

April 19, 2019

Battling Mother Nature

Delaware Electric Co-op Crews Respond Quickly to Tornado Damage

A suspected **tornado** struck **Delaware Electric Cooperative's service territory** on the morning of **Monday, April 15**. The storm knocked out power to 6,000 co-op members and left debris scattered for several miles across Sussex County.



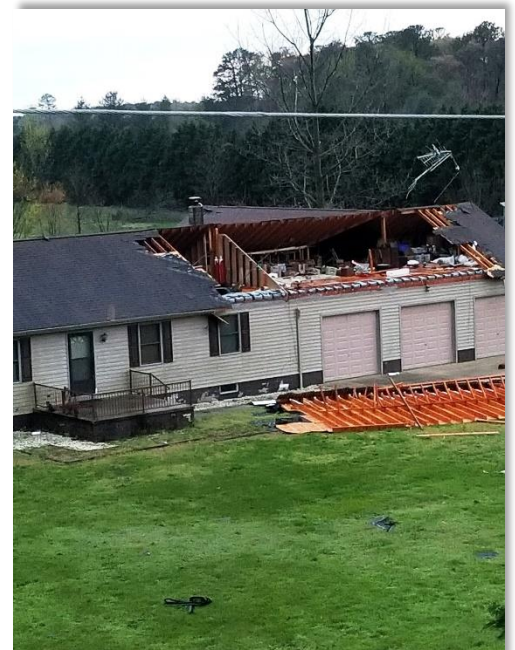
An April 15 tornado passed through Delaware, uprooting trees and spreading damage across DEC's service area.

The worst of the damage was focused in the Seaford area along Route 20 and Baker Mill Road. The storm **ripped the second floor from a home and destroyed numerous barns and outbuildings**. An Utz distribution center and chicken houses were also heavily damaged.

The **National Weather Service** issued a **tornado warning** for Sussex County around 3:30 a.m., with the first outages reported around 3:45 a.m. The tornado was initially categorized as an **EF-1** with an estimated wind speed of **95 mph**.

Co-op crews worked all day to restore power to members. Linemen had to replace broken poles, cross arms and spans of line damaged by the severe weather. Officials reported one injury as a result of the storm.

According to DEC President and CEO **Bill Andrew**, "It has been years since the state has seen storm damage this severe. We appreciated the words of encouragement from members as our crews worked hard to turn the lights back on and we are hopeful our members impacted by the storm are able to quickly rebuild."



A tornado ripped the roof off a home in DEC territory.



Delaware Electric Co-op crews restore power to affected members after an April 15 tornado passed through the service territory.

Tornados seem to be occurring **more frequently** in Delaware. **In 2017**, a tornado **damaged DEC's headquarters** in Greenwood and a stronger tornado **ripped through DEC's service territory** in Kent County **in 2014**, injuring several members.

-Report by Jeremy Tucker, Manager of Marketing and Communications, Delaware Electric Cooperative.

Co-op Honors

Mecklenburg Line Worker Is 1st to Earn Degree through Partnership Agreement

There's a **new graduate** working the lines.

Mitch DeJarnette, a line technician with **Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative**, is the **first student to earn an associate degree** as part of a novel partnership between **Southside Virginia Community College** and the **VMD Association**.

The program enables apprentice linemen to pursue a degree as an **Industrial Maintenance Technician** while they're **continuing to work** to keep the lights on. It was a perfect fit for Mitch, who's been **at Mecklenburg for two years** following **four years with Central Virginia Electric Cooperative**.

"I feel a degree offers me more value and more opportunities," Mitch said. "And, I was like the guinea pig being the first in the program, too."

"This partnership is yet another example of the Commonwealth's electric cooperatives joining forces with the community colleges to provide educational opportunities for those in our industry, or those looking to get started in the electric utility business," said **John C. Lee Jr.**, president and CEO of Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative.

"We encourage our employees to continue their professional growth and we are proud of Mitch for taking advantage of the opportunity to glean even greater value from his lineman training, and position himself to be considered for other professional development options," John added.



MEC's Mitch DeJarnette said "I feel a degree offers me more value and more opportunities."

As part of the program, apprentice linemen at co-ops in Virginia can receive **up to 35 hours of college credit** for on-the-job training. The SVCC program enables them to take **online classes to complete requirements** for an associate degree. That's a big plus — the classroom setting at SVCC's campuses in Keysville or Alberta **would have put Mitch too far** from his on-call responsibilities.

He also noted that his professors understood when his job pressed up against his assignments. "All I had to do was explain the situation to them; the key is communication."

Richard Johnstone, president and CEO of the VMD Association, **praised Mitch's determination** and said he hopes **it sets an example** for other young linemen.

