

# Powered By Purpose

By Bill Buchanan, CEO

In October, electric cooperatives across the country take time to celebrate National Co-op Month and reflect on the unique advantages of being part of a cooperative. It's also the perfect time to thank you — the members who make it all possible. For us, it's not just a celebration. It's a chance to reaffirm the values that guide everything we do.

As the CEO of BARC Electric Cooperative, I see purpose in action every single day. Unlike investor-owned utilities, our co-op doesn't exist to make profits for distant shareholders. We exist to serve you — our members, our neighbors and our communities. That purpose is what sets us apart. It's why we were founded, and it's what continues to drive every decision we make.

At its core, being a cooperative means we are member owned and locally controlled. That's not just a tagline; it's the very heart of our business model. Members have a voice in how our co-op operates. You elect board members who live right here in our service area and understand the unique challenges and opportunities our communities face.

## BARC ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

P.O. Box 264

Millboro, VA 24460-0264

1-800-846-2272

Office Hours: M-F, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

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Chief Executive Officer  
Bill Buchanan

Local Page Editor  
Amanda Cunningham

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Decisions aren't made in corporate boardrooms hundreds of miles away — they're made here at home, by people who care about the same things you do.

This local accountability means we can stay focused on what matters most: delivering reliable, affordable electricity and providing real value to the people we serve.

We do that by investing in essential infrastructure upgrades and technologies that strengthen our local grid and improve electric service. We work hard to manage costs and keep rates as low as possible — because we know how much rising prices affect families and small businesses in our area. And when storms hit or outages occur, BARC crews are here and ready to respond quickly, because we live here too.

But our commitment doesn't end at the power lines.

Co-ops were built to meet community needs, and that purpose extends well beyond delivering electricity. Whether we're supporting local schools, sponsoring youth programs, partnering with volunteer organizations or helping

bring broadband to rural areas, we are always looking for ways to improve the quality of life in the places we serve. Community support isn't an afterthought — it's part of our mission.

We're also planning for the future. As electricity demand grows due to new technologies and economic development, electric co-ops are working to ensure we continue to meet those needs with a balanced, reliable energy mix. We know our members care about affordability and dependability, and we're committed to delivering both.

That's the power of the cooperative difference. That's what it means to be powered by purpose.

This National Co-op Month, I encourage you to take pride in your cooperative membership. You're not just a customer — you're an owner, a stakeholder, and a vital part of a larger effort to keep our community strong, connected and energized.

Thank you for the trust you place in us. We're proud to be your local electric cooperative.

# BARC Communities

**B**ARC Electric personnel recently undertook a major project to install a new high-voltage circuit breaker system on the 46 kV transmission line outside of the Johnson Creek substation. This project will improve our 46 kV transmission system and allow better control, visibility and reliability of the primary protection device for the transmission load fed from the Dominion Callaghan substation.



Typically, the members fed from this transmission system get distribution power from Johnson Creek, Falling Springs, Hot Springs and Mountain Grove substations. BARC can also supply power from this feed to the Warm Springs, Millboro Springs and Brattons Run substations during maintenance or system events.

“These units took almost two years to arrive on-site from the time of placing an order. Just a few weeks prior to the scheduled replacement, the previous high-voltage circuit breaker experienced a catastrophic failure during a lightning storm,” Chief Operations Officer Chris Botulinski explained. “That failure accelerated the need for a new system. The BARC team came together to finalize

the details needed for installation and I am proud of their execution of this project.”

BARC’s engineering lead on this project was system engineer Daniel Plecker and electric line foreman Jess Pritt. It took the entire BARC Electric team to complete the project, and the leadership of Plecker and Pritt was a major contributing factor to the success of the installation.

With this breaker install complete, BARC is gearing up for a near identical installation that will benefit members fed from the Cornwell substation in Rockbridge County.

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# BARC's 4 Best Bets to Stay Cyber Safe

October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month

Protecting yourself online doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. A few simple habits can dramatically reduce your risk of falling victim to cybercrime. While you can never be "hackproof," you can become resilient in the online world.

## 1. Use long, unique and complex passwords.

Your passwords are the first line of defense between a criminal and your sensitive information. Here's how to have amazing passwords:

- Every password must be long, unique and complex. Nowadays, every password should be at least 16 characters long, which significantly overwhelms password-cracking programs. Use a random mix of letters, numbers and symbols.
- Don't reuse passwords. Every account needs a unique password. Unfortunately, making small changes, like adding numbers or switching out an S with a \$, doesn't count as a unique password.
- Use a password manager to store and generate strong passwords. If you're wondering how to manage so many unique, long passwords, the answer is a password manager.

There are free password managers available, such as LastPass. If you prefer to keep a password notebook, treat it like cash.

## 2. Enable multifactor authentication (MFA).

Multifactor authentication adds an extra security layer by requiring something more than just your password to log in. Think of it as using two locks on your digital door instead of only one. This could be:

- A one-time code sent to your phone
- A biometric scan like a fingerprint scan or FaceID
- A physical security key

Enable MFA on your accounts — especially email, banking and social media. It's a simple way to supercharge the security on



your accounts. Also, never share MFA codes with anyone. Only scammers will ask for MFA codes.

## 3. Keep software updated.

Software updates don't just bring new features. They often fix security flaws that criminals exploit. It usually takes a few minutes, but updates are worth it. Here are some tips:

- Turn on automatic updates when possible for your devices and apps. You can usually find these options in your settings menu.
- Install updates promptly for your operating systems, browsers, antivirus tools and apps.
- Don't click Remind Me Later — the security is worth it.
- Remember your phones, smartwatches and tablets are computers, so keep these devices updated as well.

## 4. Look out for phishing and scams.

Phishing remains the most common online threat. Criminals send fake emails, texts or social media messages to trick you into revealing sensitive information or clicking malicious links. These messages aim to get you to click before you think by playing on your emotions. Scammers will even call you! BARC members have reported fake calls demanding immediate payment. If you are unsure, hang up and call BARC directly at 1-800-846-2272.

Here's how to look out for phishing and scams:

- Be highly skeptical of unexpected messages, especially those urging immediate action or asking for personal details.
- Phishing emails can light up positive emotions ("You've won our sweepstakes!") or negative ones ("You've been hacked!").
- Don't click suspicious links or download unexpected attachments.
- Report phishing attempts to your email provider, social media platform or IT department.
- If you're unsure if a message is legit, ask a friend, coworker or family member. A second set of eyes can be invaluable in spotting scams.

*This article was provided by the National Cybersecurity Alliance. A non-profit organization on a mission to create a more secure, interconnected world.*

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