

SCANNER

OCTOBER 2009 - VOLUME TWO - ISSUE FOUR

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CONTROL CENTER MOVE**

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TO HELP COMMUNITY**

**SOUTH
MISSISSIPPI
ELECTRIC**

POWER ASSOCIATION

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Cover photo: System Operator Matt Barnes in the new control center

FIVE YEARS IS A LONG TIME IN A CHANGING INDUSTRY



Jim Compton,
General Manager/CEO

This October marks five years that I have been General Manager of South Mississippi Electric. The Board of Directors put enormous trust in me when they passed the resolution giving me executive authority and responsibility for the Association. I thought that I knew what I was getting into, but since then, so much has changed for electric utilities.

Management – whether as a front-line supervisor, General Manager, or somewhere in between – can be a humbling experience. Just when you think you are getting comfortable about knowing your job, it changes and you find yourself trying to catch up again. I believe that being willing to learn and adapting to change are the most important qualities a supervisor needs today.

The past five years have seen many positive changes. In 2004, our net worth was \$97 million and total debt was \$719 million. We ended 2008 with a net worth of \$135 million and total debt down to \$636 million, even though total utility plant increased by \$200 million. We expect to end 2009 with over \$165 million in net worth. RUS, CFC, and CoBank recently closed on our indenture, which will replace our RUS mortgage, allowing us to better access private capital markets while still maintaining eligibility for low-cost RUS loan funds. This step indicates the respect and confidence that RUS has for SME. The indenture allows us much more freedom and flexibility in planning and financing major projects. These are very important financial improvements.

We have seen significant improvements in facilities and equipment. While these upgrades improve efficiency and productivity for employee work groups, the process of construction can be trying. We are currently underway with major upgrades in computer software that should make projects, purchasing, budgeting, and information sharing more efficient. Purchasing and inventory have become Supply Chain, with better controls and procedures.

Maintaining adequate generation resources is our greatest responsibility and the largest element in the costs required to meet Member needs. Our process for evaluating and planning for potential new resources is much improved. We now prepare a new Power Requirements Study each year to track weather and economic impacts on load growth. We run dispatch models to see how potential projects fit into our existing fleet. We aggressively compare market opportunities as well as self-build projects.

As a result of this approach, we have been able to move forward with a combination of low-cost projects. We have the Plum Point coal-fired plant coming on line next year, with the Moselle Repower Project and Grand Gulf Extended Power Uprate (EPU) Project also now underway. These projects, combined with short-term Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs), provide the flexibility and economy that we need in today's volatile fuel market. Today we are much better prepared to handle those fuel cost changes, as well as contingencies such as plant outages.

Some changes have resulted from external events. Hurricane Katrina caused unprecedented devastation to our Members' service areas. For the first time ever, our system was de-energized and isolated. But the recovery effort here at SME brought us closer together, and we achieved great things for our membership. Our facilities are now hardened, and we can continue operations even if faced with a similar disaster. That preparation and teamwork were again demonstrated in our response to the recent Magee tornado, which severely damaged five SME transmission lines as well as communications facilities.

I think that perhaps the most significant change during this time is that five years ago our power supply decisions were based on reliability and economics, as they have been for decades. While those two factors are still important to us and our Members, the legislative and regulatory message we seem to be hearing more and more is that further control of plant emissions is more important than economics or reliability. We are facing a potential restructuring of how electricity is generated – in a very short timeframe. Certain mandates being proposed appear to have no regard for the cost or reliability impacts to retail customers. We find ourselves facing needs for future generation but not knowing the rules by which we will be playing. Again, these challenges will require the ability to think and act creatively so that we have the flexibility to find the best, most economical solutions for SME.

While many changes have occurred – and more will come – the one constant we must always keep in mind is that more than one million Mississippians depend upon us for electric energy. So despite natural disasters, fuel volatility, possible pandemics, or regulatory restrictions, we need to find a way to hold our business together and keep the lights on.

On my five-year anniversary, I want to thank you, the employees of South Mississippi Electric. I have learned so much about the complex electric business from you, and you have done so much to make these five years a great success. You have made SME a better company and have shown that we can meet the challenges of change in our industry and our state.



Control Center Move Involves Countless Details

The July move into the new control center – located in the Carley Building (Building C) – involved more than moving personnel and furniture. The transfer required the coordination and cooperation of several departments to provide support to all system operations – an extremely complex and detailed undertaking with little room for error.

The planning process began well before the physical move, as numerous decisions were made regarding the design of the control center and the rooms for the associated computer and communication equipment – down to the size of doors, hallways, and entrances. The key to a successful design was the ability to minimize interruption of service during the transfer of operations.

