



Plugged in to Altamaha EMC

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The Official Newsletter of Altamaha Electric Membership Corporation

Serving: Toombs, Montgomery, Emanuel, Treutlen, Laurens, Johnson and Tattnall

The value of electricity continues to shine

Electricity keeps us connected to our modern world. Consider all the necessities and conveniences we enjoy in part because of the power lines running to the electric meter outside your home. Count up your televisions, desktop, laptop and tablet computers, printers, gaming consoles, music and video players and personal assistant devices. Whether they get used every day or just occasionally, the electricity that keeps them working comes from Altamaha EMC.

Have you looked around your kitchen lately? Between the coffee maker and toaster and the microwave and electric skillet, a lot of us have added several other modern small appliances.

If you've got a workshop, the power tools and machines you use to cut and shape your projects are either plugged in or recharged from the outlets connecting your household wiring to Altamaha EMC.

In addition to all the devices mentioned above, electricity is also necessary to keep the lights on, to keep the stove hot, to run the heating and air conditioning, and to get hot water from tap. The good news is, even as we rely more on electricity, it's still a bargain, especially compared to other things we pay for regularly.

Since 2011, medical care, residential rental rates and education have increased at rates of 3 percent or more per year. Butter, meat and egg costs have been up by more than one to 2 percent annually, and even bread costs have risen better than a half point on average.

Electricity costs rise about 1 percent a year, but co-ops across the country have reported a decline in average residential use per household since 2010. That means we're doing more things with less energy.

Kilowatt hour use per household dropped by 8 percent between 2010 and 2016, slightly less than the 9 percent decline reported by electric utilities nationwide.

When it comes to value, electricity is a clear winner,

and we're always looking for ways to work with you to make it even better. That's why Altamaha EMC urges energy efficiency, encourages you to look for ENERGY STAR® appliances, and promotes technology, designed to give members more control over their electricity use.

Energy performance dashboards, smart thermostats and power strips, and appliance settings that shift most water heating, laundry and dishwashing outside of peak rate periods help reduce the co-op's overall power demand. They also give you opportunities to control or even trim your monthly utility bills.

That's good for families, couples and individuals trying to live within their budgets. And it's going to become even more important as digital devices and

internet-connected technologies become even more important in our lives.

The average home now has 10 Wi-Fi connected devices. That number is expected to explode to 50 by 2020. Technology and the gateways that keep it working use electricity, so you'll depend upon Altamaha EMC for more than the power that keeps the lights on.

That's why we're always working to provide service that's reliable, keep it affordable, and make it even more valuable to our member— you, your family and your neighbors.

—Romanous Dotson, CEO



Foundation Scholarship Applications Available

Four scholarships, worth \$1,000 each, will be awarded to local students this spring. The Altamaha EMC Foundation Scholarships were founded in an effort to help local students further their education. The scholarships are funded entirely by members' donations through Operation Round Up. Applicants must be a member of Altamaha EMC.

Applications are available on our website, www.altamahaemc.com. You can also request an application from any of our three office locations.

Scholarships will be awarded based on academic ability and financial need. Winners will be announced in May 2018.



Farm Bill update

Every five years, the U.S. Congress considers the Farm Bill, a bill that has huge implications for America's electric cooperatives, including Altamaha EMC. The bill sets food and agriculture policy for the entire nation, affecting everything from what crops are grown to funding for food nutrition programs. The Farm Bill is due to be reauthorized by the federal government this year.

The Farm Bill is about much more than agriculture policy. It promotes rural economic development and allows co-ops to finance basic electrification activities, deploy high-speed communications and enhance smart grid technologies. Through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), our national service organization, America's electric cooperatives are working to ensure lawmakers in Washington know what our priorities are for the 2018 Farm Bill. Here are a few:

Rural broadband

Increasing high-speed internet access in rural communities is a priority for many co-ops. Broadband access isn't a luxury—it's a necessity. But 34 million Americans in mostly rural areas lack access to high speed internet. Co-ops have asked Congress to use the Farm Bill to provide significant funding for broadband loans and grants to all viable internet providers, including cooperatives.

