



**Choptank Electric  
Cooperative**

A Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup>  
Cooperative 

**Members First. Every day.**



**February 2021**





By Valerie Connelly

Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Relations

# Olin Davis Elected to NRECA Board

*Davis poised to represent our membership and region for years to come.*

Choptank Electric Cooperative's Olin S. Davis III has been elected to the Board of Directors of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Recognized as one of the most effective lobbying organizations in Washington, D.C., NRECA represents more than 870 consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives across the United States.

As a new member of the national board, Olin Davis will share his insight from more than two decades of experience representing electric cooperative members on Maryland's Eastern Shore. "Our rural members have a unique set of needs that are often overlooked in the halls of Congress," explains Mike Malandro, President & CEO of Choptank Electric Cooperative. "Olin will make sure our voices are heard whenever energy policies — and now broadband initiatives — are discussed in Washington."

While Maryland falls into one of the largest metropolitan regions in the country, rural areas on the Eastern Shore and in southern Maryland are still served by member-owned electric cooperatives.

"Co-op members make up less than 10% of electric consumers

in Maryland," Davis explains. "It's important to have a voice at the national level to set us apart from the investor-owned utilities (IOUs) that serve the vast majority of Marylanders."

NRECA was formed in 1942 after false claims that electric cooperatives were hoarding copper wire during World War II brought cooperative leaders from different states together to defend themselves. Today, the Arlington, Va.-based national service organization oversees cooperative employee benefit plans; carries out federal government relations activities like lobbying; conducts management and director training; and spearheads communications, advocacy and public relations initiatives.

Olin Davis has lived on Choptank Electric Co-op lines his whole life. He and his brother own and operate Rich Levels Grain, Inc. and Rich Levels Poultry LLC, growing grain and poultry on the family farm in Kent County. He holds a B.S. in agriculture from the University of Maryland and has been certified in Board Leadership.

As a member of the NRECA Board, Davis represents both the

Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO) and Choptank Electric Cooperative. Because he is a fully trained and credentialed Choptank Electric Board member, Davis was eligible for the two-year, five-term seat shared by Maryland's electric cooperatives. Choptank was last represented on the NRECA Board more than 10 years ago by Somerset County's Carl Widdowson.

"I consider it a privilege to serve the members of Choptank Electric Cooperative on the local Board and now at the national level," Davis observes. "I will do my very best to guide Choptank and NRECA in the years ahead."



Olin Davis  
Kent County Director



P.O. Box 430 | Denton MD | 21629

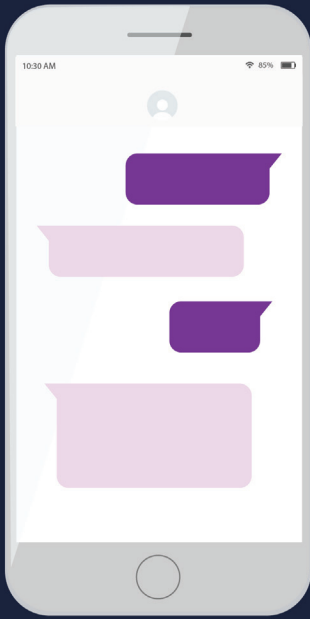
Toll-Free: 1-877-892-0001

Outage Reporting: 1-800-410-4790

Automated Member Service: 1-866-999-4574

# New, Easy Outage Reporting Is Now Just a Text Away

*This new outage-reporting service is an easy opt-in service.*



Want up-to-date information about outages? Choptank Electric has heard our members, and we are now offering an outage communication texting service. Report outages, get outage updates, and find out when power has been restored on up to four different locations.

## How do I sign up?

1. Text Choptank at 800-410-4790\*
2. Select your address\*\*

You are now signed up to receive communication from Choptank Electric Cooperative.

*\*Standard text message rates apply.*

*\*\*Outage Alerts are based on Choptank Electric's predictive outage-management system and may not be 100% accurate.*

This system is fully automated and does not rely on employee interaction — it coordinates with our internal outage system to relay information to our members who are signed up for this program. Please use only the following keywords, as anything else will not be recognized.

