

## SLECA linemen take part in safety training program

SLECA employees recently participated in the Louisiana Lineman Training Program administered by the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives in Baton Rouge. Shown at right after completing Level III training was Melvin Brown.



Shown below after completing Level VIII training were Reggie Pontiff, Brennan Blanchard and Lee Aucoin.



## Across the Board

July 11, 2011

Present were directors Alexander Doyle, president; David Luke, vice-president; Brian Rivet, secretary; Terry Trahan, treasurer; Tracy Duval, J. D. Boudreaux, Eroy Acosta, Roger Dale DeHart, Larry J. Daigle and Lloyd Gibson, advisor. Also attending were Michael Guidry, general manager, James Funderburk, attorney and Elaine Robertson, member services supervisor.

After the invocation and pledge, the board approved the minutes of the June 6 regular board meeting, 160 new members and the ALEC Report.

The financial report, approved by the board, highlighted interest earnings, cash on hand, rate comparison showing SLECA having the lowest rates compared to other area utilities, line loss, kilowatt hour sales for the month, cumulative sales to date, cost of service, equity, TIER and electric and total revenue verses cost per kilowatt hour. (Acct. No. 2308501)

Following an update on upcoming schools, meetings and events, Mr. Guidry reported on the following: (1) SLECA continues to have the lowest rates in the area; (2) The United Nations has declared 2012 as the Year of the Cooperative; (3) Those who supported the Cap and Trade Bill in the Senate are regrouping for another fight; (4) At a recent meeting between Entergy representatives and the cooperatives, Entergy could not show how cooperatives would benefit if Entergy turned over its transmission management to the Midwest Independent Service Organization even though Entergy claims millions in savings; (5) Entergy is trying to get approval to scrap its Nine Mile Point Plant and build a 550 MW combined-cycle natural gas plant; (6) It appears Houma and Morgan City, both members of LEPA, are moving forward with the building of a 64 MW combined-cycle natural gas power plant; (7) SLECA is eligible for up to a 6% discount on medical and pharmacy premiums due to its continued "wellness" program; (8) Yolanda Charles of the Inside Safety Committee and Eric Trahan of the Outside Safety Committee have been selected to attend the ALEC safety banquet as part of SLECA's safety program; (9) A theft of copper and vandalism occurred at the Landry Substation on June 7th exposing employees to a potentially fatal situation. A camera and surveillance system that can be moved from one location to another is being installed and an inspection procedure has been devised for employees to follow each time they enter any substation; (10) Summer storms have increased weather-related outages due to lightning and also branches being pushed into lines by high winds; and (11) SLECA continues to prepare for the 2012 NERC/SERC audit by reviewing its compliance program.

Next, the board took the following actions: (1) Appointed Mrs. Duval and Mr. Boudreaux as the voting delegates for the ALEC director; (2) Appointed Mr. Acosta as the voting delegate for the NRECA Director; (3) Passed a resolution per RUS, CFR 1730, Subpart C related to how SLECA handles requests from members who wish to connect devices which could result in their returning power to the grid, such as solar panels; and (4) Accepted the low bid to rebuild the boom and paint Unit 356.

The manager's report and expenses, the safety report showing employees have worked 2,398,686 hours without a lost time accident since December, 1996 and the attorney's report and fees were then approved by the board.

The meeting was then adjourned.

You may obtain copies of the minutes by contacting SLECA, P.O. Box 4037, Houma, LA 70361 or by calling (985) 876-6880 or 1-800-256-8826.

## SLECA News



Mike Guidry, Manager  
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## Co-op Connections Card coming to consumers Look for it in your September bill

SLECA's commitment to its members goes far beyond just providing safe, reliable, and affordable electricity.

We're always looking for different and creative ways to provide value to our members and to our community, especially during tough economic times.

SLECA's new Co-op Connections Card that will be arriving in your home with your power bill in September is a money-saving tool we're proud to offer our membership.

The card connects you with discounts on everything from hotel stays to oil changes.

A wide variety of businesses throughout our community accept the card and will indicate their participation by displaying a decal in their windows. Be sure to present the card at the register to receive your discount!

Through this special incentive, we hope local businesses participating in the Co-op Connections program benefit from increased traffic from SLECA members.