When the day came to shift operations from the control center's long-time location in the Engineering Building (Building E), the primary consideration was to maintain the communication and functionality of the facility while it remained on line. The control systems group played the lead role in transferring equipment, servers, and network connections into the new control center and computer room. They also worked hand-in-hand with the system operators and the communications group.

"The success of the move was due to months of planning and preparation from several groups, including internal departments and external contractors," said William Fortenberry, control systems assistant. "Everyone worked together and created a seamless transition."

"Our initial responsibility was to have the proper cables and networking equipment in place so that the work could begin as soon as the new control center was ready for occupancy," said Guy Isaac, control systems analyst. "Once the furniture was installed, we ran the cables throughout the control center, which allowed us to minimize the network downtime required to connect the consoles."

When the consoles, computers and monitors, and other equipment were ready, system operators began moving into the new control center. On July

22, system operators Steve Everett and Darren Butler began operations at the transmission and generation desks in the new facility.

"We left one desk fully functional in the old control center in case we ran into any problems throughout the first day and night," said Gary Hutson, system operations manager. "By the afternoon of July 23, the new control center was fully operational."

The approximately 2,400-square-foot facility contains a 64-screen map board and four state-of-the-art consoles for generation, transmission, coordination, and training. Each console can be raised or lowered to allow operators to sit or stand, and each contains a personal heating and cooling vent. If necessary, the control center, which has its own kitchen and restroom, can operate independently in an emergency.

"We are definitely enjoying the added space and comfort," said Shane Morrow, system operator. "We will probably see the biggest differences in this new control center during a crisis time. At that point, we will really see the benefits of the larger facility, the map board and the increased functionality of the systems. We expect to be able to coordinate restoration more efficiently."

"We are off to a fresh start in this new center," added Joe Riels, system operator. "We can no longer say that we have to perform a task a certain way because we have always done it that way. It is also nice that we are more visible to the rest of the company. All of the changes are definitely for the better."

Once the operators were fully functional in the new control center, the control systems group began moving the servers into the new computer room in Building C. The group utilized the backup control center at the FOC during the time of transition so that the network was not interrupted.

"Moving the servers went surprisingly quickly," Fortenberry said. "Contractors in Building E were continuing the construction into the old

computer room, which forced us to make the move as quickly as we could. At that point, all of our preparations really paid off."

Stand-alone systems that do not have a critical function for the control center were moved first, followed by the systems that play a vital role in the functionality of the control center. The process was another example of communication and coordination.

"Before we moved a server, we would notify the control center of the functionalities that could be affected," said Scotty Barron, control systems engineer. "If they said to wait, we waited. Because the systems were operating on backup power, we had extra operators and control systems staff on hand at both locations to protect the integrity of the system."

With the help of the communications staff, the control systems group moved the servers from Building E by rolling the servers onto a truck with a lift-gate, driving around to the ramp on Building C, and rolling the equipment into the control room. The servers were then reconnected to the network, and an upgraded firewall was incorporated into the system. The communications group also connected the phone lines, two-way radio system, and redirected communications from the multiplexing equipment to the new center.

"The move into the new control center was an extensive project that provided great results," said Tommy Clark, control and computer systems director. "The planning was more important than the move itself, and it allowed us to complete the task quickly and efficiently."

"With the addition of Building C, we now have five NERC critical rooms that increase our level of compliance and security," Clark added. "The addition of the new control center, as well as the computer room and communication room, provided an opportunity to incorporate new layers of security to our system."

One of the upgraded practices from the previous control center is in the way visitors or employees who are not granted automatic access into the facility are monitored. Visitors may call an operator from a speaker located outside the Control Center door to request access, while an overhead security camera takes a picture each time any of the doors are opened.

Part of the overall Headquarters construction plan has been to protect the new control center with "concentric circles of security," beginning with the perimeter fence and gates. The next circle is the Building C structure and controlled entry doors. Finally, the control center within Building C has its own special brick and mortar protection on all six sides (four walls, floor and roof).

The same GALAXY security system that controls entry to all controlled access points at Headquarters also provides door access control to the control center. All entries to the control center or attempts to access the room through the card readers are recorded. Motion-activated cameras provide video of all persons entering the control center, and the video records will be maintained for a minimum of three years. Operators have the capability of speaking with persons requesting access to the room to confirm the person's identity and that he or she is alone. Operators also have remote control of the perimeter gates as well as one door entering Building C and the two control center doors, and the operators may access any of the cameras throughout the Headquarters campus at any time from their computers.

For Operations and Planning Director Steve McElhane, who has worked for several different organizations, this was the third time he has been involved in a project to relocate a control center. "This was the most successful transfer that I have seen," McElhane said. "The smooth transition was due to the efforts of SMEPA personnel cooperating with each other in order to meet the goal of safety, reliability, and economics."



