

ANSWERS TO COMMON OUTAGE QUESTIONS—PAGE 5

South Carolina Living

AIKEN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Congaree magic

A misunderstood gem
is America's best
'worst' national park

CEO MESSAGE

Stay prepared for
storm season

SC RECIPE

Seeing seafood



**Aiken Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

aikenco-op.org

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The mission of Aiken Electric Cooperative, Inc. is to empower communities by providing reliable, competitively priced energy and other services desired by our membership.

CO-OP NEWS EDITOR

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AEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Stay prepared this hurricane season

WE'RE TWO MONTHS into the 2025 hurricane season, but many in our community are still feeling the effects of

Hurricane Helene. Some homes are still being repaired, and debris still lines the streets in many areas. It's a reminder that storms can leave long-lasting impacts.

This year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicts a 60% chance of an above-normal hurricane season. That means we could see more storms than usual.

While we can't control what Mother Nature does, we can control how prepared we are. Now is the time to make sure you and your family are ready.

Here are a few steps to help you stay safe:

- ▶ **Build a basic emergency kit.** Make sure you have enough supplies to last at least three days. Include items such as water, non-perishable food, a flashlight, batteries, a first-aid kit, medications and a battery-powered radio.
- ▶ **Stay informed.** Sign up for local emergency notifications and make sure your contact information with Aiken Electric is up to date to receive updates from the

co-op. If you need to report an outage and your phone number does not match an account in our system, your outage will not be accurately reported.

- ▶ **Plan for outages.** Be ready to live without power, internet, water, or phone service for a couple of days, just in case.

At Aiken Electric, we've taken steps to prepare, too. We have state-of-the-art dispatch and communication systems, mutual aid agreements in place to bring in extra crews if needed and, most importantly, a dedicated team of employees who care about this community. They are your neighbors and friends, and they are ready to respond quickly and safely when outages happen.

If you do lose power, be sure to report your outage using the instructions below. You can also follow us on social media or check our website for updates.

We hope for a quiet end to hurricane season, but we'll be ready, no matter what.

GARY L. STOOKSBURY
Chief Executive Officer

If you are experiencing a power outage:



Text "OUT" to 1-877-264-5368



Call 1-877-264-5368



Report on the AEC Mobile App

Although social media is not the best method to report an outage, you can find storm related updates by following our Facebook page: facebook.com/AikenElectricCooperative.



**Aiken Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

Your outage questions, answered

AS WE ALL KNOW, severe storms often bring strong winds, heavy rain and lightning—all of which can damage Aiken Electric's electrical equipment and lead to power outages. Just one fallen tree or broken line can take out power for an entire neighborhood.

We understand how frustrating it can be to be without power, especially when you're unsure of what's happening. We've put together a list of answers to common questions you may have during a power outage.

What caused my outage?

Every outage is different, ranging from human accidents or vandalism to animal contact, fallen trees and weather-related events.

Sometimes, we may not know the exact cause until crews arrive on the scene and assess the situation. Our goal is not to keep you in the dark any longer than necessary. When a cause is determined, we will post the cause on Facebook after the outage is restored.

Why is it taking so long to restore power?

The simplest way to answer this question is to explain the steps involved in restoration:

- ▶ **Damage assessment.** Crews are first dispatched to assess the extent of the damage. In some cases, they may call in additional help if needed.
- ▶ **Substation repairs.** If the outage stems from a substation, crews prioritize fixing those first, as they can restore power to the largest number of members at once.
- ▶ **Three-Phase line repair.** These are the main lines that carry electricity from substations to towns, communities and larger areas.
- ▶ **Single Phase Tap line repair.** Next, crews repair lines that branch off from the Three-Phase lines.



Severe storms often damage or break power poles. The replacement process requires a crew of four lineworkers approximately four hours to complete.

- ▶ **Individual service line repair.** Lastly, crews address outages affecting individual homes or businesses. These are the lines that run directly from the pole or transformer to your home.

How does the outage map work?

Our outage map updates every 20 minutes and reflects the number of members affected by outages across our service area. When looking at the outage map, it may not show your home, but only the overall area served by that line or transformer. Tip—make sure your contact information is up to date so that if you report an outage, your number matches the address we have in our system.

Why don't I see crews working?

