



# CENTRAL ELECTRIC POWER ASSOCIATION

A tradition of dependable, hometown service since 1937

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## ELECTRIC CO-OPS ARE BOLSTERING POWER TRANSMISSION

by Cathy Cash

The electric grid needs our help. Be it from new industrial complexes, data centers, more gaming and electrification at home from smart appliances to electric vehicles, today's intense energy demand requires more power 24/7 than ever before.



To keep pace with rising energy demand, new transmission equipment must be built, and existing equipment must be upgraded with the latest technology.

To keep up, new transmission equipment must be built, and existing transmission lines must be upgraded with the latest technology to move larger amounts of electricity, improve reliability and withstand Mother Nature. Transmission equipment and lines are essential in moving large amounts of electricity from where power is produced to electrical substations, where it is then sent across communities to consumers.

Each year, thousands of power lines and poles are destroyed by more extreme weather hitting outside of typical "storm season" timeframes and locales. Historic winter storms like Uri and Fern seem to be making themselves at home in the South.

The good news is that electric co-ops are completing transmission builds and breaking ground on new ones.

Generation and transmission co-ops that deliver wholesale power to your local electric co-op are doing their part to reinforce regional transmission backbones with stronger poles and power lines.

But building new transmission takes a lot of time. Many years in fact. And that's not because of the construction itself but the painstaking process for gaining approvals from state and federal agencies.

Yet, said Mary Ann Ralls, NRECA's senior director and regulatory counsel, "Electric co-ops are successfully demonstrating that their proposed facilities are necessary to relieve regional congestion and enhance system reliability."

The public and owners of property where power lines will be hoisted to serve consumers also have a big say when it comes to siting transmission and allowing projects to go forward.

That's where electric co-ops' member relations really shine.

It's not unusual for co-ops to go well beyond the prescribed number of public hearings on a proposed transmission project and to meet concerned members literally where they are.

Electric co-ops exist to serve their members with safe, affordable, reliable electricity. Their ability to build strong ties with the communities within their service territory can go a long way when the need arises for critical infrastructure like transmission.

With their members in mind, co-ops seek out the most efficient ways to build transmission. For example, they upgrade lines in existing property rights-of-way and use the most durable technologies and equipment to keep costs in check and sustain reliability well into the future.

Increased power line capacity will reduce costs associated with transmission congestion, which makes moving energy across the grid particularly expensive. This in turn will help keep your monthly bill lower.

When co-ops are able to beef up power lines, economic benefits can be felt in the community, too.

Rural areas with modern, high-voltage transmission are attractive to large job-creating businesses. Local employment and small business also experience upticks.

"Electric cooperatives have a long history of serving their members, and that same commitment is driving their work to develop new transmission capacity to meet the nation's rising electricity demand," said Patti Metro, NRECA's senior grid operations and reliability director.

*Cathy Cash writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



# ANNUAL MEETING

*Central holds annual meeting in Carthage*

Over 300 people attended the 89th Annual Meeting of the Membership of Central Electric Power Association on March 17 at the coliseum in Carthage.

The crowd was entertained by Second Mile, a southern gospel quartet based out of Neshoba County. Members enjoyed the traditional convention-style singing.

General Manager Brian Long began the meeting, followed by an invocation from Phillip Crosby, a member of the board of directors. Carthage Mayor Laurie Henderson welcomed everyone and commended Manager Long and the board of directors for the excellent work they do for the community.

Derek McGill, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) director of customer relations, provided TVA updates to the members. TVA values its partnership with Central Electric Power Association and the hard work accomplished over the years. Lydia Walters, vice president of Communications at Electric Cooperatives of Mississippi, was a guest at the meeting.

Long reported that by the end of 2025, the association had 39,184 members in central Mississippi and 4,353 miles of underground and overhead distribution and transmission lines. Long also praised his staff for working hard, being safe, and keeping the lights on.

