

# NEWS



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*Manager's Message:*

## Taking Care of our Co-op and Community During COVID-19

**J. Michael Davis**  
 General Manager



**I**n the early days of the coronavirus outbreak, it was clear that the pandemic would change our perception of normal. As concepts such as “social distancing” first circulated among health officials, electric cooperatives looked ahead to identify and confront the possible impacts of COVID-19.

As co-ops responded to local concerns and circumstances, we worked to present a unified front to our political leaders in Washington and urged them to address the specific needs of our community and their cooperative. Working alongside the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), electric co-ops’ national trade association, we informed policymakers about the challenges being faced on the ground in North Carolina.

One of the first things we looked at was the projected economic impact of COVID-19 on co-ops and their consumer-members. NRECA projected that lost electricity load and unpaid bills would total a staggering \$10 billion through 2022.

In response, electric cooperatives have worked to help their local communities by working with co-op members on extended payment plans and accelerating cash-back programs. But the federal government has a role to play, as well.

Among the policy responses sought by co-ops is the ability to refinance loans from the Rural Utilities Service (RUS). Electric cooperatives deliver essential services in the most rural, and impoverished parts of the country. Many of them meet that challenge, in part, with low-cost financing from the RUS.

However, the RUS does not permit borrowers to adjust existing loans simply to take advantage of lower rates, and penalties are significant in the narrow circumstances that allow for refinancing.

NRECA and its members are pressing for legislation that would allow

electric co-ops to adjust RUS debt to current market rates, providing greater cash-flow flexibility to meet the needs of rural consumers in these challenging economic times and allowing co-ops to be part of the long-term recovery.

Electric co-ops could realize \$10.1 billion in net present value savings from the repricing of \$42 billion in RUS loans.

One of the Seven Cooperative Principles—Concern for Community—is looming large right now in the minds of America’s electric co-ops. It has

governed our response to the pandemic from the beginning and will continue serving as our primary focus as we seek additional ways to help our co-op members.

***NRECA projected that lost electricity load and unpaid bills would total a staggering \$10 billion through 2022.***



**Due to safety concerns regarding COVID-19, Tri-County EMC will hold a Drive-Thru Annual Meeting of the Members!**

**SAVE THE DATE—Saturday, November 14, 2020**  
 Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation Headquarters, Dudley NC

**... more details to come!**

# Tips for a Safe Harvest



Harvest season brings hard work and can be an exhausting, but rushing the job to save time can be extremely dangerous (even deadly!) when working near overhead power lines. We urge farm operators and workers to keep the following safety tips in mind:



**Use care when operating large machinery near power lines.**



**Inspect the height of equipment to determine clearance.**



**Always keep equipment at least 10 feet away (in all directions) from power lines.**



**Remember to lower extensions when moving loads.**



**If a power line is sagging or looks to be dangerously low, please call us immediately.**

Source: [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org)



## **Final Deadline to Apply for Bright Ideas Grants is September 15**

It's the final call for Bright Ideas Education Grant applications! Educators with innovative ideas for hands-on projects can apply for a Bright Ideas grant of up to \$1,000 from Tri-County EMC until Sept. 15. Interested teachers can find the application, grant-writing tips and other helpful information at [ncbrightideas.com](http://ncbrightideas.com). Educators may apply for the grants as individuals or as a team.

Grants for the 2020–2021 school year will be awarded in November for projects in all grade levels and disciplines, including music, art, history, language, reading, science, mathematics and information technology, just to name a few. Last year, Tri-County EMC awarded more than \$80,000 to local teachers to fund 100 projects.

Since 1994, North Carolina's electric cooperatives have awarded more than \$12.9 million in grants to teachers for 12,359 projects, benefiting 2.5 million students across the state.



## KENAN FELLOW EXPERIENCE: *Erica Levai*

**A**s an educator for the past 10 years, I understand the importance of providing students with relevant and engaging classroom experiences. The Kenan Fellows program and Tri-County EMC have provided the opportunity for me to explore the various cooperative business operations and work alongside those who build and support the electric infrastructure that powers our community.

The partnership with Tri-County EMC provides the opportunity for me to bring the outside world into the classroom. I have been able to see what I teach my students in action and will be able to bring those experiences back to the classroom. I will be able to show students the protective gear linemen must wear when working up in the bucket and why they must wear that protective equipment. I can also show students how electricity moves in currents. Students can solve for current, voltage, and resistance in circuits. I can

teach students how to calculate the power bill for a family using differing amounts of electricity for a month. Students can also use Tri-County EMC's Home Energy Advisor tool to analyze the energy efficiency of their home and learn how to become more energy efficient.

In science classes, students learn the future will bring the need for more sustainable energy. Working with the engineers of Tri-County gave me the opportunity to learn about the pros and cons of solar farms and swine farms utilizing biodigesters to turn swine waste into electricity. I will be able to take this information back to students in order to begin constructive conversations on finding solutions for creating sustainable energy.

Everyone I have worked with at Tri-County EMC is nice, helpful, and very knowledgeable of their area of work. I have also learned the continuous work the cooperative does to give back to the



community and its members by helping fire departments, educators, community members in need, and much more.

You can rest assured if you are a member of Tri-County, every single employee of this cooperative is working to provide the best for the members and the community. Every decision made is with the best interest of the members in mind.

*I would highly recommend the Kenan Fellow program to other teachers to make connections and partnerships with industries in their area that will create better opportunities for their students.*  
- Erica Levai, TCEMC Kenan Fellow





**The Tri-County EMC office will be closed Monday, September 7, in observance of Labor Day. Have a safe and happy holiday!**

**Get Connected**

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/tricountyemc](https://facebook.com/tricountyemc)  
Find current events and get updates during major outages by following us on facebook.

**Twitter:** [twitter.com/TriCoEMC](https://twitter.com/TriCoEMC)

**Website:** [tcemc.com](https://tcemc.com)  
Find current news, information about your cooperative, managing your account and energy use, special programs, outage safety and more.



**Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month:**

Clothes dryers make up a large portion of your appliance energy consumption. Clean the lint filter after each cycle, and scrub the filter with a toothbrush once a month to remove film and increase air circulation.

Source: [energy.gov](https://energy.gov)



Tri-County EMC Membership Corporation in Dudley, N.C., was chartered May 8, 1940.

**Mission Statement:**

Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation is a member-driven cooperative committed to providing reliable electric power at a reasonable cost, to offering superior service, and to taking an active role in supporting the communities it serves.

**We are here to serve you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year.**

**For Outages or Emergencies:**  
919-735-2611 or 1-800-548-4869

[tcemc.com](https://tcemc.com)

**J. Michael Davis**  
General Manager

**Management Staff**

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Manager, Member Services

**Deidra Grantham, Editor**  
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**Michael Wood**  
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**Employee of the month**



**Tamah Hughes**

Tamah Hughes is one of 47 employees ready to serve you. She has worked with Tri-County EMC since July 16, 2018, and is the manager of information technology for the cooperative. Tamah and her husband, Jay, son, Lucas, and daughter, Marlea, reside in Wendell.