



June 2020

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## Albemarle Sounds

is published monthly by  
Albemarle Electric Membership  
Corporation

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*Albemarle EMC is an equal opportunity  
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## Renewable Energy Riders Decrease

The monthly charges on power bills that recoup renewable energy costs have been decreased for 2020–2021.

The monthly NC Renewable Mandate rider for the residential rate class will decrease to 23 cents. The monthly rider for the commercial rate class will decrease to \$1.28. The monthly rider for the industrial rate class will decrease to \$8.55. All of these changes go into effect, beginning with the June power bills.

Each month there is a charge on members' power bills, called the N.C. Renewable Mandate. This charge is a result of the Renewable Energy Portfolio

Standard, which was passed into state law in 2007. The law mandates that power providers must purchase a percentage of renewable energy each year. Because renewable energy is more expensive, utilities can recover those extra costs, using an additional charge, called a rider, on members' bills.

"Ten percent of Albemarle EMC's power, by law, must come from renewable sources such as wind and solar," said Gary Ray, general manager of Albemarle EMC. "The NC Renewable Mandate enables co-ops to recover the additional costs of purchasing renewable energy."

## High Winds Cause Outages on Lineman Appreciation Day

A strong line of storms crossed the region on April 13, Lineman Appreciation Day, causing numerous wind-related outages for Albemarle EMC members.

The majority of the outages occurred in Camden, Pasquotank and Perquimans counties, affecting close to 1,700 members. Metering points in Camden and Weeksville lost power due to outages on Dominion Power's lines. Hundreds of additional outages were caused in Perquimans County by a broken pole on Pender Road, and a

large tree that blew into power lines on Camp Perry Road. As soon as winds subsided to a safe level, Albemarle EMC

linemen began restoring power. By that evening, power had been restored to all members.

"Linemen and office personnel performed outstanding restoring power in a safe and efficient manner," said Gary Ray, general manager of Albemarle EMC. "Our lineman exemplified why a day of appreciation is dedicated to them."



*Linemen such as Roy O'Neal (above) were recently featured in a video that aired on April 13, Lineman Appreciation Day. The video recognized their service to the cooperative.*

# Bright Ideas Grants Being Accepted

Albemarle Electric Membership Corporation is now accepting applications for the 2020 Bright Ideas Education Grant program. Educators can apply for grants of up to \$1,000 to fund creative, hands-on projects in K-12 classrooms. Teachers can apply individually or as a team, and grants are available for projects in all subject areas.



for 12,300 projects benefitting 2.5 million students across the state. In 2019, over \$700,000 was awarded for more than 660 projects throughout the state, the most funding ever given in a single grant cycle.

Applications are accepted through Sept. 15, 2020. Educators who apply before the early bird deadline of Aug. 15, 2020

are entered into a special drawing. To learn more and apply for a Bright Ideas grant, visit [ncbrightideas.com](http://ncbrightideas.com).

Since the program began 26 years ago, North Carolina's electric cooperatives have collectively awarded more than \$12.9 million in grants to K-12 teachers

## Filing Period to Open for Nominations

At their June 22 meeting, the Albemarle EMC Board of Directors will appoint a nominating committee for the purpose of nominating a slate of candidates for this year's board elections.

Qualifying members who wish to be nominated should call the cooperative at (252) 426-5735 or email [chris.powell@aemc.coop](mailto:chris.powell@aemc.coop) in order to receive the name and address of the nominating committee members they will need to contact. The nominating committee will meet in mid to late July. Up for election this year are board of director seats for the counties of Chowan, Pasquotank and Perquimans.

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## New Logo Unveiled



Albemarle Electric Membership Corporation has unveiled a new company logo.

The logo is made from the first letter of the company's name, which incorporates a sailboat cutting through a wave. The logo pays tribute to our area's nautical heritage and also helps to differentiate us from neighboring electric cooperatives.

"Electric cooperatives are a family of power providers; however, each is unique in its own way," said Gary Ray, general manager of Albemarle EMC. "We will continue to use the traditional green ball on the side of vehicles, but also use the new logo in other ways to individualize ourselves."

The new logo will be featured on attendance gifts at this year's Annual Meeting.

## AEMC Makes WiFi Available



Albemarle Electric Membership Corporation has a long history of supporting our local schools. Now that support includes Internet service.

In April, the co-op made available a free WiFi hotspot at our office, which is located at 125 Cooperative Way, Winfall, in Perquimans County. The WiFi is available for anyone who has school-age children needing access to the Internet for their educational materials during school closures.

The network is "AEMCCares," and no password is required. The hotspot is available from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week. Signs have been posted at the building, where parking is available and the hotspot signal is the strongest.

