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Automated Outage Reporting

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www.blueridge.coop

Pickens

P.O. Box 277
734 West Main St.
Pickens, SC 29671

Oconee

P.O. Box 329
2328 Sandifer Blvd.
Highway 123
Westminster, SC 29693

Anderson

1212 North Fant St.
Anderson, SC 29622

Greenville

3751 Highway 11
Travelers Rest, SC 29690

Mission Statement

Blue Ridge will be a competitive, quality provider of energy and other services, maintaining its history of integrity and adapting to the challenges of a changing world. While exercising leadership in the community, the organization's focus will be on exceeding customer expectations.

Board of Directors

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

AMI stands for both efficiency and privacy

IN APRIL, Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative began changing out meters on our system and replacing them with Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) units. Within the next two years or so, we expect essentially all 66,000 cooperative-served locations to be home to these advanced meters.



AMI is a technology that has been, or soon will be, embraced by just about every sector of America's electric-power industry. This major step forward in engineering design offers a host of member-friendly features. Those features include greater efficiency in our own operation at Blue Ridge, as well as a larger measure of privacy for those receiving cooperative service.

My report this month is devoted to explaining just a few advantages this improvement will make possible. I also encourage you to read the article on the facing page that provides elaboration on some of the AMI program's other positive aspects.

From an efficiency and convenience standpoint, AMI will automatically alert the Blue Ridge office when an outage occurs at a member's premises. That notification will enable our round-the-clock dispatchers to know the minute you have a power interruption. Not only that, but our restoration efforts will be greatly enhanced by our ability to determine both the location and the extent of the outage. What's more, should service be interrupted, each of those meters will signal the dispatchers the moment electricity has been restored. That one benefit will produce significant savings. For example, crews in the field will be spared the time and expense

of traveling to individual homes to confirm the power is flowing once again.

Another favorable AMI characteristic would be the receiving of information concerning any noticeable growth in kWh use within a particular portion of our service territory. With that kind of data in hand, Blue Ridge would be better equipped to pursue needed actions toward maintaining and improving service reliability.

One last plus-factor I'd mention—AMI means fewer future unannounced Blue Ridge employee visits to a member's property. For instance, the need for someone to come and read your electric meter would become the rare exception, rather than the rule. The cooperative would still conduct periodic physical inspections of all the facilities that serve our members. However, the need for those field checks will be less frequent.

Blue Ridge is sending out mailers to provide advance notice as to when crews will be arriving to change out meters in member communities. You can be confident this undertaking will produce multiple benefits for both you and your cooperative for many years to come.

On a closing note, I want to inform you that I plan to retire from my position with Blue Ridge in January 2018. I've already shared my intentions with the cooperative's directors at a recent board meeting. Working here has been a truly wonderful experience for me, and I'll reflect more on that in one of my future reports in this magazine.

Charles E. Dalton
President and CEO

Meter change-outs underway

BLUE RIDGE ELECTRIC CO-OP is beginning a meter change-out program that will benefit both members and the co-op alike. Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) units are being installed across the system. About 7,000 new instruments have been placed and are now transmitting power-use data to the co-op.

For monitoring and billing purposes, this electronic device records electricity consumption during intervals of an hour or less and communicates that info to the co-op on at least a daily basis. This ability to communicate between co-op and member opens up new service avenues that weren't available previously.

One program about which we're excited is Prepaid Billing. At present, the regular utility bill covers the previous month's kWh use. It's too late, after the fact, to take steps

to make the bill more affordable. With prepay, you'll control (and pay in advance for) the power to be consumed. This feature allows budgeting for the amount to be spent and then paying ahead as often as desired. Members receiving a once-a-week paycheck can make weekly payments toward their kWh use. Also, an internet link between a member's account and the co-op will permit monitoring of the daily level of power usage. AMI will record a reading daily, ensuring member control over the bill.

That's just one advantage AMI provides. The co-op will also be able to connect or disconnect the meter remotely from the office. Closer monitoring of power quality and pinpointing specific times when such problems arise are important benefits. Members who have questions about kWh consumption can view a report



ALAN STEPHENS

Field service representatives will be visiting each location on the Blue Ridge Co-op system and installing a new meter. In the near future, a program will be introduced that allows members to better control their usage each month.

that specifies the particular times and days of the week when usage is high. That could lead to uncovering the cause of greater energy use that produces higher bills.

It will take about two years to replace all 66,000 meters. In the interim, Blue Ridge will initiate its prepaid program in targeted areas. More information will be available in this magazine, at blueridge.coop, and on Facebook and Twitter.

Greenville and Anderson offices to close

BLUE RIDGE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE established satellite offices in both Anderson and Greenville counties in 1991. Those operations were designed to complement the cooperative's Oconee and Pickens district offices, whose doors opened in 1940, when Blue Ridge was originally chartered. The satellite facilities were added for member convenience, long before advancing technologies began creating major differences in the way the cooperative now conducts its business.

In recent years, the numbers of members who visit our two satellite offices each month have been declining noticeably. With the advent of many computer-based services, more and more individuals are showing preferences for conducting their business either online or by telephone. After a comprehensive study of the matter, the decision has been made to close the two satellites. Friday, July 28, will be the last day of service at each office.

By taking this action, Blue Ridge expects to realize some lowering of its overall costs. At the same time, the cooperative wants members who have utilized either of these facilities to be aware of all the other service alternatives available to them. For example, Blue Ridge will continue to offer both walk-in and drive-through service each business day, from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., at our two district offices: 734 West Main St., Pickens, and 2328 Sandifer Blvd., Westminster. Night-deposit service is also readily accessible at each of these locations.

In addition, members can contact the cooperative's toll-free member service center at 1-800-240-3400 or via email at blueridge.coop. Most items of business could be easily accomplished through these online or over-the-telephone options. Requests or actions such as bill payment, new-service connection, disconnection of power, adding an outdoor light, and the like would all fall into that category. A full menu of bill-payment choices are available through the member service center.

When it comes to paying a bill, members can select bank draft, credit-card draft, e-check, or direct payment with a credit card. Sizable numbers of the cooperative's membership continue to use the U.S. Mail for forwarding their monthly remittances to the cooperative. To learn more about any of these possibilities would require a simple telephone call to the Blue Ridge member service center, where you will talk with a knowledgeable employee.

The decision to close these two satellite offices was a difficult one. In the final analysis, however, members can expect to receive the same level of quality service they have come to expect from Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative. It's always our goal to serve you well.