**Florida’s Electric Cooperatives are storm ready: Together we can stay ready**

**By Mike Bjorklund, General Manager, Florida Electric Cooperatives Association**

The onset of hurricane season is both a reminder of how our communities have pulled through past disasters and how continued preparation for the next storm is a difference maker. The same is true for Florida’s electric cooperatives. As co-ops reflect on past events, they highlight areas to improve ensuring they are ready to take on the next challenge during the storm season. We are community built, community focused and community driven to serve our consumer-members. This concept is highlighted through preparations and during a restoration.

In this part of the world [*INSERT LOCAL CO-OPS HERE] [have/has]* held their annual storm drill(s), readied storm plans and supplies to repair the grid, met with emergency officials and coordinated with restoration partners around the state and nation. All these efforts are part of shoring up crews and resources needed for an effective restoration. Additionally, co-ops are constantly taking cost-effective steps to harden the grid. Last year alone, Florida’s co-ops inspected over 180,000 electric poles, replacing or upgrading poles where needed. Co-ops also proactively trimmed over 13,000 miles of vegetation near power lines, limiting the most common cause of outages. This is more than the distance from here to the South Pole!

 Though Florida’s electric cooperatives make emergency preparedness a daily priority, with the official start of storm season on June 1st, now is a great time for you and your family to prepare. Visit FloridaDisaster.org for information about making a plan for your family or business, and talk with your family and neighbors about your plan to stay safe when a storm threatens your community. Also, stay connected with [*INSERT CO-OP NAME*] through our social media channels for storm and electric co-op related news and updates.

Your locally controlled electric co-ops, here and statewide, are committed to providing safe, reliable, affordable electricity to their communities, and with that in mind, they are prepared for the upcoming hurricane season. I encourage you and your loved ones to do the same. By working together, we can all stay storm ready.