



# Connection

PIEDMONT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER NEWSLETTER | MARCH 2025



## Protecting Your Power: Beyond Basic Tree Trimming

When you see our crews working along power lines, you might think we're just clearing branches from our rights-of-way. While that's part of our mission, we're taking an even more proactive approach to protect your reliable electric service and your wallet.

### Right-of-Way Vegetation Management

Our right-of-way extends 50 feet on each side of our transmission lines and 15 feet on each side of our distribution lines. This provides enough space for utility vehicles to work safely. As part of receiving electric service, members grant Piedmont Electric easement rights to clear, maintain and repair these areas as needed to keep the system running smoothly.

### Danger Trees: A Hidden Threat

What you may not know is that our vegetation management team isn't just focused on branches near power lines. We're also identifying and removing dead, leaning and uprooted trees outside our standard right-of-way that could fall and cause outages.

Though we always prefer to preserve trees when possible, dead trees pose a significant risk to power reliability and public safety. Removing these hazards before they cause problems helps prevent unexpected outages and costly emergency repairs.

### Smart Solutions, Better Service

Some members ask why we don't simply bury all our power lines underground. While underground lines can be attractive, they come at a steep price – typically 4 to 5 times more expensive than overhead lines. Our strategic tree management program delivers reliable service at a fraction of the cost of underground installation.

### IMPORTANT DATES

#### March 31

**Basketball Camp, College Scholarship Applications Due**

Final day to submit your basketball camp and college scholarship applications.

#### April 16

**Annual Meeting**

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**Turn to page 14 for more details about our annual meeting livestream next month.**



### Report Dead, Leaning or Uprooted Trees

We don't want to cut live, healthy trees outside of our right-of-way, but if you see a dead tree that is tall enough to hit a line, please contact our office at **800.222.3107** or **info@pemc.coop**.

Our staff will come out to examine the tree and if we determine it is a threat to powerlines then we will cut it down at no expense to the member. However, we will not haul away the tree.

Visit **pemc.coop/right-of-way** to learn more about your co-op's vegetation management process. Plus, you can contact us at **800.222.3107** to report dangerous trees or learn more.





## Spring Cleaning with Energy Savings in Mind

Spring officially starts this month, bringing longer days, blooming flowers and the perfect opportunity to refresh your home while keeping energy efficiency in mind. This season, tackle your spring cleaning list with these energy-saving tips to lower your energy bill and increase safety in your home.

### HVAC Spring Maintenance Checklist

Your HVAC system works hard to keep your home comfortable. Show it some love this spring:

- **Change 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.
- **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.
- **Schedule a tune-up:** It's never a bad idea to have a professional inspect and clean your system to ensure it's operating at peak performance.

### Give Your Appliances a Refresh

Spring is a great time to clean and maintain your appliances to ensure they're running efficiently. Add these items to your spring cleaning list:

- **Clean refrigerator coils:** Dust and dirt can make your refrigerator work harder, increasing energy usage. Vacuum the coils to improve efficiency.
- **Clear your dryer vent:** Lint buildup in dryer vents can lead to longer drying times and even fire hazards. Clean the vent thoroughly for safety and efficiency.

### Upgrade and Seal for Savings

Simple upgrades and maintenance can make a big difference:

- **Switch to LED bulbs:** They use up to 75% less energy and last much longer than traditional bulbs.
- **Install smart power strips:** These devices reduce "phantom" energy drain from electronics left in standby mode.
- **Seal windows and doors:** Use weatherstripping or caulk to block drafts and keep your home's temperature consistent.

### Time for an Upgrade?

Are your appliances showing their age? Upgrading to ENERGY STAR®-rated appliances can significantly reduce energy consumption. Flip to page 18 to learn about the tax credits you may be eligible for when upgrading to ENERGY STAR appliances.

By incorporating these energy-saving tips into your spring cleaning routine, you can create a more efficient and comfortable home. Happy spring cleaning!



### Prioritize Electrical Safety

Spring cleaning isn't just about tidying up—it's a great opportunity to ensure your home is safe. When cleaning out the garage or other storage areas, check for damaged or frayed electrical cords. Replace them immediately to prevent electrical hazards. Practice caution with all electrical appliances and outlets to keep your home safe.

# Amp Up Spring Savings

As spring approaches, now is the perfect time to get ahead of your energy costs before summer arrives. We offer several money-saving programs to help you manage your energy usage and reduce your monthly bills.

## Half-Priced Electricity

Take advantage of lower rates during off-peak hours by enrolling in our time-of-day rate program. You'll enjoy reduced rates during weekends, most holidays and 19-20 hours weekdays. As we transition into spring, this is an ideal time to establish energy-saving habits before peak summer usage begins.

Our members who participated in this program last year saved an average of \$20 per month. By planning your energy usage around off-peak hours, you can maximize your savings while maintaining comfort in your home.

## Tips for Maximizing TOD Rate

- Wash dishes during off-peak hours by setting a timer on the dishwasher or waiting until off-peak times.
- Run your clothes dryer late in the evening to lower your use during peak hours.
- Install a timer on your water heater.
- A programmable thermostat can help save peak-time energy. Save even more by pre-cooling during the summer and pre-heating in the winter.
- When turning up the heat, only make 1 degree changes at a time. Turning the heat up several degrees at once often will activate emergency or strip heating which uses a lot of electricity.

