



## This month's power bill reflects last month's freeze

Although you are actually paying less per kilowatt-hour for electricity than you were in 2009, your recent Southern Pine bill is probably much higher than normal. That's simply because you used more electricity to keep warm during the frigid temperatures that settled in our area in early January, prompting Gov. Barbour to declare a state of emergency.

With low temperatures in the teens and daytime highs rarely above freezing in many areas, demand for electricity soared and remained high for several days.

Many of our members reached all-time highs in the number of kilowatt-hours they used during this period. South Mississippi Electric Power Association, our wholesale power provider, reported record demand for electricity from the 11 electric power associations it serves in Mississippi.

Before the winter freeze struck, Southern Pine had passed along a reduction in the cost of power, reflecting the lower cost of fuels South Mississippi Electric uses to generate electricity.

Few folks, however, noticed the

decrease due to the cold weather's impact on their energy use.

Southern Pine promotes energy efficiency year-round. In extreme weather, whether a January deep freeze or an August heat wave, energy efficiency really pays off, not only in lower energy bills but in comfort, too.

Whether the ground hog sees its shadow or not, we still have weeks of winter weather to come. So if your home could benefit from some energy-efficiency improvements, here are a few ideas:

- Keep your home's thermostat set at 68 degrees or lower in the winter.
- Keep your heating/cooling unit well maintained. If it runs all the time, there may be a problem with the unit.
- Check your attic for adequate insulation. Inspect duct work for loose fittings and damage.
- Check for air leaks in windows and doors. If outside air is entering, fix the leak with caulking or weatherstripping.
- Repair hot water leaks and drips. You're paying to heat the water, so don't waste it.
- Check your water heater's temperature

setting. You may want to lower it.

- Change the filter in your forced-air heating system at least every three months; monthly is better if you have indoor pets.

- Mobile homes should have skirting around the bottom. Make sure duct work is properly installed and secured.

- Close the fireplace damper when not in use.
- Keep draperies closed at night to reduce drafts caused when warm interior air strikes cold glass.

Electricity is still one of today's best bargains. An average Southern Pine member spends less than \$4.50 per day for all the conveniences that electricity makes possible. According to the Department of Energy, Southern Pine's rates are still among nation's lowest.

The important thing to remember is that you and your family have the power to control your energy use through energy conservation awareness. Check out our Web site for more energy tips, at [www.spepa.com](http://www.spepa.com). If you would like a free booklet with tips on energy use, visit or call the Southern Pine district office that serves you.



### Energy Efficiency

### Tip of the Month

Use your microwave for cooking whenever possible. A microwave oven uses 50 to 65 percent less energy than a conventional oven. However, a conventional oven may be more appropriate for larger size items when cooking time is increased.

Source: Touchstone Energy Cooperatives

## Retirees represent 132 years of devoted service

Four Southern Pine Electric Power Association employees, valued for their service and respected by their co-workers, are embarking on retirement.

Southern Pine as well as its members gained from these employees' skills, dedication and focus on the cooperative's mission of service. We salute them with the following brief profiles of their long and successful careers.

### Betty Hudson

#### A champion of community service

Betty's retirement in January brought to a close her 14-year career at Southern Pine's Taylorsville headquarters office. The Lone Star resident joined the staff of Southern Pine's accounting department as a clerk in 1995.

She became clerk for the cooperative's Taylorsville District in 2001. She served the last months of her career as a district customer service representative.

Betty's duties included maintaining transportation and payroll records. She helped Southern Pine control transportation costs through careful monitoring of vehicle maintenance, fuel use and related expenses. She also served for many years as secretary for Southern Pine's annual membership meeting.

Unofficially, Betty motivated her co-workers to take part in various local charitable activities, including the American Cancer Society's "Relay for Life" fundraisers. Thanks to her leadership, Southern Pine was able to exceed its fund-raising goal for several years.

Betty also helped support a Presbyterian mission to raise funds to buy Bibles by saving cancelled stamps from Southern Pine members' bill payments for sale to collectors.

Southern Pine employees rallied to support Betty's participation in a 2000 marathon to benefit the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.



Betty Hudson

"The Southern Pine family is awesome," Betty said. "I've loved working here."

In retirement, she plans to continue her community service work, travel and "visit those grandchildren."

She and her husband, John Mike, have three sons—Chris, Brad and Jayson—and six grandchildren, ranging in age from 9 months to 18 years.

### Charles Pickering

#### Exemplifies 'Service Proud' motto

Charles retires this month after a 32-year career devoted to improving the reliability of electric service for Southern Pine members. Charles worked with both right-of-way and line crews during his employment. He was hired in 1977 to assist a right-of-way crew. "Our job was to keep the power on by keeping the right of way clean," he explained.

Two years later, Charles became a truck driver. From 1979 until 1994 he operated winch, utility and aerial bucket trucks in support of line and right-of-way crews. His task was to set the truck up for the job at hand and provide equipment to crew members—with safe work practices foremost in mind.

