

# Electric News

Published for Members of the Little Ocmulgee EMC

MARCH/APRIL/MAY 2018 • VOLUME 41, NUMBER 1



## Safety First, Safety Always!

By Lewis Sheffield, General Manager

**L**ittle Ocmulgee EMC (LOEMC) has always been dedicated to providing safe, reliable and affordable electric service to you, our member-owners. The lengths we go to keep you, your family and our linemen safe are a point of pride for us and are never taken lightly.

From acquiring new equipment and implementing new procedures to increasing awareness of backup generator systems within the cooperative community and supporting the Electric Cooperative Safety Accreditation Program of Georgia, LOEMC constantly strives to promote the highest standard of safety.

High-voltage wires and equipment pose a danger to you, as well as your friends and family. That is why we are proud to be at the forefront of electrical

safety equipment implementation, as well as electrical safety education.

Our line crews participate in monthly training sessions, which emphasize the safety aspect of the job and the importance of using equipment in the safest manner possible. Our employees also attend training classes in Smarr, Ga., at the Electric Cooperative Training Center.

In addition to safety training for employees, LOEMC continually promotes electrical safety through demonstrations at local schools and community events. There, we show members

and the general public just how easily an accident can occur when working with electricity and how to prevent these dangerous, and sometimes deadly, mishaps.

We also increase awareness of electrical safety by engaging with volunteer fire departments, emergency medical teams and sheriff's departments on a regular basis, offering education courses and demonstrations. These programs keep these service

providers, as well as the community, aware.

At LOEMC, we know that the more people we have in our communities who are knowledgeable about electrical safety, the safer we all will be. That's

why we strive, every day, to raise awareness of, and encourage development in, electrical safety.

We have included articles in this newsletter related to the dangers of high-voltage lines (both overhead and underground) in an ongoing effort to educate our members. Please share these resources and knowledge with your family and friends.

Working with electricity can be dangerous, and safety is the key to preventing accidents. Please feel free to contact us at 1 (800) 342-1290 to learn more about how we keep our employees and members safe.



Little Ocmulgee EMC's linemen participate in monthly training sessions.

# Make Calling 811 the First Step in Your Digging Project

**S**pring is an ideal time to dream up and achieve your landscaping masterpiece. Perhaps you're planning to build a new deck to enjoy those spring evenings. If any of your spring projects require digging—such as planting trees or shrubs or setting posts—remember to dial 811 first.

Underground utilities, such as buried gas, water and electric lines, can be a shovel thrust away from turning a spring project into a disaster.

Play it safe by dialing 811 to find out where utility lines run on your property. Your call will be routed to a local “one-call” center. Tell the operator where you're planning to dig and what type of work you will be doing, and affected local utilities will be notified.

In a few days, a locator will arrive to designate the approximate location of any underground lines, pipes and cables. These areas will be marked with flags or paint so you'll know what's below. Then the safe digging can begin.

Although many homeowners tackling do-it-yourself



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

digging projects are aware of “Call Before You Dig” services, the majority don't take advantage of them. A national survey showed that only 50 percent of homeowners called to have their lines marked before starting digging projects, according to the Common Ground Alliance (CGA), a group of underground utility and damage prevention industry professionals. CGA data also shows that an underground utility line is damaged every six minutes in the U.S. because someone started to dig without first dialing 811.

Even simple tasks, like installing a new mailbox post, can damage utility lines, disrupt electrical service to an entire neighborhood, harm diggers and potentially result in fines and repair costs.

Never assume the location or depth of underground utility lines. There's no need: the 811 service is free, prevents the inconvenience of having utilities interrupted and can help you avoid serious injury. For more information about local services, visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com).

## Have a Successful Planting Season Rooted in Safety

**A**s farmers make plans to return to their fields for spring planting, Little Ocmulgee EMC and the Safe Electricity program ([www.safeelectricity.org](http://www.safeelectricity.org)) urge them to be particularly alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines. Operating large equipment near these lines is one of the often overlooked, yet potentially deadly, hazards of working on a farm.

Start by making sure everyone knows to maintain a 10-foot clearance minimum from power lines. “Sometimes a power line is closer than it looks,” says Molly Hall, Executive Director of the Energy Education Council's Safe Electricity program. “Helpful safety steps include using a spotter and designating pre-planned routes that avoid hazard areas.”

Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting tractors on trailer beds. Many tractors now have tall antennas extending from the cab that could touch power lines. Avoid raising the arms of planters or cultivators near power lines, and never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.

Working too close to a power line is dangerous. Remember, nonmetallic materials such as lumber,



tires, ropes and hay will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.

“If your equipment does come into contact with power lines, stay in the cab and call Little Ocmulgee

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# Utility Notification Requirements for Anyone Working Within 10 Feet of a High-Voltage Line

**C**ontractors and landowners have substantial compliance responsibility when working near an electric utility's underground and overhead distribution power lines. Georgia law and Little Ocmulgee EMC regulations require contractors and landowners to contact Georgia 811 before working near power lines.

Little Ocmulgee EMC hopes to avoid personal injuries, unnecessary power outages and line damage associated with accidents involving its electric distribution facilities. Contractors can avoid substantial equipment damage and repair costs, as well as personal injuries to their employees, if they abide by these requirements.

