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Embracing our heritage and new technology

South Alabama Electric Cooperative finds new ways to serve

David Bailey, General Manager

In June 2017, South Alabama Electric Cooperative turned 80 years young. Over those decades, many changes have shaped the electric industry, something driven home by a letter written to the cooperative in the mid-1940s.

In it, a member reports that she lost power about a week earlier and asks that the cooperative restore power “when you can get to it.” Now that’s patience!

Fortunately, today’s members do not have to be so patient. Meter technology immediately notifies our team when a section of the network loses power, though members should always contact SAEC when there is an outage just to be sure.

Better outage tracking is only one way that we use advances in technology to serve you better. Last month, we rolled out our first app for mobile devices, allowing members to easily make payments, check power usage, view the power outage map and report outages.

This month, we are pleased to announce our new Pre-Pay Billing Program, which gives members the ability to pay for electricity as they use it.

Pre-Pay Billing works much the same way as buying gas for your car. You fill the gas tank and use the gas as you drive. Now, you can fill up your “electric tank,” which decreases as you use electric power. The key to Pre-Pay Billing, to extend the car example, is that you do not let it run out of gas.

Most importantly, Pre-Pay Billing offers many benefits for our members. A large deposit is not required, and there is never a surprise about how much you have spent on electricity. You have complete control over your power usage, and that control can help you reduce the amount you pay.

As a cooperative, we work hard to use the latest tools to create opportunities for our members to have reliable, economical service. Pre-Pay Billing and the SAEC app are two examples, but we will continue looking for new ways to harness technology to better serve you.

For those of you who don’t like the idea of adding more technology to your lives, let me assure you that I understand completely.

When I was a kid, technology did not have the role it does in our world now. Days were spent seeing how far we could hit a baseball in community-organized games played at the old school, church or someone’s house. Football games were played in the flattest cow pasture, and hunting was an open activity on the neighbor’s property.

Today, squirrels are one of the main causes of power outages on our system. But growing up, after my Granddaddy Raif Wilson put in an order for squirrels to use in his famous stew, they did not cause the kind of trouble they do today.

Many people feel that our society is too reliant on our devices, and when I think about those times, I’m inclined to agree with them. But while it’s good to remember days gone past, technology can offer real advantages.

Our Pre-Pay Billing option and the SAEC app do just that. They give our members options that were not possible in the past. And if you are worried about the cooperative changing too much, rest assured that we will still offer the standard billing and payment processes you are accustomed to.

Overall, I love the ways technology has helped us advance as a society. It has improved the quality of life for all Americans, and, God willing, over the next 80 years technology at South Alabama will continue to help us improve the electric service we provide for our members.

In the meantime, there will always be simple pleasures that a computer cannot replicate. I confess, I don’t play baseball and football in the community anymore, nor do I go hunting for squirrels. But I do enjoy shooting my bow, practicing hitting golf balls, and walking down my dirt road. Some things technology just cannot improve. ■

No more surprises on your electric bill

INTRODUCING THE SAEC PRE-PAY BILLING PROGRAM

Want more control over your electric bill? SAEC's new Pre-Pay Billing Program can help.

Starting Sept. 1, SAEC will roll out a whole new way to pay your bill and monitor your electricity usage. The SAEC Pre-Pay Billing Program keeps unwelcome surprises out of your mailbox, while helping you keep track of how much energy you're using.

WHAT IS PRE-PAY?

The SAEC Pre-Pay program does just what it says: It allows members to pay their electric bill up front instead of waiting for a bill each month. You can fill up your Pre-Pay account like you would your car's gas tank. When your account gets low, add more money any time of day or night. No more waiting in dread for that monthly bill — your account is right at your fingertips, either through your smartphone with our SAEC app or on your computer.

We'll also send either daily text messages or emails showing your electric usage. This helps you keep a close eye on your electricity usage instead of waiting for a printout in your monthly bill. That way, you can pinpoint the times when you are using the most energy and have the option of reducing it.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

As a member of the Pre-Pay program, you no longer receive a power bill, and you won't be charged disconnect or reconnect fees. Your account balance and energy usage will be available online or on your phone.

The Pre-Pay program requires a \$50 minimum balance, which will go toward your electric bill. You will receive text or email alerts when your balance reaches \$20. That's when you know to add more money.

And here's some really good news: If you're already a member of SAEC and have paid a deposit, your deposit will go directly toward your Pre-Pay account. In other words, it immediately goes toward your electric bill.

HOW DO I GET STARTED WITH PRE-PAY?

To join the Pre-Pay program, you'll need access to either a smartphone or a computer with internet capabilities. To learn more about Pre-Pay or to sign up, visit our office at 13192 U.S. Highway 231 in Troy. You can also call us at 1-800-556-2060, and one of our representatives will be happy to go over the program with you.



WITH THE SAEC APP AND PRE-PAY YOU CAN:

- » Avoid monthly billing surprises
- » Use your deposit toward your bill
- » Receive text and email alerts for changes to your account
- » Access your account online or through your smartphone
- » Add money to your electricity account 24/7 with your phone or online
- » Avoid connection and reconnection fees
- » Monitor your energy usage on any given day

Contact Information

Mailing address

P.O. Box 449
Troy, AL 36081

Phone

334-566-2060
800-556-2060

Website

www.southaec.com

Find us here:



Payment Options

SAEC App

Available from the App Store and Google Play

BY MAIL

P.O. Box 449
Troy, AL 36081

WEBSITE

www.southaec.com

PHONE PAYMENTS

877-566-0611, credit cards accepted

NIGHT DEPOSITORY

Available at our Highway 231 office, day or night

PAYMENT POINTS

Regions Bank - Troy branch
Troy Bank and Trust - all branch locations
1st National Bank of Brundidge and Troy
First Citizens - Luverne branch
Banks Buy Rite - Banks
Country 1 Stop - Honoraville

IN PERSON

13192 US-231, Troy, AL 36081
Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Questions?

For questions concerning Capital Credits, contact: capital.credits@southaec.com

For questions concerning Billing, contact: billing@southaec.com

For questions concerning Construction, contact: construction@southaec.com