



blueridge.coop

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 Call Toll-Free (800) 240-3400

AUTOMATED OUTAGE REPORTING
 1-888-BLUERIDGE

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.

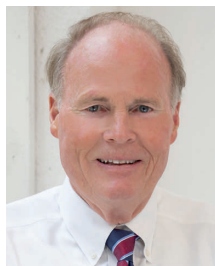
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
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PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
 Jim Lovinggood

This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Looking ahead with gratitude

BY NOW, many of you may have already heard the news I am sharing in this month's column. At the January

board meeting, I informed the Board of Trustees that I intended to retire at the end of 2026. I did this with the intention of providing the board with sufficient time to ensure a seamless leadership transition for our members.

Following a period of deliberate discussion, the Board met in February and I'm happy to share that the Trustees unanimously selected Zachary Hinton to serve as our next President and CEO. He will be only the fourth in the cooperative's 85-year history, a testament to our organization's long-standing stability. I have no doubt our co-op is in excellent hands. I look forward to watching it flourish and continue to serve our members well into the future.

Zach, as he's known to many, has been with Blue Ridge for the last 10 years, is a Pickens native and deeply understands our community. He is a dedicated leader who over the last five years has also been integral in launching and guiding Upcountry Fiber, a project that has fundamentally changed the landscape of the Upstate. In the interim, Zach will serve as executive vice president and chief operating officer and assume the duties of president and CEO beginning January 2027, where he will maintain a focus of serving our members and employees every day.

When I walked through the doors at Blue Ridge back in 1982, I never could have imagined the journey ahead. As Charles Dalton's second hire, I was proud to play a role in the creation of our Cartography Department, Blue Ridge Security and the birth of Upcountry Fiber. Without question, serving as your president and CEO since 2018 has been the greatest honor and privilege of my professional career.

While this is the right time for me and my family to begin this next phase of life, it's hard to put into words just how thankful I am to have had the opportunity to work with so many great people.

I will carry many fond memories of my time leading this cooperative, but what I'm most proud of is the commitment to safety and service our employees bring to work without fail. Nothing reflects this better than our response to two of the worst storms in our 85-year history. Everyone worked safely and swiftly. That is the Blue Ridge standard, and I know it will be upheld going forward.

I will do everything in my power to ensure this is a smooth transition for our membership and employees. Thank you for everything.

JIM LOVINGGOOD
 President and CEO

Annual Meeting May 21-22

BLUE RIDGE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE'S 85th Annual Meeting of the Members will take place on Thursday, May 21 and Friday, May 22.

Drive-thru registration, voting and gift giveaways will take place at our Pickens (734 West Main Street, Pickens) and Oconee (2328 Sandifer Boulevard, Westminster) offices.

Look for more detailed information about the Annual Meeting on the cover of the May edition of *South Carolina Living*.



Ready when it matters most

BRYAN ROPER, VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS

AS VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS at Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative, I have the unique privilege of seeing firsthand what it takes to keep the lights on for our members. It's something I think about daily.

When you see forecasts of storms across our part of South Carolina, our linemen see a call to action. They are always ready to respond when outages occur. They are ready to leave family dinners and miss Little League games so they can work in challenging conditions through the night to get your power restored as safely and quickly as possible.

That readiness is not accidental. It comes from our rigorous training, deep experience and a shared commitment to serving others.

What makes linemen especially remarkable is that they are restoring power to their own communities. They raise their families here. Their children go to our schools. They shop at our grocery stores. They understand that the service they provide is essential to our daily lives—to our local businesses, farms and our neighbors, who depend on power for medical equipment or to simply keep food from spoiling.

Powering home is deeply personal to them.

Electric cooperatives were built on the principle of neighbors helping neighbors, and our linemen embody that spirit every day. They are the first to respond and the last to leave, often working long hours to get the job done.

At times, serving our neighbors means going beyond our own service territory through a process known as mutual aid. During major outage events across South Carolina and beyond, nine other co-ops in our state sent help to us after Winter Storm Fern. They knew we were



Bryan Roper, vice president of Operations (left), presents Pickens lineman Peyton Frisbee a framed certificate for completing the Northwest Lineman College Lineworker Certification Program at a recent safety meeting.

“Their hard work, readiness and unwavering commitment to the communities they serve are the backbone of our co-op.”

the hardest hit and answered our call for help.

Losing your power can be frustrating, at worst, life-threatening. We are grateful for your patience and encouragement during these times. Linework is demanding, physical and dangerous. Our crews approach each job with a focus on safety and teamwork. We meet weekly for safety meetings. Our linemen take pride in their craft and in the trust you

place in them. A wave of thanks or even a kind word on social media means more to our crews than you might realize.

On April 18, we will celebrate National Lineman Appreciation Day, but every day we are thankful for their service and dedication.

Their hard work, readiness and unwavering commitment to the communities they serve are the backbone of our co-op.