

Transcript of Power Chat in the Electric Lounge
Season 2 – Episode 1 “Life of a Line Technician”
January 15, 2026

0:08 – 0:21

Narrator: Power Chat In the Electric Lounge is powered by SECO Energy, an electric distribution cooperative serving over 260,000 members across parts of seven Central Florida counties. For more information about us, visit Secoenergy.com.

0:22 – 3:48

Curtis Wynn Chief Executive Officer: Welcome back to Power Chat in the Electric Lounge. The podcast where we plug you into the people, purpose and power behind your cooperative. I'm CEO Curtis Wynn, and today we're diving into a topic that is important to the work we do here at SECO. The life of a lineman and the foundations of Cooperative governance. When you're a member of SECO Energy, you're more than just a customer. You're an owner. And that ownership shapes a governance model that is transparent, democratic and centered on delivering the best possible service across every facet of our operations.

And speaking of cooperative governance, this is an important season for member engagement at SECO. We're preparing for our upcoming district meetings for districts two, four, and six. And these meetings are a chance for members in those districts to learn more about the cooperative, ask questions and hear updates on reliability projects, financials, and upcoming initiatives. It is also important where you participate in the trustee election process. Local democracy in action.

I encourage every member in these districts to make plans to join us. Bring your thoughts and engage with the Board and SECO staff. These meetings are always a valuable opportunity for open dialog and transparency. If you're wondering if you're in one of these districts, don't worry, we'll notify you letting you know all the details.

And then, of course, we have our biggest event of the year. SECO Energy's 88th Annual Meeting on March 26th. It is a special day to recognize who we are. Celebrate what we've accomplished and outline our vision for the future. All members are invited to tune in online to hear updates about the state of the cooperative. Vote on matters that impact their future and participate in our live Member Engagement panel and this year's annual meeting includes an important governance item. Members will be asked to vote on restating SECO's articles of incorporation and that might sound formal, and it is, but it's also a key part of keeping your cooperative strong and up to date. Restating the articles helps ensure our

governing documents reflect modern operations, regulatory requirements, and the need of the current needs of our membership. It's another great example of cooperative democracy at work, and your vote truly matters.

Over the years, I've seen longtime members attend some who've been with us for decades and others who join just that week. Every single one of them contributes to the Seco story, and I love that. And if you're listening right now, consider this your invitation. Your voice matters. Your vote matters. Your participation keeps SECO strong. Now, joining me today is someone who embodies that mission from the ground up. Literally. He spent three decades growing with Cisco Energy, starting as a lineman and now serving as our vice president of operations. Wayne Pennington. Wayne. Welcome to the Electric Lounge.

3:49 – 3:54

Wayne Pennington SECO Vice President of Operations: Thank you, Mr. Wynn. It's a pleasure to be here today. I look forward to discussing a little bit about my SECO journey.

3:55 – 4:07

Curtis Wynn: Let's start from the beginning. Now, people know you today as SECO's Vice President of Operations, but take us back. What role were you hired for when you joined SECO Energy?

4:08 – 4:29

Wayne Pennington: I Started in April of 1988. I was hired as a warehouse helper, here in Somerville. And I worked, in the warehouse just shy of about six months and then had, in my opinion, the good fortune of transferring out onto the operations line crew, where I basically stayed within the T&D side of the organization ever since.

4:30 – 4:31

Curtis Wynn: What does T & D stand for?

4:32 – 4:34

Wayne Pennington: Transmission and Distribution Operations Sir

4:35 – 4:48

Curtis Wynn: Line technicians are such a key component here. For the work we do here at SECO. Can you walk our listeners through what a typical day looks like for a Seco energy line technician?

4:49 – 5:43

Wayne Pennington: Yes, sir. That's that could be a little bit difficult. Understanding that we have basically three facets of operations here. Well, mainly at any utility, construction, restoration, and maintenance. So, depending upon the job function of the individual, they're either performing construction, restoration, or maintenance activities. A typical day, as always, which it always should be, starts with safety. So, our morning briefings, we execute those on a daily basis as our start of shift safety briefings. The crews then disperse and go to perform their essential job functions. However, in the line trade, the day generally begins once the day ends. We have trouble that needs to be ran. Constant and continuous efforts in serving the needs of our members.