"Helping students meet their educational goals is core to our mission. We hope this partnership will encourage all of the graduates of our program to enroll and also those from other programs as well," Richard said. "Creating this career pathway will allow students to progress from industry-recognized credentials to an associate degree and hopefully on to a bachelor's degree."

Financial assistance and scholarships may be available for interested students. For more information, contact SVCC's **Matt Dunn** at matt.dunn@southside.edu.

-Report by Steven Johnson, VMD Association Director of Member & Public Relations.

2019 Gaff-n-Go Rodeo

Acclaimed Line Work Expert Don Harbuck to Be Keynote Speaker at Awards Banquet

The audience at the **awards banquet** following the **Gaff-n-Go Lineman's Rodeo** next month is in for a **treat**, and we don't mean dessert.



Don Harbuck of Northwest Lineman College consistently preaches safety and says "Never stop learning."

Don Harbuck, senior vice president for customer success at **Northwest Lineman College (NLC)**, will be the featured speaker at the **May 11** ceremony at the Hilton Hotel and Spa in Glen Allen, a short drive from the rodeo setup in Doswell, Virginia.

Don has **more than 50 years of experience** in the utility industry at investor-owned and cooperatives. A fierce **advocate for safety** in the trade, he's been honored numerous times by his peers with service awards and leadership positions in national associations.

The South Carolina resident said his presentation will focus on the **history, tradition and development of the American lineman** based on a book by NLC colleague Alan Drew.

"I will chronologically go through the history of the American lineman, where it started back in the telegraph system days in the 1800s and bring it up to the modern day, where solar, wind and those types of things are taking over the scene," he said.

That history tour will contain important lessons for today's crews, Don added. Foremost among them: **Never stop learning.**

"You want to look at what you can do and what you can learn that will help you be better tomorrow than you were today," he said.

Don has been at NLC, the industry-leading educational institute, since 2012, following his time as director of loss control and training at **The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina**. He's a graduate of **Georgia Regents University** and has been married to his **high school sweetheart Frankie** for 49 years. They have two children.

"Don is tremendously respected within the industry for his commitment to making lineworkers become the best that they can be," said **Brian Mosier**, chief operating officer of the VMD Association. "We're looking forward to hearing his insights."

Doors open at 5 p.m. with the banquet starting at 5:30 p.m. Don is scheduled to speak at 6:45 p.m. The awards presentations begin at 7:45 p.m.

All registered participants and judges receive one complimentary banquet ticket. Additional tickets are available at \$50 for adults and \$25 for children ages 3-12 at www.gaff-n-go.com/awards-banquet.

-Report by Steven Johnson, VMD Association Director of Member & Public Relations.

VMD Training Center

Final Plans Underway for May 22 Dedication Ceremony

The **lineman statue is in place** and final preparations are underway as the VMD Association nears the **formal launch** of the **Electric Cooperative Training Center** on **May 22 in Palmyra**.

The 9,600-square-foot building has hosted several meetings and classes in recent weeks as a "soft opening" toward the big day, when **dignitaries, co-op leaders** and **Fluvanna County representatives** will officially dedicate the new facility.

"The initial feedback we've received from class attendees and visitors has been very positive," said **Richard G. Johnstone Jr.**, president and CEO of the Association. "This project takes our training capabilities to another level and we think it'll be a boost for Fluvanna County, as well."

The building is located on Salem Church Road, across from **Central Virginia Electric Cooperative's Palmyra office**, about five miles south of exit 136 on Interstate 64. CVEC provided nine acres for the **\$1.5 million endeavor**.

It represents the culmination of planning since the Association started holding training classes in a triple-wide modular unit on the site in 2013. Training for linemen, system operators and substation operators initially involved **just 14 weeks a year**. Now it runs to **42 weeks annually**, underscoring the need for a larger, permanent structure.

The building has **three classrooms** — one each named for **Maryland, Virginia** and **Delaware**. The rooms employ **state-of-the-art video technology** with a touchpad system to **control lighting** and **A/V equipment**. The building also offers a full-service kitchen with a catering window, a break room, and showers in the men's and women's restrooms. There's parking for **up to 62 vehicles**, with plenty of room for the overflow expected at the launch day.

