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**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.

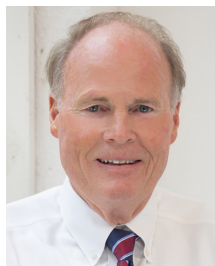
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This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



## Reducing the risk of wildfires

**GONE ARE THE DAYS** when wildfires were primarily confined to the western United States. Today, more than 30 states, including South Carolina, face elevated wildfire risk. Wildfire risk is a reality for most of us, and it demands action from all of us.

At Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative, protecting our members and the communities we serve is our highest priority. We recognize National Wildfire Awareness Month in May, but wildfire mitigation is a year-round commitment, embedded in how we operate and invest in our local system.

One of the most important ways we reduce wildfire threats is through our vegetation management program. Overgrown trees and power lines are a dangerous combination, particularly during dry and windy conditions. Throughout the year, Blue Ridge crews proactively trim and remove vegetation that could come into contact with power lines and other critical infrastructure. This work requires careful planning, coordination with property owners and ongoing inspection. While it may not always be visible, it is one of the most effective tools we have to prevent fire ignition and maintain reliable electricity.

Wildfire mitigation also requires thoughtful public policy. Managing electric infrastructure in and around public lands can present unique challenges. That is why we support practical, commonsense solutions such as the federal Fix Our Forests Act, which would streamline the ability of electric cooperatives and other utilities to maintain power lines on federal lands and reduce hazardous “fuel” buildup. Policies that promote responsible land management are an essential part of a comprehensive wildfire prevention strategy.

While we are committed to doing our part, wildfire prevention is a shared

responsibility. Each of us can take important steps to protect our homes and neighborhoods. Last spring, the Table Rock Complex fires came dangerously close to our electrical system. It takes one stray spark during a drought to threaten lives.

South Carolina law requires citizens to notify the Forestry Commission (visit [scfc.gov/notify](http://scfc.gov/notify)) before burning outdoors in unincorporated areas.

When you do burn:

- ▶ Properly extinguish fires by dousing them with water, stirring the ashes and ensuring they are cool to the touch before leaving the area.
- ▶ Avoid outdoor burning on windy or excessively dry days.
- ▶ Always check local regulations for burn bans or restrictions.

Other fire protection steps you can take include:

- ▶ Maintaining a defensible space around your home by clearing dry leaves, dead branches and other flammable debris.
- ▶ Using lawn equipment carefully, particularly during hot conditions.

Wildfires are becoming more complex and more widespread. Through proactive system management, smart investments, sound policy and community partnership, we can reduce risks and strengthen resilience.

At Blue Ridge, members depend on us not only for reliable power but for leadership in safeguarding the communities we call home.

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
President and CEO

# BREC apprentice shines in Lineman's Rodeo

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR

**CODY PETERS IS** one of the youngest employees at Blue Ridge Electric. Nevertheless, he was among five co-op linemen who competed in the 6th annual South Carolina Lineman's Rodeo, held March 20–21 at the Clarendon County Industrial Park in Manning.

This was the first time linemen from Blue Ridge Electric competed in recent years. Peters and Xander Knight competed in the apprentice division. Apprentices, who are still completing the multi-year training programs required to become a journeyman, compete individually. DJ Roper, Jake Stewart and Tyler Sutton participated in the journeyman competition. Journeymen have completed an apprenticeship and demonstrated proficiency in all aspects of line construction and maintenance. They compete in three-person crews. Cameron Collins also served as a judge over the weekend.

“The Lineman's Rodeo is a chance for our linemen to show off their skills and compete with their peers across the state,” says Travis Renwick, loss control and training director for The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina. “But at its core, it's about safety. The most important thing is that these guys go home to their families every night.”

Peters performed extremely well during his skills tests, placing first in hurt man rescue, second in the obstacle course and third in insulator changeout. In hurt man rescue, he finished more than 20 seconds before a lineman from Lynchess River Electric Co-op took second place.

BREC Vice President of Operations Bryan Roper says it was a rebuilding year for the journeyman team and expected them to improve at next year's rodeo. Blue Ridge Electric is proud of the five linemen who represented the co-op so well among its sister co-ops



PHOTOS BY CAMERON DUNHAM

DJ Roper, Tyler Sutton, Jake Stewart, Cody Peters and Xander Knight (left to right) represented Blue Ridge Electric at the South Carolina Lineman's Rodeo in March.

## Rodeo events

- ▶ **Hurtman rescue** A crew or individual responds to a simulated injured lineman (mannequin) at the top of a 40-foot pole.
- ▶ **B-Phase bell changeout** Replacing failed bell insulators on a multi-phase overhead line.
- ▶ **Vertical line transfer** Working from a pole, a journeyman crew transfers an energized conductor from one position to another.
- ▶ **Obstacle course** Competitors maneuver tools, materials and conductors through a defined course on the pole.
- ▶ **Drop-in pin & insulator changeout** An apprentice climbs to the crossarm and replaces a failed pin-style insulator without losing control of the line.



Jake Stewart, Tyler Sutton and DJ Roper plot their strategy during the Journeyman competition.



BREC linemen demonstrate their skills during the insulator changeout test.