

Disaster Preparedness: Setting our Sights Before the Storm



*Jimmy Gray, VP
of Engineering
and Operations*

During this last hunting season, my son Cooper and I planned a trip to allow him the chance to shoot his first deer. The night prior, I planned our day and gathered everything needed to occupy a 9-year-old, including snacks, clothing required for the cold and of course his portable electronic games.

For any big event, whether family or work-related, being prepared with a good plan is the critical component for success. Here at the cooperative we take planning seriously and work to minimize Mother Nature's effects on your electric distribution system.

Recently, on Jan. 9, we were faced with a possible ice event that could have left a half-inch to an inch of ice in some locations of our service area. With several days' notice, your co-op began to set plans in motion—plans we have used several times before for weather events such as Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina.

Seamlessly, we organized office personnel to answer phone calls and inquiries throughout the night and planned the logistics required for bringing in several hundred workers if needed. Additional crews from our neighboring cooperatives in south Alabama and Florida were also brought in and were prepared to go to work. In all, 10 crews were on site before the storm arrived. While we dodged that storm, we have found that our planning efforts have paid off because our

system is in good shape and has the ability to weather many storms.

Storm preparation is just one type of plan we utilize. On an operational basis, we follow plans for vegetation management (you can read more about this program on the next page), system upgrades and reliability and routine maintenance of our equipment. We also plan ahead by investigating and implementing technology. Software programs such as our Outage Management System (OMS) and Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) give us real-time outage information, and when combined with our Mapping Software, we can restore power with the most efficiency.

Anticipating and analyzing helps to keep us focused at work, and that is what I realized with my son this year as well.

On our hunting trip, Coop and I reached our spot and waited. We had everything we needed, and after two hours, three deer emerged about 80 yards away. He pulled the gun up and lined up, but even with all the planning and anticipation, he began shaking and breathing heavy. He fired—and missed.

Next time we hit the woods, we'll have learned valuable lessons from this hunting trip. While he may not have made the perfect shot this time, we'll get in more shooting practice and be better prepared next season. Just as my son and I prepare for our next trip, your co-op will continue to evaluate our vulnerabilities, analyze our plans and implement new technologies—all in an effort to make your electrical system safer, even more reliable and ready for the next storm. 

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Vegetation Management—

Balancing Nature with Power Needs

Alabama is a beautiful state with abundant wildlife and breathtaking foliage for us to enjoy. But at times, nature can interfere with the delivery of electricity. That's where CAEC's vegetation management program comes in, balancing the need for reliable power delivery with the preservation of our state's natural beauty.

Plant life, namely trees, is one of the most common causes of unplanned electrical service outages—ranging from momentary interruptions to fairly longer periods without power.

“Plants play a large role in the number of downed power lines and electrical interruptions,” said CAEC Utility Arborist Manager Jacoby Dennison. “We want to do everything we can to



prevent the outages and damage caused by plant life, while also protecting our environment and wildlife habitats.”

Last year, CAEC crews treated 1,792 miles of right of way (ROW) with a low volume herbicide to slow the growth of trees and other plant life from interfering with power equipment. The herbicide, which is less intrusive and destructive on wildlife habitats than mowing with a tractor, mostly kills woody stem plants, allowing grasses and berry yielding plants to receive more light so they can provide food for animals. Crews also walk the ROW instead of driving it, which reduces interference with native animals and leaves the ROW with fewer disturbances.

Dead or dying trees are also another major concern when it comes to power interruptions.

Unlike healthy trees, decaying trees are more likely to collapse onto power equipment during a storm or high winds. In 2010, more than 2,800 trees, mostly dead or dying, were removed from CAEC's ROW. But even these trees are inspected before being brought down. For example, if a wood pecker is nesting in a dead tree, crews will leave it until the young birds have left the nest.

