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Proudly serving the members of Albemarle Electric Membership Corporation

## Albemarle Sounds

is published monthly by  
**Albemarle Electric Membership  
Corporation**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative   
*The power of human connections®*

P.O. Box 69  
Hertford, NC 27944  
(252) 426-5735

**Kevin Heath**, General Manager  
**Chris Powell**, Editor

Website and member portal:  
[www.aemc.coop](http://www.aemc.coop)

Outages:

**1-800-274-2072**

24-hour payments:  
**(252) 426-4419**

*Albemarle EMC is an equal opportunity  
provider and employer.*

**Albemarle EMC will be  
closed Monday, Jan. 1 for  
New Year's Day. The  
co-op's payment systems  
will be down Jan. 1 for  
year-end maintenance.**



## Youth Tour Applicants Sought



Albemarle EMC is offering two rising high school juniors the chance for a trip of a lifetime.

Applications are now being accepted for Albemarle Electric Membership Corporation's Washington Youth Tour. High school juniors can apply online by visiting [aemc.coop/schools](http://aemc.coop/schools) and filling out an online application. The deadline to apply is Friday, Jan. 12. Two students will be selected based on the quality

of a written essay and extracurricular activities.

"This is truly an opportunity of a lifetime, and we are delighted to be able to make it possible," said Albemarle EMC General Manager Kevin Heath.

The trip will be June 15-21, 2024. Youth tourists from across the state will meet in Raleigh, then board a bus for Washington, D.C. While at the nation's capital, youth tourists from across the country will meet with legislators, take a harbor-party cruise, visit museums, memorials, monuments and make many friends. For more information, call Chris Powell at 252-426-2586.

## Summer Basketball Camp Scholarships Offered

Many young basketball players dream of playing under the bright lights of a college arena, showcasing their skills on the hardwood. Albemarle EMC is helping to make that dream a reality for two lucky students by once again partnering with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and N.C. State University.

Through the Touchstone Energy Sports Camp Scholarship program, Albemarle EMC will provide one young woman with a scholarship to attend the Wolfpack Women's Basketball Camp at N.C. State University (camp dates were not available at press time). Young men can apply for a scholarship to attend the Carolina Basketball School which will be held June 22-26 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Eligible applicants must be in sixth or seventh grade during the 2024-2025 school year at a qualifying school. To apply, students must complete and submit the online application by March 31 at [ncelectriccooperatives.com/sports-camps](http://ncelectriccooperatives.com/sports-camps).

The scholarships cover all expenses at the overnight camps, which provide a glimpse into life on a college campus. Campers stay overnight in dorms, learn fundamental skills that will help them excel on and off the court and receive individual and group instruction from Division 1 coaches to enhance their basketball and team-building abilities.



# ACT Grants Benefit Region



*Marcia Berry, extension agent for 4-H Youth Development in Camden County, receives a \$4,000 Albemarle Community Trust grant. The grant will be used to purchase kayaks, paddles, storage racks, life jackets and a kayak launch for local youth programs.*



*Connections Pastor Chris Rexroad, with Open Door Church, receives a \$4,850 Albemarle Community Trust grant. The grant will be used to purchase two AED defibrillators for the church. Sharon Schwartz, children's director for Open Door Bertie, also assisted with the grant application.*



*From left: Elizabeth City Habitat for Humanity volunteers Norma James, Lindsey Waters and Ashley Oliver receive a \$2,500 ACT grant. The grant will help pay for construction costs of a Habitat for Humanity home.*

# AEMC Lineman Competes in State Competition

In a competition showcasing lifesaving skills, 25 electric cooperative lineworkers from across North Carolina raced against the clock – and their peers – for top honors at the 2023 Pole Top Rescue held at Nash Community College.

“Behind every service call is a lineworker who has completed rigorous training,” said Roy O’Neal, manager of operations for Albemarle EMC. “This competition tests the safety and rescue skills required for lineworkers to maintain the lines that power the lives of electric cooperative members.”

During the competition, each lineworker executed a rescue scenario of retrieving an unconscious coworker from atop a utility pole. Each competitor, dressed in full climbing gear of up to 20 pounds, is judged on their swiftness and proficiency in radioing for help, scaling 20 feet up a utility pole, lowering a weighted mannequin and beginning CPR.

To advance to the state competition, each of the 25 competitors had to win a similar rescue event against their peers at their local electric cooperative. This year, Albemarle EMC’s own Matt Byrum completed the exercise with a time of 2:45, placing 11th in the state competition.

“Every lineworker hopes to never have to use this method of rescue,” O’Neal said. “That’s exactly why this competition is so important; it provides an excellent opportunity to hone our rescue and safety skills so that if we are ever in a situation where a lineworker needs help, we know we can perform the rescue quickly, proficiently, and most all, successfully.”

The biennial competition is hosted by North Carolina’s Electric Cooperatives with members of its training and safety team serving as judges. All North Carolina electric cooperative lineworkers must complete this same scenario in less than five minutes to maintain their certification to work on co-op power lines.



