



**Berkeley Electric Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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TOUCHSTONE ENERGY

# Shedding light on the need for power generation



**MIKE FULLER**  
 President & CEO

**IT HAS BECOME** second nature: We flip a switch and the lights come on. Powering your life is our day-to-day responsibility, but ensuring reliability comes at a cost, with many processes and complex systems working continuously behind the scenes.

Most don't give a second thought to powering homes and businesses. But last

December, as many families prepared for Christmas Day festivities, we faced a power supply crisis. Low temperatures drove the demand for electricity to record highs and power grids to the brink. As a result, many utilities across the Southeast, including South Carolina, implemented temporary, planned power outages—called rolling blackouts—across their systems, leaving millions of customers without power on Christmas weekend.

Fortunately for Berkeley Electric members, there were no rolling blackouts. But as our leadership monitored the situation and prepared for the worst, we knew we were facing an even greater problem ahead. We cannot be content having weathered this near miss nor can we choose to be complacent. We must speak up about the urgent need for new power generation now.

In May, the North America Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) released a report that warned about an increased number of areas at an elevated risk of “insufficient operating reserves” if

demand spikes during summer. NRECA CEO Jim Matheson called these threats to the power grid unacceptable and said that “America’s ability to keep the lights on has been jeopardized.”

While the NERC Summer Reliability Assessment states that the Southeast was at a lower risk for reliability issues, we can’t continue to operate as we are, simply hoping for near misses. We must be proactive.

Like many cooperatives around the country, Berkeley Electric is a distribution utility. We rely on Central Electric Power Cooperative to contract with bulk power systems that generate and transmit power, so that we can distribute power to our members. The interconnected nature of the electric grid means that we are all reliant on one another to deliver power to homes and businesses. Whether one generates power, transmits power, or as we do—distributes power—together, we are all vulnerable to future power shortages.

**How have we reached this point?**

A number of factors have contributed to this shortfall. First, our industry has been forced by environmental regulations to permanently shutter fossil fuel generation plants without building adequate replacement generation. Also, the Southeast has experienced a significant increase in the demand for power because of an influx of population, as well as a significant increase in economic development.

## What can we do to solve this problem?

We need to find a way to increase our natural gas capacity in the state, not only to supply new power plants, but also to continue to support robust economic development. All stakeholders must gather around the table, working side by side to solve the permitting challenges for both natural gas pipelines as well as additional electric transmission lines. Current federal and state permitting costs and timelines are unreasonable and unacceptable—both present significant obstacles to our solving this problem. Another dilemma remains the ability for literally anyone to bring a lawsuit challenging permitting and construction—this, too, must be addressed. The failure to launch V.C. Summer nuclear units 2 and 3 has put South Carolina utilities 10 to 15 years behind in building generation. This is a critical call to action to move forward, or it will soon be too late.

## So what actions are we taking?

Fortunately, a great deal of discussion and preplanning has taken place, with more efforts to address this issue now on the horizon. Area leaders met with the governor in June to discuss the issue further. I want to stress again that we are in critical times—this cannot be a can that we kick down the road for our children and grandchildren to solve.

Cooperatives, too, are taking action. We are sharing everywhere about the need for power generation, from board and staff meetings to community gatherings and editorials. We are reaching out to lawmakers and providing them with the information they need to push this issue forward. Finally, we are informing you—our members. It's important for us to be transparent and for you as a member to understand the challenges facing our power grid. We also need to prepare. If we do need to ask you to conserve energy in the future, we hope that this communication will provide context and the reasoning behind it. We hope you will join us in lifting up this issue—whether in conversations with your neighbors or by contacting our legislators. The power of our cooperatives has always been in its people and in the visibility of that strength to others.

As the founders of our cooperative did so many years ago, we are committed to bringing light to darkness and tackling the hard tasks for our members. I never want to face another day like last Christmas Eve, wondering if we had to deliver that tough message to the members we serve. We don't want rolling blackouts to be the reality we face for years to come. The lights are on today, with the expectation that when you flip the switch, they will be on tomorrow. We are speaking out now to keep it that way!

Sincerely,



### Electrical Lineworker Scholarship

Ready to start a new career? Apply for a full scholarship to our Electrical Lineworker Program at Trident Technical College. Apply at [berkeleyelectric.coop](http://berkeleyelectric.coop) by Nov. 30.



### 12 Days of Christmas

Spirits will be bright as we give away a different prize package each day from Dec. 1-12th on our Facebook page at [facebook.com/BerkeleyElectricCooperative](https://www.facebook.com/BerkeleyElectricCooperative).



### Bright Ideas Program

Sharpen your pencils and get ready to apply for up to \$1,500 in grants for your classroom project this January. Don't forget to sign up for the Bright Ideas 5K at [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com).