Economic development

Co-ops aren't just electricity providers. They are engines of economic development - powering and empowering the communities they serve. The Farm Bill's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program is an important source of financing for economic development projects in rural communities. Over the last two decades, electric cooperatives have partnered with community stakeholders on hundreds of projects to renovate hospitals, build libraries and expand businesses. Co-ops have asked Congress to ensure ample funding for this program in the next Farm Bill and beyond.

Innovation

Not-for-profit electric co-ops are natural incubators of innovation, because they are driven solely by the needs of members like you. The USDA runs a number of programs that help fund innovative projects, including the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) and Rural Energy Savings Program (RESP). Co-ops use these programs to save members money by financing investments in energy efficiency, constructing new renewable energy resources and deploying electric grid modernization technologies. REAP and RESP help ensure that co-ops are poised to meet the evolving needs of their members.


USDA Rural Development

The health of our nation is dependent on a healthy rural America. Rural America grows most of the food, generates much of the power and manufactures many of the goods consumed by the nation. USDA's office of Rural Development operates many different programs that provide fundamental assistance to those rural communities. Co-ops have asked Congress to maintain a strong rural development program in the Farm Bill to reaffirm the importance of these programs.

We look forward to working with Congress and other stakeholders to pass a Farm Bill that promotes economic growth in rural America and allows co-ops to continue meeting the needs of their members.



Spring is in the air



It seems like it was just Christmas, but spring is right around the corner. As the weather warms up and the days get longer, it's a good time for a few chores that could save energy—and money—throughout the spring and summer.

- **Tune up your air conditioner.** Air-conditioning weather is still a couple of months away, but if you put off having your equipment serviced until it's hot outside, you run the risk of an A/C breakdown on a sweltering summer day. A qualified HVAC technician can replace your central air conditioning system's filters, make sure it has enough refrigerant and clean its evaporator coils. A pro can spot potential problems and recommend repairs so they don't put your unit out of commission.
- **Open the windows.** Natural ventilation costs nothing. On warm spring days, invite spring breezes and sunshine in. It's a great way to air out the house as you begin your annual spring cleaning.
- **Turn off the heat.** And delay your use of the air conditioner. Unless March and April are especially warm, enjoy the open windows for as long as you can.
- **Seal cracks in the drywall on the indoor side of your exterior walls.** You'll find them around electrical outlets, cable lines, windows and doors. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that you can save up to 30 percent on your energy bills by sealing air leaks around your house.
- **Service your large appliances.** The refrigerator is one of your home's biggest users of energy. Keep it clean on the inside and out—including the back, where coils collect dust and sap the unit's efficiency. Clean the lint out of your dryer vent.

Include electrical safety in spring cleaning

As you give your house a good cleaning this spring, don't overlook your appliances and electrical fixtures. Here are some items you might not have thought to clean:

1. The stove's exhaust hood. A year's worth of home cooking—especially after the holidays, when your home has been full of company—can leave grime and grease buildup on the hood. That buildup, which also includes food particles and dust, can catch fire. Remove the hood and clean the filter and all surfaces.

2. The back of the refrigerator. When is the last time you pulled it away from the wall and vacuumed the coils? Do that every two or three months. Dust on the coils prevents the appliance from operating efficiently. Once they're clean, push the fridge back toward the wall, but don't let it touch the wall. Air needs to circulate around those coils.

3. The dryer vent. The lint that collects in the dryer duct presents a fire hazard. Snake it out at least twice a year.

4. Ceiling fans. It's easy to overlook dirt and dust you can't see. Drag a small ladder into the house so you can climb high enough to wipe down the tops of the blade. If your fan has a built-in light, remove the decorative cover and rinse out the dust and dead bugs. Let it dry completely before replacing it.

5. Baseboard heaters. They're a catch-all for dust, pet hair and whatever falls off of a nightstand or end table that's pushed against the wall. If they get dirty enough, they can prevent the heat from operating efficiently and even leave black stains on the nearby walls. To clean them, shut the power off to the heater, remove the cover, lift out debris (and retrieve any lost items you find) and vacuum inside with a soft brush attachment.

