



The LAMPLIGHTER

Official Member Newsletter of Washington EMC

June 2026

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

Why vegetation management matters

There's something timeless about trees. They ground us. They remind us of where we've been, and they stretch toward what's ahead. Here in our community, we take pride in the natural beauty that surrounds us—the shade on a summer afternoon, the colors that mark the changing seasons, the quiet strength of something that grows slowly but endures.

At the same time, we share another responsibility; one that's just as essential to our daily lives. The responsibility to keep the lights on, to power our homes and businesses, and to make sure that when you flip a switch, the energy you depend on is there.

That's why Washington EMC works

every day to strike a careful balance between preserving the beauty we cherish and delivering the reliable electricity you expect.

One of the most important ways we do that is through regular tree trimming.

Now, it may not always be obvious, but keeping lines clear of overgrown vegetation plays a major role in preventing power outages. We've all seen what can happen when severe weather rolls in—strong winds, heavy ice or sudden storms can bring down branches and, with them, power lines and poles. Actually, many power outages can be traced back to trees and vegetation coming into contact with electrical infrastructure.

That's why you may notice crews



Wendy Sellers
President/CEO

from Washington EMC, Georgia Right-of-Way, or our trusted contractors like Gunnison Tree Services working in neighborhoods throughout the year. Our crews are highly trained and certified, following the latest industry standards to ensure the job is done safely and effectively. Their work might seem routine, but it's anything but—it's a proactive step that helps prevent problems before they start.

And it's not just good practice—it's required. Electric utilities across the country are obligated to manage vegetation near power lines. Scheduled trimming helps remove dead or weakened limbs and keeps fast-growing trees from becoming hazards. It's about staying one step ahead, especially as we prepare for the increasing frequency and intensity of severe weather events.

But beyond reliability and efficiency, there's another reason this work matters: safety.

Electricity is a powerful force, and

Continued on page 18B



From left is William Conley, Baylen Zielinski and Jon Daniel Glover.



An electric membership corporation

258 N. Harris St. • P.O. Box 598
Sandersville, GA 31082

Email: wemc@washingtonemc.com
Website: www.washingtonemc.com
Wendy Sellers, President/CEO

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mike McDonald,
Chair, District 1

Mike Beckworth,
Vice Chair, District 6

Brenda English,
Secretary/Treasurer, District 3

Mildred W. Jackson, District 5

Jeff Lacksen, District 2

Becky Prince, District 4

Ken Vickers, District 7

SANDERSVILLE 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 outage or
pay by phone, 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 WINDOW

319 N. Smith St., Sandersville, GA 31082
Monday through Friday,
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

PAY ONLINE

Visit www.washingtonemc.com
and click the "Pay Now" button
to pay your bill online.

SMARTHUB APP

Download, sign up and use the free
SmartHub app and web portal online at
www.washingtonemc.com/smarthub.

Vegetation management, *Continued from page 18A*



RYAN HALL

Keeping lines clear of overgrown vegetation plays a major role in preventing power outages.

when trees grow too close to power lines, that power can become dangerous. Branches that touch lines—or even come close—can carry electrical current. Children climbing trees in their own yards may not realize the risk. And during storms, fallen trees



GLENN MACARANA

Nearly half of all power outages can be traced back to trees and vegetation coming into contact with electrical infrastructure.

can create hazardous conditions not only for families but also for our line-workers working to restore service.

There's also a financial reality we can't ignore. Preventive maintenance like tree trimming is far more cost-effective than repairing widespread damage after an outage. Left unchecked, overgrown vegetation can lead to more frequent disruptions and higher costs for everyone. A thoughtful, strategic vegetation management program helps keep those costs down for our members.

You can help, too. When planting new trees, consider their mature height and distance from nearby power lines.

Continued on page 18D



Electrify your lawn care

By Miranda Boutelle

Electric lawn equipment has seen drastic improvements in cost, motor efficiency and battery power in recent years. From hedge and string trimmers to leaf blowers, chainsaws and mowers, there are lots of options for electric lawn equipment.

Electric equipment is quieter than its gas-powered counterparts and typically needs less maintenance. There's no more mixing fuel, changing spark plugs or worrying about gas going bad over the winter. Advances in rechargeable battery technology eliminate having to lug around a heavy extension cord to get your work done. Just pop in a battery and go.

Most popular lawn equipment brands offer battery-powered options, along with newer brands that specialize in electric tools. If you need multiple tools, buying the same brand with the same battery type allows you to swap batteries between different pieces of equipment. That also means fewer battery chargers to store or keep on your workbench.

