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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

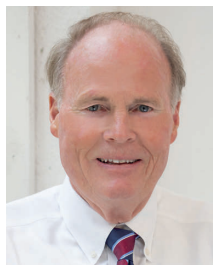


Lineman Matt Crenshaw takes questions while showing elementary school students the safety gear Blue Ridge linemen wear.



Students get an up-close look at a service truck and the equipment it carries from BREC lineman Luke Burton.

PHOTOS BY ASHLEY DICKSON



## The next generation

**ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES EXIST** to serve their members. That mission is straightforward, but what it looks like in practice goes well beyond keeping the lights on.

Cooperatives across the country operate under seven core principles, adopted in 1884 and still guiding the way we work today. One of those principles, Concern for Community, shapes everything from how we respond after a storm to how we show up for our neighbors year-round.

For our employees, that means more than keeping the grid running. One example is our Watts of Love Member Assistance Program, which provides grant-funded support to members facing hardship. Our team also invests time in local schools with a straightforward goal—helping the next generation of young people understand what a career in the energy industry looks

like. Statewide youth programs such as Washington Youth Tour and Cooperative Youth Summit are the pinnacle of our education efforts, but local school visits are where we meet the most young people.

The rise of artificial intelligence and advances in technology aren't eliminating the need for skilled electrical workers. If anything, the demand is growing. Connecting with students early, through classroom visits, career fairs and hands-on opportunities, is one major way we're working to ensure the communities we serve have the workforce to support them in the decades ahead.

In the past school year alone, our co-op visited more than 15 schools and participated in local career fairs, connecting with students of all ages. These visits often include hands-on safety demonstrations with lineman's gear or an up-close look at a bucket truck.

School may be out for the summer, but learning doesn't stop. If you're an educator planning a fresh curriculum for the fall, we'd love to hear from you.

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
 President and CEO

### SCHEDULE A SCHOOL VISIT

Are you a guidance counselor or teacher interested in a school visit for the upcoming academic year? Reach out to Ashley Dickson at [ashley.dickson@blueridge.coop](mailto:ashley.dickson@blueridge.coop).



Zeke Seigler, manager of Forestry and Vegetation Control, surveys a stand of trees in a co-op right-of-way. Seigler says clearing limbs and vegetation along power lines can help prevent problems before they start.

## Why vegetation management matters

BY ZEKE SEIGLER, MANAGER, FORESTRY AND VEGETATION CONTROL

**THERE'S SOMETHING TIMELESS** about trees—like the shade they provide on a summer afternoon or their changing colors that mark the seasons.

We take pride in the natural beauty of our community in our five-county service territory. We also have a responsibility to power our homes and businesses. When you flip a switch, we have to make sure the energy you depend on is there. Blue Ridge Electric works every day to strike a careful balance between preserving the beauty we cherish and delivering the reliable electricity you expect.

One of the most important ways we do that is through regular tree trimming. Keeping power lines free of overgrown vegetation plays a major role in preventing power outages. Strong winds, heavy ice or sudden storms can bring down branches and, with them, power lines and poles.

That's why you might notice crews from Blue Ridge Electric or our trusted contractors working to clear vegetation along power lines throughout the year. Although the work is routine, it's also critically important because it helps prevent problems before they start.

It's not just good practice, it's necessary for delivering safe, reliable power.

Electric utilities across the country administer scheduled trimming to remove dead or weakened limbs and keep fast-growing trees from becoming hazards. By managing vegetation near power lines, we're staying one step ahead and preparing for severe weather events. In the last year alone, we cut 1,540 miles to keep right-of-ways clear.

Beyond reliability and efficiency, there's an even more important reason this work matters: safety. When trees grow too close to power lines, electricity can become dangerous. Branches that touch lines—or even come close—can carry electrical current. During storms, fallen trees can create hazardous conditions not only for families but also for our linemen working to restore service.

You can help, too. When planting new trees, consider their mature height and distance from nearby power lines. Trees that grow up to 40 feet should be planted at least 25 feet away from overhead lines. Larger trees should be planted at least 50 feet away. If you're landscaping near pad-mounted transformers (the big green ones at ground level), keep shrubs at least 10 feet from the front and 4 feet from the sides to



BREC Tree Specialist Ethan Jordan works in a heavily wooded area to clear a tree growing near a power line.

allow safe access.

If your neighborhood has underground lines, don't forget to call 811 before digging. It's a simple step that can prevent serious accidents.

We all want the same thing: a community that's safe, resilient and beautiful. Blue Ridge Electric is proud to be part of that effort because roots run deep here—over 85 years, in fact—just like the trees we work to care for.