*Albemarle EMC Lineman Matt Byrum recently competed in the 2023 Pole Top Rescue Competition, held at Nash Community College.*

# Heating Bill Assistance Available

Albemarle EMC wants members to be aware of a government program that offers financial assistance with heating bills.

The North Carolina Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) helps eligible households pay their heating bill. The federally funded program is made available through your local Department of Social Services. Members can also contact the NC Division of Social Services at 1-800-662-7030.

“This is a great way for our members enduring financial hardship to get the help they need,” said Clarissa Perry, manager of corporate services for AEMC.

LIEAP provides a one-time vendor payment to assist with heating costs

during the winter. The program runs Dec. 1 through March 31 or until funding is exhausted. Households containing an elderly person aged 60 or older or households with a disabled member who also receives services through DAAS can apply December 1 – 31st. All households can apply beginning January 1 – March 31st or until all funds are exhausted.

To be eligible for the assistance, a household must have at least one U.S. citizen or non-citizen who meets the eligibility criteria. The person must have cash reserves at or below \$2,250 and must be responsible for paying their heating costs. If a household is found eligible for assistance through LIEAP, vendor payments will be paid directly to the heating source provider.



# Albemarle EMC is at Your Service

## Energy Audits Can Reveal Excessive Power Use

by Chris Powell

We want you to get the most out of the dollars you spend heating and cooling your home. To that end, Albemarle EMC offers energy audits for no charge. Members have two ways to request an audit. They can fill out an online form found on our website [www.aemc.coop](http://www.aemc.coop) in the Energy Efficiency drop-down menu. Or they can call our office at 252-426-5735. Once an audit has been scheduled, members will be contacted and a date and time scheduled. Energy audits are performed inside the home, so the member must be present. However, you don't have to schedule an audit to find the problem. By taking some of the simple steps I will explain below, any person can perform an audit to determine if their home is not operating satisfactorily.

Typically members schedule an audit when they notice excess power usage. One of the first things I look at is the thermostat. Sometimes members mistakenly set their thermostat fan to *On* instead of the more efficient setting *Auto*. When set to *On*, the airhandler's fan will run nonstop, causing a surprisingly large usage of excess power. However, when set to *Auto*, the fan will only run when your HVAC system is either heating or cooling. This begs the question: Why do thermostats have an *On* setting at all? The answer comes down to comfort. If the fan is running all the time, it will equalize temperatures throughout the house because air is circulating all the time. The tradeoff, of course, is higher energy usage because the fan will be running nonstop for the entire billing period.

If a home is heated with a heat pump, the next thing I look at on the thermostat is the heat setting. Most homes in our area are heated with air-source heat pumps. A thermostat for this type of

heat pump will have two heat settings, *Heat* and *Emergency Heat*. Sometimes homeowners will mistakenly set their thermostats to *Emergency Heat*. The *Emergency Heat* setting tells your system to run off its backup heat only. The backup heat, also called auxiliary heat, is like a large toaster oven that the air handler blows air through to heat the house. This heat is considerably more expensive than when your heat pump is in its normal heat mode.

In its normal heat mode, your outside heating and air unit will use warm air from outside and compress it so that it becomes 95 to 100 degrees coming out of your vents. Because this is the most efficient mode, we will always check to make sure the outside unit is indeed running. If your HVAC system is heating your home, but the outside unit is not running, that means your system is using its auxiliary heat, which needs to be corrected.

If the outside unit is running, the next step is to check the temperature of the air coming from the vents. This can be done with inexpensive thermometers that can be purchased at most auto parts stores. A thermometer can be placed in a vent on the floor or taped to a vent in the ceiling. A properly functioning heat pump will produce air from about 95 degrees to possibly over 100 degrees. If the air coming from the unit is in the 80s or lower, your unit needs to be serviced or you have significantly leaking ductwork. That said, if you find the air temperature around 120 degrees, that is a clear indication that your unit is using auxiliary heat. This may be normal or abnormal depending on the outside temperature. If the air temperature is in the mid 30s or lower, there is not enough

heat in the outside air for your heat pump to sufficiently heat the house. As such, it will use auxiliary heat to make up the difference. However, if the air temperature is in the upper 30s or higher, your heat pump should be able to heat the house on its own. If the air coming from the vents is around 120 degrees and the outside air temperature is in the upper 30s or higher, your heat pump is not operating correctly and should be serviced.

By taking temperature readings at vents throughout the house, we can sometimes identify if ductwork has a significant leak. Temperature differentials always increase the further the vent is from the heating and air unit. However, if there are two vents in the same room, and one vent is 20 degrees cooler than the other vent, that is a likely indication of leaking ductwork.

The next largest user of electricity in your home is your water heater. Using a thermometer, I will check to ensure the temperature of the water is no higher than 120 degrees. If it is, your water heater can easily be adjusted down. Some water heaters have a dial on the top of the water heater that can be adjusted. However, the adjustments for most water heaters are located behind the top and bottom panels. For safety, turn power to the water heater off at the breaker box, then remove the two panels, which will reveal the dials. They can be turned back with a straight head screw driver.

Energy audits cover much more than there is room to discuss in this article. However, by taking these simple steps you can quickly determine if there is a problem with your home's biggest energy users and, if so, take steps to remedy the situation.