

Membership MATTERS



Child Safety and Planting Tips Around Transformers

Electric padmount transformers, better known as “big green boxes” scattered through your neighborhood, deserve more attention than you might expect. Transformers can serve up to six houses, so in a large neighborhood, transformers can be abundant. The purpose of a transformer is to change high voltage electricity to a lower voltage needed for supplying power to the lights and appliances in your home.

Children, however, can view padmount transformers as playground equipment and not understand their dangers. Parents need to explain that transformers are not meant for playing, climbing or touching.

Padmount transformers can be a potential danger if soil is eroded from around the base or if they become damaged. Warn your children not to put their fingers, sticks or other objects through cracks in a transformer and teach your child about the yellow or orange electrical hazard stickers located on the boxes. Children should never play in areas where they see these hazard stickers. And you should always report broken locks on transformer boxes to Blue Ridge Electric.

Follow these tips to enhance padmount transformer safety in your neighborhood:

- Make sure transformers have at least 10 feet of unobstructed access area around them and “Call 811” to locate underground equipment before you dig around transformers.
- Make sure transformers aren't obstructed by fences, shrubs, trees, plants and storage sheds.
- Develop landscaping plans and take them to your local nursery for advice on plant selection and planting procedures. You don't want to plant vegetation that will become a transformer obstruction when full grown.
- Make sure plant roots don't interfere with wire and buried cables.
- Keeping the area around the transformer in your yard or your neighbor's yard unobstructed can speed up power restoration during outages and routine maintenance checks. Help your local cooperative keep the lights on and burning bright!



Time for Director Elections

One of the benefits of belonging to a cooperative like Blue Ridge Electric is the voice you have in this business. Voting for your directors is one of the most significant ways for you to have a voice and participate in your cooperative. On June 12 this year, you will have that opportunity during the Annual Membership Meeting which is being held at Ashe County High School.

It is you — the members — who elect your cooperative's board of directors. These representatives are your fellow Blue Ridge Electric members who help guide and direct your cooperative. The board acts as your voice in setting policies, rates and strategic direction for the cooperative so that the best interests of the membership as a whole are met and that your cooperative is well positioned to meet your needs for reliable electricity, now and in future years.

Much diligence goes into ensuring strong leadership for your cooperative through the board of director's election process. This process begins with developing a slate of qualified candidates created through the Nominating Committee and nomination by petition processes. In addition to members being able to run for the board by petition according to guidelines in the bylaws, nominees are selected each year by a board appointed Nominating Committee. This committee evaluates potential candidates based on their business experience, leadership abilities, strategic planning skills, and prior board experience in addition to other qualities that help ensure good governance of your cooperative. Full details on these processes can be found in the cooperative's bylaws available at any Blue Ridge office or online at BlueRidgeEMC.com.

You received information about your board candidates on the cover wrap of last month's issue of *Carolina Country* and

you can see highlights of that info again in this month's issue of the magazine. In addition, "Meet the Candidates" forums were held in May.

Other important information we're sending you this month is your cooperative's annual report which is coming to you as an insert with *Carolina Country*.

Within the annual report, look for the Blue Ridge Electric Members Foundation annual report on pages 6 and 7 that includes financials on your Foundation as well as highlights of the impact it's making in local communities. The Members Foundation was inspired by you — the member-owners of this cooperative. And it's your contributions to Operation Round Up® that helps fund the Foundation and that are helping us all join together to leave a legacy of making a difference through the Foundation. You can be proud that just last year, more than \$106,000 was given through Operation Round Up to help the Foundation award funds to members in need of crisis heating assistance. Just as much was awarded to help many different non-profit services and programs that enrich the quality of life for our friends and neighbors.

Look for more information about your cooperative's performance and our plans to continue providing reliable electricity at the lowest possible cost in this year's annual report. And don't miss the opportunity to vote for your board of directors and enjoy a morning of fellowship and updates as we host the Annual Membership Meeting on June 12. These opportunities remind us all of the special reason Blue Ridge Electric exists: to serve our friends and neighbors and improve the quality of life for the areas we serve.

An Editorial by
Chief Executive Officer Doug Johnson



Audited Financials Complete

Blue Ridge Electric's financial records for fiscal year 2009 have been audited by the firm of Adams, Jenkins & Cheatham, pc. The audit indicates the cooperative and its subsidiary are in sound financial condition and reflects an unqualified (highest level given) opinion.