Crews may be working to address key steps such as accessing equipment, patrolling lines, or addressing damage elsewhere along the line before your power

can be restored. Just because you don't see a truck doesn't mean repairs aren't being made. Remember, we serve rural areas across nine counties, which means we have more ground to cover. This includes heavily wooded areas, not just cities or towns, or open areas and fields.

What if I have a medical condition?

Please give us a call at (803) 649-6245, so we can make note on your account. We do our best to restore outages as quickly as possible. If you or someone in your household requires emergency medical assistance, please call 911 immediately.

Will I have a prolonged internet outage after my power is restored?

If your internet is out (and your power is on), please report it by calling technical support at (803) 785-3455, option 1 or by emailing info@carolinaconnect.com using mobile data.

JAMACIA MCCRAY



**Big day(s)
in D.C.**

Natalyia Jordan celebrated her 17th birthday with fellow Youth Tourists.

JOSH P. CROTZER

Washington Youth Tour makes an impact on student

MONDAY, JUNE 16, HAD ALREADY BEEN an eventful day for Natalyia Jordan. After a morning tour of George Washington's Mount Vernon and an afternoon at Arlington National Cemetery, she and the other 70 South Carolina high school students on Washington Youth Tour had a few hours to rest and freshen up before an evening dinner cruise down the Potomac River.

But first, an assortment of confections from Georgetown Cupcake were waiting for the Palmetto State contingent inside their hotel, making Jordan's 17th birthday that much sweeter.

"It's the best birthday I've ever had," says Jordan. "This is the most 'happy birthdays' I've ever gotten. People who aren't even my friends were telling me happy birthday. It's the most known I've ever felt."

Washington Youth Tour is an annual experience for rising high school seniors sponsored by the state's electric cooperatives. Jordan represented Berkeley Electric, one of 21 electric cooperatives and associations sponsoring South Carolina students.

The five-day, all-expenses-paid trip each June gives students the opportunity to learn how government works, walk in the footsteps of the Founding Fathers and honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom. They

also spent a day on Capitol Hill, visiting congressional offices, touring the Capitol Complex and meeting U.S. Sens. Lindsey Graham and Tim Scott on the Capitol steps.

On their final night, South Carolina's students were among more than 1,800 students from 44 states gathered at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center to hear from national cooperative leaders, former Youth Tourists and paralympic gold medalist Mike Schlappi. Schlappi, who was shot in the chest when he was 14 and lost the ability to walk, gave a motivating keynote address and challenged the students to overcome difficult circumstances.

"I've had a low point in my life where I felt like, 'What's the point of anything?'" says Jordan. "(Schlappi had) a low point, and he's risen from that and he's doing amazing things. It was inspiring."

Jordan says the entire trip through the nation's capital and surrounding landmarks has made an impact on the way she feels about her country and herself.

"It's made me more patriotic and also makes me feel less afraid to be myself," says Jordan. "If you are yourself, you will attract the right people, and I feel like I've done that during this trip."

See our 2025 Washington Youth Tour image gallery at SCLiving.coop/wyt25.

—JOSH P. CROTZER

MEMBERS SPEAK ON THE COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE



Jennifer Wilson

AIKEN ELECTRIC MEMBER

MEMBER FOR: 18 years

HOMETOWN: Graniteville

OCCUPATION: Teacher

Care in the chaos

When Hurricane Helene hit Jennifer Wilson's home last fall, all she could hear was the sound of trees crashing.

A look outside her window revealed downed trees everywhere. They took out her power and made repairs difficult. But Wilson says Aiken Electric Cooperative crews quickly got to work—sawing through wood and even wading into one of her ponds to drag out trees felled by the historic storm.

"We are always confident that they're going to come and they're going to come right away," Wilson says. "I love it."

"You can't ask for better service than that."

—JENNIFER WILSON

To her surprise, crew members

knocked on her door after days of work to check on her.

"After all that work, they wanted to know, were we OK? Were we satisfied?" Wilson says. "You can't ask for better service than that. You don't get that from anybody."

Wilson says the experience makes her grateful to be a co-op member.

"They take you as ... a family member," Wilson says. "They treat you with respect. They don't want you to be uncomfortable. They don't want you to be without, even though they're going to be without and they're going to be uncomfortable."

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?



Scan this QR code or visit SCLiving.coop/stories to share what you love about your co-op. Entries may be published in future issues of *South Carolina Living*, online and on social media.