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## Electric co-ops effectively respond to disasters

**LAST WINTER**, the ice storm that hit our state ravaged some of our sister co-ops' electric distribution systems.



Fortunately, we were able to give assistance to a fellow electric cooperative in our state. That's the way the co-op network works.

Disasters, whether caused by nature, accidents or hostile acts, exact an enormous cost, both in

economic and human terms. Electric cooperatives, like Lynches River, have a unique and effective approach to emergency management and disaster recovery: mutual assistance. Following a disaster, co-ops will rapidly deploy support staff and equipment to emergency and recovery zones to assist sister co-ops.

Because the national network of transmission and distribution infrastructure owned by electric cooperatives has been built to federal standards, line crews from any co-op in America can arrive on the scene ready to provide emergency support, secure in their knowledge of the system's engineering.

### FEMA helps us rebuild

We work closely with other first responders, state and local government and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure an effective and coordinated response in the event of an emergency.

Since cooperatives are not-for-profit organizations, we are eligible for financial assistance from FEMA, which can fund a major portion of the cost of emergency work to restore power

and the cost of repairing, restoring, rebuilding or replacing damaged facilities.

This system gives electric cooperatives the ability to respond effectively and quickly in times of crisis and protects the financial interests of the cooperative members at the same time.

Unfortunately, with tighter budgets, securing FEMA reimbursements after a disaster has become more difficult. Following Superstorm Sandy, Congress changed the rules: FEMA now allocates funds for rebuilding based on an estimate of costs, not on the actual cost. If the estimate is higher than the actual cost, the excess funds must be used for FEMA-approved projects. But if the estimate is low, the co-op must pay the difference.

### Lessons learned

Electric cooperatives across the country learn from disasters. We learn how to protect our systems better, and we learn how to become more resilient. When it comes to resiliency, we have a good story to tell. Electric cooperatives serve members in the most rugged, remote terrain in the country and have learned how to restore power in extremely difficult circumstances.

While I know better than to make any predictions about what Mother Nature has in store for us, I believe these lessons will help us the next time disaster strikes.

A handwritten signature of David A. Altman in black ink.

**David A. Altman**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Youth Tour participant a real stand-out

Her community service efforts make her a winner, CEO says

**THERE WERE A** lot of winners—and not just prize winners!—in the crowd at Lynches River’s 2014 Annual Meeting back in October, but one young lady really stood out.

LeAnna Jacobs, one of four local students who represented the co-op on the Washington Youth Tour in June, received special recognition from co-op President David A. Altman at the meeting. During the summer after the Youth Tour, Altman noted, LeAnna completed a community service project in order to compete for a \$5,000 college scholarship offered to students who participate in the cooperative-sponsored tour of the nation’s capital.

“With the help of volunteers, LeAnna delivered 124 hygiene packages to the Pee Dee Coalition,” said Altman, adding, “She may not have won the scholarship, but she’s a winner in my book.”

### Showing compassion

LeAnna also won the appreciation of the Pee Dee Coalition, a Florence-based organization dedicated to the reduction of sexual assault, family violence, child abuse and its victims. The women who must turn to the Pee Dee Coalition for shelter and aid are often in dire straits, as LeAnna notes: “A lot of women come in and they only have



**LeAnna Jacobs at Lynches River’s 2014 Annual Meeting. “She’s a winner in my book,” said co-op Chief Executive Officer David A. Altman.**

the clothes that are on their backs,” she says.

LeAnna became aware of the organization’s work through her church, which has previously aided the Pee Dee Coalition. She and her fellow volunteers also made welcome packages for the women “so when they come in, they feel more welcome.”

A senior at Chesterfield High School this year, LeAnna was joined on last summer’s Youth Tour by Ryne Mangum of McBee High School, Pankti Patel of South Pointe Christian School and Austin Truesdale of Andrew Jackson High School. They were among 64 South Carolina students sponsored by electric co-ops around the Palmetto State on the five-day, expense-paid Youth Tour. The South Carolina delegation joined thousands of their peers from across America on the annual event for rising high school seniors.

### The spirit of service

LeAnna was one of about a dozen S.C. Youth Tourists

who rose to the challenge of creating a community service project in order to compete for the R.D. Bennett Scholarship. All students selected to go on the Washington Youth Tour are qualified to compete for the scholarship, named for the first manager of The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, Inc. (ECSC), the state association for Lynches River and 19 other S.C. co-ops.

The scholarship winner is chosen based on the successful completion of their community service project, with the winner announced in August after the Youth Tour. A one-time check in the amount of \$5,000 will be issued to the student and the college, university, trade or technical school of the winning student’s choice, by ECSC.

Youth Tour coordinator Van O’Cain, director of public and member relations for ECSC, says students like LeAnna would have made Robert D. Bennett proud. “Mr. Bennett, who led the state association from 1950 until his retirement in 1980, strongly believed that electric cooperatives should support their local communities, providing a better quality of life for their members. His spirit of community service is reflected in this scholarship opportunity,” O’Cain says.

### Apply now! Deadline Feb. 27

High school juniors can now apply through Friday, Feb. 27, for the 2015 Washington Youth Tour, set for June 13–19. Lynches River is looking for students who are strong in their schoolwork and exhibit community involvement and good communication skills. Applicants will also need to exhibit knowledge gained about electric cooperatives during the application process.

Selected students experience democracy at work. Youth Tour participants meet members of their Congress, tour sites of historical significance and attend cultural events. To be eligible, students must be rising high school seniors and live in Lynches River’s service area. To see what an exciting experience the Washington Youth Tour can be, visit [YouthTour.coop](http://YouthTour.coop).

To access a Youth Tour application form, visit [LynchesRiver.com](http://LynchesRiver.com), click on the Community tab, then Washington Youth Tour. Local teachers and guidance counselors can also apply to serve as chaperones. Both application forms are also available at Lynches River’s office.

