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Focusing on What Matters – the Consumer

By Glenn English, Chief Executive Officer, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

The consumer comes first. That is the driving motivation behind your local electric cooperative's work. It doesn't take a lot of fancy words to understand the difference between your local electric cooperative and other utility companies that want to provide energy services to you.

Simply put, if something – a policy, a service, a way of doing business – is good for the member-consumers, then it is good for the electric co-op, too. Contrast this philosophy with that of the big power companies.

Making a profit is first and foremost with them. That's all well and good – unless there is a clash between profits for the company, and serving consumers and their communities. When that happens, guess who wins? Whom would you rather have serving you? An investor-owned utility that exists to take money out of your pocket and out of the community? Or would you rather get your electricity from an electric co-op that is in business to serve you and help you keep your hard-earned dollars in your pocket and your community?

The choice is simple because the philosophy of an electric co-op is simple: member-consumers are the co-op, so if it's good for them, it has to be good for the co-op itself.

However, the reasons your electric co-op looks out for your interests better than a big power company goes way beyond differences in business philosophy. The men and women who work for you at your cooperative are in a better position to protect your interests in the debate over the future of the electric utility industry. Why? They live and work in the same community you do, and they are attuned to paying attention to what you are saying. And, your electric co-op is run by an elected board of directors – your friends and neighbors – who have a duty to put consumers first.

Today, Americans all across the nation are beginning to realize just how special and unique cooperative businesses can be in finding solutions to local

problems and needs. As the laws governing how utility companies operate continue to change in state after state, consumers are discovering that the best way to find solutions to community problems is to empower themselves to solve those problems. That's a cooperative way of getting a job done – it puts the member-consumer first.

Over 70 years ago, hard-working families in your community teamed up and organized a co-op to bring electric power to their homes and businesses. The big power companies had turned their backs and refused to help because they didn't believe there was money to be made. Your needs as a consumer did not come first – the interests of the power company came first.

Today, it seems cooperative businesses are becoming more popular. People are weary of dealing with distant corporations and are frustrated with inattentive, large bureaucracies. And, they want to feel that they are more than just a statistic.

In fact, national research confirms that electric cooperatives nationwide get far better ratings on service than any other group of utility companies. We are recognized for our local orientation, our attention to detail and, primarily, putting you – our consumers – ahead of all other priorities. In research recently conducted for electric cooperatives, 85 percent of member-consumers said their electric co-op is providing quality service, and 80 percent said it is being responsive to customers. Furthermore, 69 percent agreed that co-ops are responsive and close to the community.

These results of this research should not be surprising. I have found electric co-ops to be businesses where honesty, integrity and cooperation are the norm. That's because member-consumers are the co-op, and the driving force behind everything the co-op does is the consumer. At your electric co-op, the consumer comes first – and that means you.

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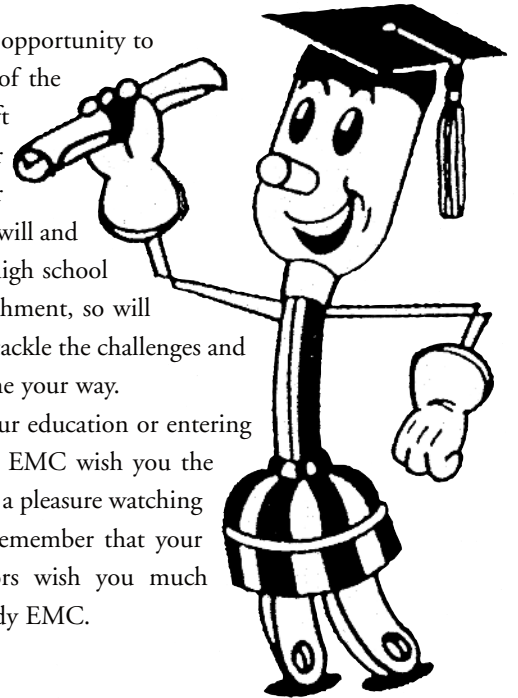
Graduation 2011

A very special day is just around the corner for a select group of individuals. Needless to say, this is a day that has been long-awaited and worked hard for. The Seniors of 2011 will be taking their turn in the spotlight as diplomas and recognitions are handed out graduation day.

Grady EMC would like to take this opportunity to congratulate each and every graduate of the Class of 2011. Prior graduates have left their mark on their school and their community. They are taking their responsible places in society just as you will and just as will future graduates. Just like high school has been a challenge and an accomplishment, so will the future. You have been equipped to tackle the challenges and to enjoy the accomplishments that come your way.

Whether you plan on furthering your education or entering the job market, your friends at Grady EMC wish you the very best in your endeavors. It has been a pleasure watching you arrive at this time in your life. Remember that your family, friends, relatives and educators wish you much happiness and success and so does Grady EMC.

Congratulations!

