



**Peace River Electric  
Cooperative, Inc.**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

# Welcome to Peace River Electric Cooperative

**Congratulations! You're now a proud new member/owner of Peace River Electric Cooperative (PRECO) – a business owned by the people it serves.** Use this owner's manual as a guide to your cooperative. You'll find you receive quality electric service at the lowest possible cost, you elect the people who represent you on the board of directors, and you have access to a variety of services designed to meet your needs. Welcome to the utility that you and other members actually own.

By receiving electric service from Peace River Electric Cooperative, you are

continuing the dream begun by the rural friends and neighbors who formed this electric cooperative in 1940. When municipal and investor-owned utilities refused to serve this area because it was too costly to bring power to folks "in the country," local leaders decided to provide the service themselves by forming a cooperative.

Today, our programs reflect a spirit of cooperation forged through a partnership with members. It is a way of doing business that sets us apart from other utilities, and it is the foundation for our continued growth and success.

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## The Benefits of Membership

### True Cost of Service

Peace River Electric Cooperative operates as an IRS 501(c)12, not-for-profit. Since you own the cooperative, it is self-defeating to make a profit from you.

### Capital Credits

Peace River Electric Cooperative operates on a not-for-profit basis. Any leftover monies are allocated to each member's capital credits account based on how much that member paid the cooperative for electric service.



Each year, the board of directors determines when some portion of capital credits may be returned, while ensuring the co-op's financial health. Be sure to keep Peace River Electric Cooperative informed of your current address so that your check may be delivered to you when a capital credits return occurs.

### Ownership Regulation

You have a voice in running your co-op by electing members to a board of directors who provide oversight for the cooperative. The directors determine the general direction of the cooperative by setting policies, making financial decisions, and establishing goals.

### Ownership

Peace River Electric Cooperative is a democratically-governed private electric utility owned by the members it serves. Cooperative members influence the way in which the co-op operates by electing a board of directors to represent them. This board of directors is made up of members just like you.

### Local Accountability

Your co-op is accountable to you, not to managers or investors who run things from far away. Co-op employees are people you know. You may see them at worship, the grocery store, or ball games because they and their families live here, too.

One way Peace River Electric Cooperative gives back to members is to help the communities we serve. Co-op employees volunteer their time and talents. Here are some other ways we help:

### Operation Round Up

Through Operation Round Up, participating members agree to have their bills "rounded up" to the nearest dollar, with 100 percent of the funds going to local charitable causes.



Operation Round Up's Board of Directors (A separate board from the electric cooperative board) administers the funds. Funding applications are available at [www.presco.coop](http://www.presco.coop).



## Election Process for the Board of Directors

### SEPTEMBER

The board of directors seeks members to serve on the nominating committee.

### NOVEMBER

The board appoints a nominating committee.

### JANUARY

The nominating committee convenes and nominates director candidates. Nominations may also be received by petition. Information about the candidates

is mailed to every PRECO member residing in the respective districts. This notice also informs each member of the date, time and place of the district meeting.

### FEBRUARY

Three district meetings are held and three directors are elected.

### MARCH

Peace River Electric Cooperative's Annual Meeting is held and newly-elected directors are officially seated.

# Payment & Billing Options

## Pay By Bank Draft

By signing up for bank draft, members can have their monthly power bill automatically deducted from their bank via electronic funds transfer from a checking or savings account, on the due date.

Key Benefits:

- Prompt payment of electric bill.
- We handle payment for you, no worry on your part.
- One less check to write each month.

## Pay By Credit Card Draft

Sign up for Automatic Credit Card Draft (VISA, MasterCard, or Discover) and your monthly electric bill will be conveniently charged to your credit card on the due date.

## Access Your Account Online

At [www.preco.coop](http://www.preco.coop), view your current bill, a 16-month billing history, or pay your bill online. You can make payments with confidence that your transactions are safe.