"SLECA has always been an integral part of the business community and our local economy," said SLECA General Manager Mike Guidry. "We encourage all local businesses to become our partners and join us in this project. It's good for our consumers

and it's good for business."

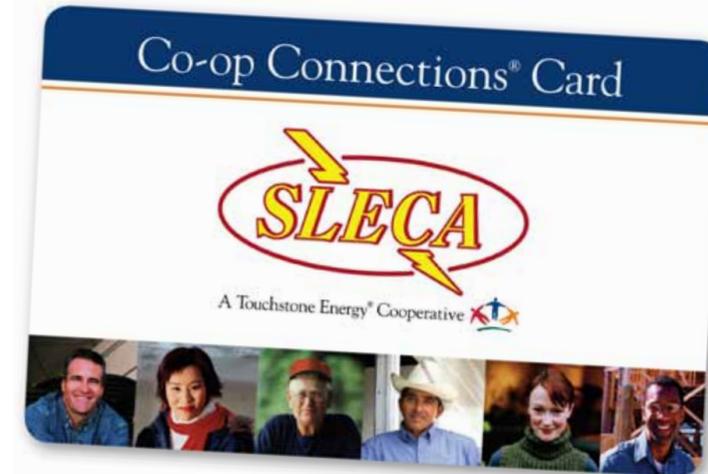
Businesses can sign up for the program at no cost. For a complete list of all participating businesses in our area, simply log on to our website, [www.sleca.com](http://www.sleca.com), in September after the program is officially launched and follow the Co-op Connections Card link.

The card also gives you access to online savings at more than 95 national retailers like Barnes&Noble.com, Hertz Rental Cars, Best Western hotels, ProFlowers.com and many more.

Need appliances like a new washer and dryer? Your Co-op Connections Card could save you 40 percent or more. If you're shopping for new furniture, use the Co-op Connections Card and save hundreds of dollars depending on what you buy and where.

How about insulation or energy efficient windows? Are you thinking of remodeling the kitchen or weatherizing your home? Would you like to save money at your favorite restaurant? You can check out these great local and national discounts at [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop).

One of the most valuable features of the Co-op Connections Card is the pharmacy discount. While it is not insurance, the discount can mean savings of 10 to 60 percent on prescrip-



tion drugs. The logo and information on the back of your card is recognized at more than 60,000 national, regional, and local pharmacies. (Acct. No. 10229401)

The pharmacy discount has been widely used by cooperative members across the country, resulting in combined savings of nearly \$20 million on prescriptions.

Want to find out more? Log on to [www.locateproviders.com](http://www.locateproviders.com) to search for pharmacies in our area honoring the card. Use code 22203 as the group number under the "Groups" login section. Next, enter your zip code.

SLECA strives to serve our members according to four core values: integrity, accountability, innovation and commitment to community. Our Co-op Connections Card is one of the ways we live up to those values.

While cards will be mailed out to existing consumers with their September bills, cards will also be given to new consumers when they come to the office to apply for service.

We're eager to answer any questions you have about the card and how to take advantage of the discounts it provides. Call us to find out more, or log onto [www.sleca.com](http://www.sleca.com).

## Utility rights-of-way make dangerous playgrounds

For electric utilities, service reliability starts and ends with rights-of-way.

South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association (SLECA) alone has 1,434 miles of power line rights-of-way in Assumption, Lafourche, St. Martin, St. Mary and Terrebonne parishes.

Electric utilities spend millions of dollars every year maintaining thousands of miles of rights-of-way by spraying, trimming trees and clearing brush to prevent outages and to enable crews rapid access to power lines whenever necessary.

Some rights-of-way run through dense woods. Others may cross open fields or run next to roads and highways.

The land these rights-of ways go through is not owned by the utility. The land is usually private property on which a property owner pays taxes. The utility only has permission to enter the property to service and maintain power lines in the course of providing service. That right of access is

limited only to the utility or its contractors and is not extended to the general public.

Unfortunately, the same process that ensures service reliability and provides easy access to power lines makes them ideal driving ranges for golfers, tempting mud-tracks for off-road vehicles and race courses for 4-wheelers.