Line Design Process Requires Teamwork

South Mississippi Electric owns and maintains more than 1,700 miles of high-voltage transmission lines – enough to stretch from Hattiesburg to beyond Phoenix, Arizona. That is a remarkable feat of engineering and construction, considering that the Association had essentially no lines at all before initiating steps toward becoming an operating G&T in 1967.

These days, the engineering department may have anywhere from 40 to 60 projects in progress, including new lines, substations, switching stations, and various transmission upgrades. Employees from various sections work together to move each project along – from planning to permitting, environmental studies, land acquisition, design, material procurement and, ultimately, construction.

Some additions to the system, of course, are in response to Member requests for new delivery points to meet consumer load growth. Other projects are a result of SME's long-range system planning, where sophisticated computer modeling is used to project how the overall system is affected by growth and load flow, thus determining where new lines are needed to ensure reliability.

The process of designing and constructing a new line may take between two to four years from start to finish. The first step is to consider the route needed to accomplish the task. In the past, possible routes or corridors for lines were first hand-drawn onto topography maps and black-and-white aerial photos; then exact routes were determined by surveys on the ground.

"Today, technology provides us with many forms of electronic data that are easier to manipulate, which is good, as there are many more regulatory considerations related to routing a line than there were 40 years ago," said Chris Roberts, transmission line design engineer. "Certainly there are more homes, churches and businesses to try to avoid. We also must take into account environmentally-sensitive areas and any aspects that will make construction and maintenance more difficult, such as river and creek crossings."

Digital aerial photography now provides extremely clear views of land under consideration and helps provide initial routing possibilities, but any proposed route is still viewed from the ground to determine where problems might exist. Like many other utilities, SME has adopted a routing process that helps identify and quantify the best options for a line, then compares those options to select the best one.

"The routing process is truly a joint effort. To be successful, we must secure input from all groups involved with the project," said Roberts. "The routes we choose must ultimately be consistent and defensible. We have to provide information to the Mississippi Public Service Commission and other regulatory agencies in order to receive permission to build and finance our projects. By considering a variety of options and documenting them, we can be sure at the end of the process that we pick the right one."

It might take up to a year or more of preliminary work to actually get to the line design stage. Roberts and design engineers Dereck Sumrall and Jeremy McAndrew then begin the task of preparing plans, which actually incorporate more mechanical and structural engineering calculations than electrical. "Basically, a transmission line is made up of straight lines and angles," said Sumrall, "but we have to consider the topography the line will be built on, as well as other stresses the line will be subjected to."

The lines that transmit high-voltage electricity are not particularly heavy, weighing a pound or less per foot; but when taking into account multiple conductors and long spans, the loads on the poles that suspend those lines above the ground can be significant. In addition, design codes require a line to be capable of withstanding various weather conditions such as high winds and ice buildup on the cables.

"We have various wind- and ice-loading zones across our system that we must consider during design," said Roberts. "For example, when we design a line near the Coast, it must withstand 130-150 mile per hour winds in the event of a hurricane. In the heart of our on-system, the design wind velocities are approximately 100 miles per hour. For lines in the northern part of the state, ice loading is more of a threat. We have to consider the effects of an ice storm, which would significantly increase the load (weight) on the conductor and insulators."

In the past, much of the line design process at SME consisted of manual drawings and calculations based on a range of engineering specifications for structures, spans, weights and pressures developed in-house over the years. Today, computers incorporate much faster and exacting design elements, creating the topography the engineer is dealing with as well as allowing for the selection of a variety of pole structures to best fit the demands of the line. McAndrew, who works primarily designing new lines, can manipulate a mouse and have the computer instantly calculate load and spans, as well as the sag of the conductor under varying conditions.

"Our software permits us to work in two or three dimensions, so we get a realistic view from virtually any angle," said McAndrew. "The computer will also model important considerations such as the potential for a conductor to swing out or gallop (an effect where a line acts like a jump rope under certain wind and ice conditions), allowing us to select the optimal designs to reduce the likelihood of problems."

"We also model for temperature variations. When a line is energized, under heavier electrical loads and in higher ambient temperatures, the conductor will expand and increase its sag between structures. We have to allow for proper ground clearances under every scenario. In the past, designs were based on operating factors of 120 degrees F., but now we consider a conductor's performance up to 212 degrees F."

The kinds of structures used in new lines today also differ from the past when single wood poles and H-frame structures were used almost exclusively. Today, prestressed concrete and fabricated steel poles, which can reach heights of 130 feet or more, provide both structural benefits and an increased service life for the line. These poles can be designed to accommodate almost any loading condition and, when combined with modern polymer insulators, lines that had to be designed with H-frame structures in years past can now be designed with single steel or concrete poles.