### Youth Tour & Summit

Get ready for an experience you won't forget! HS students can apply in January for one of our free leadership trips to either Washington, D.C. or Columbia, S.C.



### Trust Scholarships

Apply online this January for thousands in scholarships to help make your college dream a reality. Visit our Operation Roundup page for more information.



**HENRY CHAVIS**  
Trustee, District 9

## Help us shape the future of energy

**RIGHT NOW**, America’s energy system is undergoing a fundamental transformation—and much of the focus in Washington is on large utilities in urban areas. Electric cooperatives are fundamentally different. Our cooperative is owned by you, the members, and we care about the future of your family and our communities.

Berkeley Electric Cooperative works hard to recognize and meet the needs of your family and neighbors to provide affordable, reliable power to the communities we serve. But energy affordability and reliability mean different things to different communities—member-owners living in the most remote corners of America have a different set of challenges than members living in more populated areas.

Elected officials need to hear regularly from their constituents about the issues that matter to them to make decisions about what is best for those they represent—their constituents. Only by communicating and building relationships with our representatives can we effectively influence the outcome of public policy debates that affect every aspect of the way cooperatives operate. Therefore, Berkeley Electric is partnering with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) on a new program to make it easy for our members like you to join the discussion and let our voices be heard.

We invite you to join Voices for Cooperative Power (VCP), a new nationwide community designed to help co-op members just like you share your story with elected officials. We know that one size doesn’t fit all when it comes to energy policies, so as an electric cooperative consumer-member, speaking up on issues that impact your electric co-op sends a message to elected officials

about the unique needs of our communities—and their constituencies.

VCP makes it easy to have a say in policy decisions that impact you, because you can customize your experience by choosing the issues most important to you, from access to broadband technology and energy efficiency, to renewable energy and rural development and much more. VCP members will receive updates on those issues, and when needed, information on how to contact elected officials and government agencies on proposed legislation or regulations.

It’s quick and easy to join VCP. Simply visit [voicesforcooperativepower.com](http://voicesforcooperativepower.com) or check out Voices for Cooperative Power on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram (@voices4coops).


We cannot shape the future of energy at Berkeley Electric Cooperative and across the United States without your input and support. Co-ops have democracy built into the very fabric of our business model, so we encourage you to use your voice to help ensure that electric co-ops can continue to provide reliable, affordable energy to member-owners like you for generations to come. Take a moment today to join the movement!

It isn’t only elected officials who need to hear from you though. Please complete the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI®) survey on page 6 of this edition so that we can continue improving our member-service experience.

All completed surveys received by Dec. 15 will be included in a prize drawing. Winners will receive a \$100 Visa gift card.

BERKELEY AT-A-GLANCE	JULY 2022	JULY 2023
Total kWh sold	439,940,853	471,037,301
No. meters served	119,645	124,677
Avg. residential kWh/meter	1,692	1,615
Avg. residential bill/meter	\$223.58	\$219.79
Miles of line	6173	6318
Avg. daily high temperature	90	93
Avg. daily low temperature	75	76

**Make your voice heard**



To enter, scan the QR code; mail the completed survey form to ACSI Survey, 808 Knox Abbott Drive, Cayce SC 29033; or take the survey online at [ecsc.org/berkeley](http://ecsc.org/berkeley)

# Teaching the next generation

For Berkeley Electric line crews, learning is an everyday task

BY JOSH CROTZER

Spend a day in the field with BEC lineworkers Will Mills, Kyle Childers, Evan Mizzell and Ashby Freeman.

**ON EVAN MIZZELL'S** left arm is a tattooed scripting of his mother's name, "Patience."

Patience is also a trait stamped on Mizzell's development as an apprentice lineworker, the safety of the underground line crew that has mentored him, and the reliable work that the foursome does each day to serve Berkeley Electric Cooperative members.

Mizzell, Kyle Childers, Ashby Freeman and crew foreman Will Mills start their day by 6:30 a.m. at the co-op's Goose Creek district office. It's mid-June, which usually means two things—it's going to be hot by noon and summer storms are likely in Berkeley Electric's service territory.

As junior members of the crew, Mizzell and Childers are tasked with making sure their truck is equipped with the materials and tools they'll need for the day. They had stocked it at the end of the previous day, but Mills used the crew's truck while working on-call—connecting meters and restoring power after lightning caused interruptions throughout the night. That means the truck's stock of wire, fuses and connectors is depleted.



MEADE AGENCY

Once supplies are gathered and loaded, the three wait for Mills to emerge from the office building with the final work order, giving them the opportunity to discuss everyone's favorite warm-weather hobby—fishing. They display photos of their best catches on their phones and compare notes on the best locations. Their corner of the Lowcountry is a fisherman's paradise, plentiful with lakes, rivers and the inlet waterways.

