



Berkeley Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

TO REPORT OUTAGES

Call: 1-888-253-4232

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Hours: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

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(843) 884-7525
AWMemberRequests@bec.coop

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Cost pressures continue to build



MIKE FULLER
President & CEO

I want to take a moment to make sure you, as our member-owners, understand what is going on in our business and some of the challenges that your co-op is facing. Despite our best efforts, we are not immune to the economic realities we’ve all seen over the past few years. If you’ve been through a grocery store checkout line or a fast-food drive-through lately, you know what I’m talking about. The price of everything is going up – outrageously in some cases.

At Berkeley Electric, one of our most important jobs is to keep the price of electricity affordable and we have been very successful in doing that over the past few years. But not everything is in our control.

Inflation

One of the things we can’t control is inflation. It’s not just the price of eggs or a value meal that are going up. So is our cost of doing business. For example, the cost for almost everything that goes into building a utility pole has increased. Over the last few years, the cost of transformers has increased nearly 100% while the cost of crossarms has risen more than 103%. Primary and secondary wire, insulators, surge arrestors, cutouts, guy wire and ground wire have also had noticeable increases and so far, there doesn’t seem to be an end in sight.

The cost of continuing to provide excellent member service has risen as well. We have to pay our employees more so they can keep up with the cost of living – and so we don’t lose our best workers to other utilities and contractors who might offer a higher salary than we can as a not-for-profit. Plus, we are paying more for health care and benefits than ever before. All those costs put “upward pressure” on rates that can cause them to go up, despite our best efforts.

V.C. Summer and the Cook case

Another issue we’re facing is the unfortunate fact that two South Carolina utilities tried – and failed – to expand the V.C. Summer nuclear power plant a few years ago.

We were not directly involved in that project, but we buy the bulk of our power from one of the utilities that was: Santee Cooper.

South Carolina’s electric co-ops are contractually obligated to pay about 70% of Santee Cooper’s costs for large capital projects like the construction of new power plants. That includes V.C. Summer.

That arrangement worked great as we built and modernized our state’s power grid until it didn’t. And now we will be left paying for the

BERKELEY AT-A-GLANCE	MARCH 2023	MARCH 2024
Total kWh sold	355,384,592	368,584,902
No. meters served	122,862	128,038
Avg. residential kWh/meter	929	846
Avg. residential bill/meter	\$136.08	\$130.24
Miles of line	6257	6387
Avg. daily high temperature	73	63
Avg. daily low temperature	51	41

V.C. Summer project for decades to come.

I don't mean to imply that you're going to see rate increases due to V.C. Summer. You're not. In fact, the V.C. Summer debt is already factored into your bill - and it has been for years. It's a relatively small percentage of what you pay every month. But we're going to have to pay that small percentage until about 2056. What could have a real impact, though, is the class-action lawsuit - called the Cook Case - that happened after the collapse of the V.C. Summer project.

As part of the settlement ending the lawsuit, Santee Cooper had to freeze its electric rates for about four years. While we have benefitted from the rate freeze keeping our power costs - and yours - stable, the same cannot be said for Santee Cooper's costs.

In the last four years, they have gone through a series of events that caused their costs to increase including several large storms and a fire at the mine that supplies most of the

coal Santee Cooper uses to generate power. And when Russia invaded Ukraine, the cost of natural gas soared.

Those costs - and others - have added up to about \$680 million. We call these the "Cook case exceptions." Santee Cooper will pass those costs down to their consumers - including us - when the rate freeze ends at the end of this year.

That's a lot of money, and we are still negotiating with them about how much of that we are really going to end up paying, and over how long of a time period that we're going to pay it. If we have to cover those costs in the next five or six years, it's going to hurt a lot more than if we can spread out those payments over 20 years. That's something we are working hard on to figure out.

Energy policy

The last factor I'll mention is energy policy. Over the past few years, the federal government has pushed hard to reduce carbon emissions from the U.S. economy, including the electric utility industry.

The EPA is mandating a lot of changes to how we produce and deliver power. In some cases, they are requiring power providers to adopt technologies that are currently unproven, unavailable, and expensive.

The need to be good stewards of our environment is one of our guiding principles. However, the need to keep costs affordable for consumers is equally important. Are the EPA mandates the best way forward? I don't know. I do know, however, that when the cost of producing power goes up, our costs to buy it go up, and your costs go up as well.

