

## **Transcript of Power Chat in the Electric Lounge**

### **Season 2 – Episode 1 “The Path of Power”**

**February 12, 2026**

**0:08 – 0:22**

**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](http://secoenergy.com).

**0:23 – 0:53**

**Curtis Wynn, Chief Executive Officer:** Welcome back to Power Chat in the Electric Lounge. At SECO Energy, our mission is simple, provide safe, reliable electricity to our members. But behind every flip of a light switch is a complex system working around the clock. Today, we're breaking that system down. I'm joined by our Chief Operating Officer, Ben Dawson. Ben oversees the teams and infrastructure that make it all possible. So, Ben, thank you for being here, and welcome to the Electric Lounge.

**0:54 – 0:56**

**Ben Dawson, Chief Operating Officer:** Well, thank you, Curtis. I'm glad to be here, too.

**0:57 – 1:06**

**Curtis Wynn:** So, let's get started. For members listening, can you give us a snapshot of what you do here at SECO Energy? What is your role?

**1:07 – 1:40**

**Ben Dawson:** Sure. I'll be glad to. I oversee engineering and operations, which oversees the safe operation of power to over 260,000 homes and businesses on our system, which entail leads to, our operations department with over 140 employees that's responsible to maintain, upgrade and construct new power lines and over 90 employees, in our engineering department, which is tasked to design for new construction and growth and upgrades.

**1:41 – 1:43**

**Curtis Wynn:** Wow. That's a few words, but it's a whole lot.

**1:43 – 1:44**

**Ben Dawson:** Yes, it is.

**1:45 – 1:52**

**Curtis Wynn:** You've got a big role you cover. You oversee, and as a part of your team, that's over half of the workforce here at SECO.

**1:53 – 1:54**

**Ben Dawson:** And it's been very busy.

**1:55 – 1:59**

**Curtis Wynn:** Yeah, I'm sure. Now your role goes beyond day-to-day operations, right?

**2:00 – 2:25**

**Ben Dawson:** That's correct. Other responsibilities I have are to ensure we comply and with safety and federal and state regulatory rules and laws, which entails our USDA, our U.S. EPA, OSHA, and even state-regulated agencies such as the Florida Public Service Commission and DP.

**2:26 – 2:43**

**Curtis Wynn:** Yeah, that's a lot in that too, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency, all working to make sure we have the funds we need, to make sure we cover the right laws and rules that we have to operate this thing safely and affordably.

**2:44 – 2:52**

**Ben Dawson:** That's correct. And in addition to that, be ready and prepared for those storms that come in, hopefully not so often, on a seasonal basis.

**2:53 – 2:55**

**Curtis Wynn:** Absolutely, we'll say "what storms," right?

**2:55 – 2:55**

**Ben Dawson:** What storms?

**2:56 – 3:05**

**Curtis Wynn:** Let's shift and talk about the product itself. Electricity. Where does that power SECO gets, where does it actually come from?

**3:06 – 3:28**

**Ben Dawson:** It comes from Seminole Electric Cooperative, we're one of nine members, owners of Seminole, and they are responsible or tasked by us to generate our power for us. They are one of the largest electric cooperatives in the nation, and they are responsible to get that power to us.

**3:28 – 3:57**

**Curtis Wynn:** Right, and they have a big job. Now, let's slow things down a bit here and talk about the product itself, electricity. Sometimes we think we just say “poof,” and it's here, but there's a process. So, how is electricity actually generated, and can you break that down for us? You're an engineer, Ben, so break it down for us at the basic level so that even a simple guy like me can understand it.

**3:57 – 4:27**

**Ben Dawson:** Sure, I'll be happy to. There's different fuel sources that Seminole and other utilities use, such as natural gas, coal, solar, nuclear, that essentially heat up water into steam, which actually creates that steam, pushes a turbine, creates motion, which connects to a generator.

**4:28 – 4:36**

**Curtis Wynn:** Right, so really all the fuels you mentioned, coal, natural gas, all that's creating motion, right?

**4:36 – 4:37**

**Ben Dawson:** That's correct.

**4:37 – 4:38**

**Curtis Wynn:** Motion.

**4:38 – 4:38**

**Ben Dawson:** Motion.

**4:39 – 4:44**

**Curtis Wynn:** Is this sporadic, or is this happening constantly?

**4:44 – 5:07**

**Ben Dawson:** It's a constant process, 24/7, 365 days a year. It's just a matter of how much in quantities. During the day, there's a lot more of that. At night, when people are asleep, there's not as much, and it's a constant responsibility to make sure that we are delivering, and that Seminole is delivering that generation to us.

**5:08 – 5:16**

**Curtis Wynn:** Right. Because there's not a time during a 24-hour period or 365 days a year that when we hit that switch, that we do not expect it to be on, right?

**5:16 – 5:16**

**Ben Dawson:** That's correct.

**5:17 – 5:19**

**Curtis Wynn:** That's where that constant piece comes in.

**5:19 – 5:19**

**Ben Dawson:** Yes.

**5:20 – 5:28**

**Curtis Wynn:** So, what is Seminole Electric's diversified generation? What does that portfolio at those power plants look like?

