

The LAMPLIGHTER

Official Member Newsletter of Washington EMC

June 2025

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

Commitment to zero

Washington EMC celebrates continued commitment to National Safety Initiative

Washington EMC President/CEO Wendy Sellers, along with all cooperative employees and the Board of Directors, recently held a company-wide luncheon at the main office in Sandersville to celebrate their continued commitment to safety as their highest priority with the National Safety Initiative.

Management and safety leaders highlighted the co-op's success with the program since its initial adoption in 2018, but they also used the occasion to introduce the initiative with newly hired employees.

Sellers spoke candidly with all gathered: "There is no area of responsibility that I take more seriously than the safety of our employees. I commit to the highest level of safety in our

workplace, and I expect the same level of commitment from every employee. Together, we can reduce exposure to serious injury accidents. ... What I'm asking you to do today, with me, is to continue to commit to that. To those of you who weren't here before, this is your initial commitment to the safety of each other."

Washington EMC employees know that message well and rose to the challenge by individually signing a Commitment to Safety pledge board, which is displayed at all three office locations in Sandersville, Sparta and Wrightsville. They also placed a Member Pledge board at each location in order for members to "commit to our co-op" with a signature.

"I have always believed our safety



Wendy Sellers
President/CEO

program here at Washington EMC is very strong," says Sellers. "I believe our employees are the best in this industry, and they make safety a top priority, but

it is important to never be satisfied with a safety program. We must always be focused on how to improve even more."

Attendees and speakers at the luncheon included Georgia EMC Vice President of Training and Safety Harry Reeves, Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange Safety and Loss Prevention Consultants Keith Brooks and Sam Cornwell, in addition to Washington EMC Safety and Loss Control Manager Andrew Williams.





An electric membership corporation

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Wendy Sellers, President/CEO

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From left, William Conely, Charles Harrell and Jon Daniel Glover.

Move over to protect roadside crews

By Scott Flood

When lineworkers are perched in a bucket truck, repairing power lines along a busy road, they have good reason to be concerned about their safety. However, most are less apprehensive about problems like working with high voltages or falling. Their biggest worry is also the most unpredictable: a distracted driver slamming into their vehicle or a nearby power pole.

The National Safety Council reported that 891 people were killed and 37,701 people were injured in work zone crashes during 2022 (the most recent statistics). Most of those crashes occur in construction sites, but electric co-op crews are likely to face even greater danger, as they are often working alone along remote stretches of roads, frequently in heavy rain or other adverse weather conditions that can reduce their visibility.

The danger of work zone crashes led to states adopting Move Over laws. According to the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety, Georgia's Move Over Law states that motorists traveling in the lane adjacent to the shoulder must move over one lane when emergency and utility vehicles are stopped on the side of the highway and operating in an official capacity. Vehicles included in the law are all first responders (law enforcement, fire, EMS), utility vehicles, department of transportation vehicles, HERO Units and wreckers tending to an accident. Drivers caught violating the law in Georgia can face fines up to \$500.

Unfortunately, the Journal of Road Safety reports that just 14 states' Move Over laws

protect other types of service vehicles like construction trucks and utility vehicles. That means drivers in those states are under a legal obligation to give lineworkers that added margin of safety.

Compounding this issue is the dramatic increase in distracted driving. The National Transportation Highway Safety Administration has reported that as many as 1,000 Americans are injured each day because of activities that take drivers' attention away from the road. The most common distraction is reading and responding to text messages. If a driver traveling at 55 miles an hour glances at their phone for just five seconds, they'll have traveled the length of a football field before returning their gaze to the road.

The design of today's vehicles also contributes to distraction. Many vehicles have complex controls for entertainment and climate that demand the driver take their eyes off the road to make even simple adjustments.

Besides the potential for lineworker injuries, accidents can also damage or destroy expensive service vehicles, reducing a co-op's ability to respond to outages and other problems. Power poles and other infrastructure may also suffer severe damage.

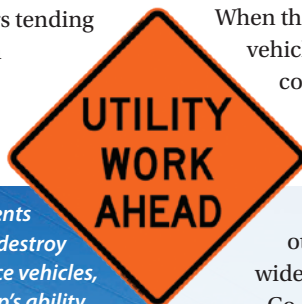
Additionally, many of the tasks performed by lineworkers are inherently dangerous and require their complete focus.

When their attention is distracted by speeding or noisy vehicles, they're more likely to make mistakes that can complicate the repair or cause injury.

Many state transportation agencies have work zone awareness programs. Amplifying those efforts by devoting part of a co-op's advertising, publicity and social media reminds co-op members and other drivers of the importance of giving lineworkers a wide berth.

Co-ops are considering ways they can modify bucket trucks and other service vehicles to make them more visible. Bright colors and additional lighting like flashing strobe lights and lighted detour arrows can attract attention from a distance. Reflective "work zone ahead" signs can also alert drivers to be ready for an unusual situation. Sometimes, a little bit of extra attention is all that's needed to prevent a serious incident.

Scott Flood works with electric cooperatives to build knowledge of energy-related issues among directors, staff and members. He writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.



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Split and Save: Teaching Young Adults Financial Responsibility

As school doors close and summer begins, many teenagers will embark on their first employment experiences. These summer jobs can provide more than income; they can offer valuable lessons in financial responsibility.

Consider implementing a 50/50 Rule with your children this summer. Have them save half of their earnings in a dedicated account while allowing them to spend the other half as they choose.

This balanced approach accomplishes two important objec-

tives: 1) it establishes the habit of saving, helping build a solid financial foundation; 2) it provides them with spending power and decision-making experience, which sometimes learning what not to buy is as valuable as learning what to buy.

The 50/50 Rule provides a tangible lesson that theoretical discussions simply can't match. By fall, many young investors may be surprised to see their accumulated savings and the total sum they've spent over the summer months. Happy summer saving!

