

Members love their annual meeting

2025 edition sets attendance record

Walton EMC’s Annual Members’ Meeting continues to grow more popular every year. This year’s meeting saw record attendance, with 2,430 members from every part of the co-op’s service area registering. The previous record was 2,392 set in 2023.

“Our members understand the cooperative principle of democratic member control,” says CEO Ron Marshall. “They turn out every year to make their voices heard and elect directors to represent their interests through the board of directors.”

As a result of those elections, three directors were re-elected for three-year terms: Billy Ray Allen of the Mountain Park district, Dawn Taylor of the Five Forks-North Snellville district and Dan Chelko of the Southwest Walton district.

As part of the annual meeting process, Walton EMC’s CEO and board chair publish reports on the co-op’s website. These reports give members a glimpse of the business’s operations over the past year and commentary about the state of their cooperative.

“It is a privilege to lead this governing body that is committed to staying the course,” said Board Chair Michael Lowder. “We remain committed to delivering power with purpose to better life for the people and communities served by the cooperative.”

In his report, Marshall said, “2024 brought its share of challenges and achievements. I am proud of what we have accomplished as a co-op and am looking forward to the future. In 2025, Walton EMC employees remain committed to reliability, great service, supporting our communities, educating our members and keeping everyone safe.”

See both annual meeting reports in their entirety, a meeting recap and the list of members who won bill credits and the retired truck at [waltonemc.com/annual-meeting](https://www.waltonemc.com/annual-meeting).



Walton EMC CEO Ron Marshall presents the grand prize, a retired F-150 pickup truck, to co-op member Jerry Fincher of Monroe.



Sara Beddington, nicknamed the Happiness Ambassador, passes out the traditional bucket of gifts.



Harry Ruiz, Ryan West and Hudson Kingery greeting members at the 89th Walton EMC Annual Meeting.



Walton EMC Board of Directors and CEO. Front row (left to right): Sam Simonton, Wayne Lester, Billy Ray Allen, Dan Chelko, Tommy Adcock. Second row: CEO Ron Marshall, Dawn Taylor, Stan Pitts. Back row: Michael Lowder and Jason Sidwell.

Watch a recap of the 2025 Annual Meeting [here](#)



realite

INVESTING *energy* IN WHAT MATTERS MOST

reliability

members

safety

employees

community

service

HURRICANE KATRINA

TWENTY YEARS LATER: WALTON CREWS REMEMBER

Twenty years ago this month, Walton EMC linemen packed their trucks and headed south into one of the most devastating natural disasters in American history. Athens Banner-Herald reporter Wayne Ford accompanied the team to document their mission, publishing a powerful series of articles in September 2005 under headlines such as “Power to help,” “Another dark night” and “Pulling together.” Recently, Ford returned to interview these same linemen for a special retrospective, and what emerged were memories that remind us why the cooperative spirit runs so deep.

The crew that made the eight-hour, 268-mile journey to Pearl River Valley Electric in southern Mississippi included lineworkers Greg Pannell, Randall Pruitt, Ronnie Browning, Lee Chandler, Carlos Thompson, Eric Ellington, Scott Cole, Jason Blankenship, James Wise and Josh Fuller, led by foreman Gerald Malcom. They arrived in Hattiesburg to find devastation beyond imagination.



The photo on the left shows our Walton EMC lineworkers gathered during their Hurricane Katrina response mission in September 2005, photographed by Athens Banner-Herald reporter Wayne Ford. From left: Ronnie Browning, Josh Fuller, Carlos Thompson, James Wise, Scott Cole, Lee Chandler, Greg Pannell and Jason Blankenship. The photo on the right shows crew members reunited 20 years later when Ford returned to interview them for his retrospective story. Left to right: Greg Pannell, Jason Blankenship, Lee Chandler, Gerald Malcom (retired supervisor), Josh Fuller, Ronnie Browning and Eric Ellington.

This was Fuller’s first storm response, and it was quite an introduction. “I was too young to drive any of the trucks since we were working out of state,” he recalls with a laugh. However, age didn’t stop him from jumping into one of the largest mutual aid responses in the history of electric utilities, working alongside crews from cooperatives nationwide.