"That's what we all grew up doing," says Freeman, who started with the co-op at 18 and has worked for Berkeley Electric for ten years. "I think everybody here has a boat. We can be competitive about it."

For the 21-year-old Mizzell, fishing is a rare topic where he can claim superiority over his slightly older, more experienced peers. This particular morning, he can claim bragging rights to the biggest catch of the season, a 9.5-pound bass. He also finished second in the apprentice division of the South Carolina Lineman's Rodeo, but he still gets more good-natured ribbing about not finishing first from the rest of the crew.

Mizzell has been with the crew approximately a year and they have nicknamed him "Junior" because he's a third-generation employee. His father Kevin Mizzell is District Operations Manager and his grandfather David Mizzell is Superintendent of Underground Construction and Maintenance.

"There's definitely pressure because they are big shoes to fill," says Mizzell, who opted for line work over a chance to play baseball at Erskine College. "I try not to bring my dad or grandad into the job. I just try to approach every day like they would, working hard to be the best that I can."

The location of today's job is an empty block in a new residential development in Summerville known as Hewing Farms. Freeman grew up in the area, locally known as Carnes Crossroads. Standing on the block's corner, he points to a nearby water tower and describes what the area was like when he was a teenager.

"We would drive our trucks down the right-of-way of the power line and go swimming and carry-on," he recounts, referring to a spot that once was a pond. "There was a 10-foot cliff over about 20-feet of blue water. We'd jump off that tower, one right after another. Those were fun times."

The pond is filled in. Now when Freeman arrives nearby in a truck he and the crew can only dive into their work. But first, there is a tailgate discussion about the job and their objective. On this day, they're installing underground transformers at each vacant lot and connecting them to the existing circuit so that power is available when construction on the houses begins. For Mills, those important objectives are that every connection is correct and labeled.



Each job always starts with a tailgate meeting to discuss the scope of the job and safety procedures.

MICAH PONCE



Teamwork is key as Kyle Childers and Evan Mizzell work together to set an underground service in Hewing Farms subdivision in Summerville.

MICAH PONCE

"Once you start trying to rush to get things done in a hurry, it's gonna come back to bite you because you're going to start messing up," says Mills. "I try not to even let that be a part of the thought process. Take your time. Do everything right."

(continued)



MIC SMITH #18

Linemen protect one another on a daily basis, which truly bonds them together in a unique way.

Underground line maintenance and the culture that Mills has built is a perfect learning lab for Mizzell, who can be found working with each of his crewmates throughout the day. On one of the connections, the young lineman encounters a familiar challenge, a pop quiz. Mills peppers him to explain each of his actions as he puts in a lightning arrester at the end of the circuit.

“Now, why did you put that there,” Mills asks, after directing Mizzell to the first step of the connection.

“Because you told me to,” Mizzell responds, drawing a little extra respect for the snarky answer.

Mills laughs but persists, making sure Mizzell understands each step he’s taking and the reason for taking it. It’s not always the foreman that is administering the tests, either.

“It’s all our responsibility,” Mills says later. “Ashby does the same thing. So does Kyle. We just try to make him think. Get him out of his box and get his wheels turning. He’s going to be on another crew someday soon and we want him to stand out. How he progresses reflects on all of us.”

The team effort is also a perfect development scenario for Childers.

“I’m in that transition period between knowing what to do and then teaching someone else,” says Childers. “Will knows that it’s hard for me to see something that needs to be done and not do it. But he reminds me to back off and let Evan get the experience and to show him how to do things.”

When the crew finishes at Hewing Farms, all the feeds are labeled, showing from where the power source is coming and where it’s going. As long as the power comes on when the switch is flipped, their deliberate methods and attention to detail is practically invisible. It could only be recognized and appreciated by the next crew to work there.

“The hardest part about being a lineman is worrying about that one missed step,” says Mills. “I’m responsible for everyone in my crew and the crews that come behind us.”

Once the day is finished, the four won’t work many more jobs together. In July, as is Berkeley Electric practice to keep them developing and well-rounded, lineworkers across the cooperative changed crews. Childers is now a part of a two-man service team and Freeman is the lead lineman doing overhead construction. Mizzell is with a new foursome, doing service installations and maintenance.

“I like to see people achieve,” says Mills. “I want everyone to be better than I am, so I try to share every little bit of knowledge that I have.”

# HELP YOUR CO-OP AND COMMUNITY!



**Voices for Cooperative Power**  
United for Stronger Communities

## JOIN TODAY



SCAN ME TO LEARN MORE AND JOIN TODAY.

VCP is a network of electric co-op members working together to influence public policy decisions that impact our co-ops and our way of life.

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[VOICESFORCOOPERATIVEPOWER.COM](http://VOICESFORCOOPERATIVEPOWER.COM)  
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