



A Salute to Those Who Climb

Bruised clouds collect overhead in a darkening spring sky; powerful wind gusts begin thrashing tree limbs and batting vehicles about like toys; severe weather alerts blare from drivers' cell phones, rattling already frayed nerves. As the first fat rain drops begin to strike and thunder cracks overhead, most people focus on one thing and one thing only: getting to shelter.

But linemen aren't most people.

As the storm rages and lamps start to flicker, these skilled men and women – a rare breed, for sure – grab their gear, kiss families goodbye and calmly roll out to face whatever Mother Nature has in store. No matter the conditions, time of day or date on the calendar, electric cooperative line workers are there for the members they serve, working tirelessly to keep the lights on and power running.

At Coweta-Fayette EMC, nearly 30% of our 200+ employees are linemen. They work for a purpose, not just a paycheck, and drive to work from as far away as Alabama and as close as Coweta Co. Their ages range from 21 to 67, and they are a skilled, bold, dependable, close-knit brotherhood, the very backbone and muscle of the co-op... and often its heart, too (not that they'd admit it!).

On April 19, our cooperative—along with many others across the state—will honor the dedicated men (and in some cases, women) who often work in challenging circumstances to keep the lights on. We proudly recognize all electric linemen for the services they perform around the clock in dangerous weather to keep power flowing and protect public safety.

“Conditions can be brutal, but they push through to ensure reliable service for our members,” said EMC CEO Chris Stephens. “To honor Coweta-Fayette EMC’s brave men, we plan to attend a ceremony with public officials at the state Capitol and hold a breakfast here in their honor. We invite members to take a moment and thank a lineman for the work they do if you get the chance.”

Although electricity is often taken for granted in the U.S. due to its availability, make no mistake—Coweta-Fayette EMC’s linemen power your life. From lights and technology to refrigeration and home climate control, their ability to harness and direct one of history’s greatest discoveries is integral to routine and order. They don’t mind dirt under their nails or mud on their boots, and they also don’t mind

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The President's Message

*Chris Stephens
President and CEO*

One of my most vivid childhood memories involves all my family huddled around a fire during a winter storm with just the flickering light of a candle to see by. I remember bundling up in blankets as we told stories, many of which reflected upon our appreciation of electricity. And then, seemingly in the middle of the night, we saw flashlights approaching through the window. Although the power had been off for hours, within minutes of seeing these brave souls, the lights were back on. These fearless individuals were linemen, and they inspired me at an early age to embark upon a path that ultimately led to service in the electric utility industry.

Through my years at Coweta-Fayette EMC, my respect for the men and women who have chosen the profession of line work has only grown. I have had the opportunity to work closely with many of them and have seen first-hand their commitment to safety and service.

Electric line work is one of the “Top 10 Most Dangerous Professions,” and it is a career not just anyone is cut out for. I have heard many say that electricity has no conscience. Linemen often do not get second chances—their mistakes can be deadly. Through continuing safety training, the use of protective equipment and the study of best practices, it is my personal goal for each lineman to return home to their families and loved ones every day.

When it comes to serving others, it is not solely a lineman's commitment; it is an obligation also undertaken by those who care about them. As I think back upon my memory of gathering close around a fire with my family, I am aware of these brave men and women who leave their families in the middle of the night, on weekends and during holidays to assist others. Like electricity, these storms do not have a conscience—they strike at any time.

April is National Lineman Appreciation month. When you see a lineman, please join me in showing gratitude for what they do and the sacrifices they make to improve our quality of life. Just remember, when the conditions are horrible and many of us are nestled in the safety of our homes, these courageous men and women are fighting the elements to serve us.



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Those Who Climb *continued*

climbing 40 feet up a pole in a howling snowstorm at 3 a.m. to work with enough voltage to electrocute them if one mistake is made.

Our linemen are fearless, but not reckless; tough as nails, but not hardened; proud, but selfless to a fault. They love working outdoors, operating huge machinery and staring down a challenge; they scoff at mentions of their talent and pay no mind to the notion that they're the co-op's public face.

Coweta-Fayette's guys make fathers proud and mothers worry, they leave their sleeping families to restore power more often than they'd like, and they trust each other with their lives.

The camaraderie helps blot out the high injury risk fears, but never completely. After all, electricity has no conscience. Many have had close calls personally or have witnessed a coworker's close call, and it can haunt the memory.

The linemen of your co-op provide the power behind the power, and often make up the very fabric of nearby communities. They're our little league coaches and church deacons, neighbors and friends – their tenacity, sense of duty and reliability are too big for work alone to contain. The line life attracts a certain kind of person,



one whose roots run much deeper than the holes they dig and whose loyalties stretch longer than the 6,200+ miles of Coweta-Fayette line to maintain.

