Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative
Lighting the way since 1937

www.svec-coop.com
We're here to serve
(8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. • Monday - Friday, Lobby Hours)

Business Office: 800-447-4509
(8 a.m. - 5 p.m. • Monday - Friday)

Power Outage Reporting
(Day, Night, Weekends & Holidays)
800-752-0025

SERVING THE SUWANNEE VALLEY
OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE
SVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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CEO'S CORNER

Lighting the way

Michael S. McWaters
Executive V.P./CEO

One of the best parts of starting a new year is the feeling of untapped potential for the months to come. There are many kinds of resolutions and goals we could achieve, and it's just a matter of putting our ideas into motion.

Meeting resolutions and accomplishing goals requires planning and the right strategies — two things that are always at the top of our minds here at Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative. That's true whether we're responding to outages or implementing programs to benefit our members.

In this newsletter, you can learn about our power provider's generation resources and how we are working together and planning ahead to ensure the cooperative can continue to provide the same affordable, reliable electric service you've come to expect.

You can also learn how SVEC dispatchers monitor our electric system to stay on top of any issues, as well as how they communicate with and orchestrate the activities of the crews who can get them fixed.

We're dedicated to providing excellent service to our member-owners and, as a part of this community, want to do everything we can to help it thrive.

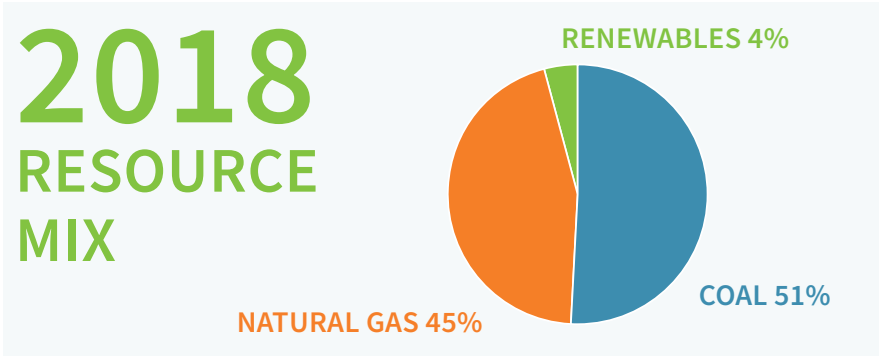
So as we kick off 2018 and begin the cooperative's 81st year, I'd like to wish all of you success in meeting your resolutions and goals in the months ahead. With the support of our trustees and you, our members, we will strive to do the same. ■

Suwannee Valley
CURRENTS

January 2018

Planning for success

A LOOK AT SEMINOLE'S RESOURCE MIX



At the beginning of each January, people across the world create New Year's resolutions and set goals to accomplish in the new year. Whether the resolution is to walk 2 miles daily after work or to save enough for a dream vacation, most goals require planning to be achieved.

Each year, SVEC resolves to continuously provide safe, affordable and reliable electricity to our members, like you. To do this, we work hand in hand with our wholesale power provider, Seminole Electric Cooperative, to plan for our future needs.

Seminole is a generation and transmission cooperative that is jointly owned by SVEC and eight other distribution electric cooperatives in Florida. Collectively, about 1.6 million people and businesses in parts of 42 Florida counties rely on Seminole's member cooperatives for electricity.

To meet the electricity demand of so many consumers, Seminole owns generation resources powered by coal, natural gas, solar and other renewable resources.

Seminole's primary energy resources include the Seminole Generating Station (SGS) and the Richard J. Midulla Generating Station (MGS).

MGS, located on the Hardee and Polk County line, is an 810-megawatt facility that uses natural gas as its primary fuel. Seminole's newest source of generation is Cooperative Solar, a 2.2-megawatt solar facility adjacent to MGS.

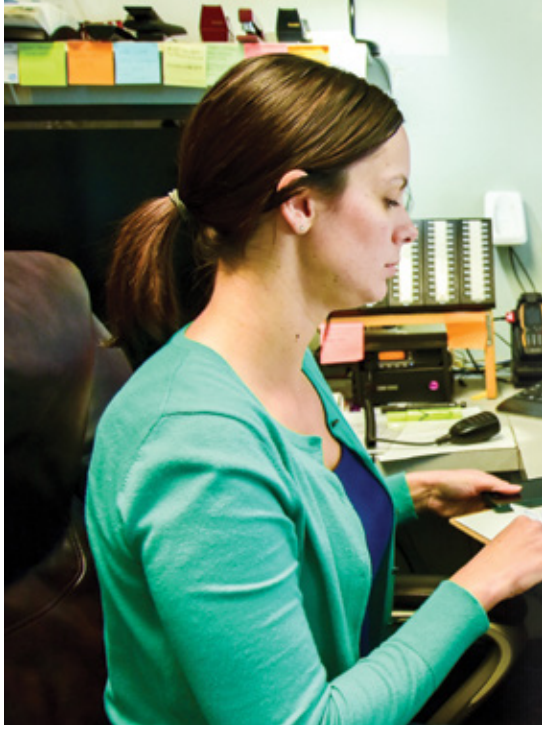
Located in Putnam County, just north of Palatka, SGS has two 650-megawatt coal-fired generating units that began commercial operation in 1984.