## Keywords:

- OUT** - Report an outage at your location
- STATUS** - Get more info about an outage
- QUIT** - Opt out of outage notifications
- HELP** - Get help with your outage notifications

The number you select **MUST** be the number that is attached to your Choptank Electric account. If your cellphone number is not currently attached to your account, please call our Member Service Center at 1-877-892-0001 and speak with one of our Member Service Representatives to add your cell phone number to your account.

If a member tries to sign up for the outage texting service without adding their cellphone number to their account as their main source for contact, members will receive a message asking them to contact our Member Service Center to update the information. Members must allow 24 hours after the information has been updated and/or changed in our system before trying to opt-in again to our text messaging service.

If you have signed up for multiple texting alerts, and would like to stop receiving texts for a specific account, send "Quit" which will stop ALL alerts. Once you have opted out of all the alerts, you can sign back up the same way as stated previously, and then select the accounts you would like to receive texts about.

If you are a member who wishes to receive alerts and have more than four accounts, you may contact our Member Service Center at 1-877-892-0001 to sign up for the text messaging service.

**Helpful Tip:**  
**Save the number**  
**1-800-410-4790**  
**in your phone,**  
**labeled as**  
**"Choptank Outages"**



# Director Earns Gold Certificate

***Congratulations to Director John J. Burke Jr. for earning his Director Gold Certificate.***

Cecil County Director and Board Vice Chairman John J. Burke Jr. earned his Director Gold Certificate this past September. The certificate was issued by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and presented to Burke during the October Board meeting.

The Director Gold credential recognizes directors committed to continuing their education beyond NRECA's Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate (CCD) and Board Leadership Certificate (BLC) plus three additional credits from the BLC courses. The Gold credential also signifies a director's ongoing commitment to advancing their knowledge and performing their fiduciary duty to the best of their ability.

Burke was appointed to the Choptank Electric Cooperative Board of Directors in March 2010 to represent Cecil County. He was elected to the role of Board Secretary and Treasurer in April 2014. In April 2018, he was elected Vice-Chairman.



# Malandro Wins Most Admired CEO Award

***The Most Admired CEO award recognizes industry leaders with a focus on vision.***

Our President and CEO, Mike Malandro, won The Daily Record's 2020 Most Admired CEO award this past November. "My biggest accomplishment is bringing positive change to rural areas through broadband," said Malandro. Fellow Co-op CEO John Lee of Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative recognized Mike's impact in Virginia as well as Maryland.

The Most Admired CEO award recognizes the talented business and nonprofit leaders throughout Maryland. Honorees are selected based on leadership and vision; community leadership and service; corporate leadership and board service; competitiveness and innovation; and financial performance and growth.



# Winter Storms: Staying Safe and Warm

*Learn what to do to keep safe before, during, and after a winter storm.*



Extreme winter weather can immobilize an entire region. Even areas that normally experience mild winters can suddenly be hit with heavy snowfall or intense cold. Winter storms can result in closed streets and highways, power outages, and flooding. Take action now to ensure the safety and comfort of your family in the event of extreme winter weather.

## **Before a storm**

Have snow-removal equipment on hand, as well as rock salt to melt ice and sand to improve traction.

Regular fuel sources may be cut off, so make sure an alternative is available to heat your home. For example, store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.

Keep fire extinguishers on hand and make sure everyone knows how to use them. Fires pose an additional risk when alternate heating sources are in use.

Locate your main water supply and valves; make sure you know how to shut them off in case a pipe bursts.

Repair roof leaks and keep gutters clear. Trim any tree branches that could fall during a storm.

Winterize by caulking and weatherstripping doors and windows, sealing the attic area, and installing storm windows. This will help to keep your family safe and comfortable during a storm.

## **During a storm**

Listen to your radio, television, or NOAA Weather Radio for weather reports and emergency information.

Eat regularly and drink ample fluids, but avoid caf-

feine and alcohol.

