

Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

SOMERSET REC

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Jessi Ditzler

Executive Assistant

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

EMERGENCY OUTAGE NUMBERS

814-445-4106
800-443-4255

New Year Brings Adoption of Enhanced Circuit Breaker Technology



**RUSTON
OGBURN**

I **GENERALLY GIVE A BROAD** overview of the upcoming year in January. This year's article, however, focuses on an isolated change we plan to make because I wanted to include some history that influenced our decision. This change is the broad adoption of a circuit-breaker technology we have been testing for several years.

Since our distribution lines were built 85 years ago, they have used breakers and fuses to protect the public and our equipment. These devices simply monitor the amount of electricity flowing through them and open the circuit when

this current gets too high. While the concept is simple, the physics of quickly disrupting the current in a distribution system can be daunting. Traditionally, mechanical equipment immersed in mineral oil extinguished the arc (another name for a very big spark) that gets created under these conditions. New designs use a vacuum to open the circuit and dissipate the arc.

This new equipment requires less maintenance to operate as expected and provides more flexibility in our system design. While the oil-filled design works great, the oil characteristics change over time, which can make the breakers less reliable and less predictable. To mitigate these issues, the breakers have a relatively short maintenance period. Maintenance includes replacing the equipment mounted on the poles, so extending this interval time saves significant money.

Each fuse or oil-filled breaker serves a single purpose. In contrast, each vacuum breaker can be programmed with a wide range of parameters. New breakers can be closely matched with the needs of a circuit, and a single vacuum breaker in our inventory can replace any of the other breakers on our system. This allows us to reduce our storeroom costs while improving our back-up resources.

Every new technology seems to come with a downside. In this case, a traditional breaker remains easier to rehabilitate and can withstand some conditions better than the new electronic devices. Even considering these factors, we still believe this new technology will provide long-term value for our members.

Adoption of this new breaker aligns with our general philosophy of allowing new technologies to develop a lengthy track record in the field before we invest in adding them to our system. With thousands of similar units installed at cooperatives across the U.S. and a commitment of many years of continuous support from the manufacturer, we believe now is the right time to install these devices on our lines.

As always, if you have any questions about this or how the cooperative operates, please call 814-445-4106 or stop by the office. Happy New Year. 🍷

RUSTON OGBURN
GENERAL MANAGER

Member Appreciation Day Highlights

A GOOD TIME WAS HAD by all Friday, Oct. 11, 2024, at the Member Appreciation Day, which was held at Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative's (REC) headquarters in Somerset. More than 475 people attended and enjoyed hot dogs, kielbasa, ice cream sandwiches, and more. Members had the opportunity to talk with co-op employees and engage in fellowship with other members.

Many members attended and brought canned food for the local food drive, enabling us to collectively give to the needy in our communities. Collected items this year were delivered to the Shade-Central City Food Pantry. Each year, Somerset REC donates non-perishable items to a rotating list of food pantries in our service area.

Somerset REC is truly a member-owned organization and proudly works to improve the quality of life in our service territory. It was a genuine pleasure to host this day in appreciation of our members. If you couldn't make it, we hope you can join us at the next member event. 🍷

MEMBER SATISFACTION IS KEY

Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative is conducting a member satisfaction survey through the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI®). The survey is open through Feb. 28, and your feedback helps us improve our services to you. For your convenience, please scan the QR code below to access the survey or visit somersetrec.com/member-survey.

Thank you for participating!

ACSI® and its logo are registered trademarks of the American Customer Satisfaction Index LLC. For more information about the ACSI, visit theacsi.org.



HANDY HELPERS: A box trailer of non-perishable food items was delivered to the Shade-Central City Food Pantry following Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative's recent Member Appreciation Day. Pastor Randy Newell, third from left, accepted the donations on behalf of the pantry. Those doing the heavy lifting were, from left, cooperative employees Drew Boyer and Brock Crawford and Youth Leadership Council representative Brandon Hurley. Co-op employee Phil Read, not shown, also helped.

Co-op Employees Carry ID Cards – Ask to See Them!

WITH RETIREMENTS COME A LOT of new faces at the co-op. Before allowing any person who claims to be a cooperative employee enter your home or access your property, please do the following:

1. Ask to see their Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) identification card.
2. Look for the Somerset REC sign on the door of the vehicle the person is driving. If the co-op is using a third-party vendor for right-of-way maintenance or infrastructure inspection, their vehicles should also be marked with a Somerset REC logo.
3. When in doubt, call the co-op office and verify the person's ID and their need to enter your home. 📞



How Cold Weather Affects Your Bill

The frigid weather has become a staple in western Pennsylvania recently. The bottom line: It's cold! And prolonged low temperatures lead to an increase in electricity use, which leads to higher electric bills.

In the winter, the largest contributor to your energy use is heating your home. Follow these tips to control your heating system and energy costs this winter.

- Create a MyREC SmartHub account to monitor hourly, daily and weekly energy use through the My Usage tool.
- Set your thermostat to 68 degrees or lower in the winter. If you have a programmable thermostat, set it to adjust 4 to 6 degrees lower when no one is home or when sleeping. You can then set it to increase the temperature in stages by 1 or 2 degrees at a time so your home is comfortable when you return or wake up.
- Use space heaters sparingly. To run one space heater for 12 hours every day for a month could cost around \$65.
- Make sure your house is properly insulated and that all air leaks are sealed.



HAVE A STORY IDEA FOR PENN LINES?

At Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, we're always interested in sharing stories of co-op members who have a unique hobby, collection or new business in the pages of *Penn Lines*.

Think you have an interesting story to tell our readers? Let us know! Contact Emily Baer, director of marketing and members services, at ebaer@somersetrec.com or call 814-445-4106.



6 Tips for Year-Round ENERGY SAVINGS

- 1** Use your ceiling fan counterclockwise in the summer for a down breeze, and clockwise in the winter for an updraft to force warm air down into your room.
- 2** Turn off lights and unplug chargers and electronics when not in use.
- 3** Regularly change or clean your furnace and indoor AC filters as recommended, and keep the area around your outdoor AC unit clear of obstructions.
- 4** Close or lower window coverings to keep out heat or cold.
- 5** Insulate your home and weatherproof windows and doors.
- 6** Use a programmable or smart thermostat. Adjust the temperature a few degrees for overall savings.

Get more tips on creating a resilient and efficient home:



HOW MUCH ARE YOU SPENDING?

Let's determine the annual cost of your appliances and electronics. Start by finding the wattage of your specific appliance, which is typically listed on the bottom or back. Then, plug that number into the first step of the equation below to figure out how much it costs to use each individual item per year.

$$\boxed{} \times \boxed{} = \boxed{}$$

WATTAGE OF APPLIANCE HOURS USED PER DAY WATTAGE PER DAY

$$\boxed{} \times \text{365 DAYS} = \boxed{}$$

WATTAGE PER DAY WATTAGE PER YEAR

$$\boxed{} \div 1,000 = \boxed{}$$

WATTAGE PER YEAR kWh PER YEAR

$$\boxed{} \times \$0.12 = \boxed{}$$

kWh PER YEAR AVERAGE kWh RATE ANNUAL COST

You can also easily monitor your electric use on the cooperative app known as SmartHub.

Convenient charts show hourly, daily, weekly and monthly energy use at your home or business.



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