

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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800-443-4255

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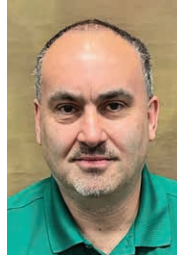
Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

EMERGENCY OUTAGE NUMBERS

814-445-4106
800-443-4255

Guest Column

Searching for the Internet



GARY GINDLESPERGER

THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, THE INTERNET has become a part of our daily lives. It is now a key component in business, communication and entertainment around the world. Even if you do not use the internet and have no desire to do so, it's most likely being used by the places you do business with. Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) uses the internet for many of our day-to-day activities, such as operating our phone system and collecting live outage data for line crews.

With the internet becoming such a major tool for business and personal use, it makes sense that many of our consumer-members are interested in home internet access. Over the years, we have had members call the cooperative and ask about internet options. The cooperative has investigated facilitating internet access for our members, but ultimately this service wasn't logistically or financially feasible.

Throughout the process of investigating the feasibility of providing internet, we realized many areas in our territory already had options available. Since we use various providers and technologies for our communications, we decided we could do our members a service by helping them figure out what options are available at their residence or place of business.

Since May, we have been offering our Internet Site Survey service. We have conducted more than 100 surveys and, in all cases, we were able to help members find some type of internet connection. We tested three cellular providers and Starlink at each location, unless the member was only interested in a certain provider. The members received a form with our test results, a guide on the available speeds and what they could expect, and contact information of local cellular dealers and point-to-point wireless providers.

In doing the surveys, we visited some very remote places. In one instance, Starlink, which relies on low-orbit satellites to provide service, did not work. However, if you have even a limited view of the sky from your property, chances are Starlink is a viable option. We also tested T-Mobile, Verizon and AT&T hotspots at each location. Most locations had at least one cellular option.

You may be wondering: Of the four different services tested, which one was better? It depends on your needs. Our goal was to provide a guide of what you can expect to do with the speeds available. We also answered questions about our findings. In most cases, Starlink provided the best overall connection but is also the most expensive solution we have tested. Many members were pleased with the speeds offered by cellular providers. In some cases, cellular offered a better connection based on the property's proximity to a cellular tower.

In closing, we are happy with the results of the surveys. Feedback from participating members suggest they are happy as well.. If you are interested in having the survey done at your home or business, free of charge, please call the Somerset REC office at 814-445-4106. We will be offering this service for the remainder of the year. 📶

GARY GINDLESPERGER

MANAGER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

ASDFJKL; Be Sure to Keep It Random

EMILY BAER, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & MEMBER SERVICES

YOU MAY HAVE THOUGHT THE title of this column included a typo, but rest assured, there is meaning behind it. In middle school, I remember my keyboarding teacher drilling into our developing minds, “ASDFJKL; — know the home keys on a keyboard.” But why would I ever need to learn this?

These characters are located, seemingly at random, on the “home row” of a keyboard. And when creating passwords, you should take the same approach — in other words, keep it looking random to protect your information. At Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), cybersecurity is a priority so we can keep your personal and financial information safe from pesky hackers. In fact, the cooperative follows industry best practices to protect the data of our members and employees.

With technology so prevalent, it is very important that consumers take steps to protect themselves, too. The best defense in cybersecurity is you. Companies can implement policies, software and various hardware to help protect your personal information, but you must also be diligent.

Changing your password often is good practice. Many banks and online businesses require you to change it every so often. Also, they often ask users to meet some type of minimum criteria before their new password is accepted. You want to avoid using words or dates that can easily be linked to you, such as a birthday or child’s name. Along with changing your password, avoid using the same pass-

word for multiple accounts. In the event your password is compromised, scammers would have access to all of your accounts using that password.

Phishing is one of the major causes of security breaches. Phishing is an attempt to gain access to your account information by sending you an email that looks important and asking you to respond. Red flags include the following:

1. You need to click on a link to accept a package being shipped to you.
2. You will be charged a large dollar amount for an item if you do not respond.
3. The email states your username and password have been stolen and you need to “click here” to reset it.
4. The email appears to be from someone you know who is asking for personal information.

These are just some examples of phishing attempts. The best thing to do is to check the email address. When you receive an email, it will include the sender’s name or organization. A good habit is to take a closer look at the actual email address linked to the sender. The most obvious way to spot a bogus email is if the sender uses a public email domain, such as “@gmail.com.” So remember: If the email address doesn’t make sense to you, it is probably a phishing attempt. If you are unsure, do not respond and do not be afraid to reach out to the company or person — either by phone or in a separate email — to ask if the email is legitimate.

Also, be cautious of phone scammers. Many of us at the cooperative have received these calls. The person will claim to be from Apple, Microsoft or some other company and tell you that your phone or computer has been compromised. They will say they can help you fix the problem for a charge. Do not proceed with the call; instead, hang up. There are online scammers, too. For instance, when surfing the web, a window may pop up that proclaims your computer has been compromised, and you need to call a certain number to get it fixed. Do not do this either. These scams make it hard to close your web browser, so simply shut off your computer for a minute. When you turn your computer back on, it most likely will work fine, and you can avoid whatever website you were on that prompted the scam page.

