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Study seeks energy efficiency for cooperative consumer-members

(Columbia, SC) South Carolina’s electric cooperatives are launching a statewide energy efficiency and consumer education study. While aimed largely at making the state’s highest-in-the-nation percentage of manufactured homes more energy efficient, site-built homes are also part of the study.

The study, called “Help My House,” will test different approaches to cost-effective energy solutions in more than 1,200 homes, including manufactured and site-built homes. Manufactured homes, many of them older, less-efficient models, make up nearly 20 percent of South Carolina housing. For electric cooperatives, the number is even higher at 24 percent. That’s three times the national average.

The S.C. Budget and Control Board’s State Energy Office awarded Central Electric Power Cooperative, the cooperatives’ wholesale power supplier, \$2.9 million for the statewide study. Central Electric’s additional funding brings the total budget to \$3.3 million.

Nineteen of the state’s electric cooperatives will participate in the education and research study, including Aiken, Berkeley, Black River, Blue Ridge, Broad River, Coastal, Edisto, Fairfield, Horry, Laurens, Little River, Lynches River, Marlboro, Mid-Carolina, Palmetto, Pee Dee, Santee, Tri-County and York.

Beginning Monday, March 1, consumer-members of the above co-ops will have the opportunity to apply for one of the available energy efficiency measures offered through their cooperative. The details of the solution offered will be available at the individual co-op’s Web site. Printed applications for some of the measures can be found in South Carolina Living magazine or in a member’s latest electric bill. Applications will be accepted through April 30. ***Members may apply only for the measure being offered by their cooperative.***

“We know that energy efficiency can save our members money,” said Ron Calcaterra, Central Electric’s president and CEO. “This study will show us which efficiency measures will give them the biggest bang for their buck. It will also help educate our members on how to use energy more efficiently.”

“The benefits of this study to the citizens of the state are two-fold,” said Ashlie Lancaster, an official with the energy office. “Not only will the residents who participate in this study see savings from their homes becoming more energy efficient, but residents state-wide will benefit as we learn the most effective ways to reduce energy use in manufactured homes.”

Each of the 19 co-ops will participate in at least one, but not all, of the following field tests:

- 200 manufactured homes will receive standard weatherization assistance (Aiken, Berkeley, Black River, Little River)
- 200 manufactured homes will receive energy-efficient roof retrofits (Broad River, Horry, Mid-Carolina)
- 200 manufactured homes will receive high-efficiency heat pumps (Blue Ridge, Coastal, Lynches River, Palmetto, Santee)
- 200 manufactured homes will receive ENERGY STAR appliance upgrades (Coastal, Marlboro, Palmetto, Tri-County, York)
- 400 homes will receive a new in-home display power monitor (Edisto, Fairfield, Laurens, Pee Dee)

Data from the field tests will enable utilities and policy makers to determine which energy efficiency approaches have the greatest impact and should be emphasized in the future.

“By learning the most efficient measures to reduce energy costs in these homes, the state will be able to take a more strategic approach to energy efficiency,” Lancaster said. “This could be a great relief to moderate and lower income families which unfortunately tend to have higher percentages of their income going to their power bills.”

“Palmetto Electric Cooperative is excited to be part of this continued effort to make homes more energy efficient in the Lowcountry,” said G. Thomas Upshaw president and CEO of Palmetto Electric Cooperative.

This grant is part of \$68 million in federal economic stimulus funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Energy to the South Carolina Energy Office for the purpose of reducing energy costs, increasing the use of renewable energy and creating jobs.

The Help My House study is the latest in a series of measures co-ops in South Carolina are taking to save energy and money. Since 2008, the co-ops have given away more than two million energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs to consumer-members. And last year, the co-ops awarded home energy efficiency makeovers valued at up to \$10,000 each to seven families in the state. More information on that program is available at www.HelpMyHouse.org.

About The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, Inc.

The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, Inc. is the state association of independent, member-owned electric cooperatives. More than 1.5 million South Carolinians in all 46 counties use power provided by electric cooperatives. Together, the co-ops operate the state’s largest electric power system with more than 70,000 miles of power lines across 70 percent of the state. More information is available at www.ecsc.org.

About Central Electric Power Cooperative

Central Electric Power Cooperative is a generation and transmission cooperative organized in 1948. Its mission is to provide generation and transmission service to the 20 electric cooperatives in South Carolina. Central, acting as an aggregator of energy requirements of the cooperatives, negotiates energy supply arrangements and transmits that energy to the cooperatives. Central is one of the largest generation and transmission cooperatives in the U.S.

About Palmetto Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Palmetto Electric Cooperative is a non-profit electrical distribution utility that is owned by the members it serves. The Cooperative serves over 66,000 consumers in southern Beaufort, Jasper and Hampton counties. Palmetto Electric's mission is to provide diversified, innovative energy and related services to its customers consistent with sound business practices, while always acting in a community-building leadership role. For more information, visit www.palmetto.coop or call 843-208-5551.

About the South Carolina Energy Office

The South Carolina Energy Office (SCEO) provides a broad range of resources designed to help citizens, businesses and public entities save energy and money. In recent years, the SCEO has helped save South Carolina over \$300 million through public and private energy-saving measures and new energy technologies. The SCEO is a unit of the S.C. Budget and Control Board. Additional information can be found at www.energy.sc.gov.

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