The screenshot shows the website header with the logo and tagline "A Touchstone Energy Cooperative". Navigation links include COMPANY PROFILE, MEMBER SERVICES, ENERGY SERVICES, CAREERS@PRECO, MEDIA NEWS, COMMUNITY, FAQ, ESPAÑOL, and CONTACT US. Below the navigation is a section titled "ONLINE BILL PAY" with a mouse icon and a dollar sign, and a button "VIEW AND PAY YOUR BILL ONLINE". To the right is a large blue box with the URL "www.preco.coop" and the text "IS YOUR RESOURCE FOR:". Below this are several bullet points: "office locations & hours", "online secure bill payment", "automated payment options", "new service application online", "member's handbook", "energy efficiency tools", "surge suppressor program", and "... and much more". On the left side of the screenshot are three yellow buttons: "SIGN UP FOR SERVICE" with a pencil icon, and "MEMBER SERVICES" with a list of options: "Pay/View Bill", "View Account History", "Report Outage", and "View Publications".

Peace River Electric Cooperative's secure socket layer (SSL) software is the industry standard for secure e-commerce. To receive a password or to make password changes, call our Member Services Department at **1-800-282-3824**.

## Pay by Phone with a Credit Card

You can pay your bill 24 hours a day with a major credit card by phone. Just call **1-800-282-3824**.

## Go Paperless with e-Bill

PRECO's e-Bill service allows you to receive your electric bill electronically (e-bill), via email. It is a personal, automatic notification that your account has been billed and is ready for viewing and payment. Simply click on the Web address provided and it will guide you directly to your account information on our secure server. There is no cost for this service. Members who use this service will no longer receive a paper bill in the mail each month. If you would like to sign up for this service please call us **1-800-282-3824**.

## Bill Pay with your Bank

Bill payment with your bank is an excellent option but please be aware most online bill payments can take up to five days for your bank to process your request until a check is mailed to the cooperative. When using this option, please factor in this possible delay.

## Pay by Mail

When you pay your bill by mail, please allow time for it to travel through the mail to our office in Wauchula. We suggest mailing your payment at least 7 business days before your due date to ensure your payment arrives and is posted on time.

## Pay in Person

### WAUCHULA CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS

210 Metheny Road, Wauchula, FL 33873  
Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., M-F

*A payment drop box is located at our drive-through window. Payments placed in the drop box after hours will be posted the next business day.*

### BRADENTON OFFICE

15105 59th Ave. East, Bradenton, FL 34211  
Hours: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., M-F

*A payment drop box is located at the front entrance. Payments placed in the drop box after hours will be posted the next business day.*

### INDIAN LAKE ESTATES

17363 County Road 630  
Lake Wales, FL 33898

*A payment drop box is provided for your convenience at the front gate. Payments placed in the drop box will be posted the next business day.*

## Levelized Billing

Balance your budget by paying the rolling average of your last 12 months' electric bills. This keeps your bill about the same amount each month (+/- \$5). Certain restrictions apply. Call **1-800-282-3824** for more information.

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# Residential Rates and Service Charges

The facilities use charge covers what it costs to bring energy to your home, provide offices, metering personnel, member services representatives to assist you, and billing services.

The energy charge is based on a kilowatt-hour (kWh); a measurement of electricity. One kWh runs a 100-watt light bulb for 10 hours.

Other costs you may find on your bill include the following: Florida sales tax, city/county sales taxes, property tax, Florida gross receipts tax, and special purpose local option sales tax (SPLOST).

## About Your Bill

### Your Electric Service Bill

You will receive your bill about every 30 days. It is due upon receipt. Failure to receive a bill does not release you from your obligation to pay.

Accounts not paid by the due date are subject to a minimum of a \$10.00 late fee or 3 percent, whichever is higher, and disconnection.

### Checking the Status of Your Account

There are three ways to check the status of your energy account:

- 1) Call PRECO at 1-800-282-3824, then follow the prompts for 24-hour automated account information.
- 2) Use our website, [www.preco.coop](http://www.preco.coop), for 24-hour online account information and payment options; or
- 3) Call during business hours, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., then follow prompts to speak with a member services representative.

