

BLUE RIDGE



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MISSION STATEMENT

Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative will operate as a competitive provider of energy services and a partner with local communities, with a focus on safety, service and integrity.

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This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Two August milestones



AS I'M PREPARING this month's report, it's been 1,785 days since Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative employees recorded their most recent lost-time accident. By the time this magazine arrives in your mailbox, five full years will have passed since that last

accident occurred. August 4, 2015 was the exact date. That represents an almost unbelievable accomplishment! I have to take my hat off to the entire Blue Ridge workforce for their impressive focus on working safely.

Quality leadership

This kind of safety performance doesn't just happen. For one thing, it's critical to have quality leadership at the helm of any job training and safety program. The co-op certainly has that in the person of our manager of safety and loss control, David Black. David leads by example, and he sincerely cares about the well-being of every single man and woman included on our organizational chart.

It's also important to have in place a well-thought-out safety program. The co-op has invested heavily in

Manager of Safety and Loss Control David Black leads by example.



its program because we recognize that the folks who work here are our greatest asset. It's therefore incumbent upon us to design the safest possible environment in which these individuals can perform their tasks.

Also essential to a successful safety program is employee support. In that respect, our safety record speaks for itself. Our workforce has obviously embraced all aspects of our emphasis on safe job practices. Consequently, they've reached a milestone that's truly rare in the world of work.

80th anniversary

The month also welcomes another milestone that's of special significance to our Blue Ridge organization. This August 14th, the co-op will be observing its 80th anniversary. On that date in 1940, a small group of men gathered in Clemson and took the necessary actions that brought Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative into existence.

In the years since, Blue Ridge has been responsible for taking the blessing of central-station power to more than 67,000 members. Those members include homes, farms, businesses, schools, churches, and many other institutions located across the primarily rural areas of this northwestern corner of South Carolina. Our 80-year history is definitely a proud one, and as a result, we're celebrating. It's also true that the co-op continues to grow, and we're excited about what the future might hold for us. You can be assured that our plan is to keep growing in our commitment to deliver the most reliable service possible to you and all our other members.

JIM LOVINGGOOD
President and CEO



Is solar the right choice for you?

Stephen Strickland (right) meets with co-op member Randy Evett to discuss the efficiency of the solar panels installed at his home.

AMANDA MACHEN

SOLAR PANELS ARE popping up in many residential neighborhoods these days. Have you ever wondered if solar is an energy option that might suit your lifestyle and needs? Your co-op has several employees devoted to solar technology and is ready to give you all the pros and cons to having these panels attached to your home.

Stephen Strickland has been with the energy services department for a number of years and knows a great deal about cost verses payback, as well as some of the things to avoid when choosing solar. Strickland explains, “Not all solar companies and salesmen are alike. Some

are very knowledgeable and can give you excellent advice on installing panels, but others will make promises that can't be kept. Our goal is to counsel you and be there to oversee the process with you, should you make a decision that solar is for you.”

The competition among solar companies is strong. Many promise no more power bills or bills that will be cut in half or more. When that doesn't happen, our co-op members come to us for help, but by then it's too late.

Blue Ridge is now partnering with several solar installers to make sure that, if solar is your choice, you are given all the correct information and your

expectations are realistic.

“We are your cooperative, and if solar is the right fit for you, we want to oversee your installation from beginning to end and make sure you know what you're getting,” Strickland adds. “After all, we aren't going anywhere—we've been here for almost 80 years, working to bring you power for all your needs.”

So rather than calling after solar panels are installed, let us be the first contact on your list. Truthfully, we work for you and want to be your trusted energy expert. Contact us at (800) 240-3400 or visit the Energy Services tab at blueridge.coop.

A virtual experience of a lifetime

The risks of spreading COVID-19 caused summer cooperative programs like the Rural Electric Youth Tour in Washington D.C., and the Cooperative Youth Summit in Columbia to be cancelled.

Neleah Clough, Greenville Technical Charter High School; Karlyn Esuary, Liberty High School; Page Holcombe, West-Oak High School; and Daniel Watson, Cyber Academy of South Carolina, participated in the Virtual Youth Experience, a weeklong web conference hosted by South Carolina's electric cooperatives.

From June 19-26, several of South Carolina's highest elected officials—Governor Henry McMaster, U.S. Senators Tim Scott and Lindsey Graham, and U.S. Congressman Jim Clyburn—responded to questions about the pandemic, race relations and other topics important to

the students. State Superintendent Molly Spearman described how their final years of high school might be different. Dr. Linda Bell, the state's chief epidemiologist, answered questions about COVID-19.

Jim Sonefeld, drummer for Hootie and the Blowfish, discussed mental health during the pandemic and substance abuse. Rev. Charles Jackson, senior pastor at Brookland Baptist Church in West Columbia, spoke about the importance of developing community and positive race relations.

Neleah Clough shared of her virtual experience, “I was granted the opportunity to listen to and speak with a lot of influential figures, receive a crash course on the basics of storytelling and audio recording, and meet so many new friends from across the state! Getting the chance to hear from such

a diverse group of people allowed me to gain a greater understanding of how the recent events of 2020 are effecting people from across the state, and renewed in me a hope that we will all persevere through these troubling times together.”

Karlyn Esuary also shared her thoughts on the virtual tour. “I loved being able to ask our speakers direct questions, which is usually a task reserved for journalists. I also was grouped with two other students from South Carolina and we're working on a project together that has definitely challenged us.”



Molly Spearman
State Superintendent