"Having access to high speed Internet is vital to our education system," said Gary Ray, general manager of Albemarle EMC. "We plan to keep this hotspot available whenever students need it."

## Grants Directed to Food Banks

Reacting to the recent stay-at-home orders, the Albemarle Community Trust Board of Directors voted to direct all currently available grant funds to local food banks.

The Edenton-Chowan Food Pantry and Open Door of Perquimans each received \$1,000. Food Bank of the Albemarle received \$4,000, and the Camden Food Pantry received \$4,000. According to the trust's bylaws, organizations can receive up to \$5,000 per year. All local food banks have now received the maximum \$5,000 amount for the year.

"In light of the number of people who have seen disruptions to their personal finances, the ACT board felt this was the best use of those funds," said AEMC Information Technology Coordinator Zach Bray, who serves as the liaison between the co-op and the ACT board.



# Albemarle EMC is at Your Service

How Albemarle EMC works to provide its members with the highest-quality service possible.

## 75 Years of Resilience

by Chris Powell, coordinator of public relations

Albemarle Electric Membership Corporation and its members have a 75-year history of meeting challenges and persevering. Just in my relatively short 15-year tenure here, we have contended with hurricanes, ice storms, tornadoes and a severe housing downturn. Now we can add a threat of global proportions to that list. On each occasion, your cooperative has met the challenge, adapted and overcome it.

We are able to rise above each circumstance through a versatile workforce designed to be adaptive. Wearing many hats is a hallmark of a co-op employee. Electric co-ops tend to run lean, without a deep bench of employees to draw from. That's why it's so important that our employees be multifunctional.

As coordinator of public relations, one aspect of my responsibilities is conducting energy audits, which help members save electricity. I'll never forget the time I was at one member's home and introduced myself. The member looked a little surprised and asked, "Aren't you the guy who writes in the Carolina Country magazine?" I chuckled and acknowledged that I was. He was genuinely impressed that the same person who is the co-op's spokesperson is also willing to come to his home, crawl around his attic and try to save him money. I always looked at energy audits as a natural extension of public relations in the energy business. The member was obviously used to a more specialized workforce, which is how the majority of most large organizations operate. But not co-ops, and I'm glad for it.

This versatility enables us to be efficient as well as proactive and responsive. Our current manager of operations was promoted from his former position as safety coordinator for the cooperative. This enabled the co-op to combine two positions into one, reducing the payroll. Moreover, the move meshed management of the operations department with safety expertise. The work our linemen do is inherently dangerous, and having a manager steeped in corporate safety is vital.

Albemarle EMC linemen are required to be adaptive in their roles. Larger utilities have crews that specialize in underground or overhead work. Certain crew members may even specialize in particular equipment operation. However, Albemarle EMC linemen, who reach first-class status, are required to be equally proficient in underground as well as overhead line work. It's not unusual for our linemen to be considered an expert operator of

a bucket truck, trencher and excavator. Our first class lineman also work as servicemen on a rotating basis. The serviceman position is unique in that the person must be able to work alone, trouble shooting a variety of problems that affect power quality at members' residences. By rotating linemen in and out of this position, the co-op always has a bullpen of capable servicemen warmed up and ready to go.

The co-op's member services representatives are often promoted to various back office positions, such as our finance department, and then are cross-trained to be able to cover for each other. This practice ensures we have employees available, who have the ability to process payments, handle new accounts, dispatch linemen and a myriad of other requests.

Our human resources person takes care of all personnel related issues and also handles payroll and compiling employee W2s, which can also be done by our accountant. The general manager's administrative assistant serves as a liaison for the board of directors. She is also currently training to help assist key accounts, which are mainly businesses on the co-op's lines.

Of course, the co-op's general manager has to be knowledgeable in all aspects of the co-op's business. That said, one of his main strengths is his background in engineering. If needed, he has the ability to perform engineering work for the co-op. He also provides a good sounding board for our full-time engineer.

The Albemarle EMC Board of Directors, which is primarily responsible for overseeing the general manager, also receives training regarding cooperative governance and best practices. This includes areas such as member relations, ethics, future industry trends and more. The relationships that board members have with their communities is, arguably, one of their biggest assets. These connections are vital to remaining strong lines of communication between the co-op and the members it serves.

Albemarle EMC's membership has proven adaptive as well. When we needed them to, members were able to shift from direct interaction with our employees to conducting more business online and through our drive-through window. Members also increased their use of our various electronic payment methods. We appreciate your adaptability. The ability for all of us to change as circumstances require keeps us strong.