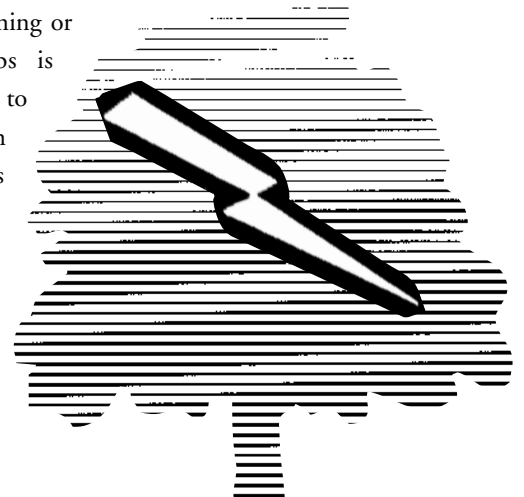


Trees, Shrubbery, and Electricity

You might already have figured out what this article is about. Since trees, shrubbery, and electric power lines don't mix, trimming or even removal of trees or shrubs is sometimes required. We do not like to see beautiful trees or shrubs cut down

or severely pruned, but we have to provide all of us with safe, dependable electricity. Trees that grow into power lines not only create unnecessary outages for several people, but also can create a dangerous situation for children that like to climb these trees.

If you are making plans to plant trees, shrubs, or vines on your property, please notice where the power lines are located. Planting trees approximately 40-50 feet away from the power line could prevent the tree from having to be trimmed allowing it to live out its full life without being cut. Thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation.



KNOW WHAT'S BELOW... ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Whether it's a dreamed up deck addition or a landscaping masterpiece, spring – when the weather starts to warm up – is a great time for outdoor improvement plans to actually play out.

But if your planned projects include digging, like planting a tree or bringing in a backhoe for trench work, you'll have to wait a few more days so the job can be done safely. Underground utilities, such as buried gas, water, and electric lines, can be a shovel thrust away from turning a summer project into a disaster.

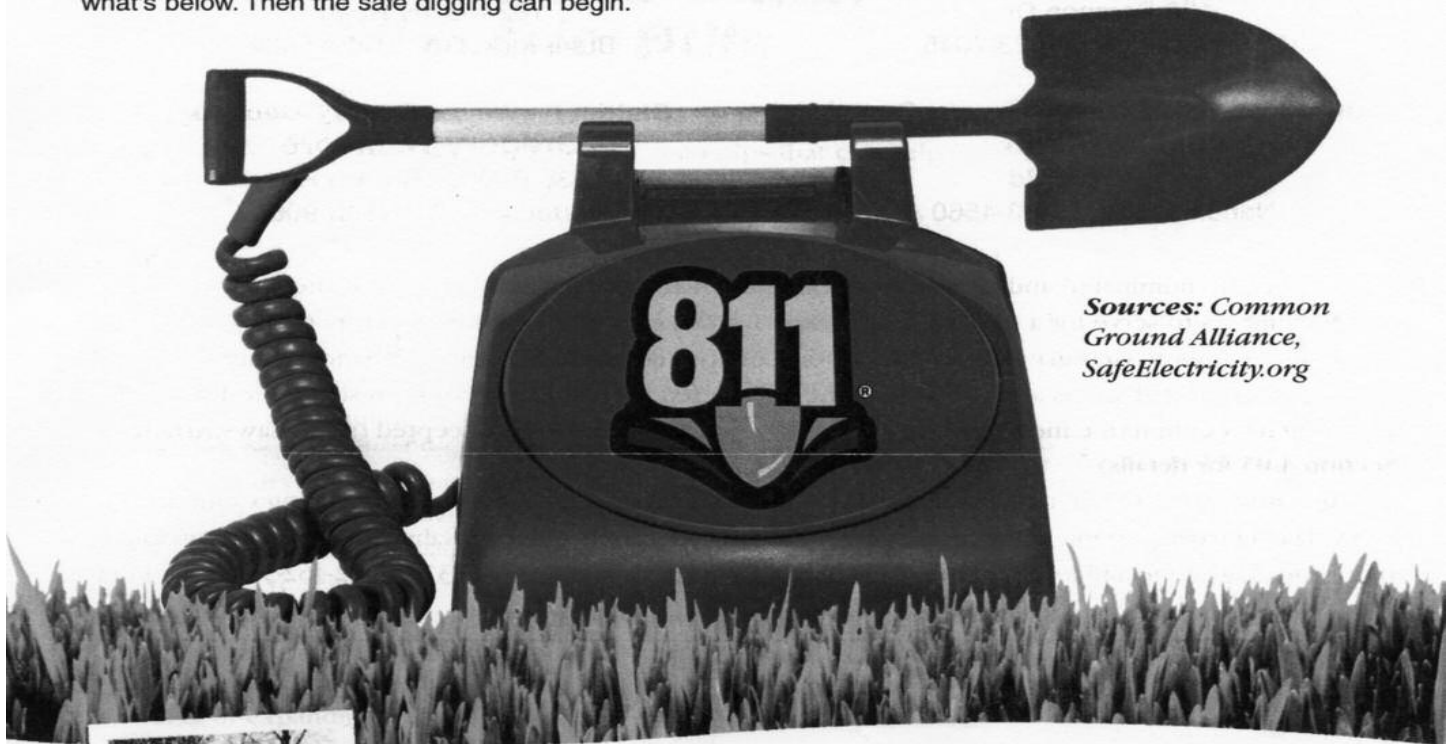
To find out where utility lines run on your property, dial 811 from anywhere in the country a few days prior to digging. Your call will be routed to a local "one call" center. Tell the operator where you're planning to dig and what type of work you will be doing, and affected local utilities will be notified.