Whether on public or private property, a utility right-of-way exists solely to ensure reliable utility service, and any action that interferes or prevents that function has serious consequences.

Those who misuse rights-of-ways may not only be criminally and financially responsible for any damage they cause to the land itself or the utility's property located in such rights-of-way, they also can be financially responsible for any damage to private property caused in homes or businesses served by those lines because of misuse of a right-of-way.

When rights-of-way are used as driving ranges,

golf balls can damage insulators, allowing power lines to come into contact with each other or the ground, causing damage to utility hardware, appliances or electronics. (Acct. No. 8253201)

Off-road vehicles or 4-wheelers making unauthorized use of rights-of-way can snag guy-wires or hit power poles, damaging the utility equipment attached to them, and disrupting service to thousands of homes and businesses.

Rutting due to off-road vehicle usage can cause erosion requiring expensive control measures to be undertaken to preserve the land. Those responsible can be held financially liable for the damage and financial losses they cause.

Utility rights-of-way may look like an inviting playground, but that's not what they're intended for and misuse of a right-of-way can be very expensive in the long run. It can also be deadly because damage that causes a power line to fall puts everyone in deadly peril.

## Safety First



By Joe Ticheli  
SLECA Safety Coordinator

## Critter outages and other safety hazards

There's a war going on between all sorts of critters and electric utilities—and the varmints are usually winning.

As strange as it may seem, squirrels, raccoons, possums, snakes and birds have caused more bizarre electrical outages, blinks, power surges and service interruptions than the public would believe possible, and trying to put a stop to the problem is not only expensive, but nearly impossible.

Weather remains the leading cause of power interruptions so electric utilities spend vast amounts of money and time every year keeping trees and limbs out of power lines, but critter outages aren't that simple to prevent. As subdivisions invade what was once natural habitat, more and more wildlife ends up with human neighbors. And that inquisitive wildlife is stirring up trouble by turning power lines into highways and power poles into perches. (Acct. No. 10221801)

This situation is not limited to rural states such as Louisiana. A recent story in the Wall Street Journal related how a Washington, D.C. utility serving 1.8 million urban consumers reported 999 squirrel-related outages last year, a big jump over the 702 reported outages the year before. The animals kept getting themselves fried while climbing on transformers by creating a "short" between live wires and connectors on the transformers. The utility tried to reduce the problem by installing special insulators (\$5 each), but officials frankly admitted "there's nothing squirrels can't get by" when they want to.

Elsewhere, a municipal system in Tennessee spent \$25,000 putting "varmint shields" on "hot spots" where critters were causing the most trouble,

but had only "limited" success. Other utilities apply expensive plastic "barriers" around power poles or spray predator urine around substations to spook invading pests.

SLECA installs guards and barriers to prevent wildlife such as squirrels, raccoons and snakes from shorting out electrical equipment. Guards are attached to the tops of utility pole crossarms to keep birds from landing on the pole and causing a short in the system.

Some squirrels have developed a taste for the insulation on wires or even gnaw on the wire itself, resulting in crispy critters and lots of mad consumers.

Large birds using poles as a perch can also cause problems, as do raccoons, possums and even snakes that have crawled into substations and managed to short out equipment affecting thousands of consumers.

Customers often find "critter outages" hard to believe, especially when they cause power surges that can damage home appliances. Laws that protected "endangered" animals or discouraged fur trapping has resulted in beaver infestations so large that they often topple trees into power lines in Ohio, Texas and elsewhere.

For utility employees, critters make every day an adventure, from the meter reader dealing with the family dog protecting his turf to the lineman who just discovered there's a hornet's nest attached to a transformer he's working on. Utility field workers have to deal with bee, wasp and hornet stings, spider bites and even fire ants that invade underground transformers. And let's not forget snake bites, ant nests or wild animals flushed out by right-of-way crews clearing lines.