"When we are working with level terrain, we can pretty much design equal span lengths and equal support for each pole," McAndrew

said. "When we deal with elevation changes, we try to balance the weight loads and wind exposure for each structure. The design software also allows us to analyze the structure's hardware, such as insulators, clamps, crossarms, braces and other structural elements, to make sure they are not overstressed."

In addition to design, Sumrall's role often focuses on working with the construction of new lines as well as assisting SME's line crews on maintenance projects. "Once we start construction of a line, there may be a need for adjustments for problems that arise in the field," he said. "Sometimes poles and guys must be moved to accommodate construction needs. Our design will typically include more capacity than the computer calculations call for. This provides us with the flexibility to make those adjustments, based on the feedback we get from the crews in the field."

Once a design is completed, an assembly summary of all the hardware, conductor and poles required for the project is compiled to allow for bidding and ordering the material. A 10-mile 69kV line may involve more than 30,000 components. Sumrall works closely with Director of Transmission Construction Jerry Pierce, who will oversee the construction crews, and Transmission Planner Tracy Stiglets, who is responsible for reserving all material associated with a project and seeing that it arrives on schedule.

"Whether a project is designed to improve the reliability of an existing line or involves construction of a new line, the only way we will do the best job is by working together," said Sumrall. "It is common during our design process to ask for input from the construction and maintenance groups. Even with all the technology we have at our disposal, there is no substitute for experience, intuition and common sense when it comes to building and maintaining our system."



On a project last summer on Line 515 near Lorman, crews used steel poles to replace wood poles that had deteriorated.

GRAND GULF PLANS POWER UPRATE PROJECT TO INCREASE CAPACITY

Plans are in place to increase the generation output of Grand Gulf Nuclear Station by approximately 178 Megawatts Electric (MWe, a nuclear industry term to differentiate between electric and thermal megawatts) by the summer of 2012, which would add approximately 18 MWe of base load capacity to South Mississippi Electric's system.

SME owns 10% of the facility, which is co-owned by System Energy Resources Incorporated (SERI), a subsidiary of Entergy. Entergy's Board of Directors recently approved the project, as did SME's Board. The project must receive regulatory approval from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), and SME and SERI have requested a certificate of public convenience and necessity for the project from the Mississippi Public Service Commission.

"When U.S. nuclear units were originally constructed in the 1970s and 1980s, many of the major components were built with significant operating margins included as part of the design," said Brad Edwards, SME's nuclear specialist located at Grand Gulf. "Over many years of operation, the industry has realized a wealth of experience in the operating characteristics of each plant design, which has allowed many operating utilities to realize increased output through Stretch and Extended Power Uprates."

Stretch Power Uprates (SPUs) are typically less than 10% of a plant's output and generally do not require extensive operating license amendments. Extended Power Uprates (EPU), on the other hand, are generally much larger – in some cases up to 20% capacity increases – and require more analysis and license amendments. Since 2000, more than

5,000 MWe of power uprates have been approved by the NRC, the equivalent of bringing five new 1,000 MWe nuclear units online.

Grand Gulf began commercial operation in 1985 with a net capacity of 1,250 MWe. The planned EPU will increase the unit's maximum thermal output to 115% of the plant's original license levels. Combined with several smaller efficiency uprates over the years, the project will increase the unit's overall capacity to approximately 1,500 MWe (gross). The total cost for the project is expected to be \$574 million, including transmission upgrades needed to accommodate the increased electrical output. SME's share of the project, which will include only EPU costs, will be approximately \$49 million.

"This is a very attractive option for adding base load capacity because the project's effect on non-fuel operating costs will be minimal, and the nuclear fuel cost is generally a small portion of a plant's overall operating cost," said Edwards. "The cost per kilowatt hour of adding this extra capacity compares very favorably with other sources of base load capacity and is well below estimates of what would be required to build a new nuclear facility."

The project calls for the unit to undergo several modifications during the next two refueling outages (spring of 2010 and spring of 2012). Most of the physical work for the EPU will occur during the 2012 spring outage, which will extend that outage's length by about 45 days. Several main components of the facility will be affected, including: replacement of the high pressure rotor of the turbine, modifications to the generator and exciter, main transformer replacements, replacement of nine feedwater heaters, and the addition of eight new cooling cells to the auxiliary cooling tower.

"It is an ambitious project that will be a challenge for everyone involved, but SME certainly needs the extra reliable base load capacity," Edwards said. "Many of the component modifications will also support the license amendment request to extend the plant's operating license from the current 40 years to 60 years."

