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**MISSION STATEMENT**

Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative will operate as a competitive provider of energy services and a partner with local communities, with a focus on safety, service and integrity.

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This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

## The greenest of the green



**SINCE ITS INCEPTION** 18 months ago, our Blue Ridge Energy Services Department has been producing some impressive results for cooperative members. This enthusiastic employee team is heavily involved in quite a list of initiatives, each of which is

designed to make life better for those we serve.

Among their responsibilities are the installation of rooftop solar systems and the marketing and servicing of emergency generator units. These folks are also involved in equipping members' homes with smart thermostats and performing research on battery-storage systems. Additionally, in light of the growing popularity of electric vehicles, they're staying on top of developments, and preparing appropriate initiatives, related to that business.

### Geothermal heat pumps

One other service which has captured the department's attention is that of geothermal heat pumps. The key to this appliance's operation is a loop of fluid-filled pipe that can be buried either vertically or horizontally on the member's property. This installed loop has a life expectancy of 50 to 100 years.

Six feet or more beneath the ground's surface, our region's soil has a temperature reading that holds steady in the 60-degree range. Winter or summer, the heat pump utilizes that temperate soil to produce either heating or cooling, as the season may require. Compared to a standard air-to-air heat pump, the ground-source model boasts much-lower operating costs. As a matter of fact,

when it comes to all energy-efficiency technologies, I honestly view the geothermal heat pump as "the greenest of the green."

### Tax credits, rebates, other incentives

The single perceived drawback for a geothermal unit would be the expense associated with installing that underground loop. However, this concern has essentially ceased to be much of an issue. First of all, in recognition of the unit's significant contribution to the efficient use of resources, tax credits and/or rebates are available to homeowners. These benefits are provided at both the state and federal level. Furthermore, the cooperative is supportive as well, offering monetary incentives and a very attractive loan program.

When all these factors are placed on the table for consideration, I can foresee the geothermal heat pump as a major player in the promotion of the wise use of electricity. I'd invite you to contact our Blue Ridge energy services group to get a complete picture of how this technology can be put to work for you.

Since this November report will be my last one for 2019, I don't want to miss the opportunity to remember the upcoming holiday observances. With that in mind, I want to end this article by wishing you and yours a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas, and a prosperous New Year!

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
 President and CEO

### Holiday Schedule

Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative will be closed November 28–29, December 24–25, and January 1 for the holidays. We will have dispatchers in the office and crews on call for emergencies during these times. Happy Holidays!

## Geothermal provides year-round efficiency

**ONE OF THE** most appealing things about our locale is the presence of four distinct seasons throughout the year. Those seasons go from blazing summers that cool to frigid winters. However, what many people don't realize is that the temperature below ground (regardless of climate or season) stays fairly consistent all year. While air temperatures can vary greatly from day to night or winter to summer, the temperature just a few feet below the earth's surface stays an average 55°-70°F year-round.

The ground is able to maintain temperature consistency because it absorbs 47 percent of the sun's heat as it hits the earth's surface.

Geothermal systems are able to tap into this free energy with a series of underground pipes called an earth loop. The loop circulates water to move heat energy to and from your home. It's the heart of a geothermal system and its biggest advantage over ordinary heat pumps, air conditioners and fossil fuel furnaces. The type of loop is based on available space, ground composition and installation costs for specific areas.

Most importantly, geothermal systems can save you up to 70 percent on your heating, cooling, and hot water

costs. Does saving money with the greenest, most efficient, most cost-effective heat and cooling unit sound appealing to you? Blue Ridge is partnering with several WaterFurnace geothermal heat pump dealers to facilitate installation of these systems. Right now, there are a number of rebates and tax incentives available, making the cost of a geothermal unit very

attractive. The Blue Ridge package includes:

A rebate of \$ 1,600 /ton (installed by a participating dealer)

Blue Ridge Electric on-bill financing @ 6.5 percent for up to 7 years for qualifying

members

These along with federal and state tax credits make this an affordable option to heat and cool your home for years to come. Because of the extraordinary efficiency of a WaterFurnace system, most homeowners save more on monthly bills than they pay for the system when installation costs are financed. Any added investment over traditional equipment is usually recovered in just a few years, and many homeowners see a return on investment of 10-20 percent over the life of the system. Visit [blueridge.coop/gogeo](http://blueridge.coop/gogeo) for more information and the answer to additional questions or call (800) 240-3400.



Annual  
**Tree Lighting**  
Ceremony

**Tuesday, November 26 at 5:15 pm**

Join us as we light the tree on the lawn at the co-op office in Pickens. Reverend David Taylor from Grace United Methodist Church will present a devotional, and Ansley Burns will sing several Christmas selections. Following the lighting of the tree, light refreshments will be served. We hope you'll be part of this holiday tradition.

## Here's a hot tip to cool winter costs

**AS TEMPERATURES FALL**, Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative needs your help to Beat the Peak on cold winter mornings. If you aren't already helping, would \$1,000 interest you?

Peaks occur at times of high energy use by many co-op members, like mornings in winter and late afternoons in summer. Beat the Peak is a voluntary program to lower energy use and costs at these times. Currently, 33,069 members of 18 co-ops across South Carolina participate, including 2,384 members of Blue Ridge Electric.

To attract more participants, the co-ops have sweetened the deal with another prize drawing: Any member signed up for Beat the Peak by 11:59 p.m. December 15 will be entered to win a \$1,000 Visa gift card. Participation is limited to one entry per co-op account. The winner will be selected by December 20.

Sign up today at [BeatThePeak.com](http://BeatThePeak.com). Contest rules are at [EnergySmartSC.org/1000contest](http://EnergySmartSC.org/1000contest).