To conserve fuel, keep your residence cooler than normal or temporarily close off heat to some rooms.

Stay dry. Change wet clothing frequently to prevent the loss of body heat.

Watch for signs of frostbite; these include loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers and toes. If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately.

Drive only when necessary. If you must drive, travel on main roads during daylight hours. Keep others informed of your whereabouts.

## **After a storm**

Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Overexertion can bring on a heart attack, a major cause of death in the winter. If you must shovel snow, stretch before going outside.

Help neighbors who may require special assistance including infants, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

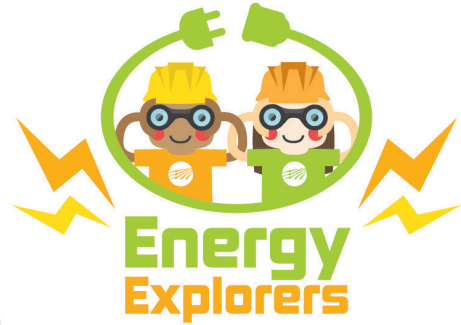
If the pipes freeze, remove any insulation and open all faucets; pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold. Do not try to thaw them with a blow torch or other open flame.

Follow forecasts and be prepared when venturing outside. Major winter storms are often followed by extremely cold conditions.

A little forethought and attention to detail will help to ensure that you and your family stay warm, dry, and safe this winter, no matter what the weather is like outside.



# 2021 ENERGY EFFICIENCY CALENDAR



There are so many ways you can save energy! Saving energy helps reduce your family’s monthly bills – and it helps our environment. Change your energy use habits by following the monthly tips below. Keep this calendar on your refrigerator to remind family members to be energy efficient throughout the year.

## JANUARY

Turn off ceiling fans when you leave room.



## FEBRUARY

Instead of turning up the heat, put on an extra layer of clothing or stay cozy under a blanket.

## MARCH

Turn off lights when you leave a room.



## APRIL

Ask an adult to help you plant a tree to help shade your home in the summer.

## MAY

Decorate your backyard or porch with solar-powered lights.

## JUNE

Take short showers instead of baths.



## JULY

Dry heavy linens outside on a clothesline instead of using the dryer.

## AUGUST

Ask an adult to help you schedule a reminder to change the A/C filter every 60-90 days.

## SEPTEMBER

Turn off running water while brushing your teeth.



## OCTOBER

Unplug energy vampires, like chargers, gaming consoles and cable/satellite boxes.

## NOVEMBER

Remind family members to use cold water when washing clothes.



## DECEMBER

Decorate your home with energy-saving LED holiday lights.

# Help! ‘My Bill is High! What Should I Do?’

## *A step-by-step approach to analyze your high bill.*

This is a familiar picture. You just arrived home and proceed to open mail. Among the many envelopes, you find your latest Choptank Electric bill. You hold your breath and open it — and there it is! The highest bill in history! Even if you view your bill online, a high bill is still a disrupting event that usually feels like it arrives at the worst possible moment. Members who receive high bills can often feel confusion, anxiety, or even anger — yet the worst feeling is that of being powerless and not being able to do something about it.

**Fortunately you are more in control than you think.** Like a good lawyer preparing to go to court, an empowered member could prepare and ask themselves some questions about their habits, usage, and past billing history before picking up the phone to call the Member Service Center. Energy usage and billing information can be seen anytime, anywhere, using SmartHub. Members can access SmartHub through the web portal or via mobile App for iOS or Android.

**The first step would be to review your last few bills.** If you are good about keeping your billing records you can simply pull the last 12 months of bills OR by logging into your SmartHub account (or setting up an account on SmartHub if you don't have one already) to compare bills. Look at how much you have used this month, compared to the same month last year. Is it vastly different? Or is it about the same? You might want to access up to 24-36 months of bills for reference. You will notice

bills go up and down at around the same times each year, marking the beginning or end of seasons.