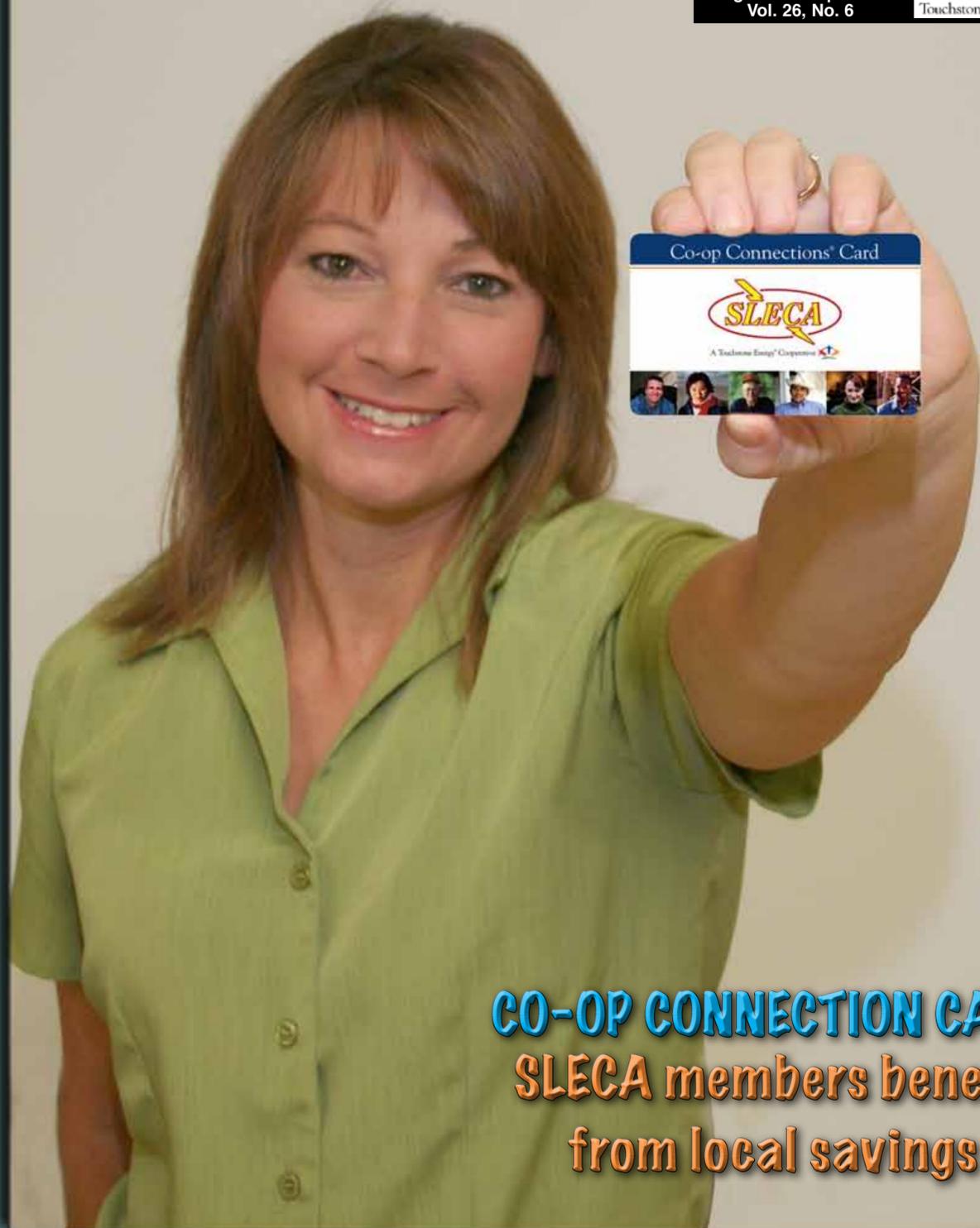
## SLECA SWEEPSTAKES

Did you know that each month SLECA gives away CASH just for reading LOUISIANA COUNTRY? It's true. Every month, four lucky SLECA consumers have their account numbers randomly selected by computer. The numbers are then hidden in the articles in the SLECA News section of LOUISIANA COUNTRY. Then it's up to you. If you see your account number, call SLECA and win \$25.00 in cash or have your winnings applied to your bill. It's that simple. So, if you are not reading LOUISIANA COUNTRY you're missing out on great local articles and the possibility of winning extra money.

Your Cooperative Connection

# LOUISIANA COUNTRY

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**CO-OP CONNECTION CARD**  
**SLECA members benefit**  
**from local savings**