5:44 – 6:06

Curtis Wynn: So, there are thousands of utilities, several even in our territory, within our service community that would love to have technicians who are as talented as you and who have the skill set to be a line technician. Now, what initially inspired you to join SECO and what drew you to this field of this organization?

6:07 – 6:56

Wayne Pennington: Really it was because I was recently married at the time. I knew people that worked for the co-op and had a discussion with one of my friends who had recently been hired on and, let me know that there were positions available here at SECO Energy. Took the opportunity to come to the Sumterville office for an interview. And actually, was hired on, like I said, in that warehouse position. And then, moved out into the line field. It was a wise decision. I was looking for a career, Mr. Wynn, at the time. There were jobs everywhere, but the career aspect was something as a young man, recently wed young man, knew that I needed to stop hunting jobs and look for a career and, SECO fulfilled that need for me.

6:57 – 7:17

Curtis Wynn: Wow, now for our listeners and even for me as a person who's been in the industry for a while, really, the thing that matters is if I flip that switch, the lights come on. But behind that is a lot of technical expertise that's needed to make that work. Can you explain the role that line technicians play in keeping our members lights on?

7:18 – 7:56

Wayne Pennington: In my opinion, the technicians at SECO and most any other utility are the first line of defense in keeping the light switches on. And, you know, that starts through daily efforts, through job training and safety.

All of our line technicians here at SECO are qualified troubleshooters, which is kind of rare, in the utility space. They all understand that not only are there job functions day to day to construct and maintain, but also to restore. They're always out there looking for opportunities to make our system better, to lessen the impact of outages to our members.

7:57 – 8:36

Curtis Wynn: You know, so that's the day-to-day part of it. And now, here in Florida, from the panhandle down to the peninsula, the farthest part of Florida, we're accustomed to something that starts with the letter H. We don't say the word here, but we'll just say for the sake of this, this, podcast, big storms. So line technicians play a big part in SECO and other utilities restoring power in the wake of one of those famous H words that come to visit us from time to time. What role do they actually play in doing and making sure that we get back to normal after one of those things happen?

8:37 – 9:34

Wayne Pennington: So, I guess I'd have to back up on that. And say that being a line technician, at SECO especially, it is a lifestyle. These men and women are, are faced with restoration efforts, mainly during the storm season. You know, which all utilities in the state of Florida are impacted with, but they're faced with challenges not only at work, but at home. The work challenges are very difficult. They're working long hours. They're away from their families. It can be a trying time for line technicians, but I can assure you that the ladies and gentlemen here at SECO Energy that are line technicians put 110% forward every single time there's a major storm event. And they do their best with the understanding that they are there to serve the needs of our members and restore power as quickly as possible and safely as possible.

9:35 – 9:59

Curtis Wynn: You know, I can't help but just 100% kudos and agree with you. We have some of the best, and they're falling underneath your leadership. And we really appreciate that. You've seen a lot in 30 years. 30 years. Long time. Is there 1 or 2 events or things that have that happened during your time as a lineman that you would like to share with our audience that you, that you can recall?

10:00 – 11:28

Wayne Pennington: I would say there are two, major restoration events that stick out to me the most. One would be October 2012; I believe it was hurricane Sandy came through and impacted the Northeast. Myself and 16 other employees traveled to those devastated

areas. We worked in, 3 or 4 different states. Maryland. New Jersey. Virginia. West Virginia. For all 16 or 17 of us, basically all being from Florida, we were in hill country up there. We left to go work a hurricane, and it turned into a winter storm and snow event. It challenged each and every one of us up there, just because of the terrain and the weather events that we were not accustomed to. So that was probably one of the major ones.

The other one, was in 2024. Also in October, Hurricane Milton, that impacted us here at SECO and a lot of our brother and sister co-ops in the southeast. That was one of the largest restoration events that we experienced here at SECO. The highest number of outside resources. Staging areas that we had to set up. Logistically, it was, an extreme challenge for each and every employee here at SECO. But, in my humble opinion, we overcame that. And it was a very successful restoration effort. But those are the two major ones.

