

Connection

Communicating local energy news to Four County Electric members

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

inside Four County Connection



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Get the Scoop

Four County EMC offices will be closed Monday, May 31, for Memorial Day. Have a safe and happy holiday.

May is National Electrical Safety Month

As your local energy partner, and in honor of National Electrical

Safety Month in May, Four County EMC is encouraging members to take time this month to discuss safe electricity practices with your family. You can start by sharing these simple tips:



Inside:

- Never put anything other than an electrical plug in an outlet. Use outlet covers to protect children.
- Examine electrical cords often for fraying or cracking, and throw away any worn cords.
- Extension cords are for temporary use. They are not intended for use as permanent home wiring.
- Don't run cords under carpets or rugs.
- Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets should be used in any area where water and electricity could mix—including kitchens, bathrooms, garages and outdoors—and should be tested monthly.
- Never touch electrical appliances with wet hands or use them near sinks, tubs, toilets or showers.
- Don't use extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliances. All major appliances should be plugged directly into a wall outlet.

Outside:

- Never go near or drive over a power line. If you encounter a downed line, stay far away and notify Four County EMC at 888-368-7289.
- Keep kites, model airplanes and metallic balloons away from powerlines.
- Watch for overhead lines when using a ladder, working on a roof or carrying a long tool.
- Call 811 before any digging project.
- If it is necessary to use a portable generator, always operate the generator outdoors in an open area. Use an extension cord to connect the generator directly to the appliance, and ensure the extension cord has three-prongs and is rated for the amount of power used by the appliance. Do not connect generators directly to household wiring unless the work is completed by a licensed electrician. This prevents backfeeding, which could electrocute utility workers.

For more safety tips and information, visit fourcty.org and the Electrical Safety Foundation International at ESFI.org.

BOARD SPOTLIGHT by Janet Smith

Franklin Williams

“**G**rowing up on a farm prepares you for life,” says Franklin Williams, president of Four County EMC’s Board of Directors. “It’s a challenging life filled with hard work and determination.” Williams grew up on a large strawberry farm in Rose Hill and his wife, Paula, grew up on a farm a few miles down the road. Joking, he says, “Our families were friends. I knew she was down there, but when I was a kid, I didn’t much care.”



Hospital board for 15 years, and for over 30 years, Williams has been an advocate for the local farming community on the Duplin Farm Bureau board. He is an elder, treasurer and Sunday school teacher at the church he grew up in, Oak Plain Presbyterian.

In 1985, Four County EMC appointed him to finish out a term for a departing director. When asked why he was interested in serving, Williams laughs and says, “My father-in-law, Paul Owen, was a former director on the Four County board. My wife would have run me off if I turned it down!”

In his years on the board, Williams has held the position of secretary/treasurer and has been president since 2004. The year he became

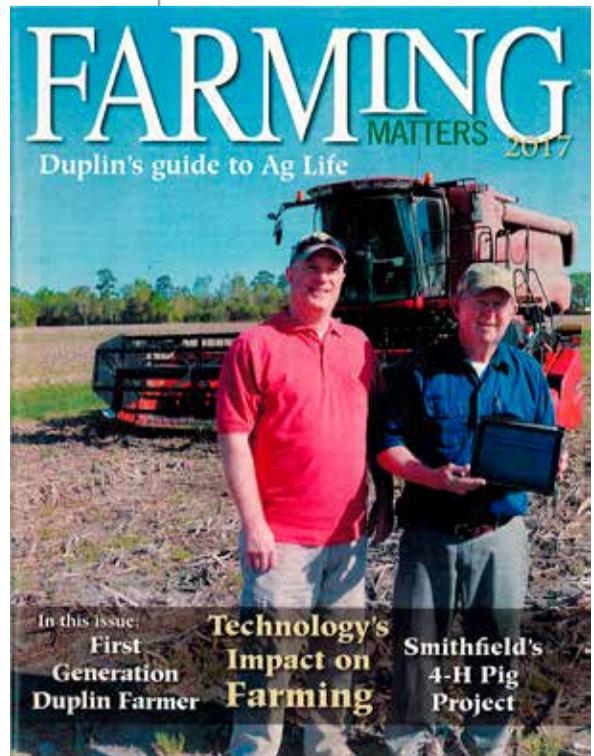
Williams attended Magnolia High and was the next-to-last graduating class for the school. He says sports played a big part in his high school experience and it was a lot like growing up on a farm — full of hard work and commitment. While Williams says basketball was his real love, baseball was where he excelled. Williams played varsity baseball for five years, making the high school varsity team in 8th grade. He laughs and admits, “I didn’t really become a good hitter though until my senior year when I got eyeglasses!”