These regulations apply to contractors, well drillers, farmers, landowners and others who may have a personal business interest in work performed near power lines. While the following rules address overhead power lines, Georgia law requires that anyone digging in Georgia must contact Georgia 811 at least three days before construction begins, so utility companies can be contacted to mark underground facilities.

## High Voltage Safety Act

The High Voltage Safety Act became law in Georgia on July 1, 1992. This act requires individuals performing work within 10 feet of overhead high-voltage electric power lines to notify Georgia 811 during its regular business hours at least 72 hours prior to beginning the work (excluding weekends and holidays).

Georgia 811 will then contact the owner of the power lines to take appropriate safety measures to prevent injuries, property damage and interruptions of utility

service resulting from accidental or inadvertent contact with high-voltage electric lines. Failure to call Georgia 811 constitutes a violation of the law and can result in fines and penalties, in addition to liability for repair of damages.

Contractors are encouraged to become fully familiar with the details of the High Voltage Safety Act. Information is available directly from Georgia 811. Use the same telephone number for notifications or contact them at their website.

**Georgia 811**  
**Statewide: 811**  
**Nationwide: 811**  
**[www.gaupc.com](http://www.gaupc.com)**

## Special notice to farmers

Modern farm equipment can be raised or lowered to allow for harvesting greater amounts with fewer delays. Use of this equipment requires that you check fields and roads where your equipment may come within 10 feet of overhead power lines.

The power lines were installed to comply with the National Electrical Safety Code clearance guidelines at the time of construction. If any part of your equipment will be within 10 feet of overhead power lines, you must notify Georgia 811 at least 72 hours before you work under the power lines.

## Wells and pumps

Both the well driller and the landowner bear responsibility to notify Georgia 811 when any equipment or materials will be within 10 feet of overhead high-voltage power lines. For safety reasons, installation of wells and well pumps at distances closer than 30 feet from any overhead power line should generally be avoided, but in locations

where the options for well placement are limited, Little Ocmulgee EMC will help determine the minimum clearance requirements, as specified in the National Electrical Safety Code.

Minimum clearance requirements for the location of wells and well pumps vary according to the line voltage and certain site-specific attributes, and Little Ocmulgee EMC should be consulted to determine the appropriate minimum recommended distance. Clearance requirements vary with the voltage of the power line, the height of the line above ground, the distance to poles that support the line and other local factors that determine where a drilling rig will be stationed for installation and future maintenance or pump replacement activities.

A Little Ocmulgee EMC representative will meet with the well driller and/or landowner to determine the minimum acceptable distance if the desired pump location is closer than 30 feet from an overhead line.

## Easements

Little Ocmulgee EMC's Service Rules and Regulations require the contractor to notify Little Ocmulgee EMC directly if proposed work and/or construction will be performed inside the utility's easement. In most cases, the easement extends 20 feet on each side of the power line. Little Ocmulgee EMC will provide the necessary protection to avoid hazards. Again, consideration should be given to providing plenty of time to respond.

Call Little Ocmulgee EMC's Engineering Department at (912) 568-7171 or 1 (800) 342-1290 and ask to speak with a representative.



# Safety, Skills, Service at Heart of Linemen's Job

A storm moves in, a tree falls on a power line and the lights go out. A call is made and somewhere a lineman prepares to head out.

What does it take to become a Little Ocmulgee EMC (LOEMC) lineman? It's not easy. Highly skilled, highly trained employees, they must successfully complete a multiyear on-the-job training program (the Georgia EMC Linemen Apprentice Program, offered in conjunction with the Northwest Lineman College) and have good personal skills such as dedication, loyalty and perseverance.

Once linemen are certified, their training never really stops. Industry changes and emerging technologies require them to continue their education through industry publications and recertification classes. When they're not restoring power, they are busy with the normal daily requirements of building and maintaining more than 2,000 miles of distribution power lines across 960 square miles of LOEMC's service area. They build new lines, perform routine maintenance and complete system upgrades

to existing lines and substations to accommodate the ever-growing need for electricity.

The worst part of storm work? The unknown.

When linemen go out at night, in total darkness, they never know what they will find. Much like first responders, linemen must first assess the damage, then formulate a plan and put it into action. Burdened with worry and concern for our members' safety, as well as their own, safety is their No. 1 priority.

The best part of storm work? Seeing the lights come on. Linemen know the members are inconvenienced without power; they realize how much we've all come to rely on electricity. Little Ocmulgee EMC is locally owned and operated, and many LOEMC linemen are your friends, neighbors or family members.

Why do they do it? It's their way of serving the public. Their compensation goes way beyond a paycheck. The satisfaction they get when they see the lights come on and electricity restored to a community is the reward. They know the members are depending on them.



## Successful Planting Season, *Continued from page 26B*

EMC at 1 (800) 342-1290 for help," says Hall. "If the power line is energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path to the ground. Even if a line has landed on the ground, the area could still be energized. Warn others who may be nearby to stay away and wait until EMC help arrives."

Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and the ground at the same time.

For more tips and information on how to stay safe this planting season, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org). Safe Electricity is the safety outreach program of the Energy Education Council, a nonprofit organization with more than 400 electric cooperative members and many others who share the mission of educating the public about electrical safety and energy efficiency.

### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



In spring and summer months, set your ceiling fans to turn counterclockwise. This will create a cool breeze. Remember: Ceiling fans cool people, not rooms. Turn them off when you leave the room.

—Source: [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov)