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Guest Column

CAEC's Integrated Vegetation Management Program

Most of us have heard Benjamin Franklin's quote: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Meaning, it's much easier to be proactive to prevent a problem than to deal with it after it has occurred.

Trees are dynamic; they grow and change shape over time and they're the number one cause of electric outages for most electric utilities. The growth rate, form and habitat for every tree species are different, and every individual tree is constantly changing. In order for CAEC to supply reliable electric service to our members, our crews regularly perform preventive maintenance within our 5,000 miles of distribution lines through a system-wide Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) program.

We understand how inconvenient even the shortest outage can be to our members; therefore, we work to cost-efficiently control trees and brush that would eventually grow into power lines. We trim trees near power lines every four to five years so the branches will not interfere with the lines before the next trimming cycle. If left alone, these trees and underbrush could cause outages and inhibit continuous access to the right-of-way (ROW) needed for restoration of service after major storms or power outage occurrences. Sufficient clearances are required to ensure no contact between the conductors and tree branches will be made before the next maintenance cycle. Our crews obtain the needed clearances through the proper pruning and removal of fast-growing tree species where possible. This approach to vegetation management provides the maximum benefit from the resources expended and maximizes cost effectiveness. Preventive maintenance improves reliability and safety by reducing tree-related outages.

In addition to trimming, selective herbicide applications are performed on two- or three-year cycles. The herbicide, which is less intrusive and destructive on wildlife habitats than mowing with a tractor, is targeted to woody stemmed plants, allowing grasses and berry yielding plants to receive more light so they can provide food for animals. Herbicide applicator crews also walk instead of drive under the power lines, reducing interference with native animals, leaving the ROW with fewer disturbances.

Another component of our IVM program is to survey for "danger trees." These inspections look for trees that are outside the normally maintained area and that appear to be susceptible to fall. Danger trees are the majority cause of outages experienced by the Cooperative.



Jacoby Dennison is CAEC's Manager of Vegetation Maintenance



"Danger Tree" located in the Weoka area of Elmore County

From January 2008 thru December 2014, our crews removed a total of 32,542 dead, dying, danger or problem trees from our system. In 2008 alone, 10,336 trees were removed, but this exceptionally high number can be attributed to the drought we experienced in 2007. We averaged removing 3,701 trees per year from 2009 thru 2014. During the same time frame, crews also completed 6,139 Tree Maintenance Orders which ranged from clipping a few limbs around a service, to trimming out whole spans of ROW that could not wait until the next maintenance cycle to be trimmed, to removing problem and danger trees of every size and species. In 2014, a total of 1,124 Tree Maintenance Orders were completed and 3,162 trees were removed.

This year, crews will trim and clear 10 different substation circuits in Chilton, Coosa and Elmore Counties. Seven complete substations with circuits in Autauga, Elmore, Dallas and Lowndes Counties will be treated with herbicide.

While we strive to deliver reliable power, the importance of wildlife habitat cannot be overlooked. Since 2004, CAEC has partnered with the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) to develop plans to manage our ROW and other land that provides an ideal habitat for wildlife. Through the Energy for Wildlife program, their staff works directly with utility companies to integrate NWTF standards in the utility's land management programs.



CAEC right of way located in the White City Community of Autauga County

Together with CAEC's IVM program, planning, continual monitoring and partnerships, trees, wildlife and electrical infrastructure can coexist without infringing on one another while keeping service interruptions to a minimum. ■

Jacoby Dennison has 35 years of experience in the utility line clearance field. He's been with CAEC for approximately 21 years and holds the following certifications: ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist, ACRT Certified Line Clearance Arborist and Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries Certified Commercial Pesticide Applicator.

CAEC Taxes Provide for the Areas We Serve

April is the month associated with filing taxes, and even though your co-op is a not-for-profit organization, we pay taxes each year as well – taxes that benefit the communities we serve.

In 2014, CAEC contributed to regional, state and federal governments by paying more than \$10.2 million in taxes. Of the \$10.2 million, approximately \$1 million was paid in ad valorem

taxes. The revenue from ad valorem taxes goes to school districts, volunteer fire departments and other vital services for our communities.

In addition, CAEC paid \$535,000 in city business licenses and another \$25,000 in state and county use tax for the year. The sales tax is paid when CAEC buys goods and equipment.

Payroll taxes, totaling almost \$3.2 million, were paid in 2014. These taxes include employer-funded state unemployment compensation as well as the social security and Medicare taxes funded by both the employee and CAEC. The co-op also paid approximately \$1.9 million in gross receipt taxes and approximately \$3.6 million in utility taxes. ■



Democratic Member Control

PRINCIPLE

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Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights – one member, one vote – and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

Every cooperative, whether it's CAEC or your credit union, follows the basic principle of one member, one vote, demonstrating co-op principle number two. As a member-owner you elect the governing body who determines cooperative policies and oversees the cooperative's activities. Each member of the Board of Trustees is also

When you are asked to elect individuals for the board of trustees, you vote for folks who are friends, neighbors and fellow residents, people who live in our local communities and are easily accessible because their phone numbers are listed each month in *Alabama Living* magazine. Every member in good standing of the co-op has the same opportunity to run for the board, which is a key difference between a co-op member and a customer of an investor-owned utility (IOU). Trustees are selected through elections conducted during your cooperative's annual membership meeting with CAEC's annual meeting being held the second Friday of August. During each CAEC annual meeting three to four trustees are elected with nine trustees each representing a particular geographic district and one trustee serving



The Board of Trustees are your friends, neighbors and fellow residents who live in your community.

a member of the cooperative and receives electric service from CAEC. Consequently, your elected trustees have a vested interest in the quality of service that is received as well as the cost of electricity to the membership.



Members have equal voting rights.



