



## Whatever it takes: Powering life, from a lineworker's perspective

By Brandon Salter, Working Foreman

**L**ineworkers are ranked as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the country. The lineworkers at Upson EMC work rain or shine, in often challenging conditions, to ensure you have reliable electricity. We're celebrating Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 8, 2024. The following column was written by Brandon Salter, one of our many dedicated lineworkers.

My name is Brandon Salter, and I'm one of 11 lineworkers at Upson EMC who work every day in all weather conditions to make sure our community has the power to live their lives. I love my job. It's hard work, but it's very rewarding. I hope this will give you a better look into what we face and more importantly, why we do it.

### The danger

A lot of people know linework is dangerous because we work near high-voltage electricity. Move just the wrong way



View from the bucket of a bucket truck

or lose focus for a split second, and it could be deadly. You must be aware of your surroundings and the safety of the person next to you. We often work on energized power lines, and you can't always tell they are energized by just looking at them. You're working with an element of danger that requires concentration, and there is no margin for error. The environment compounds the pressure, because when you need power most, it is usually when the weather is the worst. I'm often working in storms with rain, wind, extreme heat and cold, in the dark or on the side of the road next to fast-moving traffic. Yes, it's dangerous, but that's what we're trained to do.

Many may not realize it, but we undergo years of training before we can officially be called a lineworker. We typically start as a groundperson, helping crews with tools and keeping job sites safe, then we transition to apprentice status, which typically spans four years. After an apprenticeship, with more than 7,000 hours of training under our belts, we transition to journeyman lineworker status. That's when we're considered officially trained in our field.

But the education is ongoing. Lineworkers continuously receive training to stay mindful of safety requirements and up to date on the latest equipment and procedures.

### The physical demand

The daily expectations of a lineworker are physically demanding, but you won't hear any of us complain about that. I know what I signed up for—loading heavy materials, climbing poles and in and out of buckets. A lot of times, we go places the trucks can't, so I might be hiking through the woods loaded down with 40 pounds of personal protective equipment. But that's the job. Most of us are just glad to be outside.



Brandon Salter

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# Whatever it takes,

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## The sacrifices

There are some sacrifices to being a lineworker. I'm often first on the scene of an emergency, seeing things that are devastating like car accidents, structure fires and damage from severe storms. You don't know what type of situation you're going to face or when you're going to face it. We get calls at all hours and in the middle of the night. I've missed a lot of ballgames and family dinners, but my family is very supportive, and it pays off in the end. We make sure there is nothing standing in the way of helping our friends and neighbors get back to normal life.

## It's worth it

One thing that makes this job worthwhile is the camaraderie. My co-op is my second family, and the line crews are a brotherhood. In this work, you have to depend on the person beside you in life-or-death circumstances. It's a culture of trust, teamwork and service. It's all about keeping the teammate beside you safe and the lights on for everybody else.

I have a lot of pride in my work. Even when it's cold and wet, I know I'm working to keep people warm. There's a lot of satisfaction in hearing someone yell "Thank you" from the window after the lights come back on or seeing people flipping the light switches on their porches after an outage is restored. No matter how tired I am or how long I've been working, that feeling always makes it worth it.

Upson EMC and its employees are members of this community. We live in the same neighborhoods. We shop at the



Brandon with his wife and children

same stores. Our kids go to the same schools. If your lights are off, there is a good chance ours are off too. So, you can trust that we are doing our best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible—so you can get back to normal life.

## Upson EMC and Gas South partnership

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**GAS SOUTH**

# Upson EMC purchases its first hybrid vehicle

From shuttling our mail to supporting our community, fleet vehicles are all around us and have a tremendous impact on our lives. With the growing demand for electric vehicles, the manufacturers have expanded their range from passenger vehicles to commercial vehicles as well. Upson EMC recently had the opportunity to purchase its first plug-in diesel hybrid bucket truck because of its many advantages.

## What is a diesel hybrid bucket truck?

Now you may be wondering, what is a diesel hybrid bucket truck? It is a bucket truck that has two distinct energy sources, a diesel engine and an electric motor powered by a battery. When you lift the hood of a hybrid bucket truck, you will find a diesel engine that looks the same as it would under the hood of a traditional bucket truck. This standard diesel engine powers the transmission for the truck's on-road driving.

The major difference between a hybrid bucket truck and a traditional one is that the hybrid has a second motor. In addition to the diesel engine, an auxiliary electric motor, located under the mid chassis section, powers the hydraulic pump. The internal combustion engine burns diesel fuel while driving on the road like a gas-powered vehicle. Once it comes to aerial tasks on the job site, our team can turn off the truck's diesel engine with the push of a button and switch to all-electric mode to power the bucket. The electric motor is powered by a dozen high-capacity battery packs which provide clean and efficient power to the hydraulic system for many hours.

