**Behind the Scenes**

Our consumer-members know [*NAME OF COOPERATIVE*] is a little different from other utilities, such as investor-owned or municipal systems. But for those unfamiliar with the cooperative model, the differences may not be so apparent.

That is where the Florida Electric Cooperatives Association (FECA) comes in. FECA represents 2.7 million Floridians receiving electricity from 17 cooperatives throughout the state, strengthening the co-op voice with elected officials at both the state and federal levels.

FECA advocates to ensure Florida’s electric cooperatives continue to complete their mission of providing safe, reliable, and affordable electric service to consumer-members. As FECA develops relationships with lawmakers and their staff, they help educate legislators on the not-for-profit electric cooperative model, its difference from for-profit and government-owned utilities, and how energy policies impact electric utilities and specifically our consumer-members; their constituents.

However, that is just a piece of the overall services FECA provides to its member cooperatives. Another big piece of the pie, one our gulf coast region is highly aware of, is securing mutual aid following a disaster. When a hurricane, ice storm, or other catastrophic event occurs, there are many moving parts within the electrical industry. Mutual aid is the process of receiving additional resources to help the co-op restore power to their consumer-members as safely and quickly as possible. FECA steps in during a time of disaster to help coordinate with Florida’s co-ops and other states to fill the needs with crews and equipment. This assistance allows the affected co-op to focus on restoring power to their area.

Receiving mutual aid is much more complex than simply waiting for visiting crews to arrive and most people have never thought about what goes on behind the scenes. As the receiving co-op, [*NAME OF COOPERATIVE*] coordinates food, housing, laundry, and all day-to-day items involved in taking care of crews that are away from home. Before they arrive, FECA coordinates the moving logistics to ensure the needs required by a receiving co-op are reflected by the multiple crews traveling to the impacted area. They coordinate equipment needs, Department of Transportation waivers to assist crews along their route, fuel needs, road closures notifications, and anything else to help streamline the process of getting crews where they need to go.

Electric cooperatives are a family. When we are not receiving mutual aid for disasters, we help by providing mutual aid to other co-ops; wherever the need might be. The logistics in sending mutual aid can be just as complex and fluid as receiving it.

FECA is a valued asset within our communities. Often not seen by our consumer-members, but their impact is felt. The cooperative difference is what makes us so unique. We may be small, but we are part of a much larger network that makes us very strong, Co-op Strong.