To raise cybersecurity awareness and avoid cyber scams, I encourage you to keep your passwords random, use caution when clicking external web links or opening emails, and never give financial or personal information over the phone. 🛡️



KEEP 'EM GUESSING: Regularly changing your password is a solid cybersecurity practice. When creating a new password, avoid patterns or personal information that can easily be guessed. To everyone but you, your password should look like random characters.

Protecting Your Home Against Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

EMILY BAER, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & MEMBER SERVICES

IT HAPPENS EVERY YEAR: PEOPLE die from carbon monoxide (CO) in their homes without ever knowing they were exposed. The U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission calls CO poisoning a “senseless killer” because just one CO detector near the bedrooms in every home could prevent this loss of life.

CO is a by-product of combustion. It is an odorless, colorless and tasteless toxic gas that weakens a body’s defenses. It is produced when natural fuels are burned with incomplete combustion in a gas, coal, or oil furnace, gas water heater, fireplace, space heater, wood stove, or any appliance that uses flammable fuel. This also includes fuels like diesel, gasoline and propane.

Toxic fumes can enter your home through leaky flue pipes, blocked chimneys, cracked heat exchangers in a furnace or even a backdraft that sucks flue gasses down the chimney.

The symptoms of CO poisoning can be difficult to recognize. They often resemble the flu — headaches, nausea, dizzy spells, fatigue and drowsiness.

The gas typically accumulates gradually. As the build-up increases, so do the symptoms. Other times, it builds a high concentration rapidly. When CO is inhaled, it eventually replaces oxygen in the blood. It is the same weight as air, so it mixes readily and does not dissipate quickly. It easily overtakes the body’s oxygen, resulting in brain damage or death.

Since modern construction has made houses much more energy efficient and airtight, CO can more easily be trapped inside. Exhaust fans in the kitchen and bathrooms can help create negative air pressure, which could draw CO back into the house.

A good CO detector can give you peace of mind if you are using fossil fuels in your house. Recently, at the Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting, CO/smoke detectors were given as gifts to attending members. If you did not attend but are a member of the co-op and your home is not equipped with a carbon monoxide detector, please stop by the co-op office at 223 Industrial Park Road to take one home to install.

Limited quantities are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Limit one per member. 📍



2024 MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

GIFT

JOIN US FOR LUNCH!
FRIDAY, OCT. 11
10 AM - 2 PM

WE WILL BE GRILLING HOT DOGS AND KIELBASA AND OFFERING OTHER REFRESHMENTS.

SOMERSET REC OFFICE
223 INDUSTRIAL PARK ROAD
SOMERSET, PA 15501

PLEASE HELP OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED. WE WILL BE COLLECTING NON-PERISHABLE FOOD DONATIONS FOR FOOD PANTRIES IN OUR COMMUNITY. ALL DONATING MEMBERS WILL BE ENTERED FOR A CHANCE TO WIN ONE OF FIVE \$50 BILL CREDITS.

It's Spooky When the Lights Go Out! Be Outage Ready

WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT, it can create all kinds of headaches — and even be a little scary. How can you live your life without electricity?

Many consumers have opted to buy generators to keep the power flowing, and if you have one, consider installing a GenerLink transfer switch to provide peace of mind. There has never been a safer or easier way to connect your generator to your home when an outage occurs.

Portable generators, when not handled properly, can be dangerous. Old, damaged or undersized units can overload and overheat your electrical system, resulting in a fire. However, you are not the only one at risk. Improperly connected generators can backfeed the electrical system, sending a dangerous current back through the power lines and possibly injuring — or even killing — unsuspecting lineworkers who are restoring your community's power.

A GenerLink transfer switch, however, enables power to flow safely through your generator and panel. The unit is installed behind your electric meter by a cooperative employee. This allows you to plug your portable generator right into your circuit box with a specialized GenerLok cord, which is provided with the purchase of a GenerLink unit.

From here, you can simply flip a breaker in your circuit box to decide which appliances you prefer to run during an outage. Most transfer switches are limited to six to eight hard-wired circuits, but GenerLink gives you complete flexibility to work within the power of your generator. Also, a convenient status light lets you know when power has been restored, signaling that it is OK to disconnect your generator and put away.

Thinking about installing a GenerLink transfer switch? Here are the specs:

- ▶ GenerLink units are available in 30-amp or 40-amp.
- ▶ All units include a 20-foot GenerLok cord. Longer cords are available for purchase as a special order.
- ▶ GenerLink will not work with an electric service rated more than 200 amps.
- ▶ Units include indicator lights to alert the user of capacity, utility power, generator power and abnormal conditions.
- ▶ All GenerLink units include a limited warranty.

For more information or if you are ready to purchase a GenerLink unit, please contact the cooperative office at 814-445-4106 and ask for Emily Baer. 📞

How to Choose the Correct Generator

Three simple steps to selecting the correct generator to pair with your GenerLink transfer switch.

For more information on how to find out which generator is right for you, refer to the [GenerLink Operation Manual](#).

- 1

Your generator must have one of these receptacles:

50 AMP
L14-50

20 AMP
L14-20

30 AMP
L14-30
- 2

Your generator must be in these wattage ranges:

Generator Wattage
4800 – 9,600 Running Watts
- 3

Your generator must **NOT** have a full GFCI panel:

No GFCI panel

GFCI panel

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