Electric News
Published for Members of the Little Ocmulgee EMC
MAY/JUNE/JULY 2023 • VOLUME 46, NUMBER 1

Staying One Step Ahead of **Mother Nature**

By Jennah Denney

Mother Nature tends to have a mind of her own. Utility power lines are constantly at risk from severe storms—particularly fallen and overgrown tree limbs, which can lead to power outages. It's estimated that 50% of outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation, which is why electric co-ops regularly trim and maintain their local systems.

This tried-and-true method requires a significant amount of on-the-ground labor, including manual data collection, in which dozens of workers assess the vegetation that needs to be cleared while walking below the infrastructure, as well as manual verification of the work's quality and completion by contractors.

This method has been effective, but in an era of extreme weather events and accelerating digitalization, electric co-ops are looking to innovative vegetation management methods to improve power reliability for the members they serve.

By utilizing technology, co-ops may be able to dispatch crews to perform trimming at the ideal moment and location, preventing additional outages while enhancing productivity, cutting costs and providing better service. Timely monitoring and maintenance are necessary to identify assets that are prone to sustain damage or catch fire.

Today, there are several cutting-edge vegetation management tools, each with its advantages.

LiDAR, or light detection and ranging, gives exact, 3D data about the shape of the surface around utility assets. LiDAR is a popular way to scan portions of forests to determine how tall trees are and acquire information about their health, like whether a tree has leaves. LiDAR doesn't provide data on how healthy plants are in general, but the technology can be paired with high-resolution multispectral satellite imagery to obtain accurate information about the health of the plants surrounding power lines. Timely data like this is extremely beneficial and can help electric co-ops make more proactive planning decisions.

Satellites provide coverage 24 hours a day and can supply two kinds of images: a wide macro view of the area near utility assets and a more detailed micro view. Satellite data can often be used in place of other monitoring methods. With satellite technology, co-ops can learn a lot about local vegetation, including:

- **Health:** This knowledge makes it possible to predict vegetation growth based on real conditions rather than guesses.
- **Dryness:** This information is valuable for determining the likelihood of a wildfire—and how to protect wildlife around utility infrastructure.
- **Satellites** are always in orbit around the Earth, so data can be updated quickly, in real time. This makes it possible to act more precisely and on time.

BRANDI WILLIAMS

Drones fly very close to utility assets to take the clearest images and provide data to help keep an eye on how close vegetation is to equipment.

Satellite images can have a spatial resolution as small as 1.6 feet, which makes it easy to spot when vegetation is growing in the right-of-way near power lines and utility equipment. Typically, satellites can speed up the process of inspecting power lines, because they give the utility a solid foundation for making data-driven decisions about vegetation management.

Electric co-ops are also using fixed-wing aircrafts and drones. Drones fly very close to assets so they can take the clearest images and provide data to help keep an eye on how close vegetation is to equipment, as well as check the health of trees to see if they are likely to fall.

Many co-ops are utilizing drones with cameras, which are considered essential tools. When it comes to taking care of surrounding vegetation, drones are often used for detailed

Continued on page 20D

Is Your Home Constantly Dusty? Your Ducts Might Be Leaking.

If the air inside your house is dusty, it might mean your air-conditioning ducts have sprung leaks. However, changing your air conditioner filter regularly will help trap dust and pollutants that get into the indoor air so they never make their way into the duct system—or back into the air.

But if the ducts have tiny holes, cracks or joints that aren't well-sealed, dust can bypass the filter and sneak directly into the ducts. Once dust gets in there, the duct system will blow it all over the house.

Dust in the ducts and in the air can raise the temperature in your home, and force your air-conditioning system to operate inefficiently and struggle to keep your home cool during the summer.

It's well worth it to have the ducts of your air-conditioning system sealed at the joints. Not only will it prevent dust from flying around your house, but it could reduce you're A/C bills this summer. The average house loses about 20% of its conditioned air through ducts that are improperly installed or are leaking at the joints.

A house with "clean" air also is less likely to trigger dust and pollen allergies in family members while they're indoors.

May Is Electrical Safety Month

May is National Electrical Safety Month and a good time to sweep your home for electrical safety risks. Here are five risks that many homeowners overlook:

1. Unplug and store all extension cords. They are not designed for prolonged use. If yours are hiding under carpets, they could overheat or get stepped on and damaged, and that can start a fire.
2. If you have more than one power strip plugged into an outlet, there's a chance you are overloading your circuits, especially if you live in an older house. If you don't have enough outlets, ask a licensed electrician to add more.
3. Kitchen countertop appliances should be plugged into three-prong, ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) receptacles. Any electric appliance that you use near water could shock or even electrocute someone.
4. Change the batteries in your smoke alarms twice a year and test them monthly to make sure they're operating properly.
5. Did you know table lamps and overhead light fixtures are designed for specific lightbulb wattages? Check yours and change any lightbulb wattage that exceeds the fixture's capacity.

Smoke alarms should be installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home.

Remember to test them once a month!