### Comparing Bills

When you compare electric service bills to a neighbor's, it is like comparing apples to oranges. Families do not have the

same habits, appliances, or billing cycles. A more accurate guide is to track your use by comparing your own bills in the same month, but for different years. Consider any Peace River Electric Cooperative rate adjustments, additional services you have added, and climate or living habit changes.

## Energy Services

Peace River Electric Cooperative prides itself on helping customers use energy wisely. Below are some of the services we offer to help our members with their energy conservation efforts.

### Energy Optimization Services

**Free Energy Audits:** This service investigates total building electric use and then breaks it down into basic components like heating, cooling, lighting, and water heating. The audit will help you prioritize energy saving measures.

**Home Energy Calculator:** This online tool allows you to calculate your estimated energy costs with regards to criteria related to your home. This tool can be found at [www.preco.coop](http://www.preco.coop).

**Touchstone Energy® Home Program:** Peace River Electric has long placed a priority on promoting energy-efficiency to our members. The Touchstone Energy® Home is the most energy-efficient home around. It features building methods designed especially for the counties in our service area. Exclusively for members of Touchstone Energy cooperatives such as Peace River Electric, the program guidelines ensure your home meets the highest energy-efficiency standards. For more information, check [www.preco.coop](http://www.preco.coop).

## Surge Protection

### Flash Guard Surge Suppressor Program

PRECO offers surge suppressors to members with options to lease or buy comprehensive protection for residential appliances. A heavy-duty surge arrester can be installed by Peace River Electric Cooperative in the meter base to help stop indirect surges that could damage or destroy household wiring and large appliances such as air conditioning and refrigeration equipment. Plug-in type surge suppressors are also available to provide surge protection to your more sensitive appliances. Call us at **1-800-282-3824** for more information.



## Key Benefits:

- Peace River Electric Cooperative surge suppressors are designed to protect your electronic equipment by diverting harmful surges away from sensitive electric circuits.
- Each Peace River Electric Cooperative surge suppressor provides the highest quality surge protection available today. Each is UL-listed and meets the IEEE 587 standard for surge suppression equipment.
- Peace River Electric Cooperative also offers a variety of battery backup systems commonly called UPS or Uninterruptible Power Supply systems. These devices provide temporary power for a short time period (5-20 minutes) and are most often purchased by serious personal computer users.

To contact the energy services department regarding any of the services described above, please call **1-800-282-3824** or e-mail [energyservices@preco.coop](mailto:energyservices@preco.coop).

## Outdoor Security Lighting

Peace River Electric Cooperative members are eligible for the security light program. Security lights provide safety and peace of mind, lengthen your outdoor evenings and discourage intruders. Ask about fixed lease rates and lighting options by calling **1-800-282-3824**.

## Florida Currents Magazine

**Florida Currents** is our official publication. It features human interest, horticulture, travel, and energy efficiency articles, plus recipes and a festival and fairs event calendar. Peace River Electric Cooperative provides this magazine to members free of charge.

## Cooperative Newsletter

Your co-op's monthly newsletter is mailed to you as an insert inside Florida Currents magazine each month. PRECO encourages you to read your newsletter for information on rate changes, revised policies and member meetings.

## Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

The annual Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. program is sponsored by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. It brings hundreds of high school juniors to our nation's capitol each year for an exciting week of educational activities, tours and fun. Peace River Electric Cooperative annually sponsors students from high schools serving families in our 10-county service territory. The participants are chosen during an annual essay contest coordinated through the local high schools in the spring of each year. For more information about the Youth Tour, contact our marketing and communications department.

