

Hurricane Season Begins ... Again



Fred Braswell serves as AREA's President, CEO

Katrina, Ivan, Andrew, Hugo and Camille. We know their names and I would dare say that when people hear those names they will quickly associate them as hurricanes. In fact, they are the top five most destructive hurricanes in recent times. As we prepare for hurricane season 2010 we would do well to remember the lessons

learned in those powerful forces of nature.

The key lesson is preparation and being ready. Modern storm prediction and tracking has helped us be more alert to what is coming our way. While still largely unpredictable, we know a whole lot more now about storm development, strength and path. We have more information than ever and that allows time for preparation and to polish up our disaster plans. We will put all of that in action beginning now through November.

Your electric cooperative is part of a nationwide network of cooperatives that have intensified and improved our ability to coordinate before, during and most importantly, after a storm of big magnitude occurs. Cooperatives are busy tracking storms and assembling resources to respond quickly after a significant storm event. When we experience widespread damage and power outages we can rely on our cooperative neighbors to

send assistance and when disaster strikes others in our region we are ready to help.

Many of you will remember Ivan, who proved to be quite a match for our modern electrical system. In September 2004, Ivan struck Gulf Shores head on and roared up through Alabama - causing power outages in every county of Alabama. We had to rely on help from our neighbors. Our statewide association of cooperatives helped to request, manage and dispatch nearly 1,000 workers from 14 other states who came in to help us put the lights back on. Ivan's brief visit to Alabama and surrounding states left 121 people dead, many homeless and caused nearly \$20 billion in damage.

I was taught the old adage "it is better to give than receive," and your cooperatives certainly subscribe to that philosophy. When the ice storms wreaked havoc in neighboring Kentucky this past winter, Alabama cooperatives were quick to send help. This example is duplicated time and time again in the cooperative community. Central Alabama Electric Cooperative and the other 21 distribution cooperatives in Alabama are ready and able to respond in a timely and safe manner to natural disasters.

We only hope and pray that we do not have to put these plans in action during this hurricane season. We are neighbors helping neighbors. 

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Returning Home After the Storm

As anxious as you might be to return to your home after a major storm, wait until the area is declared safe by local officials to enter your community. When it's finally secure to go back, follow these recommendations to stay safe:

- Before entering your home, walk carefully around the outside and check for down or low hanging power lines, gas leaks and structural damage. If you have any doubts about safety, have your residence inspected by a qualified building inspector or structural engineer.
- If it's safe to enter your home, do so carefully and check for damage. Be aware of loose boards and slippery floors.
- Bring supplies such as flashlights, batteries, bottled water and non-perishable foods in case utilities are out.
- Be aware of snakes (especially venomous), insects and other animals that may be in or around your home. Use a stick to poke through debris.
- If your home was flooded, assume it is contaminated with mold. Mold increases health risks for those with asthma, allergies or other breathing conditions.
- Open doors and windows if the house was closed more than 48 hours, let it air out before staying inside for any length of time.

- Be careful when moving furnishings or debris because they may be waterlogged and heavier.
- Throw out all food, beverages and medicine exposed to flood waters and mud, including canned goods and containers with food or liquid that were sealed shut.
- When opening cabinets, be alert to falling objects.
- The primary hazards to avoid when using alternative sources for electricity, heating or cooking (i.e. portable generation) are carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock and fire. Review portable generator safety in our April 2009 issue of *Alabama Living*, page 34).

Returning home after a devastating storm can be both physically and mentally challenging. Focus on the positive and have patience and, above all, put safety first. ☞



***CAEC Offices will be closed on Monday, July 5,
in observance of Independence Day***

CAEC Employee Spotlight: Plant and Facilities Staff

To better serve our members and to provide for a more effective, efficient overall operation, spotlighted in this issue is CAEC's plant and facilities staff.

Plant and Facilities Manager

One of the key roles of the plant and facilities manager is purchasing all materials and equipment needed to maintain and build the distribution system that brings electricity to your home. With offices located in Prattville, Clanton, Wetumpka, Titus and Rockford, determining and maintaining the most economical and adequate levels of materials and equipment (inventory control), ensures an uninterrupted flow of items needed for daily work by co-op employees, outside contractors (i.e. line construction) and for use in emergency situations.

Another important aspect of this job is to purchase vehicles and manage the maintenance on the co-op's fleet (i.e. bucket trucks, service trucks, cars, etc.), making certain they are in top condition.

