



**Southern Pine  
Electric Power  
Association**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



## Nuclear power examined in this month's special insert

There has been much discussion about energy issues over the past several months, and rightly so. Costs continue to increase, the debates between the presidential candidates are heating up and the recent hurricanes have once again shown how vulnerable our energy production areas along the Gulf of Mexico can be. We live in a society based on energy, especially electricity.

It is certainly important to find ways to be efficient and use electricity wisely, but the fact is that Americans will be using more electricity in the future. We will need more sources to generate it and more lines to deliver it.

As a group, Mississippi's electric power associations are seeing continuous growth in their service areas. We serve 730,000 members across 85 percent of the state's land mass. New residential and business customers are moving onto our systems, and it is our responsibility to be able to meet their needs for reliable, economical

electric service, now and in the future.

In August, the Mississippi Public Service Commission (PSC) held fact-finding hearings about the state's future needs for electricity and how to meet them. While the PSC does not oversee our rates as not-for-profit electric power associations, it does grant certificates of need for facilities such as new plants, substations and transmission lines. South Mississippi Electric, our cooperative power supplier, was involved in the hearings regarding its plans for building new generation facilities. Based on its projections, future demand in our area will require at least one new power plant with-



**By Don Jordan**  
General Manager

in the next 10 years, and maybe sooner.

I want to assure you we are looking out for the needs of our members during these changing times. We are part of a national group of cooperatives investigating options for renewable resources, although the potential for their large-scale use in Mississippi is not great. We continually plan for the future demands on our system.

Our special insert this month focuses on the nuclear power industry. As you probably know, we have a nuclear plant in southwest Mississippi that has been providing electricity since 1985. Although the capital costs to build a new nuclear plant are high, the low fuel and production costs make it attractive for meeting our base load needs.

Nuclear power must be one of the options we consider as we face the complicated issues of how to continue powering our growing economy.

## Co-op Month underscores the cooperative difference

Each October, cooperatives all across America celebrate the role, accomplishments and contributions of our nation's cooperatives. Observing National Co-op Month gives electric co-ops yet another reason to tell our members that they are part of something special.

As a member of Southern Pine Electric Power

Association, a consumer-owned electric cooperative, you enjoy a number of benefits:

- You, your family and/or business enjoy electric service at a reasonable price, despite the fact that you live in a rural or fairly rural area of Mississippi.

- When you receive service from our electric cooperative, you are more than just a customer—you are an owner of our business. Southern Pine is account-

able to you.

- Margins earned through electric sales are used to make improvements to the electrical systems and to help keep rates low. This benefits our local economy.

- As a member, you have a voice in the future of this cooperative. You may

call at any time to voice questions or concerns; you may attend and participate in the Southern Pine's Annual Membership Meeting; and your thoughts and concerns are reflected through the board of directors, which is made of co-op members elected by the membership.

- From Southern Pine's inception, it has been a socially responsible organization dedicated to the well-being of the

area it serves. Southern Pine sponsors safety programs, provides special services, presents electrical safety programs free of charge to schools and other groups, and works diligently with economic development organizations in each of the 11 counties it serves.

- Southern Pine is a good employer, operating offices in five locations. The money our employees earn and spend stays in the local communities.

- Southern Pine gives community members opportunities to develop their leadership skills through employee training initiatives as well as through programs sponsored through local chambers of commerce and economic development organizations. In addition, Southern Pine sponsors a Youth Leadership Program annually, which assists high school juniors in developing their skills. Many of our employees are truly active community leaders and use

the leadership skills they've developed at work to benefit church and civic organizations.

- Southern Pine plays a major role in improving the quality of life for its members and strives to keep its mission of high-quality service at the forefront of all it does.

Southern Pine is a great organization and its employers are proud to provide reliable, affordable electric service to 64,000 meters. Learn more about Southern Pine at our Web site, [www.spepa.com](http://www.spepa.com).

