



The LAMPLIGHTER

Official Member Newsletter of Washington EMC

September 2024

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

Don't shoot at power lines

Damages can be costly and cause outages for EMCs

By Victoria Scharf DeCastro

As dove-hunting season approaches, Georgia's electric membership co-operatives (EMCs) are reminding hunters about the hazards of firing at doves perched on power lines and fiber-optic lines.

Power lines are popular roosting spots for doves, which typically congregate on the lines while taking a break from flying or before descending to the ground to feed. This makes them easy targets.

Though it may be tempting to shoot at a bird while it is sitting on a line, firing at power lines is always a bad idea. Shooting in the direction of power lines, fiber cables, insulators and other electrical equipment can result in extensive damage that could cost thousands of dollars to repair. Such unnecessary costs take funds away from other projects and even lead to higher utility bills. Damage to equipment also could leave businesses and homes without power and internet for extended periods of time.

Fiber-optic cable runs adjacent to and beneath the electric lines. Optical fibers are protected by glass tubing, which shatters when shot and can disrupt phone and internet service.

On opening day of dove season last year, a main fiber cable was shot in Clarkesville-based Habersham EMC's service area. The outage affected 120 members, including internet users who were without service until repairs could be made. That same afternoon, another fiber cable was shot, and the next day, a third fiber cable was damaged.

Central Georgia EMC in Jackson experienced 15 incidents of shooting damage in the 2022 and 2023 hunting



seasons. The co-op is still gathering the construction, labor and material costs for replacing the damaged fiber, but splicing costs alone have surpassed \$27,000, with the cost of labor and materials predicted to far exceed that.

"Fiber repairs are expensive and can be tedious, as a strand of fiber is about as thick as a strand of hair. So, when you start splicing fiber to repair a damaged section, you must perfectly match and fuse two strands of hair on each end of the section being replaced," says Kevin Morris, vice president of engineering and operations at Washington EMC. "For a 96-count fiber line, two crews—one at each end of the replaced section—will make a total of 192 splices, taking six to eight hours to complete."

There is also the risk of physical harm to oneself and others. Damaged power lines can produce high-voltage arcs that can ignite surrounding vegetation and start a fire. Plus, a downed line may electrocute people on the ground.

"When it comes to safety, hunters should always keep a reasonable distance from power lines and electrical equipment. A wise preventive measure would be to note in advance the location of power lines and other electrical equipment on the property where dove hunting will take place, especially densely wooded areas where power lines are hard to see," Morris says.

Damaging electrical equipment violates Georgia law*, which states that anyone who "knowingly and without authority and by force or violence interferes with the operation of any system of public communication, public transportation, sewerage, drainage, water supply, gas, power or other public utility service or with any constituent property thereof" could face criminal charges and/or be held liable for the cost of repairs.

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An electric membership corporation

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OFFICE HOURS

8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Monday through Friday

PHONES

Local (478) 552-2577

Long distance (800) 552-2577

24-HOUR CALL CENTER

To report a power interruption
please call:

Local (478) 552-2577

Long distance (800) 552-2577

BRANCH LOCATIONS

12860 Broad St.

Sparta, GA 31087

Closed on Thursday

100 W. College St.

Wrightsville, GA 31096

Closed on Wednesday

Convenient bill pay options include:

Drive-thru payment window

319 N. Smith St., Sandersville, GA 31082

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Pay your bill online

www.washingtonemc.com

Use the free Washington EMC mobile app

Look for WEMC in the

App Store or Android Market.

Pay by phone

(478) 552-2577 or (800) 552-2577

Unclaimed capital credits

Last date to claim a capital credits check is September 30, 2024

Were you a Washington EMC member from 1997-1998? If so, you may have funds to claim. Washington EMC is attempting to locate former members whose capital credits checks were issued August 31, 2018, but have been returned by the U.S. Post Office as “undeliverable” or otherwise remain unclaimed.

A list of member names and instructions for claiming these funds is posted online at www.washingtonemc.com. This list is also available at all Washington EMC locations for review during regular business hours.

The last date to claim these funds is September 30, 2024. If they are not claimed by this date, they will be donated for charitable uses, as permitted by law.

To claim a refund or submit a question about this notice or the list, contact Washington EMC at (478) 552-2577.



Holiday office closing



In observance of Labor Day, the Washington EMC business office will be closed Monday, September 2. For emergency services, please call (800) 552-2577.

Don't shoot at power lines,

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Although most hunters are committed to safety, gunfire damage to power lines and fiber lines is a growing issue statewide. To help ensure a safe and successful dove-hunting season, Washington EMC urges hunters to remain aware of the dangers involved and the damage caused by firing at birds perched on power lines and fiber lines.

For dove-hunting season dates and the latest information about dove hunting in Georgia, visit georgiawildlife.com/migratory-bird-info.

* Code O.C.G.A. § 16-7-22(b)(2)

5 tips for a safe harvest

Electrical safety during harvest season requires vigilance and proactive measures.

Follow these tips to reduce the risk of electrical accidents:

1. Maintain at least a 10-foot distance from power lines when operating equipment like grain augers, elevators and other tall machinery.
2. Use a spotter to navigate safely around power lines and other electrical equipment.
3. Ensure all farmworkers are trained on electrical safety procedures.
4. Regularly inspect all electrical equipment and machinery for signs of wear and damage.
5. Keep first-aid kits and emergency contact numbers in an easily accessible location.



HIGH-SPEED INTERNET IS HERE FOR ALL!

The Connect, powered by Washington EMC, fiber network is complete and service is available to all members of Washington EMC.

Your neighbors have made the switch. Have you?

Visit www.conexonconnect.com, call (844) 542-6663, or scan our QR Code to sign up today!



Join us for the 2024 Annual Meeting



**Plan now to attend
87th Annual Meeting
Saturday
October 5, 2024**

**Ridge Road Schools
285 Ridge Road
Sandersville, GA**

Registration and voting begins at 8:30 a.m.
Business meeting starts at 10 a.m.

AGENDA:

Call to order
Invocation
Reading of notice
Minutes of previous meeting
Reports to the membership
Election of directors
Old business
New business
Attendance prize drawing
Adjourn

The 2024 Annual Meeting of Members of Washington Electric Membership Corp. will be held at 10 a.m. on Saturday, October 5, 2024, in the Ridge Road Schools cafeteria located at 285 Ridge Road in Sandersville. The location is easily

accessed from Highway 88 (Fall Line Freeway), Highway 24 (Davisboro Road) and Highway 242 (Riddleville Road).

This location offers convenient access and ample parking. Be sure to join us for your Annual Meeting.

SAVE THE DATE October 5, 2024 Annual Meeting of Members

Attendance gift—galvanized bucket



GRAND PRIZE

\$500

Credit on your power bill!

Must be present to win.

**Register to receive instant
prizes and more!**