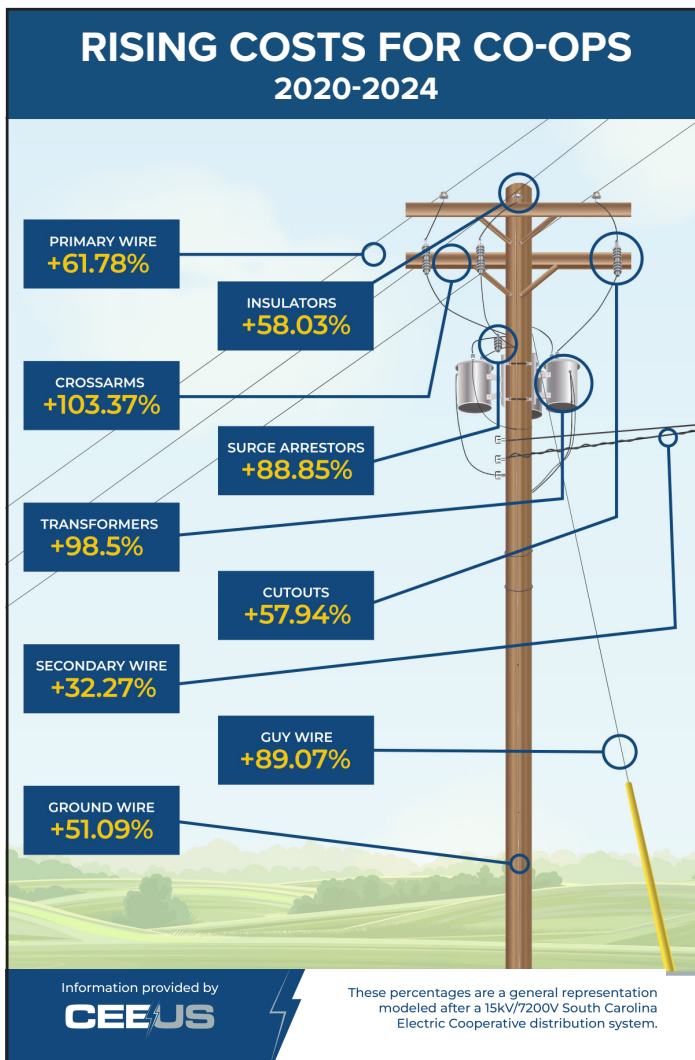
That makes energy policy something we and other co-ops monitor closely, and it's an area where we do a lot of work with our state legislators and our congressional representatives to make sure our voices are heard.

What we're doing about it

I want to be clear: these challenges are not unique to Berkeley Electric. They are occurring at every co-op in our state, and in many of the utilities in our industry. Duke Energy filed for a rate increase again this year. So did Dominion Energy.

In years' past, our co-op has been able to avoid raising our electric rates. Part of that is because of how well we've managed the co-op. We run a tight ship here, and we do everything we can to keep costs down. Over the coming months, we will continue to update you on our efforts to look out for your best interests while continuing to provide you with safe, reliable - and affordable - power.

Sincerely,





ART Calendar Contest

CALLING ALL LOCAL ARTISTS -- we want to see your original masterpieces...paintings, sketches, mixed media, watercolors and more! Send a digital copy of it our way and, if your artwork is chosen it will be featured in our 2025 calendar **plus you win \$100.**

The contest runs from July 1 thru September 30. All submissions must be landscape orientation (horizontal) and print quality so send us the **highest resolution** image possible. Please note that cell phone shots are typically not print quality. E-mail all submissions to micahp@bec.coop with the subject line "Calendar Contest."

You must be a BEC member to enter and win!



Need proof of residency before your child goes back to school?

Download a copy of
your bill from your
Smarthub account.
Available online at
berkeleyelectric.coop
or through our free
mobile app.



New commercial business resources

Although Berkeley Electric Cooperative services mainly residential accounts, commercial businesses are an important part of the co-op accounting for 28% of annual retail sales while representing 13% of its membership.

The certified energy experts at Berkeley Electric Cooperative know that keeping the power on is critical so the co-op offers a range of solutions focused on energy efficiency, reliability, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness. Plus, the co-op's SmartHub billing portal and app provide unparalleled access to a company's energy use data allowing for virtually real-time account management.

Be sure to visit our new "Commercial Energy Services" page at berkeleyelectric.coop under the "My Energy" menu to learn more about services including:

- Commercial energy audits
- Demand management & lighting upgrade incentives
- Rate & solar PV investment advice
- Renewable energy credits for commercial accounts over 500kW

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Here's an easy way to lighten the load on your clothes dryer. Before you dry a load of damp clothing, toss in a clean, dry towel. The towel will absorb excess water, shortening the drying time. If your dryer does not include an autosense feature to determine drying time, remember to reduce the timer to about half of what you normally would. Remove the towel about 15 minutes after the cycle begins. Shorter drying times will extend the life of your dryer and save energy.