If the aerial job requires hydraulic operation for longer than the battery packs can handle, the internal combustion engine will automatically take over the hydraulic pump while charging the batteries at the same time.



## Advantages of using a hybrid bucket truck

Although the hybrid bucket truck performs like any traditional truck, the use of an electric motor as the main driver for the truck's hydraulic pump results in advantages that aren't possible with a standard bucket truck.

**Fuel efficiency** – Fuel consumption is one of the biggest expenses associated with a traditional diesel engine bucket truck. With a standard bucket truck, the main engine must keep running the entire time the bucket is deployed, all the while burning expensive diesel fuel. With a hybrid, the diesel engine can be shut off while the boom is in operation, allowing it to run on the energy stored in its batteries. When the batteries are emptied, it can be charged automatically as the diesel engine takes back over or the batteries can be recharged in a regular power outlet overnight.

**Quiet operation** – Internal combustion engines can be quite noisy. Electric motors, on the other hand, can run quietly with almost no background noise. This allows for easy and clear communication between the aerial

worker and ground crew. Since there will be no more shouting over noisy machinery between team members, it reduces the risk of job site accidents as well as saves our team's voices.

**Minimize maintenance** – An electric motor contains a fraction of the moving parts of their internal combustion counterparts, so they cost less to maintain, and common scheduled maintenance is a thing of the past.

**Reduced emissions** – The electric motor doesn't emit harmful exhaust gases into the atmosphere, which is safer for the environment. As an added bonus, it also reduces health risks for our team members. Since the hydraulic system of a hybrid bucket truck doesn't run the main diesel engine, it eliminates the need for job site idling.

Upson EMC is excited about the flexibility and benefits this vehicle offers, without sacrificing the reliability of a traditional internal combustion diesel truck on which we are so dependent. This is another prime example of Upson EMC's continued commitment to environmental stewardship while not sacrificing our overarching commitment to reliability.

# Upton EMC Green Power program

Upton EMC offers members environmentally friendly green power through Green Power EMC, which is comprised of Upton EMC and 38 other electric cooperatives in Georgia. Upton EMC's Green Power Program is certified by Green-e Energy.

As a part of Upton EMC's ongoing commitment to help preserve and protect our environment, we are proud to offer alternative sources of environmentally friendly energy. Today, these alternative sources of energy are commonly referred to as green power. By utilizing these natural methods, as well as the by-product methods, we can lessen the impact that conventional means of producing electricity have on the environment. However, producing electricity by utilizing the green methods mentioned at right can be more expensive than conventional methods such as nuclear, coal or natural gas.

For information on Green-e Energy, please visit its website, [www.green-e.org](http://www.green-e.org).



## BIOMASS PRODUCT CONTENT LABEL

The product is sold in blocks of 150 kilowatt-hours (kWh).  
The product will be made up of the following renewable resources:

	Green-e Energy Certified New <sup>3</sup> Renewables in Upton EMC Green Power Program		Generation Location
	2023 <sup>1</sup> Historical	2024 <sup>2</sup> Prospective	
Biomass	100%	100%	Georgia
Geothermal	0%	0%	
Eligible hydroelectric	0%	0%	
Solar	0%	0%	
Wind	0%	0%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

1. The 2023 figures reflect the resources that were supplied for the year ending December 31, 2023
2. The 2024 figures are prospective and reflect the power that we have contracted to provide. Actual figures may vary according to resource availability. We will annually report to you before August 1 of next year in the form of a Historic Product Content Label the actual resource mix of the electricity you purchased.
3. New Renewables come from generation facilities that first began commercial operation within the past 15 years. This product includes generation from a facility that is approved for extended use by Green-e Energy.

For comparison, the 2023 average mix of resources supplying Upton EMC includes: coal (10.42%), nuclear (38.08%), oil (0%), natural gas (42.56%), hydroelectric (4.54%) and other (4.40%).

The average home in the United States uses 893 kWh per month. [Source: U.S. EIA, 2020]

For specific information about this electricity product, please contact Upton Electric Membership Corporation at (706) 647-5475 or visit [www.uptonemc.com](http://www.uptonemc.com).



Green-e Energy certifies that Upton Electric Membership Corporation Green Power Program meets the environmental and consumer protection standards established by the nonprofit Center for Resource Solutions. For more information on Green-e Energy certification requirements log on to [www.green-e.org](http://www.green-e.org).

## Good Friday closing

Upton EMC will be closed on Friday,  
March 29, in observance of Good Friday.

