



October 2021

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

It's all a matter of cooperative principles

Ace Hardware, State Farm, REI, Land O'Lakes and Washington EMC all share something in common: We're all cooperatives!

We may be in different industries, but we all share a passion for serving our members and helping our communities thrive. In fact, all cooperatives adhere to the same set of seven principles that reflect our core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater community good. October is National Co-op Month, so this is the perfect time to reflect on these principles that have stood the test of time but also provide a framework for the future. Let's take a look at the first three cooperative principles:

Voluntary and open membership

Just like all cooperatives, Washington EMC was created out of necessity—to meet a need that would have been otherwise unmet in our community. So

in 1937, a group of neighbors banded together and organized our electric cooperative so that everyone in our community could benefit. For a modest membership fee to the cooperative, any farmer could get electricity brought to his farm. Neighbors came together to tackle a problem that they all had but couldn't solve alone. They worked together for the benefit of the whole community, and the newly established electric lines helped power economic opportunities in our community.

While this history may be forgotten, key parts of that heritage remain—the focus on our mission and serving the greater good. In this, we include everyone to improve the quality of life and economic opportunity for the entire community. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender identity, language, political perspective or socioeconomic status.



Wendy Sellers
President/CEO

Democratic member control

Washington EMC is well suited to meet the needs of our members because we are locally governed. Each

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Community born. Community led. Focused on YOU.

October is National Co-op Month!



An electric membership corporation

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Wendy Sellers, President/CEO

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OFFICE HOURS:

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

Monday through Friday

Phones:

Local (478) 552-2577

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24-Hour Call Center

To report a power interruption
please call:

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Branch Locations at:

500 E. Hancock St.
Milledgeville, GA 31061

12860 Broad St.
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100 W. College St.
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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.

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Use the free Washington EMC mobile app

Look for WEMC in the
App Store or Android Market.

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

Cooperative principles, *Continued from page 22A*

member gets a voice and a vote in how the cooperative is run, and each voice and vote are equal. Our leadership team and employees live right here in the community. Our Board of Directors, who helps set long-term priorities for the cooperative, also live locally on cooperative lines. These board members have been elected by neighbors just like you. We know our members have a valuable perspective, and that's why we are continually seeking your input and encourage you to weigh in on important cooperative issues and participate in cooperative elections.

Our close connection to this community ensures we get a firsthand perspective on members' priorities, thereby enabling us to make more informed decisions on long-term investments such as high-speed broadband, community solar programs, equipment and technology upgrades, electric vehicle programs and more.

Members' economic participation

As a utility, our mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable

energy to our members. But as a cooperative, we are also motivated by service to the community, rather than profits. Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of Washington EMC. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for Washington EMC programs, initiatives, capital investments and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

Because we are guided by seven cooperative principles, it's not just about dollars—it's about opportunity for all and being fair when engaging with our members. The cooperative way is a values-based business model.

Washington EMC is a reflection of our local community and its evolving needs. We view our role as a catalyst for good and making our corner of the world a better place. And by the way, that sums up the seventh cooperative principle, "concern for community," which I'll elaborate on in November's newsletter.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Old, uninsulated and improperly installed exterior doors can waste energy and money. Shut the door on wasted energy by weather stripping and sealing all exterior doors. If you have an old exterior door, consider replacing it with a newer, more energy-efficient model.

Source: www.energy.gov

The differences between overhead and underground power lines

Whenever a hurricane, wildfire or other natural disaster causes a widespread power outage, people ask a logical question: Why don't utilities put the power lines underground? The question seems to have an easy answer—until you start looking at the details.

There are pros and cons to “undergrounding” power lines. But one of those cons tends to drown out other considerations—cost. When people hear that burying power lines could more than double their electric bills, that tends to end the discussion.

When a state experiences a major power outage, it often appoints a commission to study ways to reduce the chances of another major outage. Those studies typically cite the process of undergrounding lines as prohibitively expensive.

But states keep studying whether to bury power lines, and people keep asking about it because power outages are expensive, too. In fact, outages cost the U.S. an estimated \$150 billion annually.

Wouldn't burying power lines save some of that money?

Undergrounding lines would protect them from wind, fire, ice and tree branches, but there are other benefits. There wouldn't be poles for cars to crash into or overhead lines for squirrels to chew up. It also would keep poles and wires from obscuring the natural scenery.

Overhead lines do have advantages. While underground lines are less prone to damage, finding and repairing a problem in the air can be a lot easier (and faster) than locating and digging up the exact spot of an underground malfunction.



Workers install a section of underground power lines.

Also, underground power lines aren't immune from natural disasters. They can be overwhelmed by flooding, and digging or other construction can slice into underground service. But again, it all boils down to cost.

A study by the Edison Electric Institute in Washington, D.C., estimated that burying existing power lines would cost between \$93,000 and \$5 million per mile of line, depending on the type of service and the terrain. The study also included a survey that found 60% of respondents said they would be willing to pay up to 10% more on their energy bills to have their power lines buried. The actual cost, however, would be more than 100% higher, and with that information, more than 75% of the survey respondents said “no.”

Underground lines also require specialized training for lineworkers, says Harry Reeves, Tucker-based Georgia Electric Membership Corp.'s vice president of training, education and safety. “We have an underground

school at the Electric Cooperative Training Center in Smarr every year, and we also offer in-house underground training for cooperatives. This covers things such as splicing of underground cable, tagging, troubleshooting and making sure they understand proper shoring equipment.”

Some people are served by underground lines. One estimate places that number at two out of every five utility customers. In some cases, utilities are placing new electric service underground, even though it can cost three times as much as building

overhead lines.

“Forty-five percent of our electrical system is underground, but a larger percentage of customers are served [through] underground,” says Chris Fettes, CEO of Midway-based Coastal Electric Cooperative. “In general, customer density is greater in subdivisions and neighborhoods with underground lines.”

All the new subdivisions in Coastal's territory are supplied by underground lines, Fettes says, but residents in those neighborhoods don't have higher rates. “Our rates are based on the most economical method of service for everyone,” he says adding that developers contribute toward the cost of installing lines underground.

While underground service is often impractical due to cost, utilities are finding other ways to increase reliability by using modern smart-grid technology and drone patrols, as well as old-fashioned tree trimming to keep limbs from touching power lines and causing power blinks.

Join us for the 2021 drive-thru Annual Meeting



Plan now to attend the
84th Annual Meeting
October 2, 2021

Ridge Road Schools
285 Ridge Road
Sandersville, GA 31082

Drive-thru registration
begins at 9 a.m. and
ends at 11 a.m.

Prizes will be drawn
after registration ends.

The 2021 Annual Meeting of Members of Washington Electric Membership Corp. will be held from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Saturday, October 2, 2021. It will be held at the same location, but in a drive-thru format to keep our members and employees safe during this time of social distancing.

This location is easily accessed from Highway 88 (Fall Line Freeway), Highway 24 (Davisboro Road) and Highway 242 (Riddleville Road). Signs and employees will guide you through the process once you arrive.

Please come join us this year to receive your registration gift and be entered to win one of 25 \$100 utility bill credits. Winners will be notified on Monday, October 4, 2021.

You could win one of

25

utility bill credits

\$100