Safety starts with you.
MAY IS ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

Notice of Patronage Capital Assignment for 2022

Because Little Ocmulgee EMC is a not-for-profit cooperative, revenue collected in excess of expenses is eventually returned to the co-op's member-owners, our electric customers. After each year is completed, margins are assigned to members' accounts so they can be paid later as capital credits.

Assigned margins are retained for several years to be used, in place of borrowed money, as a source of funding for the construction of new lines and other utility plant expenses. This helps the cooperative keep the cost of providing service as low as possible. When financial conditions are favorable, the margins are returned as capital credits to members.

The assignment is made by applying the percentage of the cooperative's margins (revenues in excess of expenses) to each member's total billing for the year (excluding sales tax). In addition, margins are assigned to Little Ocmulgee EMC by other organizations with which it is associated, such as Cooperative Finance Corp., CoBank, Gresco, Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange and Southeastern Data Corp. The percentage assigned from these associated organizations is assigned to each member each year in the same manner as in the chart to the right.

$$\frac{\text{2022 total operating margins + 2022 total associated organizations}}{\text{2022 total sales of electric energy}} = \frac{\$\ 203{,}117}{\$\ 24{,}092{,}201} = 0.008430821$$

Little Ocmulgee Electric Membership Corp.

2022 Patronage Capital Assignment Factors

	Allocation Factor	If your total bills were: (excluding sales tax) $500	$1,000	$2,000
2022 patronage capital assigned for Little Ocmulgee EMC	0.000651373	$0.33	$0.65	$1.30
2022 patronage capital assigned from associated organizations	0.007779449	$3.89	$7.78	$15.56
2022 total patronage capital assigned	0.008430821	$4.22	$8.43	$16.86

Six Ways to Cool Off a Hot Room

1. Keep heat and sunlight out of indoor rooms during the day by closing windows and window coverings.

2. Open those same windows at night to let cool, nighttime air into your house.

3. If some windows are naturally shaded by trees or shadows, open them during the day. Opening more than one can create a cross-breeze that will quickly cool off the house.

4. Switch the direction of ceiling fan blades. In the summer, blades

should spin counterclockwise to push cool air down into the room. Turn the fans off when nobody is in the room.

5. Add an energy-efficient portable dehumidifier to a room that tends to be too warm. Humidity can make a hot room feel even hotter. Removing the humidity makes the room feel cooler.

6. Use a microwave or outdoor grill to cook dinner. Heat-producing indoor appliances like the stove, dishwasher and clothes dryer lose a lot of heat in the air in a room. Wait until after dark when it's cooler outdoors to turn on appliances.

Recipe of the Month

Peach and Cucumber Salad With Honey Ricotta and Spiced Pecans

Courtesy of Georgia Grown

Spiced Pecans

- 2 cups pecan halves
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- Pinch cayenne pepper

Apple Cider Pepper Jelly Vinaigrette

- 3 tablespoons pepper jelly
- 3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 teaspoon fresh mint, finely minced

Salad

- 2 large peaches, cut in wedges, skin on
- 1 cup English cucumber, cut in wedges
- ½ cup ricotta
- 2 teaspoons honey
- ½ teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 head butter lettuce or Bibb lettuce
- Finely minced fresh mint, for garnish

For pecans: Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Spread pecan halves on baking sheet. Bake in preheated oven for 10 minutes. Place pecans in a bowl and set aside.

In a small bowl, whisk together sugar and spices.

Combine toasted pecan halves with melted butter. Sprinkle pecans evenly with spice mixture and gently stir to coat. Return pecans to oven and cook for an additional 15 minutes, or until pecans have a toasted, nutty flavor. Remove from oven and let cool. Chop pecans coarsely.

For vinaigrette: Whisk pepper jelly and vinegar together. Slowly whisk in olive oil. Season with salt and pepper, then stir in mint.

For salad: Lightly toss peaches and cucumbers with vinaigrette, then set aside. In a separate bowl, mix ricotta with honey and lemon zest, then set aside.

Place a large dollop of ricotta mixture in center of a large, flat serving dish. Use back of a large spoon to spread toward edges of dish. Add more ricotta as needed. Arrange lettuce leaves on top, then spoon peach and cucumber mixture over. Sprinkle with spiced pecans and mint. *Serves 4.*

For recipes from farms and producers across our state, visit *www.georgiagrown.com*.

Staying One Step Ahead of Mother Nature, *Continued from page 20A*

surveys rather than large-scale monitoring like satellites. Once LiDAR or satellites (often together) have collected data on a large amount of vegetation near power lines, drones are used to inspect a single area and do all the necessary checks without putting operators in danger.

Vegetation management is the most crucial tool for reducing the likelihood of power outages. And the growth of LiDAR, drone and satellite data presents an opportunity to close the loop with continuous data-driven vegetation management intelligence and to increase the power line system's dependability and safety. In the end, all three technologies for managing vegetation serve different purposes, and electric co-ops choose the ones that work best for them.

Jennah Denney writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.