Value of **Membership**

an at-large position. Not only are trustees elected at annual meeting, but the business of the cooperative is reported and conducted, including such matters as the fiscal-year financial audit, receiving management reports, bylaw changes and other cooperative business. This process guarantees your voice in the operation of your electric co-op is just as strong

Your co-op focuses on creating and maintaining transparency in our actions and decision-making. We keep you informed about the financial condition of the co-op; tell you when industry situations arise that could affect your cost or service and educate you about the issues involved. We update you about our energy efficiency programs and provide tips that will help you save on your power bill. We do this through *Alabama Living* magazine, press releases, letters, newspaper articles, social media and even communication included with your utility bill. And at annual meeting, members are able to participate in informative and engaging activities, meet with co-op staff, engage directly with the Board and attendees and receive reports regarding the cooperative's affairs of the past year. The event also brings the annual Board election to a close, as members are able to cast their ballots and hear election results.



We keep members informed about the cooperative's business affairs.

“Democratic Member Control” means just one thing – you, as a member of CAEC, have a voice—through your vote—in your not-for-profit business. We welcome and encourage your involvement — after all, it’s YOUR co-op. ■

as any other member. It’s also an opportunity to educate our members on the many programs offered. If you cannot attend the annual meeting, your vote can still be counted through a mail-in ballot.

As is the case from time to time, changes to the cooperative’s bylaws are presented to the membership for a vote at annual meeting. The membership is the only body with the authority to approve bylaws changes although the board of trustees has the responsibility of recommending the proposed bylaws changes to the membership. Later this year at annual meeting, you will have the opportunity—as a member—to vote on bylaws changes; the last time this process occurred was in 2006. To assist you in preparing for your decision, a summary of the changes will be forthcoming in the July issue of *Alabama Living* magazine.



Members have an opportunity to speak directly to Board members.

CAEC Appoints New Board Member



Chilton County resident Mark Gray was appointed to the Board of Trustees for Central Alabama Electric Cooperative (CAEC). Gray will fill the unexpired term in District 9, a position formerly held by Ruby Neeley – the current term ends Aug. 7, 2016. Gray began his term of service on March 24, 2015.

He and his family are co-owners of Peach Park (opened in 1984), Gray and Sons Storage and Flea Market (opened in 1992) and Peach Park Express Texaco (opened in 2006) in Clanton. Gray attended Auburn University, graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Animal and Dairy Science in 1992.

“We are pleased to welcome Mark to the board,” said Chase Riddle, Chairman of the Board of Trustees. “Being part of a family-owned business for over 31 years, Mark understands the importance of providing quality service to customers.”

Riddle stated that the selection process by the trustees began with a board committee who reviewed a list of all the members in District 9 (the eastern portion of Chilton County) following the resignation of Trustee Neeley. From among the 3,400 names, letters of invitation were mailed to more than a dozen individuals to determine their interest in serving on the board, and from those members who responded, interviews by the full board were conducted.

Gray and his wife, Robin, of 21 years are members of Liberty Hill Baptist Church in Clanton where he serves as a deacon and trustee. His wife is a math teacher at Jemison High School and they have two sons, Tanner, 16, and Caden, 11. Gray also does volunteer work for Habitat for Humanity of Autauga and Chilton Counties.

“I’m excited about being a representative for this district and I look forward to serving CAEC’s membership,” said Gray. ■

Storm Preparedness Kit

Although it’s not something we like to think about, do you have what you need to survive on your own after a severe storm? This means having your own food, water and other supplies in sufficient quantities to last for at least 72 hours. While local officials and relief workers are often on the scene after a disaster, they cannot always reach everyone immediately. Help could arrive in hours or it might take days.

A storm preparedness kit is simply a collection of items your household may need in the event of an emergency. Here are some items for a basic kit designed to last three days, but you should tailor yours to your family’s needs, especially if you have small children:

- ☑ One gallon of water per person per day, for drinking and sanitation
- ☑ Non-perishable food and a manual can opener
- ☑ A battery-powered radio and a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio with tone alert and extra batteries
- ☑ First aid kit
- ☑ Flashlight and extra batteries
- ☑ Whistle to signal for help

- ☑ Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- ☑ Filter mask or cotton t-shirt to help filter the air
- ☑ Cell phone with charger, inverter or solar charger
- ☑ Plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place (taking immediate shelter where you are or sealing a room to prevent contaminated outside air from coming in)
- ☑ Important family documents in a waterproof container
- ☑ Items for unique family needs, such as daily prescription medications, infant formula or diapers
- ☑ Pet shelters often require proof of vaccines, a collar with identification tags and medications if needed

Assemble your kit well in advance of an emergency and keep it in a designated place. Have it ready in case you have to leave your home quickly and make sure all family members know where this kit is located.

Being prepared is the best way to weather any storm. For more tips, visit www.caec.coop. ■



Lightning Protection From CAEC

Start protecting your appliances today.

Help prevent lightning from damaging your appliances (refrigerator, stove, washer/dryer and dishwasher) with Central Alabama Electric Cooperative's Lightning Protection Program.

Lighting can enter your home through many paths. A meter base device from CAEC can help provide a protective barrier against the high voltage that enters through electric lines.



Our meter base unit, used in conjunction with point of use devices, such as entertainment or home office strips (which can be purchased at your local retailer), can help prevent whole house damage.

Call us (800) 545-5735 ext. 2178 or visit our website (www.caec.coop) to learn more.



Central Alabama
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Sheesh, Kabobs Are Easier Than Ever!



When you buy an electric grill or smoker from CAEC, there's no telling what you can cook up! Get the delicious taste of grilled food without any of the hassle or harm of singed eyebrows. CAEC's quality electric grills and smokers can make your summer cooking easier than ever before!

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