Grand Gulf's operating license is scheduled to expire in 2024. Evaluation of a license amendment request is currently underway, which would extend the unit's life to 2044. That filing to the NRC is expected to be made in 2012.

When the EPU is completed, Grand Gulf will rank as one of the largest single nuclear units in the world. One other unit currently under construction in Finland by AREVA is expected to produce 1,600 MWe. The uprate is also expected to eliminate or significantly minimize the seasonal output variation currently experienced between summer and winter. Presently, the plant's output can vary as much as 50-60 MWe due to ambient temperature conditions.

In Search of New Generation Options

As the demand for electricity in Mississippi continues to grow, searching for new sources of generation is a high priority for South Mississippi Electric. One might think the Association would easily be able to meet future load with the Moselle repowering project now underway, the Grand Gulf EPU in the planning stages, and the possibility of becoming involved in the Kemper County IGCC project being explored. Such is not the case.

"Based on existing load projections and firm generation resources, SMEPA will need 200 megawatts of capacity over the next five to ten years," said Chief Operating Officer Nathan Brown. "Due to expiring power purchase contracts, this deficit increases to more than 600 megawatts by 2021, of which approximately 400 megawatts will need to be base load resources. We continue to look for reliable and efficient resource options, especially those that will help us maintain our diversity of fuel sources to meet operational needs."

The good news is that there are options to consider. From renewables to Mississippi lignite to nuclear, potential projects are being proposed around the region and SME is evaluating opportunities. Unfortunately, the cost to build new generation is likely to be high, and transmission to move the load where it is needed is not always available.

One option that must be part of the mix in this time of high costs and regulatory uncertainty is nuclear. Plans to build a second unit at Grand Gulf have been postponed for now, but other nuclear projects are moving forward in the Southeast, including facilities in Georgia and South Carolina. The common denominator in those projects, because of the high up-front costs, is that they all involve partnerships among several companies.

"It is very difficult for one organization to finance a nuclear project on its own," noted Brad Edwards, nuclear specialist. "As the country moves back into a mode of building new nuclear units, it will be accomplished by partners who can share the financial risk as well as divide the needed base load output of the units."

An intriguing new nuclear option is also now being considered: modular units that can be built over time at one location as the need – and financing – allows. Babcock and Wilcox (B&W) has developed a concept called the mPower Small Reactor, where six units of approximately 125 MWe could be built, or "stacked," over time at one site. The initial capital investment would be much lower than for a single 1000 MWe unit, and such a design could conceivably be brought on line faster in order to begin recouping costs sooner.

"The concept of stacking modular reactors could combine the economics of small reactors – on a scale similar to those used by the U.S. Navy – with the industry's experience of operating large facilities," said Edwards. "As we look for base load options, we have to take advantage of all the opportunities available to us. This concept has exciting possibilities."

"Real world issues such as siting, design and financing are challenging the way we must look at new options. Because we are a relatively small organization, SMEPA's opportunities are limited unless we look for partners to help share the risks of such a project."

OPENING DOORS of HOPE

Employees Continue Strong Focus on Missions Work



For many years, numerous South Mississippi Electric employees have committed themselves to missions work, spending time and effort to help meet needs in foreign countries as well as in other parts of the U.S. The wide variety of such trips and the heartwarming success stories of reaching out to people in need remind us that there are always ways to make a difference in the lives of others.

In July, Allen Keene, supply chain manager, and Tommy Clark, control and computer systems director, spent a week in San Blas, Nicaragua with a team from Baptist Medical and Dental Missions International (BMDMI). The team of 36 people from Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia provided medical and dental care, provided eye exams and eyeglasses, and distributed rice and beans to more than 2,900 people in San Blas.

"This was the best team of servants that I have been a part of," said Allen. "Together, we filled 17,700 prescriptions, performed 302 tooth extractions, provided 523 pairs of eyeglasses, distributed 2000 Spanish Bibles, and gave more than \$3,000 worth of rice and beans to hurting families in San Blas.

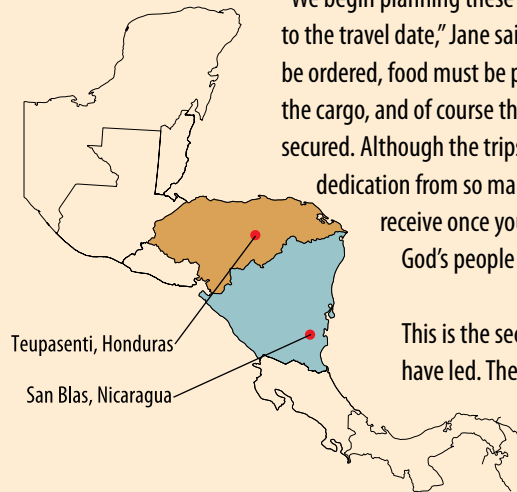
"I have a passion for the people of Nicaragua, especially the children; and although we can only provide temporary medicine, we do provide hope for these people through our actions and spreading the Gospel. The highlight of the trip was being able to witness 193 professions of faith. That is what the trip was all about."

