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Cooperative 

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February 19, 2025

Ms. Penelope Buys
Engineering Specialist
Division of Engineering
Florida Public Service Commission
2540 Shumard Oaks Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Re: Report for Rule 25-6.0343, F.A.C.

Attached is Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s (CHELCO) calendar year 2024 report for Rule 25-6.0343, F.A.C. due March 1, 2023. If you have any questions regarding the information provided in this report, please contact me at (850) 307-1190.

Regards,



J. Matthew Avery, P.E.
SVP of Engineering and Operations
CHELCO

Cc; Steve Rhodes, Chief Executive Officer, CHELCO
Cc; Forrest Boone, FECA

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Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CHELCO)
Report to Florida PSC
Pursuant to Rule 25-6.0343, F.A.C.
Calendar Year 2024
Submitted by March 1, 2025

1. Introduction

- CHELCO – Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative, Inc.
- 655 US Highway 331 N
DeFuniak Springs, FL 32433
- Contact: J. Matthew Avery, P.E.
SVP of Engineering and Operations
Phone: 850-307-1190
Email: mavery@chelco.com

2. Number of Meters Served in 2024: 69,943

3. Standards of Construction

- a) **National Electrical Safety Code Compliance** - Construction standards, policies, guidelines, practices, and procedures at CHELCO comply with the National Electrical Safety Code (ANSI C-2) [NESC]. For electrical facilities constructed on or after January 1, 2023, the 2023 NESC applies. Electrical facilities constructed prior to January 1, 2023, are governed by the edition of the NESC in effect at the time of the facility's initial construction.
- b) **Extreme Wind Loading Standards** - Construction standards, policies, guidelines, practices, and procedures at CHELCO are guided by the extreme wind loading standards specified by Figure 250-2(b) of the 2023 edition of the NESC. This statement applies to (1) new construction; (2) major planned work, including expansion, rebuild, or relocation of existing facilities, assigned on or after the effective date of this rule; (3) targeted critical infrastructure facilities and major thoroughfares considering political and geographical boundaries and other applicable operational considerations.
- c) CHELCO's Electrical construction standards, policies, guidelines, practices, and procedures address the effects of flooding and storm surges on underground distribution facilities and supporting overhead facilities. CHELCO reviews each project on a case-by-case basis to determine the effects of flooding and storm surge. We make recommendations to the counties that ultimately approve the developments.



- d) Electrical construction standards, policies, guidelines, practices, and procedures at CHELCO provide for placement of new and replacement distribution facilities to facilitate **safe and efficient access** for installation and maintenance. New facilities are placed in front or side of the property and all facilities are installed to allow access by CHELCO crews and vehicles to ensure proper maintenance/repair is performed as expeditiously and safely as possible. CHELCO decides on a case-by-case basis whether existing facilities need to be relocated. In 2021, to further harden our system CHELCO replaced or installed multiple critical wood pole structures with concrete poles as part of the ongoing distribution system upgrades or improvements.
- e) The **pole attachment agreements** between CHELCO and third-party attachers include language that specifies that the attacher, not the cooperative, must assess pole strength and safety before they attach to the pole. However, before approving any attachment, CHELCO reviews each proposed attachment to ensure each attachment will meet the National Electric Safety Code and CHELCO standards. CHELCO performs follow-up audits to ensure the attachment is properly installed and maintained. We also inspect and physically count every attachment on a 3-year cycle.

4. Facility Inspections

- a) We inspect new construction of power lines monthly. Each month work orders are closed and routed to the inspector. Work orders are selected at random and represent all types of construction and an accounting of the total dollars spent. We inspect poles, conductor, equipment, and any attachments made on the poles for NESC requirements and specifications. In addition to monthly work order inspections, we inspect every service (including transformer, service wire, and meter) once a year. CHELCO also uses an outside contractor for pole inspections. We are on an eight-year cycle to cover all the poles on our system and have been conducting pole inspections since the 1960s. Currently, our contractor inspects between 5,000 and 7,500 poles per year.
- b) During 2024, CHELCO selected 568 different work orders for inspection. This inspection ranged from one-span single-phase primary lines to complex three-phase lines. In addition to these planned inspections, our pole inspection contractor inspected 8,123 poles, or 12.98% out of a system total pole count of 62,864.



- c) During 2024, of the 8,123 poles that were inspected, there were 623 poles, or 7.7% of the poles that failed inspection for various reasons ranging from split top to wood rot.

- d) During 2024, 437 poles that failed the 2024 inspection or remained from 2023 were replaced.

5. Vegetation Management

- a) CHELCO has no Board policy that directly relates to the Right of Way Program. See below for an overview of CHELCO's current program and practices.
- b) CHELCO's current right of way program is designed to cut, mow, or otherwise manage one-fifth of its right of way on an annual basis. Our standard of cutting is fifteen feet on either side of the primary line from ground to sky. In 2024, we performed 204 miles of maintenance cutting on the primary line. We work to remove any existing problem trees under the primary line(s); this helps to reduce hot-spotting requirements between cycles. We do not require cutting around service conductors, but only the removal of limbs that are directly touching that may cause a problem before the next cutting cycle. We have an established herbicidal spraying program. Selected right-of-way floors are sprayed to prevent unwanted re-growth following the maintenance cutting program. We patrol all non-scheduled areas continually for danger trees that could affect a primary line through our service department, construction crews, right of way contractors, Right of Way Coordinator and calls from consumers. In 2015, we increased our standard overhead primary line easement area from 20 feet or 10 feet on either side of the pole line to 30 feet or 15 feet on either side of the pole line. This has helped limit the number of vegetation issues that potentially could cause an outage.

6. Storm Hardening Research

- a) CHELCO continues to harden our distribution system as mentioned above. We also continue to participate in and monitor the findings of the "Report on Collaborative Research for Hurricane Hardening" provided by The Public Utility Research Center and the University of Florida.