After high school, Williams attended NC State for horticulture science and joined the Army ROTC program. He and Paula started dating in college and married after Paula earned her degree from Women’s College in Greensboro. After graduation, Williams served in the Army National Guard and was Commander of the Guard in both Beulaville and Wallace. Williams says he enjoyed his time with the National Guard and would have served longer, but the family farm needed him.

Paula was an only child, and it was up to them to keep the family business going. With their hard work and dedication, the farm continued to grow and is now a thriving corn and soybean farm covering 1,000 acres. Their son lives nearby and now manages the day-to-day operations of the farm.

While farming full-time, Williams also dedicated himself to serving the community he loves. He was the assistant manager at First National Bank in Wallace for three years and served four years as a Duplin County Commissioner. Williams reflects, “Those seven years were excellent training in business, government and leadership. It would be difficult to put a value on those years.”

He also served on the Duplin General





CO-OP CONNECTIONS BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Lu-Mil Vineyard



Lu Mil Vineyard in Elizabethtown opened its doors on their family farm in 2005. The Taylors were leaders in agricultural equipment development, and the muscadine vineyard began as a way to test ideas for new machinery in the viticulture industry. The vineyard is still family-owned and operated and has grown to 78 acres of muscadine vines.

“We have a very engaged, outstanding board that fits well with the hard-working, dedicated employees. We’ve come so far and I’m excited for what the future holds.”

president of the Four County EMC board, he also became a board member for the North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation (NCEMC), the power supplier to North Carolina’s cooperatives.

Williams has seen a lot of changes and advances at the cooperative during his tenure. He recalls hearing about the Round-Up program for the first time. “I was so pleased when we started our program here in 1994. It’s been really beneficial for our members and the non-profit organizations that serve our area.” Williams is also very proud of the programs benefitting the youngest cooperative members, such as the Bright Ideas Education Grants and the youth leadership programs that educate and inspire our future leaders.

“It’s amazing what we’ve accomplished without increasing rates. We completed the fiber optic loop around our system a few years ago, and we’ve built two new buildings that we desperately needed. None of this could have been accomplished without working together. We have a very engaged, outstanding board that fits well with the hard-working, dedicated employees.” Franklin continues, “We’ve come so far and I’m excited for what the future holds.”

In addition to their variety of muscadine wines, Lu Mil offers a tasting room, gift shop, several event venues for small and large gatherings, and cabins available for rent. A handicapped-accessible cabin is under construction and should be completed soon. The cabins are well-equipped and offer spectacular views of the vineyard and ponds. Need a larger overnight space? You can also rent Taylor House, the four-bedroom home place of Lucille and Miller Taylor or their two-bedroom renovated farmhouse. And for all you RV travelers, Lu Mil Vineyard is one of Harvest Hosts newest host sites.

Lu Mil is open seven days/week, so come for a visit, spend an afternoon or a weekend at the vineyard. Enjoy a glass of your favorite wine, take a walk through the vineyard, or rent a golf cart, pedal kart or bicycle and explore the vineyard paths.

One of the winery’s most popular events is their annual Festival of Lights. During multiple dates in November and December, drive your car through the vineyard decorated with millions of lights synchronized to music. While there, have your photo taken with Santa



and stop at the candy shop and hot chocolate booth. The Festival of Lights is an annual tradition for the entire family.

Lu Mil Vineyard is a participating business in the Co-op Connections program. Four County members save 10% on any regularly-priced item in their gift shop when using the Co-op Connections card or mobile app. Support your local businesses and save!



Need a Co-op Connections card? Need help with the Co-op Connections app? Call Four County at 888-368-7289!

Prepare Now for Hurricane Season



May 9–15 is Hurricane Preparedness Week in North Carolina. Four County EMC is joining the National Weather Service and state officials in encouraging all North Carolinians to prepare now for storms, in advance of the start of Atlantic Hurricane Season on June 1.

Here are simple steps to get ready and stay safe this storm season:

- Outline a communication and evacuation plan for your family. If you have pets or any livestock, include them in your plan.
- Create an emergency kit that includes:
 - Important documents sealed in a watertight plastic bag
 - Cash
 - Enough non-perishable food, water and medication for at least three days
 - First-aid kit
 - Battery-powered radio
 - Flashlight
 - Extra batteries
 - Personal hygiene items
 - Extra clothes and blankets
 - Food and other supplies for pets
- Connect with us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to stay informed about outages and other storm information.