Tommy Clark served as the Team Pastor and led tent services throughout the week. "The physical needs were so great, and the hearts of the people were amazingly open to the Gospel," Tommy said. "When our Lord calls your name for the last time, only two things matter – first your relationship with Him, and second, the people He has put within the circle of your life for you to touch for Christ. The sweet, wonderful people of San Blas are now part of the circle of our lives."

In June, Brent Stansell, operator V at Plant Morrow, and his wife, Jane, led a medical and dental mission trip to the village of Teupasenti, Honduras in the region of El Paraiso through BMDMI, where Jane works as the Team Activities Coordinator. The team of 55 people from eight states spent three and a half days in the village. More than 3,600 patients were treated in the medical clinic, while 217 were treated in the dental clinic. The team filled more than 25,000 prescriptions, extracted 559 teeth and gave rice and beans to the women that came through the clinic. Vacation Bible School sessions were also offered twice a day, with approximately 100 children in attendance at each session.

"The amount of work that we were able to do for the Lord was great," said Brent. "It is truly amazing to see how God brings 55 different people together and uses them to accomplish His work. We packed and shipped clothes before the trip, and distributed them to about 4,000 people. We had a total of five pastors on our team who traveled door to door and led tent services. Approximately 300 Bibles were also given out, along with numerous tracts. Most importantly, we had 84 professions of faith and 13 re-dedications."

At BMDMI, Jane coordinates more than 30 teams that travel to Honduras from January to September. She is responsible for arranging air travel, collecting the documents needed for the professionals who serve on the teams, as well as collecting applications from each team member. She also communicates with BMDMI staff and missionaries stationed in Honduras, making sure that they are prepared to receive the team.



"We begin planning these trips about 11 months prior to the travel date," Jane said. "Medical supplies must be ordered, food must be purchased and shipped with the cargo, and of course the financial details must be secured. Although the trips require much hard work and dedication from so many, the blessings that you receive once you are in the village serving God's people are unbelievable."

This is the second trip that Brent and Jane have led. They are currently planning another trip for June 2010.

Environmental Affairs and Fuels Manager Joey Ward traveled with a team from Hattiesburg's Temple Baptist Church to Kansas City, Missouri in April to assist in storm restoration on the campus of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"Our main job was to remove damaged trees from past tornadoes, wind storms, and ice storms," said Joey. "Prior to leaving, our team completed several hours of classroom and hands-on field training, but we learned a lot more once we began working around the campus. Many of the trees that we removed were around power lines, highways, and historic buildings on campus, so we were grateful for the heavy equipment and rigging supplies that we had. Malcolm Creel, a lineman at Pearl River Valley EPA, was also part of the team and spent several hours in the bucket lift. His expertise was definitely a blessing."

Although the team was only on the campus for five days, their efforts will have lasting effects. "Not only did the Seminary avoid the cost of having a tree service perform the work, but the firewood we cut will be sold by the students to help offset some of their expenses," Joey added. "Our service to the Seminary was two-fold, and that makes the hard work and sweat more than worth it."



Close to the Heart

Employees Walk For a Cure

Richard Ashley, director of design engineering, brings heartfelt enthusiasm to the annual Forrest/Lamar County Heart Walk sponsored by the American Heart Association. He has been the cornerstone of South Mississippi Electric's Employee Heart Walk Team, participating in the fundraising event every year since 2004, when he underwent heart bypass surgery.

"My heart surgery in 2004 was somewhat of a wake-up call to the fact that I was not to escape my family history of heart disease," Ashley said. "My father died of a heart attack at age 37 when I was very young, and my older brother had heart bypass surgery at age 38. In the spring of 2004, I started to experience chest pains with the slightest exertion. I would walk from my car in the back parking lot at SMEPA to my office in the Engineering building and would experience chest pains for 2 to 3 minutes. I knew something was not right, and a subsequent heart catheterization confirmed that I had a 70% blockage in my left main artery.

"The doctor explained that stents or other non-invasive techniques were not recommended and he suggested immediate coronary artery bypass graft surgery for the left main and two other arteries. The surgery was performed on June 30, 2004 and recovery and cardiac rehabilitation lasted about eight weeks. Before and after my surgery, I was impressed by the current state of technology for cardiac care and the knowledge of the nurses, technicians, and doctors.