Keeping the ROW clear also involves trimming vegetation along the power line corridor. CAEC crews trimmed 732 miles of ROW vegetation last year, and this trimming, according to the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), is beneficial because it leaves plant debris that provides a natural nesting area for turkeys and other small animals.

“We've partnered with NWTf since 2004 to develop plans to manage our ROW and other land that provides an ideal habitat for wildlife,” said Dennison. “Through the Energy for Wildlife program, their staff works directly with utility companies to integrate NWTf standards into the utility's land management programs.”

When it comes to providing quality power, a successful vegetation management plan is key. Through planning, continual monitoring and partnerships, plants, wildlife and electrical infrastructure can coexist serenely. 



CAEC Spotlight: Maxwell Air Force Base/Gunter Annex

Through a unique partnership, CAEC and Dixie Electric Cooperative work together to serve the Air Force.

Seven years ago, Central Alabama Electric Cooperative partnered with Dixie Electric Cooperative to operate and maintain the electric distribution systems at Maxwell Air Force Base/Gunter Annex in Montgomery. This 50-year contract was the first of its kind—a company serving the privatized utility system for the United States Air Force.

Today, the electric utility system that CAEC and

Dixie operate is much like a smaller version of our member system - complete with substations, transformers and power lines. Depending on the Base's workload, there may be as few as three cooperative employees or as many as

15 workers on base on any given workday.

"It really is like a small city," said Bruce Adamson, Manager of Cooperative Utility Services (CUS) Operations. "We are in a consistent state of renewal—replacing equipment and improving efficiency, just like we do for our members."

Work at the base can vary from day to day. With 90-95 percent of the power lines underground, crews do a fair share of locates (identifying the location of underground utilities for those on the base), reading meters, replacing equipment as needed and constructing new services.

"By working together with Dixie, we can pool our resources and work more efficiently with troubleshooting potential issues as they arise," said Adamson.

When it comes to planning for equipment upgrades and new construction on the base, the two co-ops prepare work plans and cost estimates and submit these to the Air Force, much like CAEC's Engineering Department does when planning upgrades to the cooperative's system.

The contract with the Air Force is based on operations and maintenance, not kWh sales. The partnership that was created in 2004, CUS, is a joint limited liability corporation (LLC). Through CUS, both CAEC and Dixie supply the equipment and manpower to operate the distribution system once electricity is stepped down at the substation. The power is generated by Alabama Power Company and transmitted to the substation on base (unlike most of the power delivered to our members, which is produced by our generation and transmission cooperative, PowerSouth). Payments for services made to CUS are distributed



CAEC Lineman cuts a sidewalk in preparation of underground line installation.



CAEC Linemen install a primary pad-mounted 600 amp switchgear at Maxwell Air Force Base.

to the two partners, and since CAEC is a not-for-profit organization, that revenue is used to divert cooperative expenses that may otherwise impact our members.

"In the end, we are able to provide a valuable service to the Air Force while spreading some of our costs over a larger system, which provides savings to our members," said Adamson. ☞

Orange Beach Couples Conference

As a cooperative member, you and your spouse have an opportunity to network with other members from across the state —by attending the 2011 Alabama Cooperative Couples



2010 attendees Jay and Windy Thompson

Conference in Orange Beach. CAEC will sponsor two couples to take part in this three-day forum, held July 25-27.

In its 36th year, the Couples Conference gives members a unique perspective on how cooperatives affect their everyday lives.

“It was a great opportunity to meet other hard-working people and to gain a better insight on how all coop-

eratives, not just electric co-ops like CAEC, operate,” said 2010 Couples Conference attendee Jay Thompson.

“There were many activities that allowed us to really get to know everyone who attended the conference and, of course, it was in a wonderful location.”

To be eligible, you must be a member of CAEC (past Couples Conference attendees are not eligible) and 40 or under. For more information about the Alabama Cooperative Couples Conference, or to apply, call 1-800-545-5735 ext. 2213 or visit www.caec.coop. ☞



2010 attendees John and Wendy Marshall

CAEC's Statement of Non-Discrimination

Central Alabama Electric Cooperative is the recipient of Federal financial assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which provide that no person in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or disability shall be excluded from participation in, admission or access to, denied the benefits of or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organization's programs or activities.