## Operation Round Up



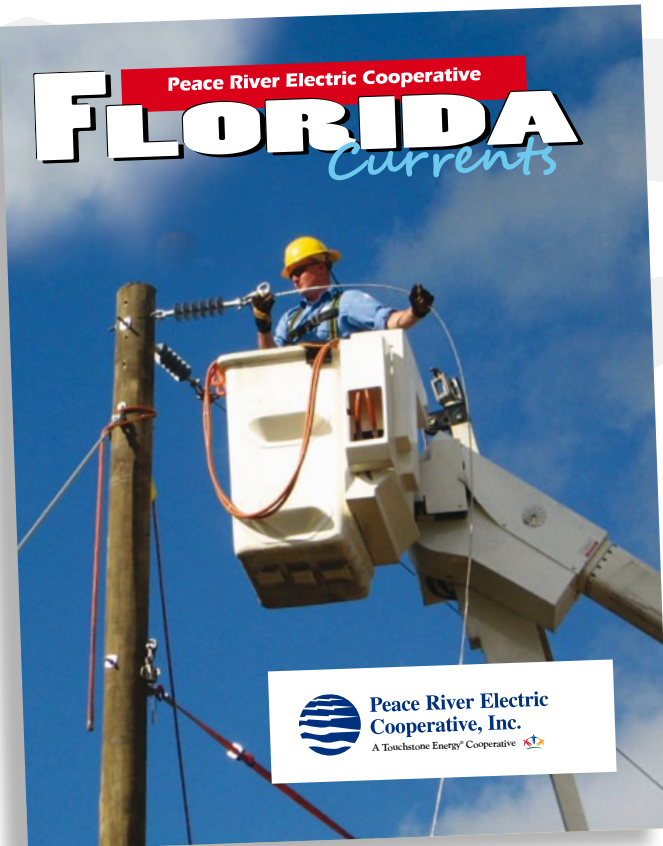
Operation Round Up collects voluntary donations from PRECO members for community charitable purposes. Members' electric bills are 'rounded up' to the next dollar to provide charitable funds for six needs categories: food, shelter, clothing, medical, the environment, and education.

An independent Board of Directors made up of nine PRECO members carefully investigates and reviews each application. Grant funds are considered for individuals, families, and charitable organizations. Annually, Operation Round Up considers college scholarship applications.

Initially, every member account is enrolled in Operation Round Up. However, participation is not mandatory, and if you choose not to participate or elect to discontinue your contributions, you may do so at any time. Your enrollment status may be changed by calling **1-800-282-3824**.



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## Co-op Connections Card

Peace River Electric Cooperative members can now “cash in” on savings at a variety of local businesses. We’re taking advantage of our status as a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative to offer the Co-op Connections program, a Touchstone Energy initiative. It’s a great way to add value to your co-op membership, while supporting local businesses.

With the Co-op Connections Card, you can receive discounts on products and services from participating local businesses. Simply show your Co-op Connections Card to any participating business displaying a Co-op Connections window sticker. And if you travel outside the Peace River Electric Cooperative service area to other parts of the nation, be sure to take along your Co-op Connections card. Businesses nationwide participate, too.

Log onto [www.presco.coop](http://www.presco.coop) for a complete list of participating businesses.

## Tips for Energy Savings

### Heating / Cooling System

- Set thermostats to 68° F in winter and 78° F in summer. Each degree you set below/above these suggested settings reduces costs an additional 3 percent for heating and 4 percent for cooling.
- Do not lower standard heat pump thermostats lower than you can tolerate on cold nights because you will offset any energy savings later when you turn the heat up excessively.
- Clean or replace air conditioner filters monthly.
- Insulate your duct systems with a minimum of 2” insulation. Seal leaks using foil tape or mastic paste. Check for air leaks around joints, connections, etc.
- Have air conditioners/heat pumps serviced periodically by a qualified professional to ensure proper operation.



### Water Heaters/Water Use

- We recommend setting the thermostat to 120° F. (Always use extreme caution when adjusting temperature settings. Prior to making any adjustments, turn off power to the water heater.)
- Take showers instead of baths.
- Electric water heaters usually have two heating elements, so make sure both are working.
- Install a good quality, low-flow shower head to reduce water consumption by approximately 50 percent.
- Wrap all exposed hot water pipes with foam tube insulation.
- Wash dishes in a full sink, not running water.