"Talking with my brother after my heart catheterization and later after my surgery, I observed how much these procedures had improved since his bypass surgery some 20 years earlier. The advances in cardiac care are truly



left: Richard Ashley with his wife Garleen and son Ryan

amazing, and research continues to produce breakthroughs in diagnosis, treatment, care, and prevention of heart disease. The American Heart Association, in my opinion, does a great job not only in funding research but, more importantly, providing support and education on the local level."

Of the \$5,000 that the SME Heart Walk Team raised this year, Richard personally raised \$1,500, making him one of the Top Walkers for the local American Heart Association chapter. His success story was featured in the October issue of the Forrest/Lamar County Heart Walk Newsletter.

"Being featured in the Heart Walk Newsletter was truly an honor," Richard said. "I set a goal to raise \$800 this year, but I was skeptical of reaching it due to the current economic conditions. To be able to nearly double my goal was a huge success.

"Using the American Heart Association's Kintera web site, I used e-mail tools to send out blast e-mails to many business associates, family members, and other contacts with whom I have great relationships," Richard said. "I personalized my requests with an update on my health as a heart disease survivor and provided details of the 2009 Heart Walk and the efforts of the SMEPA Heart Walk Team. I sent the e-mails to nearly 70 contacts and received my first contribution within an hour."

The 2009 SME Heart Walk Team consisted of more than 25 employees and an additional 25 friends and family members, making it the largest SME Team to participate in the event to date.

"We had a phenomenal team this year," Richard added. "We began meeting in May to discuss possible events to raise money and ideas about how to raise awareness of heart disease for employees. We set our goal at \$4,000, and were thrilled when we exceeded our goal and reached \$5,000.

"We again conducted the IP Hotel and Casino Getaway Raffle and the always-popular Gun Raffle, and had great success with these, as usual. We added a t-shirt sale this year that ended up being our biggest money maker. The employees did an outstanding job supporting our team and the American Heart Association, and their contributions are greatly appreciated. The team could not have met our goal without the support of employees and management."

Richard also represented the Team at safety meetings and spoke to employees about taking heart-health seriously by choosing a healthy diet, exercising, and visiting the doctor. He hoped that his personal experience with heart disease would resonate with his co-workers and encourage them to begin taking steps toward a healthy lifestyle.

"Other than raising money for research and development, the role of the American Heart Association is to educate the public on heart disease," Richard said. "That includes knowing the various heart conditions, as well as warning signs and ways to prevent those conditions. As the SMEPA Heart Walk Team, it is our job to educate the employees. I hope that through this campaign we have made an impact on the employees, as well as helping so many heart disease patients with the money we raised."



2009 SMEPA Heart Walk Team

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Richard Ashley* | Brian Harris | Mark Phillips* |
| Michael Barnes* | Nathern Henderson | Chris Roberts* |
| Christa Bishop* | Chris Henry | Nicole Ruhnke* |
| Matt Dyar* | Alex Howard* | Steve Sylvest* |
| Beau Easley* | Missy Kelly* | Christy Triggs |
| Robert Evans* | Sam Kicker* | Jeanne Walker* |
| Jay Fairley* | John Kihyet | Debbie Woullard* |
| Tonya Farmer | Bryan Lankford* | |
| Roy Foster* | Jeremy McAndrew | *Team members |
| Don Ganas* | Jason McCardle* | who were able to |
| Reagan Griffin | Scotty Mims* | attend the Walk |

New Employees



Justin Bennet began working as substation maintenance technician at the FOC on July 20. He is a graduate of East Marion High School and Pearl River Community College with a degree in electrical technology. Before coming to SME, Justin worked with J&S Waterwell Drilling in Columbia. He is a native of Columbia and enjoys hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities.



New receptionist **Allie Stevens** began working at Headquarters on August 17. Previously, Allie has worked as an office assistant at Bedford Care and at the Hattiesburg American. She was born in Memphis but grew up in Petal, where she still lives with her daughter, Danielle. She enjoys cooking, watching TV and working in her yard.



Raymond Breazeale began working as a laborer at Plant Morrow on August 25. A native of Purvis, Raymond worked as a lumber grader at Purvis Forrest Products for the past 14 years. He is married to Tammy and has two sons, Owen, 16, and Logan, 13, who are both involved in team roping. He enjoys farming, hunting, fishing, rodeos and attending Good Hope Baptist Church.



Environmental Process Engineer **Ronny Kimbrough** began working at Plant Morrow on September 21. He holds a chemistry degree from the University of Southern Mississippi and a chemical engineering degree from Mississippi State. Ronny previously worked as the Asphalt Plant Manager for Blaine Companies in Mount Olive. He has also worked for Entergy and Georgia Pacific-Monticello. Ronny enjoys fishing, hunting, spending time in the yard, and attending Mount Olive Presbyterian Church. Ronny is life-long resident of Mount Olive, where he lives with his wife, Beverly, and 12-year-old daughter, Molly.



