to hear from you.

Outage Map: Real-Time Information



Choptank Electric Cooperative's Outage Map has many features that members can take advantage of during any outage situation. The Outage Map can give you information such as how many members are without power, which counties, towns, and streets are affected, if crews have been dispatched, and estimated times of restoration.

Go to our website www.choptankelectric.coop and click on the Outage Map button at the top right hand corner or follow this direct link <http://choptank.maps.sienatech.com/> so you can see the Outage Map and check out its interactive features.



Connecting with you

Paying your bill online has never been easier with SmartHub, our secure billing process. SmartHub is easy, convenient, and simple.

You can:

- Get billing notifications
- Report outages
- Pay your bill
- Go paperless
- Review your energy usage

and much more. Sign up today at www.choptankelectric.coop

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Looking for an easy way to make your home cozier? Try using an area rug to increase the insulation levels of your floors. Area rugs are stylish and can keep cool air from entering through your floors. Your toes will thank you!



November 2017 Trust Awards

- Adkins Arboretum - \$399 dip jar
- St. Luke's UMC - \$1,000 sound equipment
- Caroline Optimist Shop with a Cop - \$500
- Eldorado Brookview VFC - \$1,385 thermal camera
- Farmers and Hundlers Feeding the Hungry - \$1,000 processing
- Snow Hill Middle School - \$1,944 outdoor seating
- Dorchester Skipjack Committee - \$1,500 repairs

- Queen Anne's Make a Difference Day - \$690 facility rental
- Mason Dixon Woodworkers - \$500 supplies

The total of approved applications for November was \$27,322.74 which included \$18,404.74 for individual home and medical expenses.

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 Maryland's Eastern Shore.