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's non-discrimination compliance efforts is the President/Chief Executive Officer, Thomas M. Stackhouse. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint with this organization; or USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. ☞

CAEC Taxes Provide for the Areas We Serve

It's tax time, and even though your co-op is a not-for-profit organization, we still pay taxes each year—taxes that help the communities we serve.

In 2010, CAEC contributed to regional, state and federal governments by paying more than \$9.6 million in taxes.

Of the \$9.6 million, approximately \$758,000 was paid in ad valorem taxes. The revenue from ad valorem taxes goes to school districts, volunteer fire departments and other vital services of our communities.



In addition, CAEC paid \$604,000 in city business licenses and another \$19,900 in state and county sales tax for the year. The sales tax is paid when CAEC buys goods and equipment.

Payroll taxes, totaling nearly \$2.8 million, were paid in 2010. 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 \$1.8 million in gross receipt taxes and approximately \$3.6 million in utility taxes. 

What to have Before a Storm

History teaches that a lack of storm awareness and preparation are common threads among all severe weather related disasters. Knowing your vulnerabilities and what actions to take can help reduce the effects of a disastrous storm.

Here are some reminders as to what to do before a storm hits:

- Have a designated safe place in your home to weather a storm (or locate shelters ahead of time). It's also a good place to store your storm supplies.
- Keep a supply of flashlights, a battery-powered radio, new batteries, medicine, first aid supplies, candles, lighter, bottled water and non-perishable food items.
- Pet shelters often require proof of vaccines, a collar with identification tags and medications if needed.
- Storms may occur while family members are at work or school, so designate a safe meeting place where everyone can regroup after a storm.

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



CAEC Offices will be closed April 22 for Good Friday.

Lightning Protection From CAEC

Start protecting your appliances today.

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.



base unit, 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 Web site (www.caec.coop) to learn more.



Central Alabama
Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

www.caec.coop



Recipe for *Efficiency* from CAEC

Insulation

Have you looked in your attic lately? Insulation in your attic is an essential component to help keep your home warm in the winter and cool in the summer. While your attic temperature is still comfortable, it's the perfect time of year to re-apply attic insulation before the summer heat arrives.

There are numerous types of insulation to choose from, and each has a different method of installation. The example below uses cellulose--an easy "do it yourself" process.

Ingredients (supplies):

Cellulose Insulation

Utensils (tools):

Insulation Blower

Machine Gloves

Goggles

Breathing Masks

Directions:

Purchase the cellulose insulation at your local hardware store where you should also be able to rent an insulation blower. The amount you need will depend on the square footage of your home and the thickness of the existing insulation. Make sure the thickness of your insulation (including any existing insulation) is between 10 and 12 inches, which should give you an R-value of 30.

You will need at least one person to assist you in applying the insulation.

Installing Cellulose Attic Insulation

1. Place the insulation and the blower machine outdoors. DO NOT operate the machine indoors.

2. Take the blower's tube up into the attic with you (through a window or door in the house). Make sure you are outfitted with gloves, goggles and a breathing mask.



3. Have the person (also outfitted with gloves, goggles and a breathing mask) stationed near the blower machine begin to feed it with the loose, cellulose insulation, one bale at a time. When ready, this person will also control the flow of the insulation by using an on/off switch.



4. In the attic, sweep the blower's tube in the locations where you desire the insulation. When finished, have the person stationed with the blower turn off the machine.



On average, an 1,800-square-foot house will take approximately four hours to complete at a cost of \$500. Prices and times may vary due to retailers, square footage and depth of existing insulation. On a house with little or no pre-existing insulation, adding more—and doing it yourself—can help make your home more comfortable and provide some cost savings to your power bill.