

## What It Means to Be a Member of Your Electric Cooperative

When you flip a switch, charge your phone, or turn up the heat, it's easy to think of electricity as something that just shows up. But behind every reliable moment of power is a system—and a business model—designed with you in mind.

Jones-Onslow EMC isn't a for-profit utility. We are a member-owned electric cooperative, and that difference matters.



### You're Not Just a Customer —You're a Member

Unlike investor-owned utilities that exist to generate profits for shareholders, electric cooperatives like JOEMC were created to serve communities that others wouldn't. Today, that mission continues.

As a member of the cooperative:

- ✦ You own a portion of the utility
- ✦ You have a voice in how the cooperative is governed
- ✦ Any margins are reinvested back into the system or returned to members—not paid out to shareholders

Our focus isn't on profit. It's on providing safe, reliable, and affordable power to the homes and businesses we serve.

### How the Cooperative Model Impacts Power to Your Home

Because we are locally governed and not driven by shareholder returns, every dollar collected is used with purpose:

- ✓ Maintaining and upgrading power lines, substations, and equipment
- ✓ Investing in grid reliability and storm restoration capabilities
- ✓ Supporting long-term planning to keep power dependable today and into the future
- ✓ Decisions are made by a local board of directors—your neighbors—who live in the communities we serve and understand local needs.

### Built for the Long Term

Electric cooperatives were built to last. The cooperative model prioritizes:

- ✦ Reliability over profit
- ✦ Local decision-making over distant control
- ✦ Members over shareholders
- ✦ That structure allows us to focus on keeping the lights on safely, responding quickly when outages occur, and planning responsibly for the future of the electric grid—all while keeping members informed every step of the way.

### A Cooperative You Can Trust

At JOEMC, we take our responsibility to you seriously. Being a cooperative means transparency, accountability, and a commitment to doing what's right for our members—not just today, but for years to come.



## Behind the Scenes of Our Winter Readiness Routine

When winter weather strikes, Jones-Onslow EMC members can count on their cooperative to be ready. Long before the first cold snap arrives, our crews and staff are already preparing to keep power flowing safely and reliably—no matter what the forecast holds.

### HOW WE PREPARE

Winter readiness at Jones-Onslow EMC starts months in advance. Our line crews inspect equipment, clear rights-of-way, and perform maintenance on poles, lines, and substations to reduce the risk of outages during severe weather. We also test backup systems and ensure essential materials—such as poles, transformers, and hardware—are stocked and ready so we can respond quickly if outages occur.

Behind the scenes, our team closely monitors weather forecasts and adjusts staffing and resources as storms approach. We also coordinate with neighboring electric cooperatives and local emergency agencies so additional support is available if needed. Above all else, safety remains our top priority—for our employees and for the members we serve.

### OUR TEAM IN ACTION

When winter weather hits, Jones-Onslow EMC crews are on call 24/7. Whether facing freezing rain, high winds,

or icy conditions, our teams work around the clock to restore power as safely and efficiently as possible.

Outages are tracked in real time, allowing crews to be dispatched quickly and strategically. We also keep members informed through outage alerts, social media updates, and our online outage map—so you know what’s happening and when restoration efforts are underway.

### HOW YOU CAN BE READY AT HOME

Members can play a role in staying safe and comfortable during winter storms by taking a few simple steps:

- Prepare an emergency kit with flashlights, batteries, blankets, and nonperishable food.
- Charge phones and devices ahead of storms and keep a battery-powered radio on hand.
- Stay informed by bookmarking our outage map and following Jones-Onslow EMC on social media.
- Avoid downed power lines and report them immediately.
- Plan ahead for medical needs if you rely on electricity for medical equipment.

Winter weather can be unpredictable, but preparation makes all the difference. As a member-owned cooperative, Jones-Onslow EMC is committed to keeping you safe, informed, and powered through every season.



