

Lineman Appreciation

By William L. Caynor Sr., Price Electric CEO

Linemen Appreciation? Who are these remarkable men and women, and why did they choose a career path of working at elevated heights and with energized high voltage conductors? What drives a person to wake up at 2 am, after receiving an outage phone call, and go out into some of the nastiest weather that the environment can muster? That's easy; these are individuals who want to help others and have the courage and commitment to endure the discomfort of the elements and the fortitude to sustain physical demands on their body over long periods of time, with the sole purpose of helping others to make a difference.

The importance of this extraordinary and crucial position was first recognized by U.S. Senate Resolution S. Res. 95 on April 10, 2013. S. Res. 95 created a day of recognition for linemen, and that year, and every year afterward, linemen are celebrated on April 18 for their commitment to the trade. It's their day, and I must say, it's well deserved.

The term "lineman" was originally derived for the men who set the poles and strung the telegraph lines in the 1840's. The telephone system came along in the 1870's, and these men continued with their craft, but when a young man named Thomas Edison invented an ingenious method of lighting in 1889 called the "incandescent light bulb," our industry was born. Edison's light bulb would revolutionize an industry and the need for electricity. By 1882, Edison had completed the construction of America's first substation at 257 Pearl Street in New York City, to illuminate the city. At this time the dangers of electricity were becoming noticeable when Edison's newly buried underground cable shocked some horses as they passed overhead, and the bare wires and connections in homes caused fires. The installation of the substation and line was the advent of today's electrical or power lineman, and safety has become of utmost importance as the lessons learned have created a safety manual and regulatory requirements that continue to swell. Nowadays, the term linemen has evolved to linespersons, as women have entered the workforce, but the numbers are still low in comparison to their male counterparts. Duke Energy, a large investor-owned utility, had 15 women out of 2,411 line-workers in 2017. Today, Price Electric doesn't have a woman on the line crew, but we are more than open to the possibility; we just haven't had an applicant as of yet.

Given the nature of recognition of linemen on April 18, I would like to personally thank, not only our linemen, but also our former linemen in the Manager of Operations position, the CEO, and a member of your Board of your Directors. Please assist me in thanking; Ben, Mike, Jerel, Roy, Andrew, Chris, Tom, Dave, Colten, Mark, and Jesse, for their commitment to serve you, our Cooperative member/owners.