### Dishwashers

- Scrape or wipe dishes first to avoid rewashing.
- Air dry whenever possible.
- Keep drains and filters clean, so the dishwashers will work efficiently.

### Refrigerators/Freezers

- Position refrigerator away from heat sources.
- Set refrigerator temperature to 38°F/40°F, and freezer to 0°F/30°F.
- Check door seal to ensure that it seals tightly.
- Regularly vacuum or dust the cooling coils on the bottom or back of the equipment.

### Kitchen Ranges and Ovens

- Use self-cleaning systems while the oven is still hot from baking.
- Bake multiple dishes at once.

- Keep range tops clean and reflectors shiny.
- Keep pot lids on, and cook with little water.

### Microwave Ovens

- Defrost foods in refrigerator.
- Keep the oven clean.
- Use one dish for cooking, serving and eating to save dishwashing costs.

### Washers and Dryers

- Use cold water to save water heating costs.
- Always do full loads in washer and dryer.
- Presoak heavily soiled laundry.
- Clean filters regularly.

### Call Before You Dig – It’s the Law

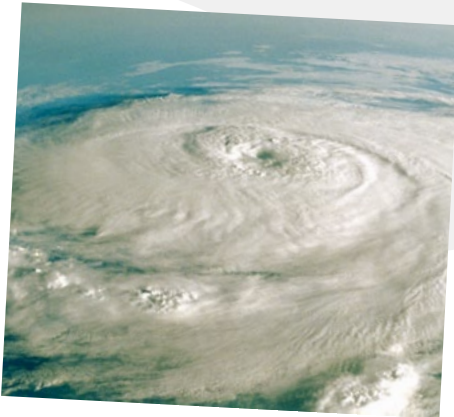
Digging in your yard and hitting an underground utility can cause serious injury or death. Always call 811 before you dig. This one free, easy call gets your utility lines marked and helps protect you from injury and expense. Call at least 72 hours before you plan any digging projects. It’s the law to call before you dig. Not doing so can cost money and lives. Visit [call811.com](http://call811.com) for more information.



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

## Electrical Safety Check-up

- Keep cords away from heat and water. Weatherproof outdoor outlets.
- Never use appliances when you are wet or on a wet surface.
- Always use moisture-resistant appliance cords outside.
- Use power tools with durable, grounded or double insulated cords.
- Teach your children not to fly kites near power lines.
- Never touch fallen electric wires. They may be energized.
- Never use any type of metal equipment (i.e. an aluminum ladder) near power lines.
- Show your family where the main fuse/circuit breaker is located.



## During a Storm

If you experience a power outage, please call **(877) 282-3656**. This automated system can answer 1,800 calls per hour, accurately putting outage information directly into Peace River Electric Cooperative's dispatch center.

## Power Outages

In Florida, we can experience a variety of weather catastrophes including tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, hurricanes, floods and the like. Severe weather along the coast or in other parts of Florida can also affect power delivery across the entire state. All of these factors can result in extended power outages. When outages do occur, PRECO responds immediately and works as quickly as possible to restore your service. You can help your family "weather" the storm, however, by preparing them and your home before an outage occurs. During a major storm event, the cooperative will activate a "storm center" section on the Web at [www.preco.coop](http://www.preco.coop).

## Restoring Power

Restoring power after a major outage is a big job that involves much more than simply throwing a switch or removing a tree from a line. Our main transmission lines, substations and the main distribution lines from the substation must be repaired first in order to ensure power delivery down the line.

