

REAL PEOPLE. REAL POWER.

Tideland Topics

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEMBER-OWNERS OF TIDELAND ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION

HIGH BILL? Extreme cold temps make existing problems worse

Many Tideland members have been grappling with exceptionally high home heating costs as a result of prolonged cold weather and numerous snow and ice events. The co-op's energy auditors have stayed busy this season helping members identify heating system problems and offering advice on how to weatherize.

One elderly member saw her electric bill increase \$300 in one month due to a faulty water heater thermostat. Dozens of members were found to have heating systems problems or disconnected ductwork. Improper thermostat operation was another common source of problems. Co-op employees have even been making courtesy calls to members alerting them to high energy use in hopes of detecting problems as early as possible to avoid future high bills.

But for every member we connect with it seems there are hundreds more who never pick up the phone to ask the co-op for energy advice because they assume everyone has high electric bills. In fact, many members seem surprised when we call to alert them to a high bill because they seem to think it is

somehow reasonable to have an electric bill that is over \$300 or \$400 for one month. No, it's not. If you are paying that much for electricity in one month then chances are you have a problem. And it is probably a problem that has existed all along but it takes a severe temperature change to make it obvious. Case in point: a member in Beaufort County lives in a total electric doublewide and her highest bill this winter was \$218 (1,723 kilowatt hours) and her electric bills year round average \$124. Another member with a two-story total electric modular used only 2,203 kilowatt hours during the coldest 30-day period. Another total electric member in Fairfield Harbour with 2,500 square feet of living space used only 1,181 kilowatt hours of energy in January.

If your electric bills are running over \$300 a month, please call the co-op. We'd love to help you reduce your energy consumption and lower your electric bill without sacrificing indoor comfort. If you currently use propane we'd also love to talk with you about switching to an electric home heating system that will reduce your overall energy bills.



Two ways to give to Operation Round Up

The problem:

- Federal heating assistance has been cut 30% in recent years
- One of the coldest winters in decades
- Reductions in family incomes the result of reduced work hours due to snow closures
- Propane prices shot up to \$4.50, and in some areas propane was rationed due to supply issues, which forced many people to purchase electric space heaters to make it through the cold weather

Be part of the solution by signing up for monthly Operation Round Up contributions or by making a one-time donation to the program. Your donations will help qualifying members with energy costs. To enroll in monthly round up contributions check the box on your electric bill payment return stub. To make a one-time donation to the fund you can make a check payable to the Tideland Electric Care Trust. All donations are tax-deductible and will only be used to assist members with home heating and cooling needs. To learn more visit www.tidelandemc.com.



Message to our Member-Owners: Galloping lines & other ice storm consequences

Right-of-Way Maintenance Update

Tideland has hired Lucas Tree Experts to trim trees in our right-of-way. In March, crews will be working along the Merritt Circuit between Grantsboro and Stonewall. The trimming includes all connected lanes and roads in that area where overhead power lines are present.

Mowing crews will continue to work south of the Pamlico River along Kershaw Road and Janiero Road.

By Paul Spruill
General Manager & CEO

The only galloping typically associated with Ocracoke is that of the island's native pony herd. But on January 29, while the ponies were no doubt huddled together for warmth, the island's main power line along Highway 12 began galloping due to a combination of thick ice and steady winds.

Galloping lines are a phenomenon mostly seen in the upper midwest where flat terrain and harsh winters leave power lines susceptible to ice formation. Ice causes normally round power lines to take on the airfoil shape of an airplane wing (see photo below). This causes the wire to lift in the wind leading to a violent up and down whipping motion. This causes additional stress to the wooden crossarms holding the wire in place. On January 29 galloping lines were reported as far south as Alabama.

Thanks to accurate forecasting, Tideland had dispatched an extra five-man crew to Ocracoke on January 28 in anticipation of galloping lines to support our four linemen who live on the island. The electric system held up well through the night, but the following morning at 5:30 a.m. power went out when galloping lines broke a crossarm on the northernmost end of the island, which in turn brought down six spans of wire. When repairs were complete, attempts to reenergize the island were initially hampered by what we call "cold load pick up." Due to the extreme cold and the length of the outage Ocracoke's demand reached 7.8 megawatts and kicked the system back off. So crews restored power to half of the island hoping to let the load settle down. When the load continued to grow, we partnered with Hyde County Emergency Management and they issued a reverse-911 call to island residents asking for emergency conservation efforts by cutting off house-

hold breakers until power had been restored long enough to let power delivery systems heat up. Those efforts were successful and crews were able to restore power at 11:46 a.m.

Efforts to then work on spot outages were derailed when galloping lines broke another crossarm south of Molasses Creek at 2:10 p.m. Crews replaced the crossarm and manually beat as much ice as possible off the power lines and restored power again at 4:25 p.m. Crews returned to work on individual outages again only to have power go back out at 5:50 p.m. due to an equipment overload. Final power restoration occurred at 7:20 p.m. Crews continued to work into early Thursday morning to clean up remaining individual outages.

It was a long, frustrating day for everyone, and I have to thank our members and our crews for the perseverance they showed that day during harrowing weather condi-

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These photos were taken at Ocracoke on January 29 when galloping lines broke two crossarms.



