



**Berkeley Electric Cooperative**

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**TO REPORT OUTAGES**

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## Satisfaction at an all-time high

**THE QUICKEST WAY** to find out what somebody thinks about you is to just ask them.

So, that's exactly what we did and it turns out that we are doing even better than we expected. In fact, our members gave us historic approval ratings, both statewide and nationally, in not just one customer satisfaction survey, but two.

J.D. Power and Associates has ranked Berkeley Electric as the third-best electric utility in the nation. The ranking is based on responses from over 100,000 online interviews conducted last year that asked customers about the nation's 149 largest electric utilities. Utility performance was measured in six areas: power quality and reliability; price; billing and payment; communications; corporate citizenship; and customer care.

Our members also gave the cooperative an American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) score of 94—the highest score among South Carolina co-ops, among the highest in the nation and a historic high for Berkeley Electric. In comparison, Chick-fil-A, which is often praised for its service, scored 85, according to ACSI. Plus, the average score for investor-owned utilities nationally was 72 last year.

No one likes to be seen as bragging, but to me, these rankings reflect the hard work our employees—past and present—have done to serve our communities since Berkeley Electric was first created by members in 1940. One of the key differences between an electric cooperative and other electric utilities is that most of our families live on the lines we serve, making the work we do more than a job. It's personal. And even after the lights are on, our work is far from over. Berkeley Electric's team of employees strive to support our

membership with programs that make a difference in their lives and go beyond traditional energy services.

Another key difference is that electric cooperatives are owned by the members they serve, which makes this type of research even more important. We aren't just interested in whether or not you like us. As a co-op, we have a mandate to provide our member-owners with opportunities to exercise their voices on how their cooperative is being run.

That is why, in addition to these traditional survey methods, which only take place once or twice a year, we have also started conducting real-time in-house surveying with every member who has an interaction with the cooperative. During 2023, we heard from over 11,000 members who contacted us about things such as establishing or disconnecting service, billing concerns, inquiring about vegetation operations or who voted at annual meeting. At the end of the year, Berkeley Electric had an overall 96 percent approval rating, which further reinforces the rankings received through J.D. Power and ACSI. And, we can't forget that our employees also voted us as one of the Best Places to Work in South Carolina for a second year in a row.

As we move further into the new year, I can assure you that our commitment to service will continue to be one of our top priorities as we continue to provide our members with safe, reliable and affordable power.

Sincerely,

**MIKE FULLER**  
President & CEO

# BRIGHT IDEAS 5K

/// LAST CHANCE

**5/04**

DATE

**8 AM**

START

**\$40**

FEE

PRESENTED BY:

///  
**CYPRESS  
GARDENS**

**MONCKS  
CORNER**



**COOPERATIVE**  
BUILDING SOLUTIONS

**HELP SUPPORT  
LOCAL TEACHERS**

[SCAN ME]







**ROBERT VANDROSS**  
Trustee, District 1

## Linemen do whatever it takes

**BERKELEY ELECTRIC** was recently blessed with the opportunity to host the 4th Annual South Carolina Lineman's Rodeo at its Moncks Corner headquarters. Not only was this a wonderful day of fellowship and friendly competition, but it also gave me the opportunity

to visit with the linemen who work every day in all weather conditions to make sure our community has the power they need for their daily lives. I can say, without question, our linemen love their job. It's hard work, but it's very rewarding and I wanted to give you a better look into what they face and more importantly, why they do it.

A lot of people know the job is dangerous because linemen work near high-voltage electricity. Move the wrong way or lose focus for a split second, and it could be deadly. They need to be aware of their surroundings and the safety of the person next to them. They often work on energized power lines, and you can't always tell if they are energized by just looking at them. The environment compounds the pressure, because when members need power the most is usually when the weather is the worst. Linemen often work in storms with rain, wind, extreme heat and cold, in the dark, or on the side of the road next to fast-moving traffic.

Those are just some of the reasons that linemen undergo years of training before officially being called a lineworker. They typically start as a groundman, helping crews with tools and keeping job sites safe before transitioning to apprentice status, which typically spans four years. After an apprenticeship, with more than 7,000 hours of training, they are able to make the move to journeyman lineworker status—which is when they are considered officially trained in the field. But even then, the education is ongoing. Lineworkers continuously receive training to stay mindful of safety requirements



and up to date on the latest equipment and procedures.