## Basketball Camp Scholarships for Rising 6th and 7th Graders

Jones-Onslow EMC is now accepting applications from rising sixth or seventh graders for scholarships to attend basketball camps at two North Carolina universities this summer. Young men can apply for a scholarship to attend the Carolina Basketball School which will be held June 27-30 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Young women can apply for a spot at the Wolfpack Women’s

Basketball Camp which will be held June 14-17 at NC State University in Raleigh.

The scholarships cover all expenses at the overnight camps, which provide a glimpse into life on a college campus. Campers stay overnight in dorms, learn fundamental skills that will help them excel on and off the court and receive individual and

group instruction from Division 1 coaches to enhance their basketball and team-building abilities.

To apply, students must be a sixth or seventh grade student during the 2026-2027 school year at a qualifying school. The application is open, and it must be submitted by March 31. To learn more and apply, visit [ncelectric-cooperatives.com/sports-camps](https://ncelectric-cooperatives.com/sports-camps).

## UNDERSTANDING HEAT STRIPS: A Simple Way to Manage Winter Energy Use

During the winter months, your heating system works harder to keep your home comfortable. If you notice higher energy use this time of year, your heat pump's auxiliary heat—commonly known as heat strips—may be playing a role.

Heat strips are an important part of your system but knowing when and how they operate can help you use energy more efficiently and manage your electric bill.

### 1. What Are Heat Strips?

Heat strips are the backup heating element in a heat pump system. They automatically activate when temperatures drop extremely low or when your system needs extra help—such as during a defrost cycle.

Because heat strips generate heat using electricity alone, they use more energy than your heat pump's normal operation. Under typical conditions, a heat pump costs about 30–35 cents per hour to operate. When heat strips are activated, that cost can jump to around \$1.30 per hour—and one common trigger is raising your thermostat too quickly.

### 2. Small Changes Can Make a Big Difference

If you lower your thermostat overnight or while you're away, it's best



to raise it gradually when you return—by no more than two degrees at a time. Sudden temperature increases can cause your system to switch to auxiliary heat, increasing energy use and resulting in a higher bill.

### 3. Let a Programmable Thermostat Do the Work

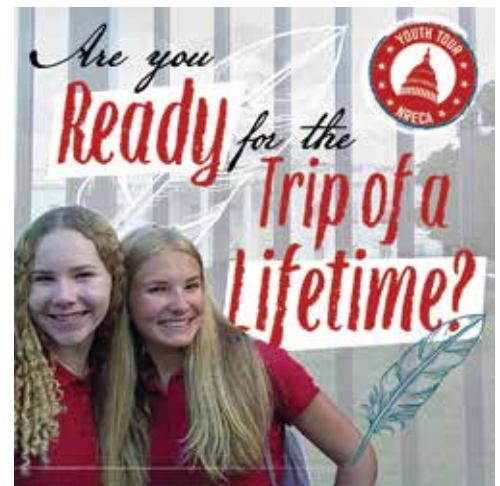
A programmable or smart thermostat helps manage temperature changes automatically, allowing your system to warm your home efficiently without unnecessary use of heat strips. This is one of the easiest ways to improve comfort while keeping energy use in check.

### 4. When to Call a Professional

Because heat strips cost nearly four times more to operate than your heat pump's normal mode, it's important to ensure they're only activating when necessary.

If your system frequently runs in auxiliary mode during milder winter weather (when temperatures are above 35-40 degrees) or if you notice your energy bills are consistently higher than expected, it may be worth having a licensed HVAC professional check your system to ensure it's operating properly.

While we can't control winter weather, we can control how we use energy at home. You can help your heating system run more efficiently and manage winter energy costs by adjusting thermostat settings gradually, avoiding unnecessary use of auxiliary heat, and using a programmable thermostat when possible. For more energy-saving tips and resources, visit the Energy Wise section at [joemc.com](http://joemc.com).



### Rising Seniors this is for YOU!

The countdown is on! Applications for the 2026 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour close on **February 28**.

Don't miss your chance to spend an all-expenses paid week in Washington, D.C. building leadership skills, making new friends, visiting historic monuments and museums, and connecting with 1,800+ student leaders from across the country.