The personal sacrifices were significant. Pannell was expecting a child back home, while Pruitt’s daughter was graduating from high school. Yet when the call came for mutual aid, both answered without hesitation.

Ford’s original articles captured the staggering destruction: trees snapped 20 feet up at the trunk, oaks and magnolias uprooted leaving gaping holes in the ground, power lines twisted across highways, substations flooded and entire distribution systems needing complete reconstruction. But the crew also discovered something unexpected in the midst of catastrophe: hope and human kindness in the most unlikely places.

—continued inside



quick guide

IF YOUR POWER IS OUT
770.267.2505
[waltonemc.com](https://www.waltonemc.com) > Report an Outage

WHEN WE’RE AVAILABLE
Power Outages and Emergencies > 24/7
Contact Center > M–F, 7A–7P
Business Offices > M–F, 8A–5P

find us

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Snellville 3645 Lenora Church Rd.
Watkinsville 2061-D Hog Mountain Rd.

Web [waltonemc.com](https://www.waltonemc.com)
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Youtube [youtube.com/emctv](https://www.youtube.com/emctv)

our leaders

President and CEO Ron Marshall
Senior VP Corporate Services Russell DeLong
Senior VP Walton Energy and External Affairs Jim Bottone

VP Engineering and Operations Tim Morris

VP Power Supply Hudson Kingery

VP Finance Darlene Butler

Board Chair Michael Lowder

Board Vice Chair Jason Sidwell

Board Secretary/Treasurer Stan Pitts

Board Members Tommy Adcock, Billy Ray Allen, Dan Chelko, Wayne Lester, Sam Simonton, Dawn Taylor

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HURRICANE KATRINA

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The local “birddog” — an employee familiar with the system who helps mutual aid crews navigate — showed up wearing leather chaps. When our guys asked about them, he simply said, “They’re for the rattlesnakes.” It was just one of many reminders that this wasn’t ordinary linework.

Despite having no power for weeks and limited communication, residents kept trying to offer our linemen food and drinks. The impact of their mission became clear in the voices of those they helped. As Ford reported in his original coverage, when the Walton EMC crew arrived at the home of the Franklins — an elderly retired couple in remote Mississippi who had been without power for weeks — a woman walked out of the house and said to foreman Malcom: “Hey, Hon. God comes in a white truck.”

The scale of work was unlike anything they’d seen. “At one point, every pole you could see had a man on it,” Pannell said. “Linework doesn’t change, just the technology does.”

As Ford wrote in his September 2005 coverage, the work was methodical yet relentless — replacing broken utility poles, restringing power lines, working into the night by generator-powered lights. The work was also different because there were no underground utilities to navigate, which allowed crews to focus purely on rebuilding the grid from scratch. Ellington summed up

the team’s spirit perfectly: “If there was a job to do, this bunch right here could get it done.”

This spirit of mutual aid isn’t just history, it’s woven into who we are as electric cooperatives. When ice storms hit Georgia, when tornadoes strike neighboring states, when floods threaten communities across the Southeast, co-ops respond. It’s one of our founding principles: cooperation among cooperatives.

Our crew showed what it means to put community above personal convenience, working around the clock in dangerous conditions, away from major family moments, because they understood that when one cooperative suffers, we all do. When the next storm comes, and it will, we’ll be ready to help and ready to receive help, because that’s what cooperatives do.



Above: Utility crew member Eric Ellington and Ronnie Browning pull fallen powerlines from debris along right-of-way in a deep forest before the lines could be reset. Photo and caption courtesy of Wayne Ford, Athens Banner-Herald, September 25, 2005.



Above: St. Paul United Methodist Church, in background, escaped serious damage, but many trees were down in the cemetery. Photo and caption courtesy of Wayne Ford, Athens Banner-Herald, September 25, 2005.



Left: Pearl River Valley Electric official Sam Cain talks with Walton Electric Membership Corp. crew members and their foreman, Gerald Malcom, right foreground, prior to their work in southern Mississippi repairing downed utility lines left in Hurricane Katrina’s wake. Photo and caption courtesy of Wayne Ford, Athens Banner-Herald, September 25, 2005.

Be sure to read Wayne Ford’s complete 20-year retrospective story and watch the video interviews with our crew members in the Athens Banner-Herald.