The cooperative's 2009 Consolidated Audit Report and the 2009 Blue Ridge Electric Members Foundation audit is now available in each district office for your review and online at BlueRidgeEMC.com.



More News

Transmission Line Upgrade Necessary

To ensure adequate power resources for Watauga County, engineers with Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation have determined that the 60-year-old transmission line serving the Boone and Blowing Rock area must be upgraded by next year.

The plan calls for the existing 44 KV (kilovolt) transmission line between the cooperative's Boone and Blowing Rock substations to be upgraded this year. This project will increase the capacity of the transmission line and accommodate predicted future growth forecasted for the next 40 years. The upgraded line will also improve reliability of electricity that members expect from their cooperative.

The tree clearing phase of the project is underway along US Highway 321 near Tweetsie Railroad. This involves re-routing part of the line from the middle of the popular theme park to the roadway, with work scheduled for completion by early summer.

While the upgraded line will generally follow the existing route, several portions of the line will be moved to improve access for repairs and maintenance. Additionally, the current wooden poles will be replaced with fewer metal poles and where possible, multiple lines will be combined to lessen clutter.

The plan also calls for the upgrade to be conducted with safety in mind as well as minimal impact to the landscape. Though some temporary access roads may be necessary as well as the cutting of some trees, Blue Ridge Electric will make every effort to restore areas where construction occurs and erosion control measures will be put into place. Road construction will be coordinated with the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

The first phase is scheduled for completion by the end of October depending on weather conditions. The second phase of the improvements, which upgrades the line to the cooperative's existing Blowing Rock substation, will occur next year. The line serves more than 5,000 members.

Members with questions may contact Mike High, Director of Engineering Services at (828) 759-8928.



New Technology Being Installed in Watauga County

Specialized Technical Services (Team STS), a contractor for Blue Ridge Electric, is currently installing automated "smart" meters in the cooperative's Watauga County service area.

The automated metering infrastructure (AMI) being installed across the Blue Ridge Electric system holds many benefits for both members and the cooperative. In addition to providing a powerful tool that helps the cooperative even further improve and monitor the reliable flow of electricity to members, AMI brings the latest technology to automated metering and the electric system as a whole. With AMI, energy usage is communicated over the power lines to the cooperative with precise accuracy. This offers members detailed information about their home or business energy usage, which could be used to help better control energy costs and improve efficiency.

Visit BlueRidgeEMC.com for more details about AMI, or contact your local district office.

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Members Only NEWS ~For Members of Blue Ridge Electric

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(PowerLine® is an automated account information and outage reporting system.)

Toll Free 1 (800) 451-5474
(for members outside the service area)

To report an outage at any time,
call one of the numbers listed above.

OFFICE HOURS

8:30 am - 5:00 pm, Monday - Friday

Night deposit available.

Visit us on the Web:

www.BlueRidgeEMC.com

An Appalachian Summer Festival Member Discount Available

As part of Blue Ridge Electric's sponsorship of *An Appalachian Summer Festival's* concert featuring Blood, Sweat & Tears, Blue Ridge Electric members are eligible to receive discounts on tickets to the event. The concert will be held Saturday, July 24, starting at 7:30 p.m. in Holmes Convocation Center on the campus of Appalachian State University (ASU).

Members of Blue Ridge Electric can call the box office at ASU at 1-800-841-2787 or order online at the box office link from BlueRidgeEMC.com to receive \$5 off the regular ticket price of \$30. Tickets for children 12 and younger are \$5 each. Members should have their Blue Ridge Electric account number handy when ordering.

An Appalachian Summer Festival is a cultural arts program of ASU. The month-long arts festival features visual and performing arts for all ages. Blue Ridge Electric sponsors *An Appalachian Summer Festival* as part of its commitment to local communities.



Being Smart with Energy

Properly hooking up your clothes dryer can help save on energy costs. The outdoor dryer exhaust door should close when the dryer is off. Check to make sure the dryer vent hose is tightly connected to the dryer and also to the inside wall fitting. The vent hose should not be kinked or clogged.

Source: Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

* And, to be an even wiser energy user, consider drying clothes using nature. Nothing beats the freshness of line-dried clothes and there's no energy cost or consumption required.