- Download our Four County EMC app to view and report outages.
- Visit fourcty.org/report-an-outage to report an outage and to view our real-time map of power outages across our service territory.
- Sign up for local weather alerts. You can also visit ReadyNC.org for tips on preparing for natural disasters, as well as real-time weather and traffic information.

This year, it is also important to stay tuned to the latest health and safety guidelines from the CDC and local officials, and to adjust your preparedness plans accordingly to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.



Visit fourcty.org/hurricane-preparation for additional storm preparedness information and tips.



Improving Grid Resilience

Last year’s Atlantic hurricane season broke records with a total of 30 named storms, 12 of which made landfall in the United States, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The severity of the storm season made headlines and garnered significant attention until the tropics settled, the weather cooled and new issues dominated headlines.

But at Four County EMC, we did not forget. Our focus on improving the resilience of the electric grid is a year-round effort. We take steps on a daily basis to ensure the electric grid can quickly and effectively recover from storms and other threats so our members have the reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity they depend on.

The electric grid has evolved substantially in recent years and will continue to change as new advancements are transforming the ways co-ops and other utilities transmit power and our members use it. Digital technology is also making an unprecedented level of energy monitoring and communication possible, which ultimately benefits you by alerting us to issues on the grid and enabling tools that allow you to be more aware of your energy use.

On today’s modern grid, power no longer moves in a linear path from cooperative to member. Instead, it includes a wide variety of resources and technologies spread throughout the grid, like a spider web. Many of these distributed energy resources stem directly from members like you, including smart thermostats and water heater controls, residential solar, and even electric vehicles (ncdriveelectric.com). Four County EMC and the state’s other electric cooperatives are also pursuing a range of innovative energy solutions, from microgrids to solar and storage, that further contribute to enhanced grid flexibility and efficiency. Visit ncelectriccooperatives.com/energy-innovation to learn more about the co-ops’ innovative energy solutions.

Using a sophisticated energy management platform, we are carefully coordinating and dispatching these interconnected resources to meet electricity demand and balance traffic on the grid, which improves reliability and helps manage costs by offsetting the need to build traditional power plants.

We are also undertaking other measures that increase grid resilience and strengthen our infrastructure against storms, including physical enhancements and the introduction of system redundancies that help prevent outages from occurring.

All of these efforts are part of our ongoing commitment to building a brighter future for the people, businesses and communities we serve.



Help us Create the 2022 Four County EMC Calendar and Win a Prize!

We need your photos—scenery, buildings, power line equipment—anything you think represents our beautiful service area. Winning photos will be used to create our 2022 calendar!

Prizes will be awarded for the twelve photos selected. First place receives a \$100 bill credit, the calendar cover page and a month in the calendar. The other eleven winners receive a \$50 bill credit in addition to a spot in the calendar.

Please submit your photos to marketing@fourcty.org. The deadline to enter is August 15 and a panel of judges will choose the winners. Visit fourcty.org/photo-contest for submission rules. Still have questions? Contact janetsmith@fourcty.org.

By submitting a photo entry to this contest, you are granting FCEMC permission to use the image in any and all of its publications, including internal and external newsletters and website entries, without payment. However, photo credit will be given. FCEMC reserves the right to disqualify any photo deemed inappropriate or offensive.



Mutual Aid Plans in Place

by Janet Smith

Eastern North Carolina is no stranger to hurricanes, tropical storms and the flooding they bring. When Mother Nature strikes and residents evacuate, utility crews head into the storms to assist hard-hit regions.



Baptists on Mission's Charity Rebuild Center sits on 20 acres of land and can support upwards of 200 crew members when disaster strikes.

While there is no more welcome sight than a convoy of lineworkers heading your way, the host co-op has a difficult task before and in the wake of a storm. The logistics of housing and feeding crews while dealing with major power outages is not easy. Not surprisingly, hotel

rooms can be difficult to obtain during a natural disaster. Like most cooperatives, Four County EMC's service area is rural—there just aren't many hotels nearby. Also, hotel reservations can be tricky: how many rooms are needed and for how many days? What about check-out times and laundry facilities?

available to Four County, crews can easily be housed where the most restoration efforts are needed.

Stationed at each host camp is a Four County employee or retiree. These facility leaders stay on-site and provide communication between visiting crews and Four County EMC. If a need arises, their knowledge of the cooperative and the community ensures a quick and efficient resolution. A Four County employee is assigned within each group of lineworkers. These substation leaders know the Four County territory and help guide the crews around detours and flooded roads to reach their designated area.

