



www.blueridge.coop

**FOR ALL YOUR
 CUSTOMER SERVICE NEEDS**
 Call Toll-Free (800) 240-3400

AUTOMATED OUTAGE REPORTING
 1-888-BLURIDGE

PICKENS
 P.O. Box 277
 734 West Main St.
 Pickens, SC 29671

OCONEE
 P.O. Box 329
 2328 Sandifer Blvd.
 Highway 123
 Westminster, SC 29693

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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
 J. Spencer Dalton, Jr., *Chairman*
 Len D. Talley, *Vice-Chairman*
 Franklin M. Looper, Jr., *Secretary*
 J. Mendel Stone, *Treasurer*
 Will Anderson
 Joel R. Davis
 Jimmy Lee Dodgens
 William G. Elrod
 Kenneth G. Southerlin

**PRESIDENT AND CHIEF
 EXECUTIVE OFFICER**
 Jim Lovinggood

This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



2023 in review

IT HAS BEEN quite a busy year for the co-op, and I wanted to share with you some of the highlights of 2023. Much of the information that I am highlighting doesn't cover the full 12 months of our 2023 operation, but I think you will agree that it was another year of significant progress. Here are highlights from 2023:

- ▶ 83rd consecutive Blue Ridge Annual Meeting hosted, with a record 8,228 members registered.
- ▶ \$1 million-plus in capital credits refunded to members—the fortieth straight yearly return of these payments, bringing the to-date total to more than \$33 million.
- ▶ 403 past-their-prime transformers removed from the field, refurbished and returned to inventory. This program created \$444,575 in savings and was helpful in meeting our need for these line construction materials in the face of supply shortages occurring all across the electric power industry.
- ▶ 45 emergency generators installed for members. A total of 800 of these units are now in operation at Blue Ridge members' premises.
- ▶ 978 miles of power line rights-of-way cleared mechanically or treated with herbicides. Trees and power lines just don't mix, and an aggressive program of vegetation maintenance is essential to service reliability.
- ▶ 918 net new members connected to the Blue Ridge system; total membership expected to have grown beyond 72,000 by year's end.
- ▶ Complete rebuild of 1.5 miles of 44-KV transmission line providing service to the cooperative's Mountain Rest substation. A challenging project that took place amid some of the most rugged and mountainous territory on the Blue Ridge system.
- ▶ Establishment of electrical service to a new firearms manufacturing industrial plant located within the Pickens County Commerce Park.
- ▶ The number of customers receiving Upcountry Fiber's high-speed internet services grew from 8,283 on Jan. 1 to 13,332 by Sept. 15. Total should surpass 15,000 by Dec. 31.
- ▶ Upcountry Fiber Darius Rucker concert netted \$114,000 to be distributed among local charities.
- ▶ South Carolina Lt. Governor Pamela Evette participated in an Upcountry Fiber field trip that provided her with an up-close look at crews connecting high speed internet for new customers in Greenville County's Travelers Rest area.

The above listed items represent just a fraction of activities that our Blue Ridge team had on its plate during 2023. I'm proud of their hard work, and I'm looking forward to further progress as we prepare to welcome a new year.

Finally, I want to call your attention to page 6 in this edition of the magazine and the member satisfaction survey you'll find there. We value your opinion and hope that you will take a few minutes to let us know your thoughts on our service and important topics in the energy industry. There are several ways to submit your survey and all completed surveys received by Dec. 15 will be entered into a prize drawing.

I want to wish you and yours a happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a prosperous new year.

JIM LOVINGGOOD
 President and CEO



2024 calendar salutes homegrown

HOMEGROWN BRINGS to mind many of the things we enjoy throughout the year that are ours by virtue of our closeness. When we were thinking about the 2024 Blue Ridge Calendar, the first produce stands were beginning to sell all the local vegetables and fruits that are so abundant during the summer months. With your help, we identified several of the places you go when you want that “home grown” taste of summer.

Additionally, homegrown is the essence of Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative and Upcountry Fiber. Both organizations were born out of a need—one 83 years ago and one more recent. Home is where our heart is, and we hope you feel that in every transaction you have with us.

Enjoy the 2024 calendar and we hope you will visit these spots next summer when you need a taste of the freshest produce available. This popular calendar will be available beginning the Monday after Thanksgiving in our offices.

Tis the Season!

May the lights of this season fill you with warmth and a joyous spirit!

ANNUAL TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY
Tuesday, November 28 at 5:15 pm

Join us as we light the tree on the lawn at the co-op office in Pickens. This year's event will include a devotional and music. Following the lighting of the tree, light refreshments will be served. We hope you'll choose to be a part of this outdoor holiday tradition that signals the start of the Christmas season.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year from all of us at Blue Ridge Co-op.

THANKSGIVING
Closed Thursday, Nov. 23 & Friday, Nov. 24

CHRISTMAS
Closed Monday, Dec. 25, Tues., Dec. 26, & Wed., Dec. 27

NEW YEAR'S DAY
Closed Monday, January 1

BLUE RIDGE Electric Co-op

Although our offices will be closed for the holidays to allow our employees to spend this time with their families, dispatchers will be taking emergency calls and crews will be on standby. You may also access much of your account information or report an outage by using the BREC app that can be downloaded for your device.

Serving up savings

THE HOLIDAY SEASON is just around the corner and soon, festive music will flood the airwaves and sparkling lights and decorations will adorn homes and businesses. The holidays also bring a frenzy of decorating, cooking and family gatherings and amid the hectic hustle and bustle, you may receive higher-than-usual energy bills. But there are some things you can do to help keep those bills manageable.

- ▶ Invest in low-cost improvements, such as weatherstripping exterior doors and caulking around drafty windows.
- ▶ Use small countertop appliances such as microwaves, air fryers and slow cookers when possible since they use much less energy than the stovetop or oven.
- ▶ Bake multiple dishes at once for maximum efficiency. Once the

food is done, leave the stove door ajar to allow the residual heat to warm the room.

- ▶ Manage holiday lighting by switching to LEDs to save energy. LED holiday lights use 88% less energy than incandescent. Use smart light timers to turn lights on and off at set times.
- ▶ If you have a fireplace, remember to close the flue when you're not burning a fire to ensure heat doesn't escape through the chimney.
- ▶ Contact us about our smart thermostat program and get in the habit of saving energy during peak times on our system.

If you have additional questions about your energy usage visit our website or give us a call. All of us at Blue Ridge wish you a wonderful holiday season.