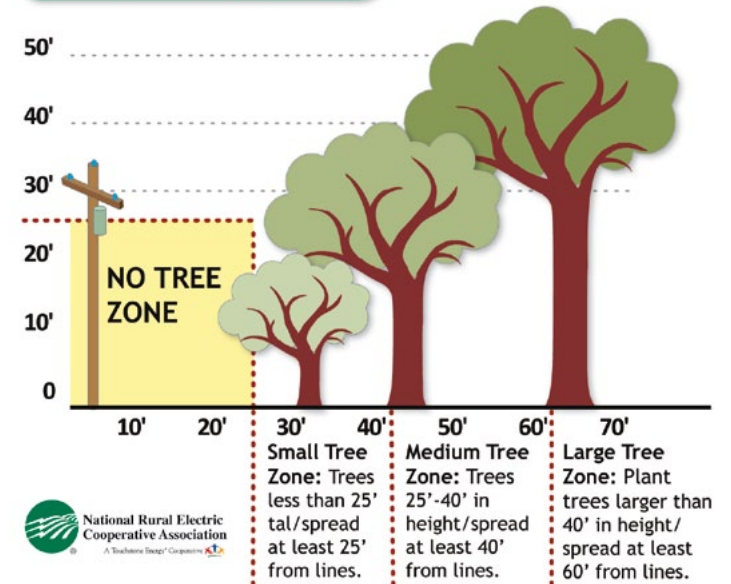
Next, crews repair the lines that bring power to the greatest number of customers. After larger pockets of customers have power, crews repair service lines to individual homes. It is at this point that medical alert customers can receive priority.



## What Causes Most Power Outages?

Believe it or not, falling trees are the biggest cause of power outages. That's why it is so important for you to plan before you plant any foliage in your yard. Also, be knowledgeable of the growth patterns of trees and shrubs before you plant, so that when they grow, they don't become dangerously close to power lines. As a rule, trees that grow 30 feet tall should be planted at least 30 feet away from electric lines. A tree that matures to 15 feet and shorter should be planted a minimum of 10 feet away from lines. The farther away from power lines a tree is planted, the better. Also, keep in mind not to plant near transformer pad mounts or directly over underground lines. For members in subdivisions with underground power lines, some lots have a transformer pad mount which cannot operate or be maintained properly if obstructed by shrubs and other landscaping.

## Tree Planting Guide



## Right-of-Way Program

In an effort to provide a steady supply of electricity to your home or business, Peace River Electric Cooperative maintains the power line right-of-way across 10 counties. Crews continually trim trees and shrubs that have grown too close to power lines. If you know of any trees that are growing into our lines, or that look like they could fall on lines, please call **1-800-282-3824**.



### Special Needs Registry

Florida Statute 252.355 establishes a registration program available through local emergency management agencies for customers with special needs requiring assistance during emergency evacuations and sheltering. If you are a special needs individual, contact your local emergency management agency for registration and more information.

Also, PRECO wants to know if you have special needs requiring electric service. If so, please call **1-800-282-3824**. Documentation from your doctor will be required to receive special needs classification. This classification does not assure that electric service will be restored more quickly in the event of a loss of power. Peace River Electric Cooperative cannot guarantee uninterrupted power to any home or business.

Consumers with critical care needs are strongly encouraged to have backup plans to move to locations with power in an emergency. Please find alternative resources in the event of a major outage.

### Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Peace River Electric Cooperative is one of more than 700 electric membership co-ops in 46 states that belong to Touchstone Energy® Cooperative. These co-ops collectively deliver power and energy solutions to more than 17 million members every day. To be a member of Touchstone Energy, Peace River Electric agrees to operate with high standards of service to all members. These standards include integrity, accountability, innovation and commitment to community.

You may have seen national advertising promoting the Touchstone Energy brand and the unique ways co-ops serve members locally.

### Statement of Nondiscrimination

Peace River Electric Cooperative, Inc. is the recipient of Federal financial assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Section 504 of other Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs).

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is the Manager of Human Resources. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call **(202) 720-5964** (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Written discrimination complaints must be filed not later than 180 days from the date of the alleged discrimination, unless the time for filing the complaint has been extended by the Secretary of Agriculture.



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