But your research doesn't end there. **You should also try to remember the weather, and other particular events that may have affected your usage.** Did your town experience a bad winter storm? Did you add a new appliance or replace a failing one? These kinds of events can drastically affect your bill, even account for a large portion of the difference between a normal bill and an outrageous one. SmartHub can help members by allowing you to set “markers” that track specific usage events such as when a new HVAC system is installed. Look to see how much it will save you in the long run. Similarly, since most of us don't keep a detailed record of the weather, we can rely on SmartHub to view temperatures for each day, and even determine how much in kilowatt or dollar amount the temperature affected the bill.

**Perhaps your particular case is different or not clear, and you need some assistance understanding your bill.** This is where our friendly Member Service Representatives come in and can help you sift through the information on your bill. They can review your account history with you to help put your bill and energy consumption into perspective. Walking through the various screens with a knowledgeable representative will help.

**So, what can you do with all this information?** If your bill is normally high during the summer

or winter months, you could look into the level-billing payment plan to better budget your monthly electric bill. Similarly, plan to reduce your usage on those days in which usage is expected to be high. If the answer is something more drastic like upgrading your home HVAC system, adding insulation in the attic or crawl space, or replacing windows, contact Choptank Electric to speak with one of our energy advisors.

Additionally, Choptank Electric has online tools available at [www.choptankelectric.coop/energy-efficiency](http://www.choptankelectric.coop/energy-efficiency) that can help you manage and understand your usage.

**Perhaps your high bill is a one-time instance? Weather or a faulty appliance could be the culprit.** Regularly maintaining your HVAC and other large appliances can improve their operating efficiency, and keep the usage down. Finally, remember that our Member Service Representatives can offer assistance and are ready to answer your questions.

Hopefully these guidelines can empower you to prevent or manage any future high bills. Contact our Member Service Department at 1-877-892-0001.



# Member Notes

Our members are the reason Choptank Electric Cooperative exists. Without their support, it would be hard for us to move forward with current or new initiatives. Whether on social media, on the phone, or via old-fashioned letters sent along with their paper bills, our members love to let us know when their Co-op is doing a good job!



## The Glasgows said of Kevin Collier (Serviceman, RSC):

*“Just a note of appreciation to you good people – we blew a transformer and you all sent us Kevin Collier. He had us up and going in almost no time at all [...] In short, he was terrific and we were so pleased with his efforts.”*

## Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Choptank Electric, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is a not-for-profit, member-owned, electric distribution Co-op serving approximately 54,000 residential, commercial, and industrial members in all nine counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

### President and CEO

Micheal E. Malandro

### Board of Directors

Jeffrey D. Rathell Sr.  
Chairman, Talbot Co.

John J. Burke Jr.  
Vice Chairman, Cecil Co.

Douglas D. Scott  
Secretary-Treasurer, Dorchester Co.

Robert E. Arnold  
Queen Anne's Co.

Amy I. Brandt  
Caroline Co.

Olin S. Davis III  
Kent Co.

Matthew R. Holloway  
Wicomico Co.

Robert B. Thompson  
Ocean Pines District

Donna R. West  
Worcester Co.

Craig N. Mathies Sr.  
Somerset Co.

# Choptank Electric Trust Awards

The Choptank Electric Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation funded by Operation Round Up donations from members of Choptank Electric. Funds from the Trust are distributed in all nine counties of Maryland's Eastern Shore.

## November

- Wreaths Across America - \$500 (wreaths - Greensboro Cemetery)
- Worcester County Veterans - \$1,125 (wreaths - Hurlock Veteran's Cemetery)
- Bless Our Children - \$1,000 (donation)
- Brighter Christmas Fund - \$1,000 (donation)

The total of approved applications was \$20,668, which included \$17,043 for individual home and medical expenses.

## December

- Choptank Holiday Helpers - \$13,200 (contribution)
- Boys and Girls Club of Cecil County - \$5,180 (Club on the Go program)
- Denton Volunteer Fire Company - \$5,000 (tools)

The total of approved applications was \$42,618, which included \$23,380 for individual home and medical expenses.