Creating and maintaining a healthy work environment reflects the quality of service we strive to provide to our members.

"It's my job to create an atmosphere that encourages productivity, is safe and efficient, and is in compliance with relevant codes and regulations," said Plant and Facilities Manager Wade Chandler with 26 years of service at CAEC.

And when it comes to the safety of the facilities, a hands-on approach is applied. Collaborating with our safety and training coordinator (position highlighted in May issue of *Alabama Living*), the Plant and Facilities Manager is a trained safety observer.



Warehouse Technicians

While it may be the responsibility of the Plant and Facilities Manager to do the actual purchasing of materials and equipment, it is the warehouse technicians who distribute materials from inventory and assist with inventory control.

The warehouse stores an inventory sufficient to build power lines and to cover losses from small outages. Some of the items kept in stock are transformers, wires, fuses, poles, nuts and bolts.

"If a transformer went out and we didn't have a replacement in stock, it would have to be delivered from the supplier prolonging the time it would take to restore power to the member," said Warehouse Technician Jimmy Payton, co-op veteran of 35 years. "But since we keep these in stock, we can have it restored much sooner."

The process for keeping track of stock in the warehouses includes doing a physical count, but this process has been made more efficient by utilizing an inventory control system. The system uses a hand-held barcode scanner to automatically identify the inventory item, and then updates the information in real-time into a database.

"During seasons when CAEC's service area is more susceptible to outages caused by severe weather, such as hurricanes and tornadoes, the co-op will stock additional quantities of special items (i.e. poles, transformers, wires)," said Charlie Debardelaben, a 22-year co-op veteran with 20 years of warehouse experience.



But if the co-op should experience a major outage and does not have certain items in the warehouse, CAEC has established relationships with suppliers that will deliver the equipment overnight or in some cases, the same day. Some suppliers even allow the cooperative to keep special equipment on consignment to avoid the high cost of purchasing the items ahead of time.

The warehouse techs keep safety at the forefront -- by keeping materials stacked and stored so that no sharp ends or protruding objects are extending from storage positions to catch clothing or injure a person passing in aisles.

"Materials are stored for easy accessibility and the work area is kept clean and safe, eliminating potential hazards," said Danny Albright, employed 15 years with the co-op.

Mechanics

Mechanics' responsibilities have evolved from simple repairs to high-tech related work.

"Safety and reliability are very important when it comes to all of our trucks and other vehicles," said Mechanic Randy Shaner, employed with CAEC for 20 years."

Preventative maintenance is performed on all of the co-op's fleet. Basic care maintenance includes routine service inspections, testing and lubricating engines and other major components, oil changes, tire rotations and minor repairs.

A few of the challenges the mechanics face consist of continually

adapting to changing technology and repair techniques; keeping cost reasonable without compromising quality when ordering replacement parts for the vehicles; and ensuring that all vehicles are equipped with operational safety equipment.



The mechanics are required to attend training schools to increase their knowledge in utilizing computerized equipment and working with electronic components while maintaining their skills with traditional hand tools. They also must work with electronic diagnostic equipment and digital manuals and reference materials. As alternative-fuel vehicles are purchased, such as hybrids, the mechanics are trained on how to repair them as well.

Maintenance records are kept on all of the co-op's vehicles and undergo an annual inspection required by the Alabama Department of Transportation. This is vital for the safety of the employees, members and the public.

Custodian

In today's environment with all the health concerns, such as swine flu or passing of blood borne pathogens, it is critical to keep our facilities as sanitized as possible, resulting in healthier employees and members. This role is handled by the custodian, along with light handy work, such as replacing air and water filters and light bulbs.

By creating and maintaining a healthy work environment, employees can continue to be productive and CAEC's facilities are clean when members visit.



Managing the maintenance and operational services of CAEC's facilities and equipment is aimed at long-term preservation of the asset value; and making sure the work environment is properly maintained for the safety of the employees, members and public is accomplished through the skills and commitment of the plant and facilities staff. 

Capitol Hill Visit 'Worth the Effort'

Washington, D.C., is a town known for politics and political sayings, and there's one statement that rings true for electric cooperatives: "If you're not at the table, someone else will eat your lunch."

