



# CONNECTION

PIEDMONT ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION MEMBER NEWSLETTER | MARCH 2021



## Stop, drop and read before starting spring projects

This spring, **stop** digging, **drop** your tools and **read** this guide to make sure you don't run into any issues when working on outdoor home projects.

Longer days and fresh spring air are on the way. If you're planning to use this time to tackle some of the items on your outdoor home improvement list, there are a few important things to remember to stay safe and avoid dangerous accidental outages during your project.

### Always call 811 before you dig.

Anytime you dig into the ground, you run the risk of hitting underground power lines which can be dangerous and fatal. It also can create an outage for you (and your neighbors!). Calling before you dig can not only save you money from a damage claim, it can also save your life. To prevent this, call 811 before you dig to have someone come out to mark underground facilities. Plus it's a free service.

### Research plant species first.

Make sure you're choosing the right type of trees before planting in your yard. Otherwise, you'll run the risk of the trees growing up into power lines. We recommend sticking to smaller trees like holly, river birch, cherry and weeping willows.

### Use plants to your advantage.

Did you know that strategic planting can help you save on your energy bill? Plant trees and shrubs so that they provide shade around your air conditioner. It'll help the system run more efficiently and give you shade when you're outside.

### Practice responsible pruning.

Once your trees and shrubs are matured, don't forget to regularly prune

them so they don't grow into the area around power lines and pad-mounted transformers. As a good rule of thumb, plant at least 15 feet away from power lines. Our right-of-way clearing crews work to keep the power lines free of trees and branches, but you can help by planting your trees and shrubs in the right place.

For more information on safe planting visit [pemc.coop/planting-guide](http://pemc.coop/planting-guide).

### Planning a major home renovation this spring?

When working on a project with major electrical updates, contact your local co-op first to make sure your current service is appropriate and so we can make changes on our end as needed. Here are a few examples of the types of projects to call about:

- ▶ Installing a whole-home generator
- ▶ Adding an electric vehicle charging station
- ▶ Changing out or moving your meter box
- ▶ Adding an extension or addition to your home
- ▶ Adding a pool or spa to your backyard
- ▶ Adding power to a shed or garage
- ▶ Anything that would require substantial digging in your yard

For more information, visit [pemc.coop/home-electrical-changes](http://pemc.coop/home-electrical-changes).

#### IMPORTANT DATES

**March 31**

**College scholarship applications due**

**April 16**

**Annual meeting livestream**

18 **Day in the life of a lineworker**

20 **Is your HVAC ready for warmer weather?**



Looking for ways to emPOWER your child's future? Have your high school senior apply for a Piedmont Electric college scholarship before the March 31 deadline. Learn more and apply at [pemc.coop/scholarships](http://pemc.coop/scholarships).



# DAY IN THE LIFE OF OUR LINE CREWS

Our crews work hard every day to ensure our members receive reliable electricity to power their lives. While we tend to think about lineworkers when a storm rolls through, we often take for granted their work to keep our electric grid running smoothly. Let's take a closer look at what could be on our crews' schedule on a blue-sky day.



## NEW SERVICE

---

We all know this is a great place to live, so it's no surprise that people want to move to our area! When new homes and businesses are built in our communities, our lineworkers and engineers work together to bring power to these new buildings. The construction plans often include digging trenches for underground wire or installing new poles and stringing line from the road to a new house in the country. Regardless of where you live in our service area, if you want power, we'll bring it to you!



## UNPLANNED OUTAGES

---

While most outages are caused by bad weather, there are a couple other common causes that can result in outages on a sunny day. Animals such as squirrels, birds and snakes often cause outages when they chew on the lines or crawl into equipment. Vehicles and large construction or farming equipment occasionally hit poles or pull down overhead power lines. No matter the time of day or the cause, our crews will restore power to our members.

## GRID MAINTENANCE

Weather, animals and time can take its toll on an electric grid. Just like how homes deteriorate over time and require upgrades, our electric grid requires constant maintenance to make sure you always have access to reliable power. Piedmont Electric conducts regular inspections of all our equipment, poles, lines and substations to ensure all aging equipment is efficient and reliable. You can often find our crews replacing old poles, updating transformers and performing maintenance on substations.

Piedmont Electric also conducts regular right-of-way maintenance that is vital to keeping the power on. We trim trees and maintain a clear right-of-way around more than 3,600 miles of lines every three years to help keep tree branches from falling on the lines. Our proactive maintenance helps prevent outages and blinks, strengthens our grid and will keep it running smoothly long into the future.