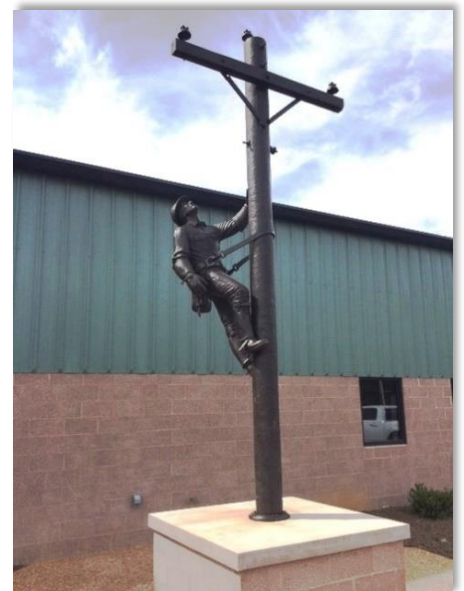
When guests arrive on May 22, they'll encounter the "**Storm Soldier**" statue, a bronze sculpture created by **Arkansas sculptor Ron Moore**. It's located just right of the main entrance. **A mural** from the Association's former training center in Culpeper has been given a facelift and is mounted along the center hallway, **linking the old and new** training facilities. **A color-coded map** designating the member systems in the Association will be installed soon.

Even if the building exceeds training space expectations, that's no problem. The south side of the building structure has an **expandable end wall** for possible expansion.

Given the center's proximity to the CVEC office and its short, 45-minute trip from Association headquarters, Richard said it also could serve as an **outage center** or **base camp** during major weather-related activities.

"The possibilities with a modern facility such as this are limitless," he said. "We want to thank all the members of the Association who have worked so hard to realize this accomplishment. For many years into the future, this training center will benefit our member systems, our linemen and system personnel, and ultimately all of our co-op member-owners."

-Report by Steven Johnson, VMD Association Director of Member & Public Relations.



The "Storm Soldier" statue now serves as a sentinel, welcoming students and guests to the VMD Electric Co-op Training Center.

VMD/ODEC Annual Meetings

Glenn Miller Orchestra to Serenade Attendees at 75th Anniversary Meeting

Kick up your heels! The VMD Association is going dancing.

The world-famous **Glenn Miller Orchestra** will be performing as part of the Association's 75th annual meeting, scheduled for **July 28-30** at the **Williamsburg (Va.) Lodge**. This private performance is being made possible courtesy of **Asplundh Tree Expert, LLC**, and **Utility Lines Construction Services, Inc.**

The band's performance will be at a celebration gala on **Monday, July 29**, as part of a **black tie (optional) event**. In addition to the Association's 75th anniversary, **it's also been 75 years since Miller**, the premier big band leader of the Swing Era, **was lost when his plane disappeared** in the English Channel on a flight to France.

Following his legacy, the re-formed **Glenn Miller Orchestra** has now been on the road for more than 60 years as an **18-member ensemble** that plays many of **Miller's original arrangements** and more modern selections arranged and performed **in the Miller style**.



The world-famous Glenn Miller Orchestra will play hits from the Swing Era as VMD member system attendees enjoy this private performance courtesy of Asplundh Tree Expert, LLC, and Utility Lines Construction Services, Inc. It'll be black tie optional at this festive event on Monday, July 29!

"What a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the 75th anniversary with something as timeless and classic as the work of Glenn Miller," said **Richard G. Johnstone Jr.**, president and CEO of the Association. "It goes to show that electric co-ops and the orchestra are still going strong after 75 years and will continue to do so."

In fact, the business part of the annual meeting will look at what's made electric co-ops so successful for so long.

Under the theme "The Power of Teamwork," a lineup of utility and cooperative leaders will examine the successful formula used by co-ops in the past, and what will be needed to remain successful in the future.

The meeting kicks off on **Sunday, July 28**, with a golf tournament at 11 a.m. Proceeds will benefit the **VMDAEC Education Scholarship Foundation**. Registration starts at 5:15 p.m., with a hospitality event at 5:30 p.m. The VMD Board meeting, business sessions and forums will be on **Monday, July 29**, with a **celebratory luncheon** honoring **exemplary leaders** in our co-op family.

The ODEC annual meeting will be on July 30.

The Association will send out its meeting notice with details and registration information **in early May** and urges member co-ops to **start polling their staffs and directors** to confirm attendance. For information on sponsorships and other events, contact **Robin Byrd Wilfong** at rwilfong@vmdaec.com.

-Report by Steven Johnson, VMD Association Director of Member & Public Relations.

Gubernatorial Proclamation

Virginia Recognizes Line Workers on May 11

The men and women **who keep the lights on** in Virginia will come in for **special recognition on May 11**. **Gov. Ralph Northam** has proclaimed the day "**Electric Utility Line Workers Day**" in the Commonwealth.

The day coincides with the second day of the annual **Gaff-n-Go Lineman's Rodeo** in Doswell.

Northam's proclamation cites the long history of **responsible and reliable service** that electric utilities have provided since the early days of electrification.

It specifically calls out the contributions of rural electric cooperatives as "**electricity made its way into the farms, homes, towns, and villages of rural America and the Commonwealth.**" Central to that accomplishment was the labor of line workers, the proclamation adds.