Aside from the mental aspect, the daily expectations of a lineworker are physically demanding, as you can imagine. It's not only loading heavy materials, climbing poles and clambering in and out of buckets. A lot of times, linemen go places the trucks can't, so restoring power often means hiking through the woods loaded down with 40 pounds of personal protective equipment and other materials to restore a few members.

After talking with these linemen, I think one of the most often overlooked aspects of their job is the sacrifices they make. They're often first on the scene of an emergency, seeing things that are devastating like car accidents, structure fires and damage from severe storms. The calls also come at all hours and in the middle of the night leading to things like missed soccer games, family dinners and, of course, sleep.

But over and over again, I heard that the one thing that makes this job worthwhile is the camaraderie. For most linemen, the co-op is their second family, and the line crews are a brotherhood. In this line of work, they depend on the person beside them in life-or-death circumstances. It's a culture of trust, teamwork and service.

Linemen have a lot of pride in their work. There's a lot of satisfaction in hearing someone yell "Thank you" from the window after the lights come back on or seeing people flipping the light switches on their porches after an outage is restored.

Remember that Berkeley Electric and its employees are members of this community. We live in the same neighborhoods. We shop at the same stores. Our kids go to the same schools. If your lights are off, there is a good chance ours are off too. So, you can trust that our linemen are doing their best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible. And as we celebrate National Lineman Appreciation Day this month, be sure to remember to #thankalineman.

Sincerely,

BERKELEY AT-A-GLANCE	DECEMBER 2022	DECEMBER 2023
Total kWh sold	408,282,747	407,506,526
No. meters served	121,279	126,320
Avg. residential kWh/meter	1,477	1,208
Avg. residential bill/meter	\$185.38	\$166.51
Miles of line	6230	6367
Avg. daily high temperature	62	65
Avg. daily low temperature	42	44

# ‘We look out for one another’

In Awendaw, co-op serves a unique, close-knit community

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

IT’S STILL EARLY, and the cool morning breezes provide evidence that it is February in the Lowcountry. Nevertheless, gnats are swirling around the heads of a Berkeley Electric Cooperative crew as they leave the Awendaw district office for the day’s job site.

A change in location does not remedy the annoying presence—neither do spritzes of OFF—as the crew is tasked with setting poles for a new residence in nearby McClellanville.

“I call this Gnatville,” says crew foreman Kenny Holloway. “They arrive about this time every year and stick around until December.”

Holloway should know. He was born and raised in Awendaw and claims the basketball court within sight from the district office as “my court.” Holloway has been with Berkeley Electric for 28 years, choosing to be among nature’s elements, flying and otherwise, after obtaining a bachelor’s degree in business administration from South Carolina State University.

“I got a chance to work for the co-op, tried it, and fell for it,” he says. “I love being outdoors.”

Vincent Simmons, one of the five linemen on the crew, is also from the area. He grew up in Tibwin as his father oversaw the district’s delivery services as its line superintendent.

“It was second nature for me to become a lineman,” says Simmons. “I always looked up to my father. Seeing him bring power to these communities and get their lights back on, put a smile



JOSH P. CROTZER



MICAH PONCE

on their face, it inspired me to do the same thing.”

Awendaw District supervisor Ricky Driggers says when the people providing power are hometown folks, there is a higher level of service to members.

“It’s easier for members to talk to them—they understand each other better,” says Driggers. “That is the good thing about co-ops, we have a lot of personal relationships with our members. So, there is a lot of communication.”

Awendaw crews are also familiar with bringing power to relatively secluded

spots like the job in McClellanville, where they are erecting poles and lines across 900 feet of newly cleared and muddy terrain to a single manufactured house. It’s the kind of service Berkeley Electric has been providing for more than 84 years.

These days, they are also becoming more and more familiar with electrifying new housing developments and commercial accounts that come with being adjacent to one of the fastest growing areas in the region. Driggers understands why the area is attracting new residents.





MICAH PONCE

Vincent Simmons wanted to “put smiles on faces” like his dad, a former line superintendent for Berkeley Electric.



JOSH P. CROTZER

Leonard Simmons welcomes members into the newly renovated and recently opened Awendaw District lobby.

## Awendaw at glance

- **Growing fast** Over the last year, the number of active accounts served by Berkeley Electric in the Awendaw District has increased by nearly 24 percent to 11,304 across 919 miles of lines.
- **Commerce coming** Commercial development extending from Mount Pleasant has been a big part of the growth, more than doubling from 30 to 64 commercial accounts since February 2023.
- **Community focused** Berkeley Electric is a strong supporter of all the communities they serve and proud to be a sponsor of Awendaw’s iconic Blue Crab Festival each October.

