



Serving members in Baldwin, Emanuel, Glascock, Hancock, Jefferson, Johnson, Laurens, Warren, Washington and Wilkinson counties

May is Military Appreciation Month

You likely identify service, mission and country with words that describe our nation’s veterans.

While veterans are innately motivated to serve, in a similar vein, electric co-ops are guided by foundational principles that put their community first. After all, electric co-ops were founded to bring electricity to rural areas where there was none. In doing so, they powered local economies and helped them thrive. I believe this close connection to an essential mission is why there are so many veterans in the utility industry and why they are such a great fit for electric co-ops.

Today’s veterans are highly skilled because everyone who joins the military is either trained in a tech career field or exposed to advanced

technology during their years of service. Many veterans have skills in advanced disciplines like engineering, electronics or mechanics, which are all beneficial for the utility industry. Washington EMC is

proud to employ three veterans, and we’re especially grateful for their contributions to the co-op and our community.



Leadership and teambuilding skills

Our veteran colleagues joined the co-op equipped with training in leadership and teamwork. That’s because while on active duty within their units, servicemen and servicewomen work closely together because they know their lives depend on each other’s actions. This fosters a high level of self-discipline, sense of personal responsibility and passion for excellence.



Wendy Sellers
President/CEO

The utility industry is increasingly complex and undergoing a profound transformation. While there is the traditional engineering and vegetation management aspect of the utility industry, it now also encompasses technology, cybersecurity and the electrification of the transportation sector and other areas of the economy. Veterans are adept at responding to changing conditions, and learning and adapting to new technologies, which is essential in our evolving industry.

Mission-oriented outlook

Working for an electric co-op is more than a job. There is a clear mission in the work—to help our consumer-members and the community. When

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An electric membership corporation

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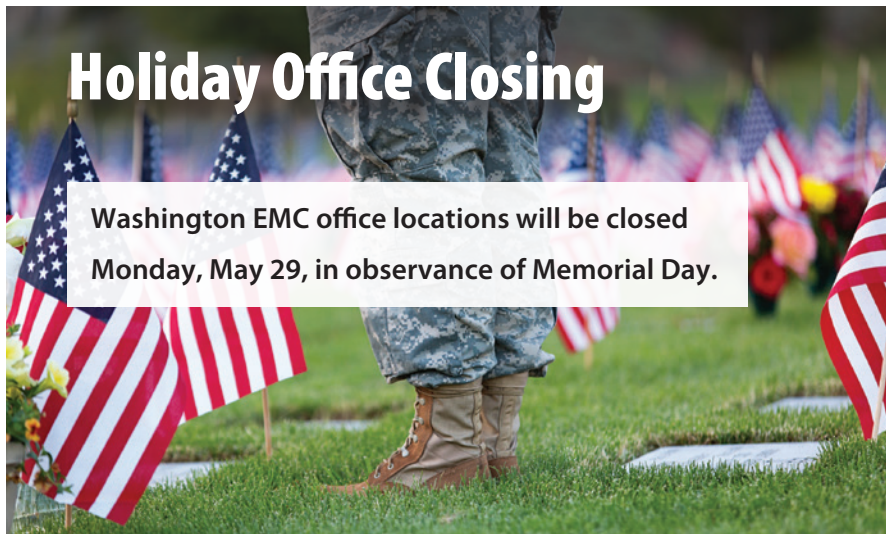
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Holiday Office Closing

Washington EMC office locations will be closed
Monday, May 29, in observance of Memorial Day.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Thermostat placement can impact your HVAC system's ability to maintain an ideal indoor temperature. Thermostats should be placed in the center of the home, away from air vents, plumbing pipes and exterior doors. Avoid placing items like lamps near your thermostat, which can cause the HVAC to run longer than necessary. Avoid installing thermostats in rooms that feel warmer or colder than the rest of the home.



Military Appreciation, *Continued from page 20A*

you work so closely with the community, you can't help but feel a sense of commitment and responsibility to our members. It's similar to the sense of duty and responsibility that veterans experience in the military. They feel deep, personal responsibility and commitment to their co-op team members and the members we serve. Veterans are trustworthy and goal-oriented, wanting to do right for their co-op and community.

At Washington EMC, we are grateful to have veterans within our company, and we are proud to serve them and their families within our community. But beyond our gratitude, we demonstrate our deep appreciation through our actions

and ongoing commitment to veterans and their families.

At the national level, electric co-ops support the Vets Power Us program, which is aimed at employing and honoring veterans and their families. This effort involves partnering with other electric co-ops across the country along with the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and others to hire veterans in the energy industry.

May is Military Appreciation Month, and I hope you'll join me in recognizing the sacrifices veterans have made to our great country—and the many contributions they continue to make to our wonderful community. Veterans, we salute you!

Staying one step ahead of Mother Nature

Mother Nature tends to have a mind of her own. Utility power lines are constantly at risk from severe storms—particularly fallen and overgrown tree limbs, which can lead to power outages. It's estimated that 50% of outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation, which is why electric co-ops regularly trim and maintain their local systems.

This tried-and-true method requires a significant amount of on-the-ground labor, including manual data collection, in which dozens of workers assess the vegetation that needs to be cleared while walking below the infrastructure, as well as manual verification of the work's quality and completion by contractors.

This method has been effective, but in an era of extreme weather events and accelerating digitalization, electric co-ops are looking to innovative vegetation management methods to improve power reliability for the members they serve.

By utilizing technology, co-ops may be able to dispatch crews to perform trimming at the ideal moment and location, preventing additional outages while enhancing productivity, cutting costs and providing better service. Timely monitoring and maintenance are necessary to identify assets that are prone to sustain damage or catch fire.

Today, there are several cutting-edge vegetation management tools, each with its advantages.

LiDAR, or light detection and ranging, gives exact, 3D data about the shape of the surface around utility assets. LiDAR is a popular way to scan portions of forests to determine how tall trees are and acquire information about their health, like whether a tree has leaves. LiDAR doesn't provide data on how healthy plants are in general, but the technology can be paired with high-resolution multispectral satellite imagery to obtain accurate information

about the health of the plants surrounding power lines. Timely data like this is extremely beneficial and can help electric co-ops make more proactive planning decisions.

Satellites provide coverage 24 hours a day and can supply two kinds of images: a wide macro view of the area near utility assets and a more detailed micro view. Satellite data can often be used in place of other monitoring methods. With satellite technology, co-ops can learn a lot about local vegetation, including:

- **Health:** This knowledge makes it possible to predict vegetation growth based on real conditions rather than guesses.
- **Dryness:** This information is valuable for determining the likelihood of a wildfire—and how to protect wildlife around utility infrastructure.
- **Satellites** are always in orbit around the Earth, so data can be updated quickly, in real time. This makes it possible to act more precisely and on time.

Satellite images can have a spatial resolution as small as 1.6 feet, which makes it easy to spot when vegetation is growing in the right-of-way near power lines and utility equipment. Typically, satellites can speed up the process of inspecting power lines, because they give the utility a solid foundation for making data-driven decisions about vegetation management.

Electric co-ops are also using fixed-wing aircrafts and drones. Drones fly very close to assets so they can take the clearest images and provide data to help keep an eye on how close vegetation is to equipment, as well as check the health of trees to see if they are likely to fall.

Many co-ops are utilizing drones with cameras, which are considered essential tools. When it comes to taking care of surrounding vegetation, drones are often used for detailed surveys rather than large-scale monitoring like



BRANDI WILLIAMS

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satellites. Once LiDAR or satellites (often together) have collected data on a large amount of vegetation near power lines, drones are used to inspect a single area and do all the necessary checks without putting operators in danger.

Vegetation management is the most crucial tool for reducing the likelihood of power outages. And the growth of LiDAR, drone and satellite data presents an opportunity to close the loop with continuous data-driven vegetation management intelligence and to increase the power line system's dependability and safety. In the end, all three technologies for managing vegetation serve different purposes, and electric co-ops choose the ones that work best for them.

Jennah Denney writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.

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