In a few days, a locator will arrive to designate the approximate location of any underground lines, pipes, and cables with flags or marking paint so you'll know what's below. Then the safe digging can begin.

Although many homeowners tackling do-it-yourself digging projects are aware of "Call Before You Dig" services, the most of them don't take advantage of the service. A national survey showed that only 33 percent of homeowners called to have their lines marked before starting digging projects, according to the Common Ground Alliance, a federally mandated group of underground utility and damage prevention industry professionals.

Although light gardening typically doesn't call for deep digging, other seemingly simple tasks like planting shrubs or installing a new mailbox post can damage utility lines. A severed line can disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, harm diggers, and potentially result in fines and repair costs.

Never assume the location or depth of underground utility lines. There's no need: the 811 service is free, prevents the inconvenience of having utilities interrupted, and can help you avoid serious injury. For more information about local services, visit www.call811.com.



Sources: Common Ground Alliance, SafeElectricity.org



One free, easy call gets your utility lines marked AND helps protect you from injury and expense.

**Safe Digging Is No Accident:
Always Call 811 Before You Dig**

**Know what's below. Always call 811 before you dig.
Visit call811.com for more information.**



NEW FEDERAL RULES WILL AFFECT ELECTRIC BILLS

EPA FORGING AHEAD WITH CARBON REGULATION

Although Congress decided it was best not to pass comprehensive legislation to regulate carbon emissions, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is doing just that under the guise of the Clean Air Act.

And that regulation won't come cheap.

The costs will hit consumers hardest whose utilities depend on coal and natural gas—America's most abundant energy sources—to generate electricity. The cost nationwide may range from \$5 billion to \$10 billion.

These three provisions will affect your electricity bill the most:

Coal Ash Rule. Coal ash is the substance that remains after combusting coal to generate electricity. After several decades of study, both university and government agencies have determined it to be non-hazardous. It's widely recycled for use in many building materials, including asphalt and Portland cement, saving valuable landfill space. The EPA is seeking to have coal ash classified as a hazardous waste. If that happens, it will cost billions of dollars for disposal and possibly shut down some generating plants.

Clean Air Transport Rule. This rule will cap power plant emissions that cross state lines in 31 Eastern states, including Georgia. The Clean Air Transport Rule replaces the Clean Air Interstate Rule that was vacated in 2008 by the Washington, DC Circuit Court. The price tag to achieve the requirements will be \$2.8 billion every year.

Cooling Water Intake Requirements. Power plants use water from lakes and rivers to cool generating equipment. Devices installed on intake pipes prevent fish and wildlife from entering, but the EPA thinks the equipment can be improved. Depending on any new rules and the level of enforcement, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation claims that one-third of the country's electricity capacity may have to be retired.

Legislation is gaining support to halt greenhouse gas regulation through these backdoor methods. We will continue to look out for you and oppose any legislation that unnecessarily raises your electric bill and hurts our economy. It's our aim that you have the electricity you need at a cost you can afford.

Familiar Light Bulb On Its Way *Out*

By this time next year, the federal government will have turned out the lights on the familiar A-shaped incandescent bulb that's probably in most of your table lamps and overhead light fixtures.

Starting Jan. 1, 2012, the traditional 100-watt and 150-watt A19 incandescent light bulb will no longer be sold. A year later, the familiar 75-watt incandescent also will be history. And in 2014, Americans will wave goodbye to their beloved – albeit energy-inefficient – 60- and 40-watt A-shaped incandescents.

The result: Most people will switch to more efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs or to a brand-new, high-efficiency halogen bulb that manufacturers have introduced in response to the “light bulb law” within the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007.

You might grumble about the considerably steeper price of the alternative bulbs – in the \$2-per-bulb range versus the 50-cent incandescent. But you could notice a difference on your electric bill once you make the switch, as CFLs last for around five years and use 75 percent less energy than traditional incandescents, which burn out after about seven months of normal use.

A heads-up: Starting this July, light bulb packages will carry a Lighting Facts Label, which will explain how bright the bulb is, how long it will last and how much energy it will use. Instead of saying how many watts the bulb is, it will give its lumens – a measure of light output.

