



FEATURE ARTICLE



## TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR BILL WITH OUR PREPAY PROGRAM

One of the benefits of being part of Piedmont Electric is that we are always looking for ways to help our members save money on their energy bills. Our PrePay program is just another example of an opportunity for our members to manage their energy usage.

### WHAT IS PREPAY?

Joining the PrePay program allows you to take control of your power costs by paying for your electricity in advance. Think of it in terms of buying gas for your car. You fill up your gas tank and know how far it will go by monitoring the gauge in your car.

Purchasing electricity through PrePay works the same way, allowing you to monitor your energy usage through your online SmartHub account, so you know when to “fill up” your account. The only difference is that you don’t store electricity at your home like you store gas in your car.

### BENEFITS OF PREPAY

- You will likely see as much as a 12 percent savings because you will become more conscious of your energy usage.
- This can be a good option for those with roommates, as you can take turns putting money in the account. Anyone with the account number can fill up the balance.

- You will be alerted as your balance gets low, reminding you that it’s time to fill back up.
- Sign up is easy and you can add money to your account online on the SmartHub app, over the phone or by visiting our office.
- There is no limit to how often you can refill your balance. You can refill it daily, weekly, monthly, etc., based on what works best for you.
- There is no deposit required to sign up for PrePay and if you have a deposit on file, that will be added to your PrePay account.
- PrePay is a great option for those trying to be diligent about sticking to a budget, helping you monitor your usage to make adjustments as needed.

Programs like this are just another reason why being part of an electric cooperative is so special! If you’d like to join the PrePay program, call us at 800.222.3107 or email us at [info@pemc.coop](mailto:info@pemc.coop).

### IMPORTANT DATES

**MAR 31**

**Basketball Camp & College Scholarship Applications due**

Apply at [pemc.coop](http://pemc.coop).

**APR 7**

**Annual Meeting**

Yearly business meeting of Piedmont Electric.

**APR 22**

**Earth Day**

### VEGETATION CLEARING

*Clearing hazardous trees around power lines helps to keep your electric service safe and reliable.*

PAGE 22

### COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

*Applications due March 31, apply today!*

PAGE 23

### LOWER YOUR ENERGY BILL

*Read our quick tips to save money!*

PAGE 24

### Want to go green and stop getting a printed bill?

Login to SmartHub at [pemc.coop](http://pemc.coop) and make sure your email is up to date. Then go to the **My Profile** section, click on **Update My Printed Bill Settings** and then turn the status to off. You’ve just gone paperless!

PIEDMONT ELECTRIC SPOTLIGHT

Jerry Phelps

Arborist and Right-of-Way Supervisor

Piedmont Electric recognizes that trees and other plants are beneficial to accenting our homes and beautifying our communities. However, trees growing in the wrong place can be dangerous.

We spoke with Jerry Phelps, Right-of-Way Supervisor at Piedmont Electric, to better understand the importance of tree and vegetation clearing. Jerry is a certified arborist with 46 years of arboriculture experience.

Why does Piedmont Electric trim trees around power lines?

Trees falling on or limbs brushing our lines is the leading cause of power outages, especially during severe weather. By trimming, removing hazardous trees and mowing in the power line easements, we reduce tree-related outages and shorten the duration of outages when they do occur. Also, when power lines are down, they are more likely to come into contact with people and property.

How often does Piedmont Electric trim trees?

Piedmont Electric has a three-year clearing schedule. This means we reach every mile of our 2,000-mile system within three years, then we start another three-year cycle.



Vegetation clearing helps keep your electric service reliable

What would happen if Piedmont Electric did not trim my trees?

You would likely experience power quality problems and longer than necessary storm-related outages. It takes three to four times longer to restore your power if our crews have to work around untrimmed trees and uncleared right-of-way.

Why don't you put all those lines underground so you don't have to cut the trees?

It's simply too expensive. The initial cost of running lines underground throughout rural areas is prohibitively high. While they may be more reliable during a storm, they can take twice as long to fix when issues occur with underground lines or equipment.

The crews I've noticed trimming trees aren't in Piedmont Electric trucks. Are they co-op employees?

Piedmont Electric works with licensed contractors to do our tree clearing. Hiring contract crews saves money which keeps rates down. These contract crews are highly skilled, properly equipped and under the supervision of specialized Piedmont Electric employees, like myself.

If you have any questions or concerns about Piedmont Electric's clearing activities, please contact Jerry at 800.222.3107 or jerry.phelps@pemc.coop.



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Visit connections.coop/pemc for discount details and a complete list of participating local businesses, national businesses, dentists, chiropractors, vision care centers and pharmacies.

Can't find your Co-op Connections Card?

Visit connections.coop/pemc to print a new one or call our office at 800.222.3107 for a replacement.

Every year, Piedmont Electric awards six

# \$1,500 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

to local high school students who are planning to continue their education.



## APPLY NOW

IMPORTANT

**March 31, 2017**, is the application deadline for our college scholarship program.

Applicants must be planning to continue his/her education at a higher education institution and their parent or guardian must be a Piedmont Electric member.



Piedmont Electric  
Membership Corporation  
Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative

Find out more and apply online at [pemc.coop/college](http://pemc.coop/college).



## INEXPENSIVE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO LOWER YOUR ENERGY BILL



### Looking for more tips on how to lower your energy bill?

Check out [PEMC.coop/save-energy-money](http://PEMC.coop/save-energy-money) to find out what you can do to make your home more energy efficient.

### SEAL UP THOSE GAPS

Did you know those little gaps in your windows and doorways can cost you more than \$200 a year? Spring is a great time to find those gaps and cracks and use weather stripping or a caulking gun to seal up any leaks you find around vents, ductwork and windows.

### BLOCK OUT THAT SUN

By simply closing the blinds or pulling the shades on your windows in the warm spring and summer months, you can save about \$35 on energy costs. Your local hardware store carries lots of inexpensive window coverings that you can install yourself. Make the investment now and the savings will start piling up!

### CHANGE YOUR AIR FILTERS

Air filters need to be changed once a month to ensure your furnace or air conditioner is performing at peak efficiency. Dirty filters restrict air flow, making your system work longer to heat and cool your home. Get in the habit of changing these filters regularly and watch your energy bills go down in both the summer and winter.

### KEEP HOT ITEMS OUT OF YOUR FRIDGE

If you put a hot casserole in the refrigerator, the heat from the dish will warm the air inside the fridge. Your compressor will then have to work harder to cool the air, wasting electricity. Let dishes cool before putting them in the fridge. And if it's time to replace an outdated refrigerator, make sure to get one that's ENERGY STAR rated. Investing in energy efficient appliances can save you money.

## PIEDMONT ELECTRIC CONNECTION

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### OFFICE HOURS

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.  
800.222.3107

Piedmont Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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### IF YOUR POWER GOES OUT, CALL US AT 800.449.2667

Our automated outage reporting system uses your phone number to determine your service location.

That's why it's important to update the number connected to your account. If your number has changed, let us know by completing the form that comes with your monthly bill or by calling 800.222.3107.

Pay account and access account information by phone 24 hours a day by calling 877.999.3394. Voice instructions will direct you through the system.