"Linemen are the unsung heroes of the cooperative world," said EMC CEO Chris Stephens. "Our crews are first responders when disaster strikes our electric distribution system, they work around the clock on high-voltage lines and they're a vital part of our local and global networks. These guys light the world both here and abroad [through the NRECA International Foundation], and I'm proud to know each of them. I hope you'll join me in showing appreciation for them this April 19."



The full text of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Board's unanimously adopted resolutions:

"WHEREAS linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on;

WHEREAS linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure;

WHEREAS linemen are the first responders of the electric cooperative family, getting power back on and making things safe for all after storms and accidents; and

WHEREAS there would be no electric cooperatives without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of linemen;

THEREFORE be it resolved that NRECA recognize the Second Monday of April of each year as National Lineman Appreciation Day and make available to electric cooperatives, materials and support to recognize the contributions of these valuable men and women to America's Electric Cooperatives."

Do You Have What it Takes to be a Lineman?

The cooperative business model serves both an economic and social purpose.

Coweta-Fayette EMC

operates on a not-for-profit basis so that we can pass along the best electric rates to you, our members. In addition to providing this service, we care about our members and the communities we serve. At our co-op, employees also believe in the cooperative difference – especially our linemen, who work hard to provide reliable service to consumers.

Have you ever wondered what it takes to become an electric lineman?

First of all, those with a fear of heights need not apply – linemen routinely work at dizzying heights, whether in a bucket or atop a pole. EMC line workers do more than just put up power poles; they are multi-faceted, frequently

providing customer service in the field, operating heavy equipment, driving large vehicles and expecting the unexpected (like interactions with wildlife and pets!) They also wear hot, bulky, protective gear and must think two or three steps ahead. If a would-be lineman can master those tasks and other rigorous training/line college, he or she might be rewarded with initiation into a special band of brothers and sisters.

Over the next several years, our country will see a major shift in the professional landscape. Many businesses are already noticing this change as the Baby Boomer Generation moves into retirement and their children and grandchildren – or Millennials – move into the workforce and advance in their careers.

The Millennial Generation has produced the largest population to move into the workforce since the Baby Boomers. They are often highly educated, forward-thinking and motivated by the ability to gain worthwhile work

experience that translates into a rewarding, career.

Driven by values and attracted to strong missions and culture over salary, Millennials are uniquely suited for co-op careers. And just in time, too . . . Within the next five years, 20 percent of America's electric cooperative employees will be eligible for retirement, and labor statistics indicate the demand for linemen is expected to grow by 9 percent through 2022.

We are looking to future generations to move us forward, to help us prepare for an evolving global economy and the changes that will come with new policies and regulations. We need people who will help us do this while ensuring we remain true to our mission: providing safe, reliable and affordable electric service.

Building the next generation of employees is critical to maintaining the success of our mission. Those who decide to pursue a career in line work will have a solid job with competitive pay and benefits, especially for rural areas.



Power Line Safety Checklist

Electrical safety should be everyone's priority. Follow these safety tips and be sure to pay attention to power lines:

- If you notice anything like trees or branches that might interfere with power lines or pose a serious threat, notify Coweta-Fayette EMC.
- Always be sure to look for nearby power lines before you cut down any tree or trim branches. If a tree falls onto a power line, contact the EMC immediately.
- Treat all power lines as energized. Never climb or attempt to handle a tree that has a limb caught in a power line. You may not see any visible evidence that the tree is electrified or dangerous.
- Be sure to maintain required clearances between equipment and power lines.
- If a fire starts from a fallen power line, notify the fire department and Coweta-Fayette EMC. Stay away from the site of the electrical hazard. Be sure others stay clear of the line and treat it as energized.
- Do not use water on or near a fallen power line.
- If you are planning to plant on your property, do not plant trees directly under or within at least 25 feet of power lines for short trees, and 40 feet for medium-sized trees.

Chris Stephens, President and CEO
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Saving Lives by Restoring Hope and Purpose



On March 6, 150 cyclists arrived in Newnan as part of a Ride2Recovery multi-state event. Unlike last year, participants had a beautiful, sunshiny first day, with lots of people gathered at the Coweta Veterans Club to cheer them on. They arrived

just in time for lunch and were greeted by signs, cow bells and cheers as they completed the first leg of the journey.

This program for veterans began in 2008 to help save lives by restoring hope and purpose. It's described as vets helping vets through caring, hard work and cycling. These wounded warriors display an extraordinary kind of strength and stamina by attempting to complete a 500-mile ride from Atlanta to New Orleans, many while using adaptive specialty bikes to accommodate prosthetics, cerebral palsy, etc.

It's a very humbling experience to watch these tough, fearless riders – some who are blind or double/quadruple amputees – embark on a journey that requires so much endurance to complete.

EMC employees were proud to be a part of this wonderful day; we helped bag cookies, served food and gave out towels/first aid items. We were honored to have been included in a program working so diligently to improve the health and healing of heroes worldwide.