Go to the Community tab at [joemc.com](http://joemc.com) to learn more and apply!



Mid-winter is a great time to ensure you're making the most of your home heating system. Replace or clean filters to keep your furnace or heat pump running efficiently. Listen for strange noises and check for uneven heating—these signs indicate that the system may need servicing. Ensure vents and radiators aren't blocked by furniture or rugs as proper airflow helps your system work less and saves energy. A little maintenance along the way can prevent costly repairs and keep your home cozy through winter.



Ricky Maready, CEO

## A Message from the CEO

# Reliability Requires Investment

As your local power provider, Jones-Onslow EMC's mission has always been simple: keep the lights on and support the communities we serve. But behind every switch, every warm home and every business that opens its doors is a complex system that requires constant care. Reliable electricity doesn't happen by accident. It requires ongoing investment in our local grid—through system repairs, maintenance, upgrades and the integration of new technologies that help us operate smarter and more efficiently.

Much of the energy system we rely on today was built decades ago. While it continues to serve us well, age alone means that components must be repaired or replaced to maintain performance and safety. From poles and wires to transformers and substations, every part of the grid has a lifespan. Routine maintenance helps extend that lifespan, but eventually equipment must be updated to meet modern standards. These proactive investments reduce the likelihood of outages, shorten restoration times when disruptions do occur and create a stronger backbone for our growing community.

The demands on the electric grid are also evolving. Homes and businesses today use more electricity than ever, and that trend will only continue. Electric vehicles, advanced HVAC systems, smart appliances and new commercial facilities add load to the local distribution system. As these technologies take hold, the grid must be able to support increased demand while maintaining the reliability our members expect. Strategic upgrades such as pole replacements are essential to ensuring we can meet these needs both today and in the decades ahead.

At the same time, new technologies are reshaping how we operate. Tools such as smart meters, artificial intelligence vegetation integration, automated switching devices and drones allow us to detect problems faster and respond more effectively. These technologies can isolate problems, reroute power to minimize outages and provide real-time data that helps us plan and maintain equipment more efficiently.

Implementing innovative technologies into the grid is not just a convenience—it is a necessity for ensuring reliability in an increasingly complex energy landscape.

While these improvements require thoughtful planning and financial investment, the return is significant. A stronger grid supports economic growth, improves service quality and enhances safety for our crews and community. Most importantly, it ensures that the essential power you rely on is available whenever you need it.

Our commitment to reliability runs deeper than infrastructure alone. It reflects our responsibility to the people and communities we serve. Every upgrade, every repair and every technology we deploy is an investment in your daily life—from the comfort of your home to the success of local businesses and schools.

We know that powering our community means preparing for the future, not just maintaining the present. By investing in our local grid today, we are building the foundation for a brighter, more resilient tomorrow.



## OYSTERS ROCKEFELLER

*Put locally raised oysters to good use with this recipe.*

Source: [www.carolinacountry.com](http://www.carolinacountry.com)

### INGREDIENTS

- 20 fresh oysters
- 3–4 cups beer or water
- 8 slices bacon
- 1½ pounds baby spinach
- 1 clove minced garlic
- Pepper, to taste
- ¾ cup heavy cream
- 1 pound grated Fontina cheese
- 1 pound grated Asiago cheese

### DIRECTIONS

1. Clean oysters in cold water. Place oysters in a steaming basket or colander and place in a stockpot filled with beer (or substitute water) to about 2 inches below basket. Bring liquid to a boil, cover and steam until they pop open. Remove top shell and let cool. Put the oysters side-by-side on a foil-lined baking sheet.
2. Brown the bacon, keeping the grease. Sauté the baby spinach in the leftover bacon grease, adding garlic and fresh-cracked black pepper. Add heavy cream, Fontina cheese and Asiago cheese to the baby spinach until mixture is thick.
3. Spoon mixture over oysters, then crumble bacon on top and put in the broiler until lightly brown.