“The best thing about this area is the people and the ability to create long-lasting relationships throughout the different communities here,” says Driggers. “There is so much history around, like the sweetgrass baskets that have been a staple to this area for centuries.”

Driggers and everyone else working out of the district office has a reminder of those relationships and the surrounding history on his desk.

“A sweet lady had some electrical issues at her house, and she was very grateful for us being able to help,” he says. “She made us a sweetgrass candy dish basket that I keep on my desk full of candy for everyone in the office. It’s by far one of the best things someone could have done for us.”

When members arrive at the Awendaw district office, park below the recently erected solar canopy and walk into a recently renovated lobby, they are greeted by an encased display of sweetgrass baskets and the smiling faces of the member services personnel.

One of those faces, office manager LaChelle Gray, is familiar to many in the Awendaw community. Gray grew up in nearby Hollywood and in her 11 years with the cooperative, she’s become a trusted friend to members, the older ones especially.

“If they don’t know me, they’ll know my grandparents or my parents,” says Gray. “They’ll say, ‘Oh yeah! I remember when you were a little girl.’”

That kinship was crucial when the office closed its doors to in-person services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Seniors who were unable to use the drive-thru and not confident in their ability to manage their account online or with the mobile app, knew who they could contact for help.

“They would call my personal phone and give me their bank cards,” recounts Gray. “They would say, ‘Can you please pay my bill? I trust you.’”

The facility recently opened for walk-in service at the end of 2023, so the the four-person staff is again assisting members with new service applications, account management, and navigating Berkeley Electric’s online services.

Sometimes, they even make house calls. The Awendaw community has several senior citizen centers and Gray visits there to explain programs like Operation Round Up and help them fill out applications. Operation Round Up grants for individual members help pay for home repairs, appliances and wheelchair ramps.

“We’re like a close-knit family so we look out for one another,” says Gray. “When we see someone in need, we all just pitch in to help.”



## Be it so resolved

**BERKELEY ELECTRIC** board member Willis Sanders was recently honored by the South Carolina House of Representatives with a resolution. Sanders' church also presented him with a copy of H. 5160, which recognizes and honors him for his dedicated public and community service to the people of South Carolina and to celebrate his distinguished career.

Currently vice chairman of the co-op's board of trustees, Sanders joined the board in 2012 after a distinguished career as a Berkeley County educator and administrator. He currently represents District 6 while holding a Director Gold certification and also serving on the board of the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina.

# CAMPEÓN DE LA COMUNIDAD

Berkeley Electric is searching for a Community Champion who deserves recognition for making a positive impact and benefitting members in the Hispanic/ Latin communities of our cooperative.

NOMINATE YOURS TODAY!

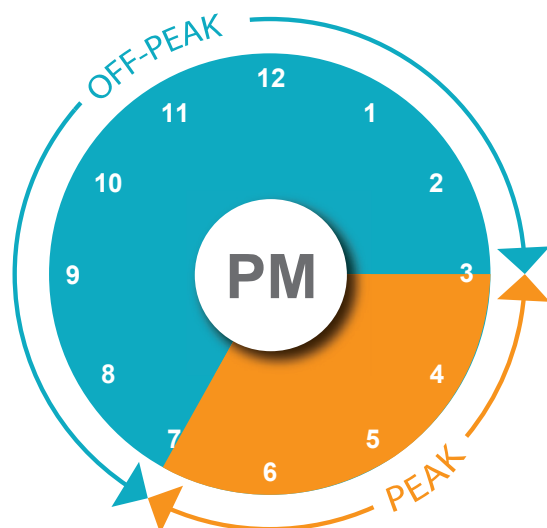
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SCAN ME

## CHECK THE HOUR BEFORE USING POWER



Berkeley Electric's Time-of-Day rate (TOD) is a voluntary program that rewards members with a lower electric rate for shifting energy-intensive tasks - such as laundry, cooking and heating/cooling - away from peak hours. Summer peak hours are from **3 pm to 7 pm** and are in effect from **April-October**. These are the few hours each day where demand for electricity is the highest and most expensive.

The more you can shift energy use away from the peak-time the more you save but it requires an active change in habits to achieve maximum savings. Members can estimate how much they can save on the Time-of-Day rate by using the interactive calculator on Smarthub. The calculator is located on the "Explore Usage Management" tab or by clicking the green button at the bottom of the screen.

**OFF-PEAK RATE: 7.41¢ per kWh**

**PEAK RATE: 29.7¢ per kWh**