HOLIDAY CLOSING NOTICE

The offices of Altamaha EMC will be closed Friday, March 30th in observance of **Good Friday**. We will reopen at 8:00 AM on Monday, April 2nd. In the event of a power outage or other emergency, standby personnel will be on duty. You can report power outages by calling us at 912-526-8181 or 1-800-822-4563.

LEDs quickly becoming America's favorite lightbulb



Incandescent lightbulbs—the ones that we screwed into table lamps and overhead fixtures since the beginning of electricity—have become relics since the U.S. government ordered that manufacturers stop making most of them in 2014. Is the compact fluorescent lightbulb (CFL) next?

The twisty CFL bulbs, which can last up to five years and are much more energy efficient than the old incandescent bulbs, were once hailed as the latest and greatest energy- and money-saver for household lighting. But LEDs—which come in lightbulb form and are built into many light fixtures, so you'll never have to change a bulb again—have proven to be a better energy value.

Like CFLs, LEDs use up to 75 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs. But LEDs last much longer than CFLs—up to 25,000 hours compared with 10,000 or so.

Here's why LEDs are quickly becoming America's favorite lightbulb:

- LEDs don't get hot to the touch while they are in use. Incandescent bulbs release about 90 percent of their energy as heat, while LEDs waste little heat and CFLs release about 80 percent of their energy as heat, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.
- Unlike CFLs, LEDs contain no mercury, so their environmental impact is minimal.
- The Department of Energy has said LED lighting "has the potential to fundamentally change the future of lighting in the United States."
- You can buy LED bulbs, but an LED fixture has the light built right into it, so no bulb is visible and no bulb will ever need changing.
- The price of an LED bulb has dropped from about \$100 five years ago to around \$5 today.

Change your clocks; change your batteries

The second Sunday in March (March 11) will trigger Daylight Savings Time, when we "spring ahead" and set our clocks one hour later. That's also the best day to change the batteries in smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors—even if the batteries aren't dead.

If you don't have fire alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, your family is at risk. The alarms will loudly warn you if smoke or gas is present in your home, so you can get out. Carbon monoxide is a clear, odorless gas that is deadly but hard to detect. If you don't have an alarm, it's unlikely you will know if your home has a leak.

Carbon monoxide doesn't come just from cars. Your gas furnace or stove is a potential source of the gas. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers these tips for poison prevention:

- Keep gas appliances properly adjusted.
- Use electric space heaters, not gas space heaters.
- Install an exhaust fan, vented to the outdoors, over a gas stove.
- Open flues when wood-burning fireplaces are in use.
- Choose properly sized wood stoves with tight-fitting doors that are certified to meet EPA emission standards.
- Have a trained professional inspect, clean and tune up your central heating system—including furnaces, flues and chimneys—annually. Repair leaks promptly.
- Do not idle your car inside the garage.





Member **RECIPES**



Cream Cheese Crescent Bars

2 cans crescent rolls
2 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
1 cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla flavoring

Topping:

½ cup melted butter
¼ cup sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9 x 13 baking pan. Mix cream cheese, sugar and vanilla. Press 1 can crescent rolls into greased pan. Pour cream cheese mixture over rolls and spread evenly. Top mixture with the other can of crescent rolls, stretching to cover mixture. Pour melted butter evenly over the top. Sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon. Bake for 30 minutes. Cool completely before cutting into squares.

-From the kitchen of Brenda Brantley

Each month, our newsletter features recipes submitted by our members. If you have a favorite recipe and would like to share it with other readers in the Altamaha EMC service area, send a copy, complete with name, address and daytime phone number to: Tammye Vaughn, Altamaha EMC, P.O. Box 346, Lyons, GA 30436. Each month, a recipe will be selected for publication. The member who submitted the featured recipe will be given a \$10 credit on their next Altamaha EMC bill. Due to limited space, not all recipes received will be featured. Recipes printed in *Plugged In* are not independently tested; therefore, we must depend on the accuracy of those members who send recipes to us.