Seminole recently completed a thorough planning process to determine and prepare for the future energy needs of SVEC and its other member cooperatives. One result was the decision to remove one of the coal units from service in about five years. To replace that energy source, Seminole will build a new plant on SGS property — a combined-cycle, natural gas-fired facility that will provide approximately 1,050 megawatts of reliable electric generation. In addition to the new gas facility, Seminole will be entering into agreements to purchase power from other solar and natural gas-fired plants.

For SVEC and Seminole, the reliability of the energy you use is essential to the electric cooperative business. Whether you need to cool your home, light a room or charge your phone, SVEC and Seminole are working around the clock to ensure that energy is available when you need it — not only in 2018 but for many years to come. ■

THE ORCHESTRA CONDUCTORS

How dispatchers coordinate SVEC's outage responses



Working dispatch for Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative occasionally comes with its quiet days. But just as often, even the slow shifts erupt into a flurry of activity at a moment's notice.

"You can go from complete calm one minute and then the next minute you're on both phones and the radio while talking to the sheriff's department about a car that hit a pole," says Leslie Grinnell, an SVEC dispatcher for nine years. "It can get really busy really quick, and you just never know when it's coming."

That may come as a surprise to members who only know dispatch as the people who report their outage information to crews in the field. In reality, at least one dispatcher is on call at all times. These professionals coordinate with almost every part of the cooperative, from member services to line crews.

On a quiet day, a dispatcher might have to send right-of-way or service crews to take care of routine maintenance, notify members of work to be done in their area, or work on ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of dispatch and system control processes.

During a typical outage, dispatchers work to determine and isolate the source of the outage, direct repair crews to where they need to go, monitor the crews' progress, and re-energize the line when it's safe to do so. Dispatchers will also reroute power when possible to help get power on more quickly.

"There are many times when dispatchers will be talking on the phone in one ear, have a two-way radio in their hand, and maybe have another call in the other ear," says Energy Control Center Supervisor Jerry Yunes. "They have their hands in everything and have to memorize quite a few moving parts. They're almost like an orchestra conductor."

HITTING THE RIGHT NOTES

If the cooperative is an orchestra, then the aftermath of a major storm is where the tempo really picks up. For dispatch, the process always begins with locating the source of the problem.

Once an outage is reported, the cooperative's outage management system can predict the locations of other possible outages and send signals to meters in that area. If the signals come back showing those meters are not receiving power, SVEC can log those outages even if the members aren't home to notice.

After enough information has been gathered to pinpoint the cause of the problem, dispatch will deploy crews.

"We try to listen to all the messages and narrow it down to find out exactly where the issue is," says dispatcher Gabe Carver. "If we can get somewhere in the vicinity of the problem, crews can go straight to it, find it and fix it without having to ride the lines looking for it. That can save almost an hour."

As crews are dispatched, SVEC will post a message to SmartHub or the outage hotline, letting members know a crew is on the way or on-site. From that point on, dispatch is in constant contact with crews via radio, cellphone and even text.

When they arrive, crews verify the outage and notify dispatch when they have found the source of the problem. After the repair, crews must let dispatch know they're ready to re-energize the line to ensure no equipment or employees working on other sections of the system will be harmed.

"A lot of the job is safety-based, and that's when it really matters," says Grinnell. "You have to know where your crews are and keep track of the guys who are working on the lines."

Each request to restore power is communicated three times to ensure no one is caught unaware. Once the linemen are given the go-ahead, the repaired section of the system is energized and crews confirm restoration of power.

For Yunes, the partnership between dispatch and field crews is key to the job. Those in the field may rely on dispatch for safety, but dispatchers rely just as much on them for needed information.

"We're able to do our work from dispatch through automation, but our eyes in the field are the linemen," he says. "They tell us where they're at, where they need the power on and where they need it off."

THE BEST INSTRUMENTS

As complicated as all that may sound, new technology has actually simplified the process in recent years. Carver, who has worked dispatch at SVEC for 16 years, recalls when the cooperative relied on a machine to print paper tickets for each outage report.

Those piles of tickets had to be organized by each substation, feeder and section of line before they could even begin to identify the source of a major outage. "We might have six or seven tables in a room, all with hundreds of pieces of paper on them," Carver says. "It took several people to work on it. I can tell you, the technology has come a long way."

Today, much of that process has been streamlined with the help of both automated meter infrastructure that allows dispatchers to remotely check which meters have power and an outage management system that makes it easier to pinpoint where an outage started.

Leslie Grinnell, an SVEC dispatcher for nine years, says that keeping the crews safe is a major part of her job. She gives the go-ahead to re-energize lines once everyone is clear.