## NIGHTTIME OUTAGES

We value our members and one of the ways we show we care is through our outage response. If you lose power at 2 a.m., our lineworkers don't wait until after their morning coffee to restore your power. Once they receive the call, they put on their boots and safety equipment and get to work. Piedmont Electric always has crews on call ready to respond to an outage, large or small. Because even if only one member is without power, you matter to us. Not many organizations can deliver that level of service!



Piedmont Electric  
kept the power on for  
**99.98%**  
of the time in 2020!

## Is your HVAC ready for the HEAT?

During this time of year, many of us take the time to do spring cleaning around the house. When you're working your way through your to-do list, don't forget about one often overlooked area of your home: the HVAC unit.

With a little extra attention, you can help prepare your HVAC for the warmer weather before it hits so that your system works more efficiently and helps you save money on cooling costs.

### HVAC spring maintenance checklist

- ❑ **Clear out the area around the unit.** Ideally, there should be at least 3 feet of clear space around all sides of your outdoor unit for maximum efficiency. Take a few minutes to pick up leaves, branches and other debris that may be piled up around the unit.
- ❑ **Check for damage.** Once you've cleaned the area, take a look at the pipes that connect the unit to your house. Is there any visible damage? If you notice deterioration from sun or pests, contact a professional to schedule repair work.
- ❑ **Change the air filters.** When your air filters get clogged with dust and debris, it makes it harder for your HVAC to work efficiently. Replace the filters monthly to help prevent damage to the system over time.
- ❑ **Consider getting the ducts cleaned.** If you notice dust accumulation in your home even after changing out the filters, it might be time to schedule a professional duct cleaning to help clear out your duct system.

### Other ways to help your HVAC

Once you've shown some love to your HVAC, join one of our energy efficiency programs to help save you even more money on your electric bill.

- **Load management:** A load control switch will cycle off your AC on the most extreme summer weekday afternoons during times of high energy use. You'll use less energy and receive bill credits during the summer months.
- **Smart thermostat savings program:** If you have a Nest thermostat, you can allow Piedmont Electric to adjust your home's temperature by a few degrees on only the hottest weekday afternoons through your home's WiFi. Of course, you can always adjust the thermostat back if you choose. This program gives you a \$50 sign-up rebate, bill credits in the summer and helps lower your energy use.
- **Time-of-day rates:** Pay a lower rate for the energy you use during times of low energy use for our co-op. If you have a programmable thermostat, you can set a schedule to have it turn off during on-peak hours.

Learn more about all of these programs by visiting [pemc.coop/save-energy-money](http://pemc.coop/save-energy-money).

**+** Find out which Piedmont Electric programs are right for you by taking our short quiz. Tell us your energy-saving goals and we'll recommend programs that best suit your needs. Take the quiz at [pemc.coop/my-piedmont-program](http://pemc.coop/my-piedmont-program).



### PIEDMONT ELECTRIC CONNECTION

Published monthly for the members of Piedmont Electric Membership Corporation. Piedmont Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Hillsborough and Roxboro

Office Hours:

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Caswell Office Hours:

Wednesday 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Report outages, make payments and access account information by phone 24-hours-a-day by calling 800.222.3107.

Voice instructions will direct you through the system.

2500 NC Highway 86 South  
PO Drawer 1179  
Hillsborough, NC 27278

Stephen B. Hamlin  
President and CEO

#### DIRECTORS

Bill R. Barber, Chairman  
Randy Kinley, Vice Chairman  
Sam T. Woods, Secretary  
Richal Vanhook, Treasurer  
Steven P. Bailey, Stephen  
C. Long, Andrew M. Oakley,  
David Poythress, Elizabeth  
Townsend & Cyrus Vernon

#### IF YOUR POWER GOES OUT, CALL OR TEXT 800.222.3107

Opt in for text alerts by texting "pemc" to 800.222.3107. Once you've opted in, report an outage by texting "#out" to 800.222.3107 or "#status" for an update on your outage.

Our automated outage reporting system uses your phone number to determine your service location. Update the number connected to your account online through SmartHub, by completing the form on your monthly bill or by calling 800.222.3107.

Please note that it may take up to 24 hours for our system to recognize new cell phone numbers in the text outage alert program.