Acting on that sentiment were more than 100 leaders from 18 of the 22 Alabama electric cooperatives who attended the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) Legislative Conference May 3-5. This annual event allows board members and staff to join another 2,500 cooperative representatives from across the country to visit their Congressional delegations and urge them to support policies that keep electric bills affordable for the 42 million cooperative members.

This year CAEC Trustees Charles Byrd, Jimmie Harrison, Jr., C. Milton Johnson and Mark Presnell, Sr., along with a few staff members, met with Senators Richard Shelby and Jeff Sessions as well as Alabama's Congressmen to discuss two vital issues.

The first was to ask for level funding of \$6.5 billion for the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Electric Loan Program. Unlike a subsidy initiative, this loan program allows cooperatives to finance expensive infrastructure (substations, poles, wires, transformers) so that members don't have to bear the entire cost through rates. Also unlike a subsidy, these loans are paid back with interest so the Federal Government does not lose money on this investment in rural America.

Secondly, the cooperatives (who were supported by other electric utilities) asked for legislation to correct problems with the current Clean Air Act that is being used to regulate greenhouse gases (GHGs). Passed in the 1970s the Clean Air Act was written to address local and regional air quality issues, and while utilities (including cooperatives) are concerned about GHGs, they advocate legislation that establishes regulations specifically designed to address GHGs, but in a

manner that also considers cost of electricity for the end users. Spokespersons for the electric co-ops also presented a resolution from the Alabama Legislature recommending the same actions.

"This was my first time to visit our Congressional delegation on behalf of CAEC," said Trustee Mark Presnell, Sr. "I was very impressed with the amount of time

our Congressmen gave us as well as the discussion I heard. It was obvious to me that they [Congressmen] respect cooperatives and their memberships, and they certainly recognized the large number of people from all over the country who had taken time from their schedules to be in Washington. Our visit was well worth the effort." 



Trustees Johnson, Presnell and Byrd, CAEC President & CEO Tom Stackhouse and CAEC Employee Jimmy Sims meet with Congressman Bobby Bright.

Want to make your voice heard? Join ACRE today! Find out more about this grass roots movement on www.caec.coop.

High Humidity = High Energy Bill

How does high humidity affect your power bill? If you have an air conditioner, it can use as much as 50 percent of its energy consumption just by taking moisture out of the air. Relatively high humidity can also reduce the efficiency of your appliances, adding to your home's overall energy use.

Even every day household activities such as cooking, cleaning, bathing and doing laundry can raise the humidity level. It has been estimated that the typical family of four converts between three to six gallons of water into water vapor each day.

To find out if you have a high humidity problem inside your home, buy a digital hygrometer (can be found at any home improvement store at an average cost of \$15) to measure the humidity level. In our region, the ideal indoor relative humidity (RH) for the summer months should be less than 60 percent and less than 40 percent for the colder months. When you reduce the humidity in your home, you also reduce the possibility of having mold and mildew growth which may affect your family.

You can limit or control the amount of water vapor in the house by simply changing some of your daily habits: cook with lids on your pots and pans, take shorter showers with cooler water and avoid hang-drying laundry in the house.

Here are some additional steps you can take to reduce humidity in your home:

- **Use a residential dehumidifier** - For a wise, economic choice, use a dehumidifier. A dehumidifier is essentially an air conditioner that has both hot and cold coils in the same container. A fan collects air from the surrounding area and pulls it into the dehumidifier. As the air passes through, it comes into contact with the cooled coils. These coils use condensation to pull moisture from the air. The collected moisture remains on the coils and drips into the reservoir. If using a dehumidifier, try moving your thermostat up a few degrees - your air conditioner unit will not have to work as hard and allows you to maintain the same level of comfort.
- **Cover the ground in your crawl space** - Moisture can seep through the soil into a home raising moisture levels throughout the house. Cover the ground completely in your crawl space, on the dirt floor or basement with a ground-moisture barrier (such as plastic) to slow down water vapor coming through the soil.
- **Use exhaust fans in your kitchen, laundry and bathrooms** - The kitchen, laundry and bathroom are all areas where water moisture is created the most. Using an exhaust fan while cooking, bathing/showering or doing laundry will help reduce humidity. If you do not have exhaust fans in these areas, consult with your heating and air conditioning expert for advice.

It can be costly to make your home comfortable inside when it's hot and humid outside. But by applying some of the suggestions listed above, you can save money on your cooling bills. 