“Electric utility line workers consistently and valiantly serve Virginians by providing reliable, affordable electricity, and do so by installing electric service, repairing damage after storms, providing for their own continuing education and training, and maintaining the highest standards of safety and professionalism, often putting themselves in harm’s way in order to restore power after outages caused by inclement weather or a natural disaster,” according to the document.

“I call this observance to the attention of all our citizens,” Gov. Northam added.

-Report by Steven Johnson, VMD Association Director of Member & Public Relations.

Honoring Excellence

VMD Co-ops Excel in Communication Awards

Electric co-ops in the VMD Association **made a strong showing** in the annual **Spotlight on Excellence Awards**, garnering a **dozen honors** that ranged from **traditional print stories** to the imaginative use of **digital technology**.

The awards were chosen from **nearly 640 entries** in the competition, sponsored by the **Council of Rural Electric Communicators** and **NRECA**.

“As new forms of communication emerge, our cooperatives are doing a stellar job of keeping in touch with their members through traditional publications as well as in digital, social media and multimedia presentations,” said **Richard G. Johnstone Jr.**, president and CEO of the VMD Association.

Awards earned by VMD member systems were:

- **NOVEC's** Public Relations division received a **gold award** for its **2018 annual report**, *Connecting to You*, and a **silver award** for its pages in *Cooperative Living* magazine.
- **Rappahannock Electric Cooperative** was recognized with a **gold award** for the August, September and October 2018 issues of *Powerlines*. REC also received **silver awards** for its **seasonal rate bill insert**, **its digital storytelling** and **social media work with wind storm Riley**, and its use of **digital media** with “REC Volunteers at The Therapeutic Adventure Camp of Orange.”
- **Central Virginia Electric Cooperative** was honored with a **silver award** for the innovative use of **digital media** with its “Solar Share Video: Harvesting Locally Sourced Energy.” CVEC also took a **silver** for its “Solar Soirée: ‘Flip the Switch’ Solar Commissioning Event.”
- **Southside Electric Cooperative** received a **gold award** for **best small special publication** with its “Regional Impact Profile,” while **BARC Electric Cooperative** took a **silver** for **best marketing design** with “BARC Connects.”
- VMDAEC’s **Richard Johnstone** received a **silver award** for **best column**, “Viewpoint — An Ode to Solitude.”

The winners will be recognized at a special reception honoring the award recipients during CONNECT ’19, a national conference for communications and marketing professionals, held May 7 in Houston, Texas. **Congratulations to all award winners on their excellent work!**

-Report by Steven Johnson, VMD Association Director of Member & Public Relations.

Commitment to Community

Choptank Electric Cooperative Gives to Compass Regional Hospice

The **Choptank Electric Cooperative Board of Directors** voted to **donate \$5,000** over the next five years to **Compass Regional Hospice** for their renovations, additional facilities, and growing services across the upper counties of the Eastern Shore, which include Kent, Queen Anne’s, and Caroline counties.

“We are proud to support such a worthy cause that helps so many people in our local communities,” said **Jeff Rathell**, chairman of the Choptank Electric Board of Directors. “Everyone has been touched by serious illness in some fashion, and Compass Regional Hospice has helped people during those difficult times in their lives. As part of the cooperative’s principles, commitment to community is at the core of what we do and this donation will give them the opportunity to impact our community.”

This five-year commitment from **Choptank Electric** will help **renovate the current space** at The Hope & Healing Center in Centreville. It will also allow construction to begin, which will add four more hospice beds and additional parking, help better utilize existing space, centralize access to the Grief Support Services Department and Hospice Center, provide a more personalized welcome and better waiting areas, allow more private family space, and enable the center to eventually move the chapel to a more convenient location for patients and families.

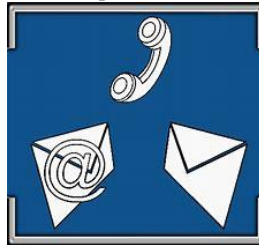
“We are so thankful for the donation and support of Choptank Electric Cooperative,” said **Heather Guerieri**, executive director at Compass Regional Hospice. “This will allow us to help heal families and support them in their time of need.”

-Report by Beth Gertsch, Choptank Electric Manager of Marketing, Communications, and Member Engagement.



At the presentation ceremony, Choptank officials met with hospice representatives. Shown are (l-r) Jeffrey Rathell, chairman of the board and Talbot County director for Choptank Electric Cooperative; Francis “Sonny” Callahan, director from Caroline County; Allison Wood, marketing coordinator at Compass Regional Hospice; Robert Arnold, director from Queen Anne’s County; Heather Guerieri, executive director at Compass Regional Hospice; Olin Davis, director from Kent County; and Mike Wheatley, retired president and CEO of Choptank Electric.

Help Us Keep You Informed!



If you have story ideas, news or information of interest and benefit to other members of the electric cooperative community in our three-state area, please contact

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