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**FOR ALL YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE NEEDS**

Call Toll-Free (800) 240-3400

**AUTOMATED OUTAGE REPORTING**

1-888-BLUE RIDGE

**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

**MISSION STATEMENT**

Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative will operate as a competitive provider of energy services and a partner with local communities, with a focus on safety, service and integrity.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Jim Lovinggood

This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

## Falling trees, broken poles



**THE PRE-WINTER STORM**

emergency that hit Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative territory in December did quite a bit of system damage. Nearly 12,500 members lost power. The trouble predominated in the mountainous reaches of our service area, which includes

northern portions of Oconee, Pickens, and Greenville counties. Elsewhere saw only scattered problems. Our own crews, assisted by hundreds of other linemen from fellow electric cooperatives and contract organizations, were able to restore everyone's power in fewer than three days.

As is typical, this was an emergency that featured both causes and effects. Along with the snow and ice, some very strong winds blew through the mountains. Since this region had received excessive rainfall during the past year—more than 20 inches above normal—the ground was super-saturated. Consequently, those stiff breezes easily uprooted trees that then fell across Blue Ridge power lines in unnumbered locations.

**103 shattered poles**

Unfortunately, falling trees that collided with our electric lines produced major trouble in the form of broken poles. The cooperative suffered 103 shattered poles in all. As we have come to understand, a broken-pole situation takes about four times as long to repair, as opposed to an outage that doesn't involve that degree of damage. I'm grateful that our workers were able to clear up the destruction as quickly as they did, but I also regret the inconvenience created for those whose service was interrupted.

In the final analysis, though, things could have been much worse. Thankfully, Blue Ridge was well-served

by our pole-inspection program. The cooperative has more than 110,000 wood poles now in service across our 7,000-mile network of power lines. That reality compels us to employ an ongoing, year-round cycle of pole inspections. Each month, scores of inspected poles, which have a life expectancy of at least 35 years, are marked for replacement because of their age and/or condition. Soon thereafter, line crews are dispatched to remove the questionable poles and then plant new ones in their place.

**Essential inspections**

Now, I recognize that a big-enough tree, should it fall, could splinter even a brand-new pole. However, a well-conditioned pole is oftentimes sturdy enough to withstand a violent clash with a large tree. Moreover, our pole inspections are essential. They offer another extra measure of service reliability to our members.

I know it's only February, but I want to supply early notice of the two big events on the cooperative's 2019 calendar. The most important is our annual meeting of members, scheduled for April 25. That will be followed on May 3 by our yearly Blue Ridge Fest charity fund-raiser. We have several great groups secured to provide the entertainment at those respective happenings. The annual meeting will feature the Chuck Wagon Gang, while the Oak Ridge Boys, along with The Tams and Jim Quick and Coastline will perform at Blue Ridge Fest. Please make note of those dates and plan to join us for both occasions.

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
 President and CEO

## Pump up the savings

**ONE THING ABOUT** winters in our part of the country is that the weather can change rapidly from day to day. It's not unusual for temperatures to go from the 50's one day to the lows in the 20's the next. We have certainly experienced chilly temperatures along with snow and a little ice already this winter.

The biggest user of energy in your home is your heating and cooling system. If you have a heat pump that is more than 10 years old, it may be time to think about replacing it with a newer, more efficient unit. With approved credit, a Blue Ridge certified dealer can install a high efficiency heat pump in your home, and the payment is added to your bill. The interest rate is a low

7.5 percent with up to five years to pay. Blue Ridge members can get an application at either co-op office or find one online at [blueridge.coop](http://blueridge.coop).



### Smart Thermostat Program

Looking for more savings? Install an Ecobee smart thermostat and see more savings in your heating and cooling costs. Designed to keep you comfortable in the rooms that matter, an ecobee4 comes with a room sensor to help manage hot or cold spots by reading the temperature and detecting occupancy. And this wi-fi thermostat can be controlled from your cell phone when you are away.

Call one of our energy experts at Blue Ridge Energy Services at (800) 240-3400 to get more information about our smart thermostat program. We are YOUR co-op, and we're here to help.

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### Introducing Budget Billing...

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