In the past, breakfast and dinner were provided at Four County's three district offices, with lunches delivered out in the field. Now, meals are served at the host sites, providing time savings and increased crew efficiency. Bagged lunches are prepared and served at breakfast which frees up Four



Kelly PoD Substation Flooded in Hurricane Florence

A New Approach

Four County EMC began discussing a new approach to their mutual aid process. From these discussions came the idea of large self-contained host sites. The cooperative then developed partnerships at five strategic locations in their service area. Chosen for their ability to satisfy logistical issues such as housing, food, and laundry, these host sites alleviate a challenging part of the planning process.

An additional advantage to these camps is the strategic movement they allow. Every storm brings surprises, but with multiple locations



County personnel who would otherwise be cooking or delivering lunch. And, as was learned with Hurricane Florence, flooded roads can make food deliveries next to impossible.

The pre-arrival process underwent an overhaul with time-saving strategies put in place. Previously, mutual-aid crews would go through a safety briefing and certification process upon arrival. Depending upon the number of lineworkers assisting, this could be a time-consuming process. To streamline, Four County's safety director recorded a video which is now sent, along with necessary documentation, to mutual aid crews and contractors in advance so they are ready to roll upon arrival. A host site welcome video is also sent, providing valuable information to crew members before leaving their homes.

Baptists on Mission

One of these site partners is Baptists on Mission, an organization focused on disaster relief. Located in Duplin County, this for-

mer school, now called the Charity Rebuild Center, consists of 20 acres and a 62,000-square-foot building. The parking lot easily supports the visiting crews' trucks, and the facility can sleep 200 crew members with space to add more bunks if needed. With hot meals provided by the organization, shower and laundry facilities, a TV room and a basketball gymnasium, the Mission is a welcome sight after the responders' long, hard days.

Other partner sites include:

- Allen Brothers Hunting Preserve, Bladenboro
- Future Farmers of America Center, White Lake
- YMCA Camp Kirkwood, Watha
- Pinhook Church Life Center, Beulaville

“With the unpredictability of Mother Nature, it's crucial that we continuously improve our emergency plans,” said Mitch Keel, CEO of Four County EMC. He continues,



Spacious new cafeteria and kitchen



“Having a valued relationship with these sites allows Four County to provide a more reliable experience for our members. Our partners stay focused on taking care of the crews so Four County can focus on getting power back on as fast and safely as possible.”



Line crews gather at a host camp.



Bunk rooms at BoM's Charity Rebuild Center

Winning
from the editor
Recipe



For the Ceviche:

- 3 pounds shrimp
- 1 cup cucumber
- 1 cup onion
- 1 cup tomato
- 1 cup cilantro
- 1 cup fresh squeezed lime juice
- ½ cup jalapeno pepper juice
- ½ tsp salt or to taste
- 1 avocado
- Corn tortillas

Cut the shrimp into ½-inch pieces, then add the lime juice and jalapeno pepper juice. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 45 minutes. Stir it

Shrimp Ceviche



to ensure even soaking, then combine with diced cucumbers, onion, tomato, cilantro, ½ tsp salt.

Spread on a tostada and add sliced avocado.

Note: if you like your ceviche with a spicier kick, add hot sauce such as Valentina or Tapatio, or whatever hot sauce you prefer.

Homemade Tostadas and Tortilla Chips:

Essentially a tostada is a giant tortilla chip, and of course, homemade is so much better than store-bought.

- **Prep:** Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Line a large baking sheet and arrange corn tortillas in a single layer.
- **Season:** Spray each tortilla with cooking spray on both sides.

- **Bake:** For 6 minutes per side, flipping once. They come out so crunchy! If you have a convection oven, tostada shells will cook faster and even more golden.
- **Storing tostadas/tortilla chips:** You can bake up to 48 hours in advance. Just store in a resealable Ziploc bag to keep shells crunchy.

Watch this month's episode of "Cooking with Cam" to see a surprise host make this month's recipe. Follow us on Facebook so you never miss an episode!

Four County
Connection
Janet Smith, Editor

Published monthly by Four County Electric Membership Corporation, P.O. Box 667, Burgaw, NC 28425, as a service to our members.

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Four County Electric

Our Mission

To provide highly reliable electric service, innovative energy solutions and outstanding service to our Members and Communities.

Our Values

- Respect
- Integrity
- Trust
- Teamwork
- Commitment
- Excellence

Our Vision

To be an advocate for our Members by:

- Exceeding members' expectations
- Utilizing well trained, motivated employees
- Achieving excellence
- Operating efficiently
- Maintaining hometown values

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

We believe in the Power of Human Connections

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