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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



Some reflections on the arctic blast

THE EXTREME 2022 Christmas arctic blast that overspread much of the United States, including the Upstate, was one

for the record books. On the morning of Christmas Eve, the low temperature of seven degrees Fahrenheit was the coldest ever registered here on that date. The bone-chilling weather hung around for another two days.

Weather-driven demands for electricity stretched the region's generating facilities to the limit. On top of the below-freezing temps, as many as 500,000 North and South Carolina consumers were confronted with rolling power blackouts, some that lasted about six hours.

Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative is in the business of distributing electric service at the retail level. Consequently, Blue Ridge and the state's other 19 electric cooperatives are members and owners of Central Electric Power Cooperative. On behalf of these 20 cooperatives, Central Electric negotiates purchased-power agreements with in-state and regional utilities that own and operate large-scale generating plants.

In addition, I would like to point out that while Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative is a fairly large cooperative and plays a significant role locally in providing electricity, we're still a very small player in the overall energy industry. We do not generate the power we sell, nor do we own or operate a high-voltage transmission system. We do one thing—distribute power. Therefore, we have very little control over generation and transmission issues, including costs, other than the services that are defined through the long-term contractual obligations we're promised with other utilities.

There can be little argument that the disruptions encountered during the recent severely cold weather

were primarily associated with power generation. Unfortunately, some of the area's baseload generating plants were out of service at Christmastime. Furthermore, renewables such as solar and wind were simply not operable during the early morning hours when the demand for electricity is at its peak.

The trend here in America and elsewhere has been to decommission baseload power plants, and that trend could be risky. To ensure the safety of Americans who reside in locales where near- or below-zero temperatures are a possibility, there must be an adequate supply of baseload generation to meet the demand. Essentially, an uninterrupted flow of electricity, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, can be provided only via power plants that are fueled by either nuclear, natural gas, or coal.

I'm not opposed to renewable energy. It certainly has its rightful place in our generation mix. However, if this region and others around the country want to be safer and more secure, steps should be taken to ensure that adequate baseload generation facilities are at hand. Those facilities would provide a safeguard to see us through whatever Mother Nature might send our way.

In 2021, the state of Texas was hit with an unrelenting cold wave for seven consecutive days. Its generating fleet fell short of expectation and damage to human life and property were severe. Mercifully, our recent cold wave lasted only three days. Next time, we might not be so lucky.

JIM LOVINGGOOD
 President and CEO

Looking out for you

SERVICE RELIABILITY is always foremost when Blue Ridge Electric thinks about providing power to its members. The analysis that the Blue Ridge management staff conducted both during and after the unusual weather event in late December indicates that the cooperative's distribution system performed adequately. Key elements that contributed to such a positive outcome include:

The practice of overbuilding our distribution system By design, Blue Ridge uses larger power poles, crossarms, transformers, and wire sizes than typical line-construction specifications require. This provides added strength and capacity that better withstand the impact of challenging weather conditions.

An aggressive system maintenance program Elements of our maintenance program include clearing of powerline rights-of-way on a regular cycle, ongoing pole inspections that include the yearly changing out of thousands of wood poles that are nearing the end of their life expectancies, and a similar inspect-and-replace procedure for our system's many distribution transformers. This persistent maintenance serves to harden our power-delivery system and therefore limits the extent of the damage caused by storms and other natural disasters.

Regularly scheduled electrical-load studies These engineering activities can ultimately point out specific areas on the Blue Ridge grid where, for example, new substations should be built. Last August, the cooperative energized its

Dr. Johns substation in western Oconee County. The added capacity that facility brought to the Blue Ridge grid supported our efforts to meet the heavy demands the extremely cold temperatures placed on that portion of our system. Bringing a new substation online has the impact of positioning thousands of our members closer to their power source, which enhances service reliability for those members.

While Blue Ridge encountered some outages during the severe weather in December, the prolonged disruptions that many customers of other utilities encountered did not affect the cooperative's service area. Understandably, members used a maximum amount of power that weekend. The good news is that there was power available.

Ready for an experience you won't forget?

Your co-op has two amazing trips planned this summer. Juniors: Apply for the Washington Youth Tour. Sophomores: Apply for the Cooperative Youth Summit.

Juniors: Experience Washington, D.C., with hundreds of students from across South Carolina and the country, meeting lawmakers and touring all the sights. Your electric co-op will cover your round-trip plane ticket, tours and meals. In other words, it's all free!

Sophomores: Experience South Carolina's capital like never before. Tour the Statehouse, meet lawmakers and see how co-ops are preparing for our state's energy future. Plus, there's plenty of fun with visits to popular Columbia attractions like Riverbanks Zoo & Garden. Your electric co-op will cover all your expenses.

We've made it easy to apply for either FREE trip. Apply today!



Washington Youth Tour: June 17-22, 2023



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