

MEMBER

*From Cedar Island to Cedar Point
and many places in between*

News



A newsletter for members of Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative

March 2006

Overhead versus underground lines

When storms hit our area and the power is out for many members, we often get asked why we don't put power lines underground. The issue of overhead lines versus underground lines is complex.

The advantage of underground lines is that they fail less frequently than overhead lines, which are exposed to the elements, falling trees and limbs and other weather-related problems. Those reasons aside, developers more often request underground service for aesthetic reasons - no poles

and wires running alongside the roads.

On the other hand, the cost of installing underground cable is much higher than building overhead lines. In addition, underground line has about half the expected life of equivalent overhead line and it is much more expensive to replace.

"Building new underground lines costs as much as 10 times more than building new overhead lines," said CCEC Director of Engineering Services Jake Joplin.

"Replacing existing overhead lines with underground lines costs even more."

In areas already developed, replacing overhead lines with underground cable would mean disturbing existing landscaping, boring under existing driveways and the like. It's



costly to install lines in a way that minimizes disruption to residents and businesses, as well as the environment. Another issue is that installing underground lines in developed areas can cause accidental damage to other utility lines such as cable, phone or water. Conversely, underground lines can be accidentally damaged by crews working on other underground utilities.

Another disadvantage of
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on the web

Major outage reports are now on our Website.

Go to:

www.carteretcravenelectric.coop



carteret-craven electric cooperative

What does value mean to you?

What is value?

Is it reliability? Customer service? Efficiency? Innovation? Cost effectiveness?

At CCEC, we embrace several values. First on the list is you, the member-owner. That's not an empty statement, either. As a cooperative and a not-for-profit organization, we are not driven by a "bottom line."

What we value is giving you reliable service, from the power we deliver to the help we provide when you call, come by



Lisa Galizia
Communications Director

our office or visit our Website. We strive to do that by building and maintaining our system with the latest, industry standard technologies and by employing highly trained crews and technicians. We do that with knowledgeable and friendly customer service, support and administrative staff.

Those are value elements we can control. Other things, like high fuel prices or severe weather, may be out of our direct control, yet we include those factors in our planning to help lessen the severity and length of such unplanned events.

Like every other electric utility -- cooperative, investor-owned and municipal -- we made a hard decision when fuel prices soared last summer and increased the wholesale power/fuel cost adjustment on members' bills. By being proactive, we were able to slice the adjustment in half while other utilities are still playing catch-up.

Let me explain that a little further. Carteret-Craven buys power with 20 other electric cooperatives in North Carolina. Buying in bulk enables us to command lower prices than we could if we were

buying solely for our own needs. Our portfolio includes power generated by nuclear fuel, coal, hydro, natural gas, and some purchases from the short-term market. While our percentage of natural gas purchases was relatively small at 10 percent, natural gas represented 30 percent of our total power costs when fuel prices skyrocketed. That is what necessitated the adjustment on your bill.

During severe weather events, we have a plan... from feeding and housing crews from other cooperatives to getting the lights on to the most people as quickly and safely as possible. That brings up another point -- safety. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, electric power installers rank seventh out of the nation's 10 most dangerous jobs. We know that. That's why working safely is paramount at CCEC. We are going to work diligently to get every job done, and we are not going to endanger our employees or the public.

With all that being said, we thought we knew what value meant to you, our members. However, our most recent Customer Satisfaction Survey (conducted in the 4th quarter of 2005) indicate that we have slipped in our members' perception of the value we provide. Until we understand what *you* value, we will still be guessing. That is why we conduct these surveys and take the results to heart. We are truly interested in your opinions. If you have any thoughts on what we can realistically do to improve and bring greater value to you, please drop us a line.

You can e-mail your comments to info@ccemc.com, add a separate note in your next bill payment, or mail your thoughts to me:

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Overhead, underground

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underground lines is that when they do fail, even with the sophisticated technology we are using, it takes considerably longer to find and fix the problem, leaving members without power longer. During storms, when the ground is wet and there is standing water, the repair time is increased even more.

“It takes specialized equipment and specialized crews to locate the problem and repair it,” Joplin said.

“Unlike overhead service, you can’t see the lines, which leads to more time troubleshooting the problem.”

The cooperative’s older underground lines were installed according to the technology of the time. These lines are on a schedule for replacement, in part, because they become susceptible to water damage as they near the end of their useful lifespan. Today’s technology calls for housing underground lines in conduit, which protects them more and lengthens their lifespan, but they are still labor-intensive to repair.

“Today, overhead lines are still more affordable to construct, repair and maintain,” Joplin said. “They’re more accessible for maintenance and repair. Faults on the line can be visually inspected and repairs are usually made quickly.”

Cooperative’s deposit policy is explained

Our deposits are based on the usage of the electricity at each specific location. Higher usage history requires a higher deposit.

Although individual lifestyles affect electric usage, a location’s electric usage is more influenced by the efficiency of the heating and air conditioning systems, construction and insulation.

Deposits are refunded, with interest, to


It’s about time...

**Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative’s
66th Annual Meeting of the Membership**

When: Thursday, May 4, 2006
Doors open at 5 p.m.

Where: Glad Tidings Church
Morehead City, N.C.

**Look for details on the cover and
inside next month’s issue of
Carolina Country magazine.**



Community Calendar

The co-op’s Website has a special community calendar page, with information about coming events, clubs and other items of interest.

To submit information, send an e-mail to: calendar@ccemc.com or mail to: Community Calendar, Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative, PO Box 1490, Newport, NC 28570. Include a phone number in case we have questions.

members after 36 months of good payment history. If you move before that time, we will apply your deposit to your final bill and return any remaining money to you. In this instance, it is important to give us a forwarding address.

Deposits on new homes are estimated, based on the size of the house and estimated usage. The minimum deposit for residential service is \$250.

Planting & Trimming

When branches and limbs grow too near power lines, trouble grows with them.



Our area is prone to high winds year round, not just during hurricane season. Fallen trees and branches are a major cause of widespread power outages in our area. For that reason, the cooperative has a comprehensive, industry-standard vegetation management program that includes trimming trees in a three-year cycle along more than 1,150 miles of line. The trimming may seem excessive to some, but is done with storm damage mitigation in mind.

The tree crews strive to preserve as much of a tree's beauty as possible while providing enough clearance between limbs and lines to help prevent storm damages.

A methodical tree-trimming and right-of-way maintenance program for power lines is crucial to delivering reliable electric power to consumers.

You can help, too, by planting taller trees away from power lines and keeping all trees, plants, shrubs and fences

a minimum of 10 feet away from underground service equipment. This will prevent your landscaping items from being removed or trimmed for access to equipment.

Here are a few landscaping ideas:

- *Use grass, gravel or 2-inch rock around electrical equipment, but do not change the grade.*
- *Do not use ivy or other climbing plants around equipment.*
- *Trees should be planted so that at maturity, they remain a minimum of 10 feet away from pad-mounted equipment, and far enough away from overhead lines so they do not need trimming and will not obstruct a boom truck when access is needed.*

To find trees and shrubs that suit your planting needs but won't interfere with the cooperative's equipment, check out the National Arbor Day Foundation's Tree Line USA program at <http://www.arborday.org>.



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carteret-craven electric cooperative

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