

SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC Cooperative



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Wired for Growth

Balancing demand and reliability

By **TYE B WILLIAMS** | *Manager*

DATA centers may feel like a big-city phenomenon, but more and more of them are showing up in rural communities – and there's good reason for that. Rural areas offer what data centers need most: affordable land, room to grow and access to transmission lines that can move large amounts of power.

What sets data centers apart from other large businesses is their electricity demand. These facilities run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Servers must remain online continuously, so power must be reliable every minute of every day.

For electric cooperatives such as Southeast Electric, powering data centers creates both opportunities and challenges.

On the plus side, data centers can deliver steady, long-term load growth that supports investments in the local grid. With proper planning and policy support, those upgrades – including new substations, stronger lines and smarter technology – could benefit all of Southeast Electric's members and help keep electricity rates steady.

However, providing power to data centers presents challenges as well. These large facilities can be constructed and operating in as little as one year, but ensuring the necessary infrastructure, equipment and electricity requires longer lead times and significant financial investment. Strategic planning and partnerships, as well as long-term power supply strategies, are essential to the process.



While Southeast Electric does not currently serve any data centers, nor do we have any in the works, co-ops nationwide are receiving requests and inquiries from tech companies. Data centers have the prospect to change the utility industry just as the oil and gas industry has in our region. The oil and gas pump sites Southeast Electric serves have transformed the cooperative, and have allowed us to invest millions in the utility system.

As a member-owned cooperative, our responsibility is twofold: to listen to the communities we serve and to provide reliable, affordable electric service to all Southeast Electric members. Balancing those responsibilities is not always straightforward, especially as new large-scale energy users, such as data centers, become part of the local landscape.

No matter what the future holds, our priority will be supporting growth with fairness – that means ensuring large-scale energy users pay their fair share, so residential bills don't spike, and our local communities feel invested in.

The energy landscape is changing, and with it comes both opportunities and challenges. My commitment, and the commitment of Southeast Electric's board and employees, is to continue listening, communicating, and working with our members and community partners to ensure all decisions reflect the best interests of the people we serve.

If you have questions or concerns regarding data centers, oil and gas pumping sites, your energy bills or any other co-op matters, we encourage you to stay engaged and reach out.

Your voice matters at Southeast Electric Cooperative.

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SECO 2026 Youth Tour winner

ALL cooperatives share a concern for their communities. Write about how your local cooperative supports your community or detail new ways they could get involved. This was the topic of the essay for the trip to Washington, D.C.

Southeast Electric Cooperative is excited to announce that Alivia Foxley of Hammond has been chosen as the 2026 Washington, D.C. Youth Tour winner. Alivia, the daughter of Nate Foxley and Lisa Borchgrevink, is currently a sophomore at Carter County High School.

Alivia's focus was on the dedication of Southeast Electric. She mentioned that they make sure the community has power no matter the weather, conditions, or time of day or night. She stated she also appreciates the fact that linemen are continually active in educating students and the community about electrical safety.

Congratulations Alivia on a well-written essay! We are proud to have you represent Southeast Electric in Washington, D.C.!



Increase the beauty of your home while decreasing energy costs

A well-planned landscape can enhance the beauty of your home and boost energy efficiency for years to come.

Your landscaping decisions should depend on the climate where you live – whether it is typically warm, cool or varies greatly with both high and low temperatures. Follow these tips to develop a landscape that will save you money for years.

The biggest consideration in landscaping to increase winter efficiency is creating windbreaks to stop wind chills from having as much of an effect on the temperature around your home.

Here are some important tips on planting windbreaks:

- Dense trees, such as evergreens and shrubs make the best windbreaks.
- Do not plant trees too close to the south of your home if you plan on using sunshine to help heat your home. A good rule is to plant your trees at a distance of 2 to 5 times the tree's mature height.
- If snow drifts are a problem, plant shrubs on the windward side of your



windbreak to help trap snow.

The biggest consideration in summer landscaping is shading your home from the heat. These tips will help you cut back on your cooling costs:

- To the south of your home, plant tall trees to provide shade. If you plant these trees far enough away (2 to 5 times the length of a grown tree), you will still be able to allow sunshine to

warm your home in the winter.

- To the west of your home, shorter trees and shrubs will provide protection from the afternoon rays of the sun, which fall at shorter angles.
- Bushes around the perimeter of your home provide shade and absorb the sun's rays. Avoid dense plants in areas where humidity is a problem. Air needs to be allowed to flow freely to keep the soil from becoming oversaturated.