11:29 – 11:49

Curtis Wynn: Wow. You took us on both ends of the spectrum. Wayne. In the first example, you were asked to go to the northeast, a place you had never been. And with Milton, as we know, we had over 1000 people to come help us. So, it sounds like this whole cooperative, environment is a brotherhood, sisterhood, family, whatever you want to call it, where we help each other.

11:50 – 12:21

Wayne Pennington: Yes sir. It is a brotherhood of sorts. Obviously, when you're when you are a line technician, it is funner to go away than to stay at home. But all of our line technicians are ready to travel. You know, obviously, the logistical challenges of hurricane Sandy, the snow event, some of the things we experienced up there we were not accustomed to. We slowed our pace. We focused on safety. And I think that's what got us there and got us home all safely.

12:22 – 12:32

Curtis Wynn: Wayne you've worked in the field on crews and now you oversee operations at the managerial level, what are some of the biggest differences between those two worlds?

12:33 – 13:10

Wayne Pennington: I think that from my perspective, the biggest difference is, as a line technician or a frontline field employee, you focus on the day to day and the week to week. When you become a part of the leadership level, you're not only focused on the day to day, the week to week, but you're looking further out. What's happening next month, six months

from now, a year from now, two years from now, five years from now, ten years from now. It's just a longer look. You're trying to forecast a lot more than you are when you're a front-line field employee.

13:11 – 13:22

Curtis Wynn: So how has that hands-on experience that you've gained over your early years shaped the way you manage at the managerial level, the leadership level?

13:23 – 14:50

Wayne Pennington: I think having that frontline field experience, really helps me remember that sometimes the tasks that we assign our employees are not that easy. Being a having that experience as a frontline field employee, you understand that we, we as line technicians or line technicians in general, say just because it was designed that way doesn't mean it can be built that way. There are constant challenges in the field that, the technicians have to overcome, whether it be from an engineering perspective, a warehouse perspective, or even a line technician perspective. There's real life challenges that we are faced with in the field that are unforeseen when we're in the planning stages. And that's one of the things that I've always tried to remember. Just because you think you can do a certain way, a certain thing, a certain way, doesn't mean that the field conditions are going to allow you to do that once you arrive on scene. And remembering that that a job or a specific task may be designed to be completed within a certain amount of time, there are things that occur in the field that are going to either extend or shorten those time frames.

And keeping that in mind. It seems to me it helps relieve some of the pressure from the technicians, them understanding that a lot of our leadership team members have been in the field and understand the challenges that our technicians are faced with on a day-to-day basis.

14:51 – 15:20

Curtis Wynn: Wayne, you lead a great team and your leadership shines, every day as you take us through all the challenges of keeping the lights on. Now let's bridge into, all of this conversation into the cooperative governance component of it. How does our cooperative model and the principles that guide it show up in your daily work, and what standards of values help ensure that Cisco continues delivering the level of service that our members expect and demand of us?

15:21 – 16:05

Wayne Pennington: I guess I can answer in this way. A couple of years, several years ago now, there was a, a colleague of mine, who had a motto or philosophy, and his motto and

philosophy was what he told me was he got up every day when he looked in the mirror and this is going to sound corny but it's real. Every day when he got up and looked in the mirror, he said he reminded himself that, we work for our members and everything that we do every single day, for the most part, should be focused on our members. And how can we what can we do today to better our relationship with our members, and how can we better serve our members on a day-to-day basis, through any job function that we perform on a day to day?

16:06 – 16:16

Curtis Wynn: Wayne, thank you so much for sharing your journey and giving us more insight into the day of, of a line technician for a utility specifically for SECO Energy.

16:17 – 16:20

Wayne Pennington: It's been a pleasure, Mr. Wynn. I really appreciate the opportunity.

16:21 – 16:38

Curtis Wynn: And to our listeners, thank you for joining us here in Power Chat in the Electric Lounge. Catch us next time for more conversations that connect you to the people and purpose behind your cooperative. Until then, I'm CEO Curtis Wynn. Thanks for listening.