



The LAMPLIGHTER

Official Member Newsletter of Washington EMC

December 2024

Serving members in Baldwin, Emanuel, Glascock, Hancock, Jefferson, Johnson, Laurens, Warren, Washington and Wilkinson counties

Clichés and hurricanes

Some clichés are used so often that the meaning behind the phrase fails to describe the situation adequately. The scale or extent never really comes across, and you move on. But sometimes, it describes the situation perfectly. One of those times is now, and the phrase is “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.”

When Hurricane Helene barreled through Washington EMC’s service territory in the early morning hours of Friday, September 27, it caused more damage than most people thought possible for a hurricane in this particular part of the state; especially a hurricane that came ashore more than 200 miles away in Florida’s Big Bend region.

The damage meant that more than 95% of Washington EMC’s meters were out; resulting in more than 700 poles being broken or damaged, 150-



plus transformers out of commission and hundreds of miles of line on the ground.

This is the point in which the cliché is true to the fullest extent—the tough got going!

The rebuilding of our infrastructure was only possible because of the dedicated employees at Washington EMC, several who had to cut downed



Wendy Sellers
President/CEO

trees on their own properties to get to our storm center headquarters in Sandersville. Once on-site, every employee either knew their restoration role, as it directly pertained to their daily duties, or they were cast in a supporting role that would be defined and refined as the rebuilding effort advanced.

For example, our hero linemen knew exactly what they were going to be doing in our effort. Though some of the toughest work around, they knew what they needed to do, and they did it.

Next, our administration sprang into action, and started gathering and mobilizing as many resources as possible. Whether it was contacting other co-ops and contract crews to help our linemen or making sure area hotels and restaurants were able to provide rooms and meals, they got it done as well.

With safety at the forefront of our efforts at Washington EMC, the safety and loss control manager, assisted by our inventory department, made

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Clichés and hurricanes, *Continued from page 20A*

sure every crewman, contractor and employee had everything they needed to stay safe in such a dangerous environment, with the equipment needed to finish the job.

Our dispatch department naturally adapted into a mini “war room,” where the team from our headquarters gathered info from the crews in the field and entered it into our information system—in real time. The dispatchers stayed cool, calm and collected as they focused on safety while entering the “wins” of our restoration effort.

One department that has a fairly defined role in these times is member services. Washington EMC has multiple ways to report a power outage, and one of them is to call and speak with our reps. They did a great job of relaying to our dispatch department what many members were encountering on the ground and the true extent of the damage.

Another group of individuals that provided a slightly different role than on a normal day, were the bird dogs—Washington EMC employees who are familiar with our power grid and help guide visiting crews on repairs. This group includes some of the longest-tenured employees from different departments at the co-op and proved to be an invaluable part of the effort.

One aspect of Washington EMC’s storm restoration endeavor that’s



indicative of a modern-day storm was our communications effort and how we relayed our repair efforts to members. Though each member’s situation was different, many seemed to have some access to our Facebook page, despite very spotty cell signals. And though we weren’t able to answer every question and request, we tried to convey the biggest gains. For example, when more crews arrived to help or a substation being energized, we posted it on social.

We relied on our IT department personnel in their traditional role,

but Washington EMC also used them as drone pilots to help film damage and repairs in order to convey updates to members on social media.

Another example of the tough getting going was our fleet and facilities maintenance crews, as they kept many vehicles rolling, whether for our crew or the many visiting crews. They also kept our properties clean and user-friendly for the extra manpower and supplies needed for our effort.

A couple of departments that were thrust into action in somewhat different roles were accounting and engineering. This group of employees coordinated everything from meal setup and cleanup to laundry, logistics and even peanut butter sandwich duty. They handled so many aspects of our effort and kept everything running as smoothly as possible. In other words, they “got going” as well.

Washington EMC stays alert and prepared for storms and outages. The extent of the damage from Hurricane Helene tested that preparation and know-how. But, in the end, our efforts truly were a team effort by some of the toughest employees around. As for our members, we thank you for your patience and continued support!



Community news



- **Toy drive:** Every year, Washington EMC participates in toy drives in our service area. Toys can be dropped off at one of our locations before December 9. This is a great way to give back to people in our community and help put a smile on a child's face.



- **2025 Washington Youth Tour:** Washington EMC is accepting applications for the 2025 Washington Youth Tour. To be eligible, students must attend a school within the Washington EMC service area, be a high school junior, be at least 16 years old by June 14, 2025, and have a parent's or guardian's permission to enter and participate. More information and applications can be obtained from your school counselor or by contacting Washington EMC Youth Tour Coordinator Denise Wombles at (800) 552-2577 or online at www.washingtonemc.com. The deadline to apply is January 17, 2025.



- **2025 Walter Harrison Scholarship:** Washington EMC is accepting applications for the Walter Harrison Scholarship. High school seniors who reside in the household of a Washington EMC member can apply for the scholarship until January 17, 2025. The \$1,000 scholarship may be used at any Georgia accredited college, university or technical school.



Sixteen winners will be selected statewide. Applications can be obtained from your school counselor or by contacting Washington EMC Walter Harrison Scholarship Coordinator Denise Wombles at (800) 552-2577 or online at www.washingtonemc.com.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you're planning to purchase electronic gifts this holiday season, look for the Energy Star label, which indicates higher energy efficiency performance. Electronics that receive the Energy Star rating are up to 25% more efficient than standard products. This holiday season, give the gift of energy savings with Energy Star-rated electronics and equipment.

Source: energystar.gov



An electric membership corporation

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OFFICE HOURS

8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Monday through Friday

PHONES

Local (478) 552-2577

Long distance (800) 552-2577

24-HOUR CALL CENTER

To report a power interruption
please call:

Local (478) 552-2577

Long distance (800) 552-2577

BRANCH LOCATIONS

12860 Broad St.

Sparta, GA 31087

Closed on Thursday

100 W. College St.

Wrightsville, GA 31096

Closed on Wednesday

Convenient bill pay options include:

Drive-thru payment window

319 N. Smith St., Sandersville, GA 31082

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Pay your bill online

www.washingtonemc.com

Use the free Washington EMC mobile app

Look for WEMC in the

App Store or Android Market.

Pay by phone

(478) 552-2577 or (800) 552-2577

GATE cards are due December 31, 2024

Georgia Agricultural Tax Exemption (GATE) cards are due to Washington EMC by December 31, 2024. If GATE cards are not received by this date, accounts will be removed from tax-exempt status.

How does it work?

Qualified agricultural producers must submit their new tax exemption certificate to Washington EMC in order to receive a sales-tax exemption on agriculture equipment and production inputs.

How do I apply?

Applications may be completed electronically online at www.agr.georgia.gov or submitted by mail. We anticipate applications being available at your county Farm Bureau office. More information can also be found at www.agr.georgia.gov.

Questions? Call (855) FARM TAX or (855) 327-6829. If you would like to receive text messages with updates on the tax exemption program, simply text "GATE" to 72727.

GATE
Georgia Agricultural Tax Exemption
GEORGIA DEPT of AGRICULTURE



Holiday office closings

Washington EMC offices will be closed Tuesday, December 24, and Wednesday, December 25, for the Christmas holidays, and Friday, January 1, 2025, for New Year's Day.

For emergency service or to report a power outage, call (478) 552-2577 or (800) 552-2577.