Opt for equipment with brushless motors. They are more efficient, more powerful and have a longer lifespan than traditional brushed motors. A brushless motor typically costs more but is worth the improved efficiency. A brushed motor transfers electricity using physical brushes, which can wear down over time. The friction caused by the brushes makes equipment run hotter and noisier. A brushless motor uses electronic commutation with less friction, which makes it more powerful, extends the lifespan and allows you to get more work done on a single charge.

Just as gas-powered lawnmowers require safe storage and handling of gas and oil, battery-powered equipment requires proper care for maintenance, charging and disposal. Always use the manufacturer's original charging equipment, charge batteries on hard surfaces away from anything flammable and store chargers in a cool, dry place.

Most manufacturers recommend charging batteries



MIRANDA BOUTELLE, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES

When you buy the same equipment brand with the same battery type, you can easily swap batteries between different pieces of equipment.



MIRANDA BOUTELLE, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES

Charge batteries on hard surfaces away from anything flammable and store chargers in a cool, dry place.



MIRANDA BOUTELLE, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES

Improved battery technology makes it easy to get more work done on a single charge and avoid hauling around a cord.

only until they reach full capacity instead of leaving them on the charger until you are ready to use them. This helps prevent damage to the battery from overcharging and heat buildup and reduces potential fire hazards. Unplug chargers when not in use to avoid energy waste.

Similar to gas and oil, old or damaged batteries should not end up in household garbage and landfills, where they can ignite fires and leak toxic chemicals into soil and groundwater. Instead, recycle them at a big-box store or at a county or city waste management site.

If you're looking for a quieter, more efficient, lower maintenance lawn care routine, rethink your

equipment options and consider electric models. If you decide to make the switch, check with your electric utility or state agency for potential rebates.

Miranda Boutelle writes about energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.



FIBER INTERNET

for Everyone

10 years and 24 states strong
200,000 miles of world-class network
Reaching 4 million rural Americans

100% committed to rural Georgia



TOP-RATED
Customer
Satisfaction
Scores!

ACT NOW FOR HUGE SAVINGS for first 6 months

2 GIG SPEED \$99.95 \$59.95* /month	1 GIG SPEED \$79.95 \$49.95* /month	200 Mbps SPEED \$59.95 \$39.95* /month
--	--	---

BONUS for 2 Gig subscribers! Save an additional \$100 in loyalty credits (\$25/month off for next 4 months)



Switch to rural America's
fastest-growing fiber internet

ConexonConnect.com
1-833-566-6416

*Restrictions apply. Offer ends 6/30/26. New residential customers only. Taxes & fees may apply. For all states outside of MS, 200 Mbps is \$39.95/mo for 6 months, then \$59.95/mo; 1 Gig is \$49.95/mo for 6 months, then \$79.95/mo; 2 Gig is \$59.95/mo for 6 months, \$74.95/mo for 4 months with loyalty credits, then \$99.95/mo. Cancel anytime in customer portal.

Keep energy bill in check while kids are home



When school's out, your home's energy use might go up—more lights on, more electronics running and the air conditioner working harder. Here's how to keep your energy use from skyrocketing while the kids are home for summer:

- **Set rules for electronics use.** Limit screen time for TVs, gaming consoles and computers. Encourage outdoor activities or reading instead of leaving devices running all day.
- **Adjust the thermostat.**

Set your air conditioner a few degrees higher and turn on ceiling fans when the kids are home. Closing blinds and curtains during the hottest part of the day can also keep the house cooler without extra A/C use.

- **Unplug devices when not in use.** Chargers, gaming consoles and small appliances draw power even when turned off. Plug them into a power strip and switch them off when not needed.

• **Use energy-efficient lighting.** If the kids leave lights on in every room, swap old bulbs for LEDs, which use less energy and last longer.

- **Plan meals wisely.** Avoid using the oven during the hottest hours. Opt for air fryers, microwaves or outdoor grills to reduce heat inside the home.

Vegetation management, *Continued from page 18B*

Trees that grow up to 40 feet should be planted at least 25 feet away from overhead lines. Larger trees—those that exceed 40 feet—should be planted at least 50 feet away. If you're landscaping near pad-mounted transformers, keep shrubs at least 10 feet from the front and 4 feet from the sides to allow safe access.

If your neighborhood has under-

ground lines, don't forget to call Georgia 811 before digging, so those lines can be marked. It's a simple step that can prevent serious accidents.

At the end of the day, we all want the same thing: a community that's safe, resilient and beautiful. At Washington EMC, we're proud to be part of that effort. Our roots run deep here, just like the trees we work to care for.