## Smart Thermostat Program

Nest smart thermostat owners can start saving immediately with our smart thermostat program. During high-demand periods, we may adjust your thermostat by a few degrees through your home's Wi-Fi network, but you always maintain control to modify the temperature as needed.

Join now to receive a \$50 initial rebate and earn \$2.50 monthly credits from June through September. Spring is the perfect time to install a smart thermostat and enroll in this program before summer arrives.

## Beat the Peak

Stay informed about peak energy periods by signing up for Beat the Peak alerts. You'll receive notifications via text or email about expected peak times, allowing you to adjust your energy usage accordingly. When our community works together to reduce peak demand, the co-op saves on our power costs. As your local, not-for-profit cooperative, we pass these savings along to you, our members.



Ready to spring into savings? Visit [pemc.coop/smart-energy](https://pemc.coop/smart-energy) to learn more about these programs or call **800.222.3107** to enroll today. There's no risk to participate, and you'll be prepared for seasonal savings all year long.

## Mark Your Calendars: Our Annual Meeting Livestream is Right Around the Corner

Get ready to participate in one of your most important rights as a cooperative member: electing your board of directors and attending our annual meeting, all from the comfort of your home.

### Your Vote Matters

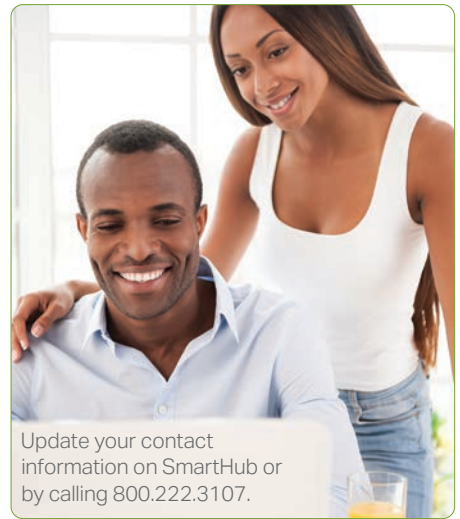
Watch your email inbox this March for important voting instructions for our board of directors election. We'll also include complete details in your April issue of Carolina Country magazine. We've made participation easier than ever with two convenient voting options:

- Cast your ballot online through our secure voting platform
- Mail in your completed ballot using the prepaid postcard provided in your April Carolina Country

### Join Us Live or On-Demand

Mark your calendar for **April 16 at 5 p.m.** when we'll livestream our annual meeting. Can't make it? No problem! The recorded session will be available afterwards on our website, so you can stay informed about your cooperative's activities at your convenience.

Your engagement helps shape the future of our cooperative. We look forward to your participation in this year's election and annual meeting as we continue working together to serve our community.



Update your contact information on SmartHub or by calling 800.222.3107.

## Combine Co-op Rebates with Federal Tax Credits to Save More

As tax season approaches, there's still time to claim valuable energy-efficiency tax credits on your 2024 return. Even better, when you combine these federal incentives with our cooperative's rebate programs, you can maximize your savings on energy-efficient home improvements you made last year. Be sure to consult a tax professional to see how these credits affect you.

### Federal Tax Credits Still Available

If you made qualifying energy-efficient improvements to your home last year, don't miss out on significant tax credits when filing your return this tax season. The Inflation Reduction Act provides tax credits for:

- Heat pumps
- ENERGY STAR-certified exterior doors
- ENERGY STAR®-certified air conditioners
- ENERGY STAR-certified windows
- Insulation and air sealing materials
- Electric panel upgrades

These credits range from \$50-\$2,000, depending on the specifics of the purchase. To see what qualifies, visit [energystar.gov/taxcredits](https://energystar.gov/taxcredits).

### Stack Your Savings with Co-op Rebates

Remember that our cooperative offers additional rebates on many of these same improvements. When combined with federal tax credits, the savings can be substantial. Our current rebate programs include:

- Smart thermostat rebate
- Electric vehicle rebate
- Load management rebate
- Electric heat pump rebate

### Planning Ahead

If you're considering home improvements this year, now is the perfect time to plan for both tax credits and co-op rebates. Energy-efficient upgrades completed this year will qualify for similar tax credits when you file next year, and our rebate programs run year-round.

For any project, we recommend:

- Consulting with a tax professional about credit eligibility
- Keeping detailed records and receipts of your purchases
- Contacting our office to verify current rebate availability
- Working with qualified contractors for installations

Ready to start saving? Visit our website or call **800.222.3107** to learn more about our rebate programs. For details about federal tax credits, visit [energystar.gov/taxcredits](https://energystar.gov/taxcredits).

### Submit Questions

Have a question for us? Email [info@pemc.coop](mailto:info@pemc.coop) with your questions and the subject line "Annual Meeting" by April 6 to have it answered during our meeting.



## PIEDMONT ELECTRIC CONNECTION

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

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