While an aspiring dispatcher only needs a high school diploma to get their foot in the door, they need to earn a number of certifications before they go to work. In fact, dispatchers are continually required to earn new certifications as technology develops around automation, electronic switching and load management.

Perhaps most importantly, dispatchers have to be well-versed in backfeeding, the process of rerouting electricity during an outage. If one substation goes down, it can mean a loss of power for hundreds of households while repair crews work. Backfeeding allows dispatchers to route electricity to those homes through a different substation, restoring power to most people within a short period of time.

SWEET HARMONY

With so much information to juggle, any distraction for a dispatcher can cause big delays for restoration. So while some members might think calling dispatch directly to report an outage will speed the process along, it can actually slow it down.

"Calling dispatch is sometimes the worst thing you can do because now they have to leave what they're doing," says Yunes. "Usually that doesn't happen during small outages; it's when we have 30 to 50 outages and it's really hectic."

Instead, the fastest way for members to report outages is through the SmartHub app on their phone or computer. The app sends members' basic information, along with any additional details they have, to dispatch in an organized format that makes it easy for them to process and pass on to crews.

If internet access is out, members can also call the outage hotline at 1-800-752-0025. Both methods feed directly into the outage management system, letting members know if an outage has already been reported in their area.

Ultimately, it's that coordination with members and planning ahead that helps dispatch do its job well. In fact, despite working up to 19-hour shifts instead of the normal 12 after Hurricane Irma, Grinnell remembers an odd sense of tranquility throughout the process.

"We had some procedures in place that helped it be more organized. It gave us a calm environment to work in," she says. "It was focused. It was busy. But it wasn't chaotic."

Working in complex situations is one of the biggest challenges of the job, but it's also what Grinnell enjoys most. In those moments, no one part of the cooperative can do everything on its own, and it's the job of the dispatchers to keep things in harmony.

"It takes everyone finding something to do to help each other out," says Carver. "You have one person listening to calls, another person answering the phone, this person talking to crews in the field. It's a team effort, and I think we all do it pretty well." ■

Gabe Carver, a 16-year veteran to SVEC dispatching, remembers when the cooperative relied on printed tickets for outages. It would take multiple employees to organize the hundreds of tickets and dispatch the linemen.

New communications towers should improve restoration times

Five 120- to 180-foot communications towers were erected at SVEC substations in November and December last year.

High-capacity, radio-frequency-signaling equipment mounted to the towers will improve connectivity between SVEC's dispatch center and control devices located in substations. As a result, system operators will be able to reduce the duration of some outages.

Six similar towers were erected in 2016.

Sign up for **SmartHub** today!

Our SmartHub app gives you an easy 24/7 way to track your usage, make a payment or schedule one for the future from any mobile device.

To access the SmartHub app on an iPhone or iPad, simply scan this QR code with your device.

To access the SmartHub app on an Android device, simply scan this QR code with your device.

IS IT TIME TO UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION?

Members can use the SmartHub mobile app or call 800-752-0025 to report an outage. In both cases, SVEC's outage management system recognizes your service location by the phone number on file for your account. To make reporting easier for you and to allow us to speed up response and restoration times, please make sure we have your current phone number.

Also, SVEC uses email to keep members informed about restoration progress after storms and other important cooperative news. Please make sure we have your email address so we can keep you up to date.

To conveniently update your phone number and or email address, use SmartHub or call 800-447-4509.

USE SPACE HEATERS SAFELY

- DON'T leave your space heater unattended. Always unplug it before you leave the house or go to bed.
- DON'T use an extension cord to plug in your space heater. It can be a tripping hazard and can cause the heater to overheat.
- DON'T place your space heater near curtains, clothing, furniture or bedding.

COLDER TEMPERATURES COULD MEAN HIGHER BILLS

We've experienced one of the coldest first weeks of January since records began. According to the National Weather Service, the average low temperature in Jacksonville for Jan. 1-7, 2018, was 38.3 degrees. That is colder than the previous record of 38.4 degrees set in 1887.

What could this mean for your electric bill? Well, if you're like most people in north Florida, you use a heat pump to keep your home warm. When it gets below 40 degrees, your heat pump struggles to extract heat from the outside to meet the heating requirements you have set on your thermostat. To keep up, your heat pump starts using a backup heat source to supplement its efforts. Most heat pumps use a strip of electric heat coils, like the ones in a toaster, as a backup. Those electric coils use a lot of electricity, which makes for higher electric bills.

A FEW TIPS TO HELP YOU SAVE MONEY:

- **Set your thermostat to 68 degrees (or lower if comfortable).**
- **Keep registers and vents clear to allow air to flow freely.**
- **Use a space heater if you want to supplement heating in only one room.**
- **Keep drapes and shades open to catch free solar heat during the day. Close them at night to keep the heat inside.**
- **Run ceiling fans on low and reverse the rotation to blow air up in winter. This keeps warm air circulating without cooling you.**