Make Treestand Safety a Priority This Fall



By Don Ganas
Security & Safety Coordinator

It is fall hunting season again, and I know SMEPA employees have been watching their game cameras to choose the perfect spot to get their trophy buck. All of us are getting our equipment together and some may be purchasing a new deer rifle. Four wheelers must be tuned up after being parked all summer. And, of course, there is range time to practice with the bow or confirm that the scope on the rifle is still zeroed in.

All of this preparation is important and for most of us is an enjoyable part of the hunting experience. But, if you hunt from a tree, do not forget to spend some time preparing your treestand. This hunting accessory may improve the success of your hunt or may lead to disaster.

The hardwood forests of the Allegheny Mountains, where I grew up, provided many good places to look out over a section of open woods. There were also large, old sugar maples or apple orchards that afforded low limbs, easy climbing and a comfortable seat once you got to a proper height. That changed when I moved to Mississippi in 1978. There was plenty of hunting land, but all was flat and populated by pine trees.

That Thanksgiving I hunted with a friend who let me use his Baker climber. To use it you had to hug the tree and, with the aid of straps for boot loops, pull the foot section up under you like an inch worm. When you achieved the desired height, you turned around and stood on something the size of a TV tray. There was no safety belt! If the tree was weeping sap, your clothes stuck to everything. Dangerous? You bet! Baker Treestand is no longer in business because of injuries and litigation.

For Christmas that year, Sue bought me an Amacker Deer Thief. The all-steel, collapsible two-piece climbing deer stand was state-of-the-art. It was solid and safe, but heavy and loaded with pinch points and places that squeaked when you moved. Amacker is still building deer stands today. I still have the Deer Thief but rarely use those 35 pounds of cold steel.

Deer stands have come a long way, and new safety features and accessories have made them much safer. But as with any tool, they are only as safe as their user and proper maintenance allows. Your stand should be thoroughly checked and serviced before using it. Never use

a stand that has been left attached to a tree from the previous season without first removing it and checking it completely. All welds should be free of cracks. Cables and straps must be sound or should be replaced. Fasteners should be tightened so they are in like-new condition. Replace any rusted fasteners so that placement of the stand on a cold January day is quick and easy. Replacement parts must be of materials and grade equal to or better than the original. Be particularly careful when inspecting wooden stands that might have deteriorated since the past season.

The treestand safety harness has become an affordable addition. The old-style safety belt is no substitute for a proper harness and should be discarded. All new stands now come with some type of harness. Be certain to have one that fits you and is in good condition. Practice putting the harness on now – you will be less tempted to leave it on the ground after trying to put on a tangle of straps in some dark pine forest. Attach the harness to the tree as you climb. It may slow your ascent, but it is the descent that will be important if something goes wrong.

Carefully choose the tree that you will attach your stand to. It should be sound, with no dead or dangerous limbs hanging over your location. If using a climbing stand, be ready to trim interfering limbs as you climb. Stay alert once you are in your location. More than one hunter has fallen asleep and tumbled from a stand. Even when wearing a harness, a sudden stop from a fall or the effect of hanging from the harness can cause serious injury and lasting physical complications. Concentrate on climbing safely. Leave your gear on the ground attached to a line that can be used to haul up guns and gear after you are safely in position. Never carry or haul a loaded gun into your stand.

The Treestand Manufacturers Association web site, www.tmastands.com has an on-line treestand safety training course. One can also get a complete list of the Association's safety guidelines on this web site. Follow those guidelines, and we will all get together next February at the SMEPA Big Buck Contest Awards.

Good luck and safe hunting.



The Power of 12



G R O W I N G M I S S I S S I P P I

Our Mission:

Deliver the South's best value for safe and reliable electric energy and serve as a common resource for our Member-owners

Our Daily Responsibility:

Knowing and complying with all environmental and regulatory requirements

Our Competitive Strengths:

- An experienced, skilled work force
- A commitment to employee safety and system reliability
- A long-term contractual relationship with our Member systems
- Financial health, including that of our Members
- Sustained load growth in our Members' service territories
- Long range planning for cost-effective generation resources
- Fuel diversity in generation resources

Back to the Basics: Conserve101

You Have the Power to Stop Energy Bandits

Phantom power bandits rob valuable electricity. Small appliances, cell chargers, MP3 chargers and other electronics use electricity even when they are not powered on. Keep them unplugged when not in use. Conserving today means saving tomorrow.



Fact:

The average American household loses up to \$20 per month to phantom power bandits.



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