Left: Athens Banner-Herald reporter Wayne Ford (back to camera) interviews Walton EMC linemen about their Hurricane Katrina mutual aid mission during a recent visit to the cooperative’s office. Ford, who originally covered the story 20 years ago by traveling with the crew to Mississippi, returned to capture their memories for a retrospective article and video marking the 20th anniversary of the devastating hurricane and the cooperative response that followed.



GET THE REALITE ONLINE

Step 1 Point your phone camera at the QR code.

Step 2 Tap the screen to access Walton EMC news online.

Vehicle sale

Walton EMC will accept sealed bids for the vehicles listed to the right no later than Sept. 20 at 4 p.m. The vehicles will be available to view at our main office located at 842 Highway 78, Monroe, Ga. Bring your license and check in at the front desk to be directed to the vehicles and equipment for sale. **The viewing is for one week only beginning Monday, Sept. 15, and ending Friday, Sept. 19, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

All vehicles are on an as-is basis. Bids must be submitted in a secure box during viewing week or postmarked on or before midnight, Saturday, Sept. 21, 2025. The highest bidder will be contacted as soon as possible.

Please send bids to Walton EMC, Attn: Tim Morris – Vehicle Bid; by either mailing to P.O. Box 260, Monroe, GA 30655 or dropping off at our drive-through window.

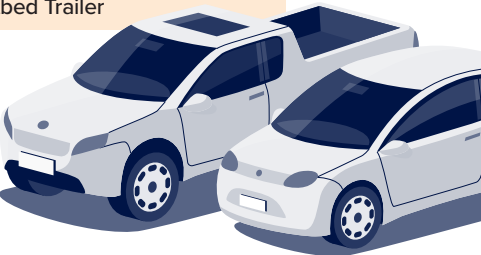
CARS & TRUCKS

VEH #	YEAR	DESCRIPTION	MILEAGE
1021	2010	Ford Fusion 4 door	163,322
1121	2007	Ford F150 Supercab Pickup	203,249
1139	2009	Ford F150 Supercab Pickup	245,062
1140	2015	Ford F150 Supercab Pickup	205,388
1731	2003	Ford E250 Van	147,349
1971	2006	Ford Escape Hybrid	217,205
2011	2010	Ford Escape Hybrid	110,209
2111	2008	Ford F150 Supercab Pickup	211,000
2601	2000	Ford F250 Pickup	267,382
3140	2017	Ford F150 Supercab Pickup	234,813

TRACTORS & TRAILERS

EQUIP#	YEAR	DESCRIPTION
27	2020	Hooper 8 ton Flatbed Trailer
29	2020	Hooper 8 ton Flatbed Trailer
35	1991	Custom Trailer Model 9T800
30	2020	Hooper 8 ton Flatbed Trailer
41	1999	Hooper Flat Bed
25	2020	Hooper 8 ton Flatbed Trailer

Please note: Walton EMC reserves the right to refuse any or all bids. Sales tax will be added.



Walton EMC representatives, from left, Bruin Johnston, Haley Parsons, Chloe Toole and Rachel Li pause outside Mount Vernon, one of the national landmarks participants visited during the 2025 Washington Youth Tour.

A capital experience

Four local high school students continued a Walton EMC tradition as the co-op’s 61st representatives at the 2025 Washington Youth Tour.

Bruin Johnston, Rachel Li and Haley Parsons, all of North Oconee High School, and Chloe Toole, Oconee High School, earned the opportunity to explore Washington, D.C., alongside 1,800 teens from across the nation. The week-long leadership and citizenship development experience is an all-expenses-paid trip organized by electric co-ops like Walton EMC.

The purpose of the Youth Tour is to help electric cooperatives promote stronger communities and a stronger nation by giving young people the ability and desire to make meaningful, lifelong contributions to their communities.

Parsons said connecting with youth from across the nation was a personal highlight of the trip. “We were able to ... develop relationships that will last a lifetime,” she said.

Applications for the 2026 Washington Youth Tour will be available at waltonemc.com in late fall. Bruin urges eligible students to apply. “The opportunity to meet new people and see the inner workings of our country is one that very few people have, and one that broadens your understanding of our country,” he said.

Oconee High School’s Chloe Toole represents the 2025 Washington Youth Tour during a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

