

CONFIDENTIAL AND EMBARGOED UNTIL:

August 25, 2021

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Palmetto Electric Cooperative bringing high-speed internet access to rural members

Palmetto Electric Cooperative has partnered with Palmetto Rural Telephone Cooperative, (PRTC), headquartered in Walterboro, S.C., to bring high-speed internet to its members living in rural Allendale, Hampton and Jasper counties.

The project, known as PalmettoLink, will be implemented over the next three years and will begin with the installation of fiber-optic cable on Palmetto Electric's lines. This fiber-optic network will not only deliver the high-speed connections that many members need but will also improve the reliability of the cooperative's electric distribution system.

"For some time now, Palmetto Electric's management and Board of Directors have been researching ways to improve the co-op's communication system in order to provide a more reliable high-speed network connection between our offices, substations and grid-connected equipment in rural areas," said A. Berl Davis Jr., Palmetto Electric president and CEO.

"Throughout this process, it became clear that we could leverage this upgraded network to not only improve our internal operation, but also bring high-speed internet to our rural members."

History has proven that cooperatives play a role in connecting rural communities. In 1940, Palmetto Electric Cooperative was formed by a group of rural residents who recognized the need for electricity and wanted to be part of the solution. When investor-owned utilities refused to bring electric service to rural areas, the cooperatives went to work. Today, more than 80 years later, co-op members living in these same rural areas face a different, yet similar, challenge with the lack of access to high-speed internet.

"Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how real the digital divide is between rural and urban areas, as many children transitioned to virtual learning and employees worked from home," said Davis. "At Palmetto Electric, we believe that high-speed internet should no longer be considered a luxury, but an essential service, much like electricity."

Providing adequate high-speed internet access is consistent with Palmetto Electric's mission of supporting the communities it serves. This expanded internet access should not only improve many residents' quality of life, but also provide opportunities in the form of education, jobs and economic development.

More information about PalmettoLink can be found online at palmettolink.us.

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About Palmetto Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Palmetto Electric Cooperative is a not-for-profit electrical distribution utility that is owned by the members it serves. The Cooperative serves over 75,000 consumers in southern Beaufort, Jasper and Hampton counties. Palmetto Electric's mission is to provide diversified, innovative energy and related services to its members consistent with sound business practices, while always acting in a community-building leadership role. For more information, visit palmetto.coop or call 843-208-5551.

Palmetto Electric is also a member of Touchstone Energy, which is a national alliance of local, consumer-owned electric cooperatives providing high standards of service to customers large and small. More than 692 Touchstone Energy cooperatives in 46 states are delivering energy and energy solutions to approximately 40 million customers every day. Touchstone Energy cooperatives serve their members with integrity, accountability, innovation and a longstanding commitment to communities.