



Located just outside of Nashville and serving 36,000 homes, businesses, and industries spanning parts of five counties, Dickson Electric System (DES) is at the heart of a midstate area that is booming with economic growth making it an ideal destination for families, businesses, and new industries. By providing safe, reliable, low cost power with friendly, efficient service, DES has played a key role within the many communities served by the municipal electric system for well over a century. With a service territory consisting of 746 square miles of Dickson, Hickman, Cheatham, Houston, and Montgomery Counties,



including 2,536 miles of distribution line and 160 miles of fiber optic cable, DES's footprint and value as a power distributor has grown significantly since its beginning.

DES's history dates back over 110 years. The first electricity in the area was generated in 1905 using a 150-horsepower steam engine. In 1923, the system was upgraded to two 150-horsepower oil engines. On May 13,

1936, one year after Congress passed the TVA Act, DES signed an agreement with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) to purchase and distribute power to the residents of area. Dickson was the second town in the state of Tennessee to sign a contract with TVA and the third to start receiving service. That same year, DES served 653 customers and had 50 miles of electric lines. Annual power sales totaled approximately \$21,857.

During its early years, Dickson Electric was operated under the direction of the city's Mayor and Aldermen, who in 1947 appointed Clarence Dunagan to be the system's first General Manager. Over the next couple of years, DES built new lines and expanded the system to accommodate customers in rural areas. By October 1949, the number of customers had grown to 5,303 along 850 miles of line, and power sales totaled \$312,000. The first meeting of the Electric Power



Board took place on November 1, 1949. Ten years later, by 1959, the number of customers had nearly doubled totaling 8,000 customers with 1,100 miles of distribution lines.

Throughout its 113-year history, only four men have held the position of General Manager of Dickson Electric System. Mr. Clarence Dunagan was the system's first manager and served in the position until his retirement in 1974. He was quoted as saying "It was a pleasure then to turn the lights on in a house that had never had electricity and have people shout for joy." Mr. Ernest "Ernie" Brown, whose career with Dickson Electric stretched over three decades, held the title of manager from 1974 to 1994. Following Mr. Brown's retirement, Mr. James Peeler was appointed as GM in 1994 after seventeen years as Construction Superintendent. In December 2008, after half of a century of dedicated and distinguished service to the company, Mr. Peeler retired from DES, and Darrell Gillespie took over as General Manager, bringing with him twenty-two years of engineering experience in the utility industry and an innovative approach to leadership and business.

Over the last decade, DES has been among the leaders in the Valley to implement technological advances and upgrade infrastructure. In late 2010, the management team led by Mr. Gillespie and supported by the



DES Power Board began planning the project of installing a fiber optic network to facilitate communication between the main office and each of the eight distribution substations located throughout the system and to support the connections necessary for an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system. In December of 2010, DES began their fiber buildout, and the project was completed a few months later in the in the spring of 2011.

Following the fiber installation, DES began their AMI deployment later that year by installing their first advanced meter in August of 2011, completing the project the following May. During this same time, the need for a new operations dispatch control center was identified, laying the groundwork for another major project on the pipeline. After extensive planning and construction, the control center was completed and DES operations staff moved in during May of 2014, only two short months after the system was hit with the second major ice storm of the winter season.

In addition to technological deployments, infrastructure improvements, and network upgrades, DES management has also focused on identifying ways to improve the experience for the customer. Over the last five years, DES has expanded customer payment options, undergone a complete website redesign, released a customer portal for customers to access their detailed energy usage information, implemented social media sites,



launched a prepaid metering option, and completed a major lobby and business office renovation. Several other customer-focused projects lie ahead including a bill redesign, an e-bill option, and additional payment options in the office.



The company's 75 employees are more like a family, coming together for community functions and special causes, and bringing their families together for an annual picnic to celebrate safety- a key objective for Dickson Electric and the management team led by Darrell Gillespie. The importance of safety, both employee safety and community safety, has always been emphasized within the electric industry, but at DES, safety has evolved into a central program dedicated to changing the mindset of every single employee, creating buy-in on every level of the company, and providing tools and opportunities for employees to better educate themselves in order to be best prepared for any possible hurdle in the field or within the workplace. In February of 2010, DES established its first Safety Team, and the first annual Safety Picnic was held in April of 2013 celebrating a company safety record of 1,000 safe days.

The significance of DES is felt both within the community and as a partner for economic development for the areas served. Employees at Dickson Electric participate in numerous community fundraising events throughout the year including Relay for Life, Cancer Crusades Auction, Holiday food drives benefitting the Help Center, AHA's Wear Red for Women, Disabled American Veterans, and area schools, as well as many other opportunities for employees to contribute to their communities. For decades, DES management has worked with the chambers, local leadership, and MTIDA to recruit and welcome new business and industry to the area by providing load and rate information for prospective industrial customers and contributing to incentive packages from the state and local governments.



With its long history of providing reliable service at a low cost, its unwavering commitment to safety, and its dedication to quality customer service, DES is striving to continuously find ways to improve the service it provides, the communities it serves, and the quality of life for its customers.