Source: homesandgardens.com





May the Funds be with you

Bright Ideas raises money for teachers on Star Wars Day

PEYTON DRESS

HIGHLIGHTS:

- 5K sets records for course time, participants & fundraising
- Next year's race will be held April 26 at Cypress Gardens
- Teachers can apply for grants starting in January

The Force was with race participants as they romped in the swamp during the 3rd Annual Bright Ideas 5K held at Cypress Gardens on May the 4th, also known as Star Wars Day. This year's race was an out-of-this-world success setting records with over 450 participants raising \$50,000 to support local teachers through Bright Ideas Education Grants.

"It feels really good to be part of this event and see how much the community has come together to support teachers. Ultimately, we're all doing it for the students so it's really exciting that we can come together for the kids in our community," said Tina McBride, one of this year's Bright Ideas grant recipients.

"The youth and schools in our area are vital to our communities," said CEO Mike Fuller. "It's a great opportunity for the co-op to give back to classrooms which is part of the fabric of what we do."

The race, presented by Cooperative Building Solutions, featured approximately one mile of road running, one mile of trail running and one mile of paved and gravel paths.

"The terrain was awesome. Seeing the lilies and the flowers and the ponds and hearing the animals when you run in nature - you're just in tune. It's beautiful and I plan on making this my favorite race and doing it again," said 5K participant Gale Chappelle.

Although he didn't finish the Kessel Run in 12 parsecs (Star Wars reference), a new course record was set by the overall winner, Cortez Gonzalez of Cross. Gonzalez finished

with a time of 19:12 while Samantha Trone of Charleston also set a new female course record with a time of 23:57. Plans are already underway for next year's race which will be held on Saturday, April 26 at Cypress Gardens. Full race results and a photo gallery of this year's 5K can be found on the co-op's website at berkeleyelectric.coop.

The next grant application period for teachers will open in January. For full details visit "Teachers & Students" on the co-op's website under the "My Community" menu.



Overall race winner Cortez Gonzalez set a new course record in his debut appearance at the Bright Ideas 5K

MICAH PONCE



Teachers & grant recipients from Ft. Dorchester Elementary also showed up in force to conquer the course



Samantha Trone set a new female course record with a time of 23:57



Forty-eight teachers representing 22 schools received Bright Ideas grants including seven teachers from Mount Holly Elementary - the most from any single school.

PHOTOS BY BERKELEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Ready to take your seat at the table?



DATES TO REMEMBER:

- Aug. 22 - Deadline for nominating committee candidates (Dist. 3, 6 & 9)
- Sept. 20 - Deadline for petition candidates (Req. 50 signatures)
- Nov. 13-14 & 19-20 - Annual Meeting of Members voting

Berkeley Electric Cooperative is not like other electric utilities. While sharing the same primary mission of delivering safe and reliable power, co-ops complete this mission with the help and guidance of their communities. Unlike traditional utility companies, electric cooperatives have their board trustees elected from within the membership, making them truly representative while playing a crucial role in powering local businesses, homes, and schools.

We want you

Have you ever considered running for a position on your cooperative's board of trustees? While it might not be the first thing that comes to mind for many members, it's essential to recognize the power of active member participation. Our board members are tasked with making informed decisions on long-term priorities and investments that keep our cooperative running smoothly. And guess what? We're already on the lookout for talented and engaged members like you who are willing to put their skills to work on behalf of their friends and neighbors.

To make your voice heard

At the heart of every cooperative is a commitment to democratic principles. The board is elected by its members during the annual meeting and acts as their voice, shaping

the direction of the cooperative and making sure decisions are made in the best interests of the community they represent. By running for a board position, you have the opportunity to be a part of this decision-making process. Your voice matters, and joining the board allows you to ensure that your concerns and unique needs are heard and addressed. Board trustees maintain open lines of communication with the members and make decisions in a fair and unbiased manner. By running for the board, you can actively contribute to building trust between the board, management, and the membership, ensuring that our cooperative operates with the highest level of integrity.

Your mission

While the day-to-day operations are handled by our dedicated staff, major decisions are made by the board. Their mission? To look out for the health of the cooperative and the communities it serves. And don't worry if you're not an expert in cooperative governance – we offer specialized training opportunities like the Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) program to help you make informed decisions.

Serve your community

Remember, the real power of our cooperative lies within its membership. By stepping forward to serve on the board, you can make a significant impact on our cooperative's success. We love our community, and we want to help it thrive. If you share the same commitment and want to contribute in a meaningful way, we hope you'll consider running for a board position.