The best part, Charles said, was working alongside respected co-workers and making a real difference in the reliability of electric service to members.

"It's been a joyous life," he said. "My co-workers are good people to work with, and the people we were dealing with treated us well. When [members] see you coming, they know you're coming to help them."

"It's all about serving people, and people appreciate it," he added. "That makes you proud to serve them."

Charles plans to enjoy retirement by fishing, hunting and vegetable gardening. He enjoys collecting turkey calls and calling up jakes to delight his grandchildren.

He and his wife, Elnora, a teacher in Collins, have two children—Wontonya



Charles Pickering

Barnes and Charla—and six grandchildren, ranging in age from 5 to 25 years.

### Donald Ray Sherman

#### Skilled, responsive troubleshooter

Donald Ray devoted his 47-year career to helping build, maintain, repair and upgrade Southern Pine's massive electrical system until his retirement last month.

Donald Ray's career began in 1962 in the cooperative's engineering department. He was a helper on a staking crew before becoming a journeyman lineman in 1969, then a construction working foreman in 1986. He again worked as a journeyman lineman and relief serviceman before becoming a full-time serviceman in 2002 for the cooperative's Taylorsville District.

A serviceman is generally the first Southern Pine employee to seek out the source of a power outage, usually in response to a call from a member. He determines whether he can restore service safely himself; if not, a standby crew is dispatched for more extensive repairs.

A power outage can happen at any time of day or night, in any type of weather. "The sun can be shining and someone's lights would be out," Donald Ray said. The cause can be as unexpected (and difficult to pinpoint) as a tree frog lodged in a lightning arrester.

Donald Ray enjoyed the personal contact he had with Southern Pine members in answering their questions and resolving service problems. "You learn about your customers' needs and try to help them any way you can. The serviceman is about the closest [employee] to the customer," he said.

He said he will miss the camaraderie of his co-workers. "Southern Pine is a family. Everybody's close to each other."

Donald Ray and his wife, Linda, have two children—Rhonda and Kevin—and three grandchildren, ages 15 to 18.

He looks forward to planting a garden

soon and helping his daughter and grandson with their show calf.

### Jerry Tanner

#### Selfless commitment to service

Until his retirement last month, Jerry served a valuable role for 39 years in helping crews build and repair power lines safely and efficiently.

Jerry started working at Southern Pine in 1971 as a groundman on a line crew. Through the years he worked as an "A-frame" truck driver, a hole-digger operator and the operator of a utility line truck outfitted with myriad safety features.

The safety of his co-workers as well as himself was foremost in Jerry's mind, regardless of the task at hand.

As a truck operator, he was responsible for setting up his vehicle at work sites in accordance with safety regulations and the safe hauling of trailers loaded with long utility poles. He also served as a spotter for safety hazards as linemen worked on overhead power lines. "You can see a lot more from the ground than they can most times," he said.

Jerry and his co-workers helped restore power in the wake of some of Mississippi's most devastating ice storms and hurricanes. They volunteered to assist electric power associations in northern Mississippi affected by two severe ice storms in the 1990s.

"I liked the outside work," Jerry said, "even though I worked a lot of freezing nights when I got called out."

He joins other retirees in noting the enjoyment of being a part of the Southern Pine work force. "It's just a great place to work. I'd do it all over again—even the cold days and the hot days. Even the ice storms!" he said.

Jerry looks forward to spending more time fishing and traveling, maybe in western states. He and his wife, Joyce, also like to garden. Jerry's family includes a daughter, Lisa; a son, Neal, who is deceased; three stepchildren, Jennifer, April and Kevin; and a 16-year-old grandson.



Jerry Tanner

### PAYMENT OPTIONS

#### • Bank drafts are hassle-free

A bank draft plan that automatically pays your electric bill from your bank account each month is available from Southern Pine Electric Power Association. The amount due on your electric bill will be withdrawn automatically from your bank account on the bill's due date. You will continue to receive a monthly bill, but it will be marked "pre-paid by bank draft" and is intended only for your records. Get details at your local district office.

#### • Budget with leveled billing

Southern Pine's leveled payment plan, for residential members, allows bill payments of approximately the same amount each month. Your monthly payment is based on an average of your actual monthly power consumption for a one-year period.

To qualify, you must be a residential customer of tax-free status; your meter must have established at least 12 months of billing history at your current place of residence with no record of meter tampering, disconnects or returned checks during that period; and the meter for the account must be accessible to meter readers.

#### • Tips for using a drop box

All Southern Pine offices have a drop box for your convenience in making after-hours and weekend payments. When using a drop box, please remember to include your bill stub with your payment, or write the Southern Pine account number on your check or money order. This will ensure your payment gets credited to the proper account. Never leave cash in a drop box; you will not have proof of payment nor any recourse should the cash be lost or stolen.

Southern Pine implemented a new bill format in January to provide members a simple, easy to read monthly statement. If you have questions about the new format, please call your local district office.

Visit Southern Pine online at [www.spepa.com](http://www.spepa.com)