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SANTEE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE NEWS
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SANTEE ELECTRIC IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Rights of way



IF I TOLD YOU THERE WERE three issues that have the potential to get our members fired up, I bet you could easily name two of them. Cost and reliability, when not as expected, can both make ratepayers unhappy with their utility. The one

that not everyone guesses, however, is the subject of this column. As much as anything, the existence of power lines on private property can be a source of major frustration, so I wanted to explain how and why we address right-of-way easements.

The right to be there

When electric utilities were initially building their systems, communities were so excited about getting electricity that most permissions to cross private property were granted with a handshake and a smile. Over time, however, as the original property owners moved or passed away, disputes started arising over the right for electric utilities to be there. Sometimes, this is even driven by feuds between neighbors or family members. Today, before we will build new lines, we get very detailed easements signed and filed with the appropriate county courthouse. This, however, was not the case in the beginning.

Fortunately, there is well-established legal precedent for what is called a “prescriptive easement.” Basically, if an individual or entity has been using some portion of another person’s property openly and without interruption for at least 20 years, then that use has a right to continue. One common example might be a driveway across someone else’s property to get to your property. Similarly, when it comes to power lines, if they’ve been there for at least

20 years, then they have a right to continue to be there—whether there is a recorded easement or not.

The responsibility to maintain

In addition to the right to be there, your cooperative has a responsibility to maintain its system. A big portion of this responsibility is keeping vegetation from interfering with reliability. To accomplish this, we aim to trim limbs and trees that might grow into our power lines every four years and we either mow or spray the growth under our lines every three years. To keep growth between cycles from contacting lines, we attempt to trim back to ten feet from the nearest conductor (or 15 feet from the pole line).

Historically, all undergrowth was mowed because high-volume spraying was not a cost-effective alternative. With today’s ability to use herbicides that selectively target woody-stemmed species, our contractors can manage tree species under our rights-of-way for far less cost than mowing every circuit. With these herbicides, the grasses, shrubs and vines are left alone and only trees that could grow into the lines are targeted.

While we know it is never our members’ desire to have strangers roaming across their property, rest assured that our contractors will always operate with logoed vehicles and equipment. Their job is to clear the right of way as efficiently as possible so that your cooperative can offer you the best reliability for the best price. Thank you for your cooperation!

ROBERT G. ARDIS III
 President and Chief Executive Officer

Co-ops power communities with purpose

AS MEMBERS OF SANTEE ELECTRIC Cooperative, you are part of the electric cooperative community.

This October, more than 30,000 cooperatives across the U.S. are celebrating National Co-op Month. It's a time to reflect on the traits that set cooperatives apart from other types of businesses, but more importantly, it's a time to celebrate the power of co-op membership.

Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit utilities that are built by the communities they serve. For Santee Electric, our mission has always been to provide you with reliable, affordable power. We care about your quality of life, and because we are locally operated, we're uniquely suited to meet our members' evolving energy needs.

All co-ops, including Santee Electric Cooperative, are guided by seven cooperative principles that embody the values and spirit of the cooperative movement. These principles are a framework to help

all co-ops navigate challenges and opportunities while remaining true to our purpose:

1. Open and Voluntary Membership

Co-op membership is open to anyone who can use the co-op's services.

2. Democratic Member Control

Members make decisions that shape the cooperative. Why? Because co-ops are created by the members, *for* the members.

3. Members' Economic Participation

Members contribute money to the co-op to make sure it runs smoothly now and in the future. At Santee Electric, this happens through paying your energy bills.

4. Autonomy and Independence

Since co-ops are owned and governed by the people they serve, we act in the best interests of our members instead of distant corporations and shareholders.

5. Education, Training and Information

Co-ops continuously educate



employees, so they have the training and information they need to make the co-op successful.

6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Co-ops share with and learn from other cooperatives. We help each other out in times of need because we want other co-ops to thrive.

7. Concern for Community All cooperatives work for the greater good of the local communities they serve and give back to help them thrive and grow.

This October, as we celebrate National Co-op Month and the power of membership, we hope you will recognize the many aspects that set electric cooperatives apart. Our mission is reliable power. Our purpose is people—the local communities we're proud to serve.

SEC NEWS BRIEFS

Winter peak hours begin Nov. 1

Peak hours are changing next month! Currently, summer peak hours are in effect (April 1–Oct. 31, 4–7 p.m.). On Nov. 1, we will switch to the winter peak hours of 6–9 a.m. The peak charge on your bill is based off your highest one peak hour of the billing cycle. By reducing energy use during the peak hours, you can save! The three easiest ways to shift energy use off the peak hours and save are:

- ▶ **Manually adjust your thermostat** so your HVAC runs less during the peak hours. A programmable/smart thermostat can also do this for you.
- ▶ **Limit hot water use** during



peak hours. Consider placing a timer switch on your water heater to help shift your energy use.

- ▶ **Use your dryer** or other high use appliances before or after peak hours.

Visit santee.org/rate-structure to learn more about peak hours and our rate structure or call 1 (800) 922-1604.

Hemingway, Manning offices to close

Rising costs lead to office closings

To reduce costs, Santee Electric Cooperative is permanently closing its Hemingway and Manning branch offices on Dec. 20. Closing these offices aims to combat increasing costs for Santee Electric's members. The goal is to keep rates as low as possible. There has been a significant decline in in-person transactions over the past decade, particularly at the Hemingway and Manning branch offices. As a result, the decision to close these offices is deemed the most cost-effective.

Members can still conduct business at our other three locations—the Georgetown branch

office, Lake City branch office and the corporate headquarters in Kingstree. Members can continue to make payments using various options, including the SmartHub App, the online portal, in-person at the at the Georgetown, Lake City and Kingstree Santee Electric offices, automated pay-by-phone and at more than 100 retail locations through VanillaDirect Pay, a new in-person payment option.

Members can also initiate new services over the phone, online or in-person at the remaining offices. For more information about Santee Electric's payment options, visit santee.org/billing.