For more information on National Cooperative Month, visit [www.coopmonth.coop](http://www.coopmonth.coop). This year's content includes the updated "A Day in the Life" publication with new intriguing cooperative member scenarios, as well as other great tools to help educate consumers the impact cooperatives have in their everyday lives.

### THE ENERGY EXPERT

## Get ready for the swap to a smarter electric meter

As many of you already know, Southern Pine Electric Power Association is in the process of replacing your old electromechanical meter with a new electronic meter that will be read automatically through the power lines. There are many benefits in embracing this new technology, including faster outage responses, voltage monitoring and remote service switching.

A company called Sooner Meter is performing the meter swap. Sooner's employees are knowledgeable, polite and courteous, and they will always introduce themselves while replacing your meter. They will work fast to ensure that your loss of power during the meter swap will be as brief as possible.

Here are a few things you can do to help make sure your meter swap will be done quickly and easily.

### Make sure the meter base is easily accessible

If you are thinking about building an addition to your home, enclosing a

garage or porch, putting up siding or even creating more floor space for your business, make sure the meter base will not end up inside the building. Keep the meter base on the outside of the building. This will help our employees as well as yourself in the future if, for some reason, Southern Pine needs to reach your meter or perform maintenance to your service.

If you have already enclosed the meter inside your home or business, this situation needs to be corrected. Simply adding a wall, window, vinyl or wood siding, or even a fence may hinder our employees from opening or even getting to your meter base. Proper workspace must be maintained around electrical equipment. The National Electric Code



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Engineer



*What not to do: This remodeling job resulted in a wall being built too close to the homeowner's electric meter, preventing access to the meter by Southern Pine. When you remodel or add a room to your home, make sure the addition allows a proper working space around your electric meter, as required by Southern Pine and the National Electric Code. An open space of at least 30 inches should be left in front of and around the meter.*

(NEC) states that: "Sufficient access and working space shall be provided and maintained about all electrical equipment to permit ready and safe operation and maintenance of such equipment." What does this mean exactly? Let's take a look.

**Width of working space:** The National Electric Code requires an open space in front of and around the meter of at least 30 inches. Also, there should be nothing above the meter socket that would keep it from fully opening.

**Entrance to working space:** All Southern Pine customers must allow our employees at least one entrance to the meter equipment, with enough working space around the metering equipment for our employees to work safely.

### Make sure the meter base is safe

If your meter base is old and rusty, it may be time to replace it. Take a few minutes to look at your meter base to make sure it has all the proper covers, and that all covers are fastened securely. Taking these precautions will ensure that you, your child and even small animals will not accidentally contact any wires that could cause

serious injuries or death.

While you are looking at your meter base, make sure your electric service ground is in good shape. Your electric service ground is a bare copper wire that is connected inside your meter base and to a ground rod, which is driven into the earth. This electric service ground helps keep your electrical service safe and helps out during close lightning strikes.

In a building not properly grounded, you could come in contact with a stray electrical charge when touching water faucets, drains and refrigerators. Improper grounding also may allow frequent damage to sensitive electronics during lightning storms. If your electric service ground is not present, or the connection between the copper wire and the ground rod is loose, please have this corrected.

Remember, if your meter base needs to be replaced or your service needs grounding, be sure to contact a qualified electrician to do this work. It is your responsibility as a Southern Pine member to provide a meter base that is sealable by our employees.

If you have any questions regarding your service entrance, please call your local Southern Pine office.



### Ready for a fast emergency response

*Joe Hardin, staff assistant at Southern Pine Electric Power Association, checks out a load of emergency power line construction materials prepared in advance of Hurricane Gustav's arrival in the Gulf Coast. Southern Pine employees containerized the materials to facilitate a fast delivery to its warehouses in the event of an emergency. This is but one of the many ways Southern Pine prepares for emergency power restoration year-round. Outages caused by Gustav affected 6,570 meters served by Southern Pine, or roughly 10 percent of meters in the cooperative's 11-county service area.*