**5:29 – 5:39**

**Ben Dawson:** Sure. Seminole owns about 50% of their generation portfolio, which makes up about the majority of its natural gas, a little bit of coal, and a little bit of solar.

**5:39 – 5:39**

**Curtis Wynn:** Yeah.

**5:40 – 5:48**

**Ben Dawson:** And then the other remaining part is they purchase on them, from other utilities and generation providers, the remaining portfolio.

**5:48 – 6:00**

**Curtis Wynn:** Right. So, you mentioned they have nine member co-ops, like SECO, us, and eight others. They generate the power. Once it's generated, how does it get here? How does SECO get it?

**6:00 – 6:25**

**Ben Dawson:** The generation facilities that are located throughout the state step it up to a transmission voltage. It can range from 69,000 volts to 500,000 volts, and it gets transmitted, all of those transmission lines, through transmission substations and then to our distribution substations. We step it back down to either 25,000 volts or 12,000 volts on our distribution lines to the homes.

**6:25 – 6:40**

**Curtis Wynn:** Right. Those are some pretty high voltages you name. No one wants to touch that, I would imagine. That's kind of why the poles are so large and so high, and they're away from the general public, because safety is pretty important. Isn't it, Ben?

**6:41 – 6:47**

**Ben Dawson:** That's correct. That's our number one priority is to make sure we deliver safe power to our members and keep our employees safe, too.

**6:48 – 7:17**

**Curtis Wynn:** Absolutely. This is awesome information, Ben, that I think will enlighten the members about what goes into providing them the electricity that powers their lives, you know, and having that quality of life even in the most rural areas, that's what co-ops are all about. That's why we were created to make sure the rural areas have that power that everybody else has. Can you give me an insight on what SECO does to keep the system running? How do we keep it constant here for our members?

**7:18 – 7:41**

**Ben Dawson:** Well, the team I mentioned earlier, they're working 24/7, keeping the system up and running through maintenance, upgrades, and new construction to make sure that we are keeping those lines energized for our members and, through technology, creating efficiencies, and to maintain our system.

**7:42 – 7:57**

**Curtis Wynn:** Yeah. So last episode, we had Wayne Pennington here talking to us about the day in the life of a line technician, and those folks are very instrumental in making sure that power stays on for our members once we get it, and the quality of life stays constant.

**7:57 – 7:57**

**Ben Dawson:** That's correct.

**7:58 – 8:11**

**Curtis Wynn:** I know we wish this wasn't the case, but unfortunately, power outages occur due to a number of causes. When they do occur, how does SECO go about making sure that power gets back on as quickly as possible?

**8:12 – 8:35**

**Ben Dawson:** Well, through our system control center, we prioritize our outages. We look at our most critical outages first, such as shelters and hospitals. We concentrate on those first. Then we look at our larger outages, that we can restore next, that can restore as many people as we can. Then we work down the lines to those one to two individual outages.

**8:35 – 8:53**

**Curtis Wynn:** Wow, awesome information, Ben. You do a great job here. We've got some tremendous outage numbers in terms of the frequency, the duration, and how often power

goes out here, and so a lot of it is attributed to your leadership and the team members that are working with you. We appreciate all you do.

**8:54 – 8:55**

**Ben Dawson:** I appreciate it.

**8:56 – 11:05**

**Curtis Wynn:** I appreciate you being here in the Electric Lounge with me today. Before we wrap up today's episode, I want to take a moment to talk about something that's really important to us at SECO Energy, supporting education in the communities we serve.

SECO Energy is proud to continue our 2026 Youth Scholarship Program. This year, our Board of Trustees has approved \$48,000 in scholarships, awarding twelve high school seniors in our service area \$4,000 each to help with their education. We believe investing in education is investing in the future, both for our local communities and for the energy industry as a whole.

These scholarships help students take the next step, whether they're headed to college, a university, or technical school here in Florida. We're especially interested in students who want to pursue careers in areas like engineering, technology, business, math, or other energy-related fields, but all eligible students are encouraged to apply. Applying is easy. You can find the application online at [secoenergy.com](https://secoenergy.com).

Just click on “Your Co-Op” and then Youth Scholarship program. The deadline to apply is Friday, March 27th, 2026, at 5 p.m. If you have questions, you can email [youthprograms@secoenergy.com](mailto:youthprograms@secoenergy.com). That's going to wrap up today's episode of Power Chat. Again, I want to thank Ben Dawson. Ben, for joining us and for helping explain how electricity gets from the power plant to members' homes and businesses.

At SECO Energy, everything we do is centered around serving you, our members, and our communities, whether that's delivering reliable power, responding when outages occur, or investing in the future through programs like our Youth Scholarship Program. Thanks for listening, and we look forward to connecting with you again on the next episode of Power Chat, here in the Electric Lounge.