To conclude the meeting, a raffle took place. Dozens of prizes, including a smoker, were given away to lucky members.

## *The special prize winners were*

**\$1,500**  
ELECTRICITY  
CREDIT

**Kent Sistrunk**  
*Leake County*



**\$500**  
ELECTRICITY  
CREDIT

**JD Pigg**  
*Leake County*  
**Roman Bryant**  
*Leake County*

**James Bufkin**  
*Leake County*

The elected board of directors is: Mike Brooks, Leake County; Danny Thornton, Leake County; and Earl Browning, Attala County.

## *A crowd of more than 300 people attended the 2026 ANNUAL MEETING*



Derek McGill, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) director of customer relations, provided TVA updates to the members.



Mayor Laurie Henderson welcomed the crowd to Carthage while complimenting Central Electric on community involvement.



Brian Long, general manager, delivers the annual report and praises Central Electric staff for a job well done.



Accentcare provided a health fair for our members.



Second Mile gospel group performed.

# ARE SMART APPLIANCES Right For My Home?

by Miranda Boutelle

Let's start by defining what "smart" means. Smart appliances — such as refrigerators, washers, ovens, thermostats, and water heaters — connect to the internet. Typically, through Wi-Fi or Bluetooth, these appliances can be controlled using your smartphone, tablet, or voice-assistant device. They are designed to optimize energy use and add convenience. Some smart devices can even learn your habits over time.

Are smart appliances right for your home? The answer depends on your preferences and types of appliances you already have. The better question might be: Are smart appliances right for you? Do you like the newest tech and typically keep your phone within arm's reach? Do you enjoy the convenience of calling out commands to Alexa? Or do you prefer less technology or something in between? Personally, I'm somewhere in the middle.

Many smart appliances allow you to see how much energy each device consumes. That information can be helpful to better understand your energy habits and identify where energy may be going to waste.

Smart thermostats are a popular choice for managing energy use and reducing energy waste. Heating and cooling systems are typically a home's biggest sources of energy consumption. According to ENERGY STAR®, you can save an average of 8% cost savings on heating and cooling with a smart thermostat. Savings depend on your climate, the type of system you have, and how you currently use it.

Most energy savings from a smart thermostat come from automating temperature adjustments while you are sleeping or away from home. If you are already good at manually adjusting your thermostat, you likely won't see big savings, but you might prefer the convenience of a programmable device you can control on an app.

Smart thermostats make it much easier to program your heating and cooling schedule. Some have geofencing features that automatically adjust settings based on how far your phone is from home.

Coming in with the second-highest energy user in most homes is the water heater. I like the smart controls on my heat pump water heater. Also called a hybrid water heater, it uses heat pump technology to move heat instead of using energy to create heat. That makes it two to three times more efficient than a conventional electric resistance water heater. You can save even more energy with smart heat pump water heaters.



Smart appliance apps allow you to monitor energy use and remotely change settings and receive maintenance notifications.

I can monitor energy use, change settings if we need more hot water, and check how much hot water is available before I jump in the shower after my kids have used it. The app notifies me when it's time to clean the air filter on top of the unit. I can access that information without having to go down to the basement. I can even set it to vacation mode after I've left the house for a trip. Not all heat pump water heaters have smart technology, so be sure to check before buying.

My refrigerator is a different story. I like the ability to monitor energy use, but it can be annoying to have my phone notify me the door is open when I'm 3,000 miles away at a work conference. There are certain features that can only be controlled through the app, which I find frustrating. The next thing I know, my husband texts me to make more ice while he's standing right next to it, and I'm on the other side of the country.

Monitoring energy use and making it easier to control your household devices are benefits of smart appliances. Before upgrading, do your research to understand how the features work and whether they benefit your lifestyle. Smart technology can help lower your energy use. But, in some cases, you're better off improving your energy habits with the appliances already in your home.

*Miranda Boutelle is the chief operating officer at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy efficiency company.*