



## Keeping the lights on



From the desk of  
CEO & General Manager  
Eddie Oldham

“Despite the challenges we constantly face, we are proud to maintain a 99.9% reliability rating.”

Providing reliable power to you is and will always be a top priority for our co-op. We understand the importance of our service to you. It powers your everyday lives and keeps our communities up and running. In our modern world, reliable electricity is an indispensable part of our daily lives. With summer storm season right around the corner, it is a perfect time to talk about the challenges to reliability, as well as the efforts we have in place to combat challenges to keep the lights on.

So what causes power outages?

The most common and obvious culprit is Mother Nature. Storms often play a significant role in power outages. High winds, lightning strikes, snow, ice and hurricanes can damage power lines, poles, and other infrastructure. They also bring down trees that fall into our service lines, creating temporary outages until our crews are able to remove the trees or limbs and repair the damage.

There are also other nonobvious causes that may catch you, and us, by surprise on days when the weather is perfect outside. You may often wonder, how could there possibly be a power outage today? However, we continually battle obstacles such as squirrels, birds, snakes, yes even snakes, as well as the unfortunate event of a car accident that involves one of our poles or equipment.

So what do we do to continually improve the reliability of the service we provide to you?

**Right-of-way maintenance.** Keeping our power lines clear of overgrown vegetation helps improve our service reliability. While we can't prevent every tree or limb from falling on our lines, we do our very best to keep up with the constantly growing trees near our lines through proactive tree trimming within 20 feet of either side of our lines.

**System maintenance.** Updating, upgrading and adding new technology and equipment are all ways we proactively maintain our system to protect reliability. Innovative projects, such as the battery energy storage technology at our Doc's Road substation, increase resilience and reliability. We are also constantly adding devices and procedures to protect the system against little critters and lightning, as well as the ability to isolate and restore outages as quickly as possible.

One question we frequently receive is, why not bury all the lines underground? Wouldn't that eliminate all the issues? When possible, we do, but unfortunately, it is not possible to bury all lines underground due to cost, safety and environmental constraints. However, while overhead lines have obstacles to deal with from Mother Nature, they are much more efficient serving our members across the more than 2,600 miles of line we maintain.

Despite the challenges we constantly face, we are proud to maintain a 99.9% reliability rating. There will be times when thunderstorms inevitably illuminate our warm, summer nights, or storms blow down trees from outside our right-of-way maintenance area, but we will continue strengthening our system to help prevent against outages. Know that our dedicated employees are prepared and ready to respond in the event of any power outages.

*Eddie B. Oldham*