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Albemarle Sounds

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections®

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Albemarle EMC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

AEMC Line Crews Assist Western NC Cooperatives

From left are: Albemarle EMC Crew Leader Bobby Upton, Lineman Drake Trueblood, Lineman First Class Chris White and Alvey Lester, chief lineman for Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative.

Following the destruction caused by Hurricane Helene, two Albemarle EMC line crews traveled to western North Carolina to assist electric cooperatives with the restoration of numerous outages.

Crew Leader Matt Byrum, Lineman First Class Kevin Bailey and Lineman Cody Stokely were the first crew to go. They assisted Surry-Yadkin EMC for four days, helping to restore power to 12,000 members. Once no longer needed, the line crew proceeded to Blue Ridge Energy and assisted them for nine days.

To relieve the first crew, a second crew, consisting of Crew Leader Bobby Upton, Lineman Drake Trueblood and Lineman First Class Chris White, was sent to help Blue Ridge Energy. Blue Ridge Energy had about 63,000 outages immediately following the storm. The second crew provided assistance for five days until power had been completely restored.

Bus Charger Installed at School

The EV charger for an electric bus at White Oak School, in Chowan County, has been installed.

Personnel from Albemarle EMC and the N.C. Electric Membership Corporation assisted the school system with navigating the state grant application process. The grant covered the cost of the school bus and charging station.

The Chowan County schools system plans to purchase the bus in the near future. The grants were funded through a legal settlement resulting from a Volkswagen emissions violation lawsuit. North Carolina's portion of the settlement was close to $70 million. Part of the settlement was designated for the purchase of 161 electric school buses for schools across the state.

Student Job Shadows

Issac Perez (left), a senior at Camden Early College, recently job-shadowed with the engineering department. Perez was given a tour of the co-op's infrastructure.

ACT Grants Received

Perquimans County Extension Director Jared Harrell and Extension Agent Tori Dewald recently received a $4,000 grant from the Albemarle Community Trust. The grant will be used to help fund youth programs.

Members of the South Camden Fire Department were recently presented a $4,055.43 grant from the Albemarle Community Trust. The grant will be used to purchase equipment designed to contain electric vehicle fires.

Aid Sent to Western NC

When Hurricane Helene ravaged western North Carolina, Albemarle EMC employees were able to send supplies there quickly with the help of a local pilot.

The King Air C90, known as "God Wink," was piloted by Craig Craft, owner of Craft Air Services, based in Perquimans County. The flight to the Ashe County airport took about two hours.

The supplies were donated by Albemarle EMC employees and included water, diapers, cooler bags, sanitary items and food. Craig joined other volunteers to fly and move supplies into Western North Carolina.

Co-op Participates in Dismal Days

Albemarle EMC employee Bridget Sawyer and Jessica Devine explain electricity safety to two individuals at the Dismal Swamp State Park's "Dismal Days."

Tielue Knight to Retire

Member Service Representative Tielue Knight will retire after working for Albemarle EMC for two decades.

Knight began her career at the cooperative in 2004. She was responsible for processing payments, new member services, handling member inquiries and much more.

"Tielue's pleasant demeanor and professionalism will be missed," said General Manager Kevin Heath.

During her career, she worked through several major storms that included Hurricanes Irene and Dorian. She said one of her most memorable moments occurred when an earthquake that originated in Virginia shook neighboring states as well as our area.

"I remember in August 2011 when there was an earthquake," she said. "We were talking, then suddenly the chair started moving and lights were swinging back and forth.

She said the biggest challenge she faced was working through COVID-19.

"It caused our processes and procedures to be different, which also involved working from home," she said.

Knight said she is grateful for coworkers who trained her when she was first hired and will miss the family-oriented culture at the cooperative.

Albemarle EMC linemen Chris White (left) and Aaron Pippen recently gave a high-voltage safety demonstration to members of the South Camden Fire Department.

Albemarle EMC is at Your Service

Are Window Heat Pumps a Viable Option?

by Chris Powell, director of public relations

Could the window-unit air conditioner be poised for a comeback?

Companies are starting to make window unit air conditioners that are also heat pumps. One has to wonder why it's taken this long for the old window unit air conditioner to be given its heating option, because it has always had the capability. Put your hand to the backside of a window unit air conditioner, or any air conditioner for that matter, and you will feel warm air being discharged.

The standard central air, ducted heat pump system that most homes now have is simply an air conditioner that can work in reverse. If you were to reverse a window unit air conditioner so the back side faces into the house, the window unit would heat that room when the outside temperature is 40 degrees or higher. Now, I would not recommend you do that because the window unit will drip water inside the room, and the control panel would be exposed to the elements. I'm simply illustrating how window unit air conditioners were always just a few technological advancements away from becoming a viable heating source.

Now some companies have made those advancements, designing a window unit that can both heat and cool. Selling for around $500, these window unit heat pumps are within a price range that many can afford and solve several problems that have plagued homeowners without the means to install high efficiency heating systems. No ductwork is required, and no permits need to be pulled to install one. As long as a room has a window, that room can be heated and cooled with a window unit heat pump. Also, it does not require an electrician to wire the unit or an HVAC tech to charge it with refrigerant. The heat pump window units run off of 120 volts, meaning they can be plugged into a home's outlet. These window units are fairly simple to install. It really amounts to setting the unit in a window opening, screwing the unit into the window sash, then installing the included side panels to fully enclose the opening.

However, there are some downsides. Most window unit heat pumps cannot be the sole source of heat because they only can heat when outside air temperatures are 40 degrees or higher. They don't posses a backup heat source like traditional, central-sytem heat pumps, which allows them to provide heat when outside air temperatures are considerably lower than 40 degrees. Also, window unit heat pumps do not have built in defrost modes. This means that when the outside temperature is cold enough to freeze the window unit, the unit will shut itself off. But if a home already has a source of heat, such as baseboard heaters or an electric furnace, those legacy heating systems could provide the backup heat sources to the efficient window unit heat pump when it is unable to provide heat.

Conceivably, window unit heat pumps could be a boon to lower-income families who live in housing with inefficient heating systems. To reduce power bills, a window unit heat pump could be purchased that would provide efficient heating much of the time. When the outside temperatures drop too low for the heat pump to operate, the dwelling's pre-existing heating systems could be used.

Seeing the potential of window heating and air conditioning units, two companies, Midea America and Gradient, have developed window heat pumps capable of heating even during below-zero temperatures. This means there is no need for a backup heat source or a defrost mode. Also, they have developed technology that manages condensation discharge in a way that there is no steady dripping of water. These heat pumps are called *saddle-mount* and hang over both sides of a window sill without blocking the view. They are also 120 volts, so they can be plugged into any standard outlet.

The two heat pump manufacturers recently gained notoriety when each were awarded seven-year contracts from the New York City Public Housing Authority to provide cost-effective, efficient heating to large New York apartments that had been heated by central boilers and radiators. The only downside of this type of window heat pump is the price. These models sell for about $3,800, which may put them out of reach of residents on a tight budget.

Even so, the design and effectiveness of this new style of heat pumps are exciting, especially if the cost comes down as they become more widely adopted.

This Gradient saddle-mount, window unit heat pump could be the future of efficient heating and cooling for residences with inefficient, legacy heating systems.