Cold weather outage safety tips

While no utility lineman likes a major storm, they generally prefer hurricanes to ice storms. Once a hurricane passes the weather is typically ideal for power restoration activities whereas during an ice storm roads can be unsafe, significantly slowing repair efforts. Ice storms also tend to deliver a one-two punch, with an initial round of outages as ice forms on trees and utility structures and another round of problems when thawing begins giving trees another opportunity to take out power lines as they become upright.

Because ice and snow storms are fairly uncommon in eastern North Carolina, many Tidelanders may find themselves unprepared for an extended power outage in freezing temperatures. While some members have secondary heat sources or emergency generators, the vast majority of Tidelanders rely on electricity as their primary heat source. So it's important to plan ahead whenever an ice storm approaches.

- 1) Identify the emergency shelters in your area that may be available to house you and your family in the event of prolonged winter outages.
- 2) Fuel up vehicles in the event that you need to sit inside your running vehicle for warmth. Reminder: never run your vehicle inside a garage and make sure the tailpipe is not covered by snow.
- 3) When signs of icing first begin you may want to raise your thermostat a few degrees

to add extra heat to the home before the outage threat level rises. This would also be a good time to fill several Thermos bottles with hot water so you have something warm to drink if indoor temperatures drop. The water could also be used to fill hot water bottles that provide additional body warmth.

- 4) Create a warm room where family members and pets can remain during a power outage. Choose a small, well insulated room with few windows as your emergency living quarters. Block all drafts to minimize heat loss. Put mattresses on the floor to act as additional floor insulation and layer blankets and quilts.
- 5) Wear layered clothing to retain body heat. Put on several thin layers of clothing instead of one or two bulky garments. Wear a hat and mittens and several pairs of socks.
- 6) Remember to cut off all household breakers with the exception of one for lights when an extreme weather outage starts. This will help prevent overloads of the electric system when crews begin to restore power.
- 7) If you use a kerosene heater or unvented gas heater, follow the manufacturer's recommendations and keep a window cracked for fresh air ventilation. It's also a good idea to make sure you have a battery operated carbon monoxide and smoke detector.



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Galloping lines

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tions. The spirit of cooperation was alive and well that day with our members responding to our call for emergency conservation efforts.

Cold load pickup is not an issue reserved for densely populated areas like Ocracoke or large subdivisions such as Fairfield Harbour. As homes and businesses become more electrified, we work to upgrade capacity and balance load. But under extreme weather circumstances or following days of long outages we really need our members to help us manage load during power restoration. Consider for a moment a school fire drill. Rather than build inordinately wide doorways to allow all the students to rush out at the same time, everyone has learned to exit doorways in an orderly single file manner. The same applies to our electric system. Rather than overbuild electric system capacity to accommodate rare instances of extreme load, which would come at a hefty pricetag for members, the most cost-effective and practical approach is to ask members to cut off household breakers until we restore power.

The Ocracoke outage also emphasized the need for Tidelanders to have a cold weather outage plan in advance of a storm. On February 9, well over 50,000 homes continued to weather four cold days without heat and power in the Pennsylvania region. Closer to home, over one million North Carolinians remember five days in the dark with daytime high temperatures between 32 and 40 degrees in the aftermath of the December 2002 Ice Storm that affected

the Research Triangle Park region. That disaster set an all-time record for the length of power outages across the state and brought less than one inch of ice to the hardest hit locations. Restoring power after an ice event requires patience and time on the part of the electric utility and the homeowner.

Our recent Ocracoke experience tells a story of repairing a single broken crossarm, restoring power and soon thereafter having the scenario repeat itself when another crossarm breaks. In a significant ice storm a Tidelander could find himself at home with no ability to travel on iced roadways while suffering for days without heat and light. Please consider what steps you can take to protect yourself and your family for multiple days without heat. Excluding a functional generator at home, locating a heat secure shelter before the storm arrives will allow you to travel safely. If forced to 'shelter in place' (in your home or neighborhood), there may be folks with whom you could share an alternative heating source for warming a single living room or a community meeting space.

As of this publication in early February, we have all stared down two serious winter storms in 2014 that favored us with snow and sleet as opposed to crippling freezing rain. Please share your emergency preparedness ideas with the Tideland community via the co-op's Facebook page or send them to me directly via email: paulspruill@tidelandemc.com. We have also listed some tips on page 27 that may help you 'shelter in place' during a winter storm.

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Give it your best shot

This summer, Tideland EMC will provide all-expenses-paid scholarships for two girls to attend the NC State Girls Basketball Camp in Raleigh (June 23-26) and two boys to attend the Roy Williams Basketball Camp in Chapel Hill (June 21-25). The camps will work closely with attendees to develop fundamental skills to help students both on and off the court.



Rising sixth through eighth graders are eligible to apply. The deadline to apply is March 28. Applicants will be judged on academics, extra-curricular activities and written essay.

Applications have been mailed to all middle school coaches in Tideland's six-county service territory. Students can also download an application at our website: www.tidelandemc.com. For more information call program coordinator Heidi Smith at Tideland EMC at 252.944.2410.