

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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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Vice President

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Director of Finances

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Manager of Outside Operations

Emily Baer

Director of Marketing and Member Services

Phil Stern

Manager of Technical Services

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

The Power of Urgency



**RUSTON
OGBURN**

DEADLINES CREATE ACTION. OUR KIDS remind us of this as they readjust to their school and sports schedules this fall.

At Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), we have a clear process for aligning our work each day because we believe if everything is a high priority, nothing is a high priority. Our hierarchy is:

- ▶ Emergency situations
- ▶ Outages
- ▶ New connections
- ▶ Modifications to allow pole attachments, space for construction, etc.
- ▶ Elective relocations
- ▶ Planned system upgrades and maintenance

Even though planned system upgrades fall at the end of that list, these tasks provide most of our construction work. The annual cycle of construction never truly ends. Instead, it resets as planning begins each fall when new connection requests from members slow down and line crews finalize planned upgrades.

Our construction and vegetation work plans begin by aligning urgency with the impact on our members. A member who requests a new connection typically has a timeline that we try to meet. However, some of this must be done in places where crops or wet areas limit access at certain times of year, so we need to manage expectations to balance the impact on other members.

These same considerations apply to recent projects, where taller or stronger poles have been installed to allow telecommunications companies to attach their cables to our infrastructure. We have agreements that lay out the safety and construction requirements associated with using the roughly 42,000 poles in our system.

These projects also have timing expectations and contractual obligations to complete our “make-ready” work. Those expectations and obligations help define our priorities. Despite these requirements, we work with impacted members to ensure we do not cause unreasonable disruption to their property.

When higher priorities are completed, we schedule upgrades to our facilities. We plan this work only when increased reliability for our members outweighs the cost. Even with this approach, it’s important to note the impact weather has on driving the urgency of work.

For instance, by mid-fall, we try to complete work in areas that are difficult to access during snowy conditions. We also work on farmland when the fields are dormant.

I recently had an interesting conversation with a cooperative member from an area that doesn’t experience winter. He explained they do not have the same urgency that we have because the weather doesn’t play a role in their plans.

So, when the snow starts flying in the coming months, be thankful for our cycle of urgency. As always, feel free to call or stop by the office to discuss anything — urgent or not. 🍷

RUSTON OGBURN
GENERAL MANAGER

Powered by Community, Driven to Give: Somerset REC Supports Volunteer Firefighters with PRIDE

EMILY BAER, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & MEMBER SERVICES

“CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY” IS ONE of the seven guiding principles that all cooperatives follow. It reflects the belief that cooperatives exist not only to serve their members, but also strengthen the communities of which they are a part.

Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) embraces this principle by actively supporting local needs with donations, volunteers, sponsorships and partnerships. We invest in long-term community development, such as education, sustainability, health, and safety, and we make decisions that balance economic goals with social responsibility.

As we celebrate National Co-op Month in October, we also recognize the importance of National Fire Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness about fire safety and rural volunteer fire departments. Recently, the cooperative provided a financial helping hand to 25 of these organizations in its service territory. It’s a journey, however, that started more than 20 years ago.

Rural development

In 1987, the Partnership for Rural Industrial Development Enterprises (PRIDE), a nonprofit, was founded by Somerset REC, the Somerset County Chamber of Commerce and the Somerset County Economic Development Council.

The original purpose was to promote, encourage, and develop industrial and manufacturing enterprises for the county’s rural economic growth. The vision began with small business incubator projects for local entrepreneurs.

Among those who completed tenant applications for the program in Somerset were Monks Aerospace, a metal milling company that built blocks of titanium for fighter jet landing gear; Meadow Mouse, a hand-crafted manufacturing company producing decorative lighting fixtures; Affiliated Energy Products, Inc. (AEP COR); Elizabeth’s Fancies; Nisha Soaps and Amenities; and Swallow Rugs, which produced hand-loomed rugs.

“I remember the late Bob Dunning of AEP COR getting an invitation to meet with the REC board to give his proposal,” says Lowell Friedline, past PRIDE Board president and current secretary/treasurer of Somerset REC. “He had a lot of enthusiasm and ultimately sold the idea of the incubator space to the board of directors at the time. We had access to Rural Utilities Service funding that helped with the development of rural utility infrastructure. I think this is when my hair started to turn white.”

Over the last 38 years, start-up businesses have been

tenants in the incubator space on Dominion Drive. As they became successful or changed their business paths, the need for economic development at the location lessened, and PRIDE sold its assets and developed plans to dissolve.

Ultimately, the building and acreage were sold to Guy Berkebile of Guy Chemical for his business expansion.

Financial support

The cooperative believed volunteer fire departments could benefit from PRIDE’s remaining financial assets, which — until recently — had been tied up for more than two decades. The cooperative partnered with The Community Foundation for the Alleghenies to help distribute the funding to 25 local volunteer fire departments. In August, Somerset REC board members and employees hand-delivered checks for \$9,321.73 to each fire company at its monthly meeting. More than \$233,000 was donated.

Wayne Sechler, a former cooperative leader, recently recalled the ups and downs of the PRIDE project.

“It wasn’t always financially easy,” he says. “After the sale of the building, the funds seemed to be tied up for over 20 years. To be honest, I never thought I would see the day that the funds were distributed, but I am happy to hear the money was donated to deserving nonprofit organizations.”

The following volunteer fire departments received donations: Acosta, Addison, Bakersville, Berlin, Boswell, Central City, Conemaugh Township, Confluence, Garrett, Hooversville, Jennerstown, Jerome, Listie, Meyersdale, New Baltimore, New Centerville, Rockwood, Salisbury, Seven Springs, Shanksville, Sipesville, Somerset-Friedens, Stoystown, Wellersburg and Windber.

For Somerset REC, business isn’t about profits; it’s about people. By caring for our members and the community, we’re helping build stronger, safer and more connected places to live, work and play. 🏡

DRIVEN TO GIVE: Somerset REC directors and staff deliver donations to local volunteer fire departments. The funding came from the dissolution of an economic development project the co-op had once supported. More than \$233,000 was distributed to 25 fire companies in its service territory. The recipients were thankful and plan to use the funding — each received more than \$9,300 — for operations and training.



Stay Connected: Follow us on Facebook and Instagram

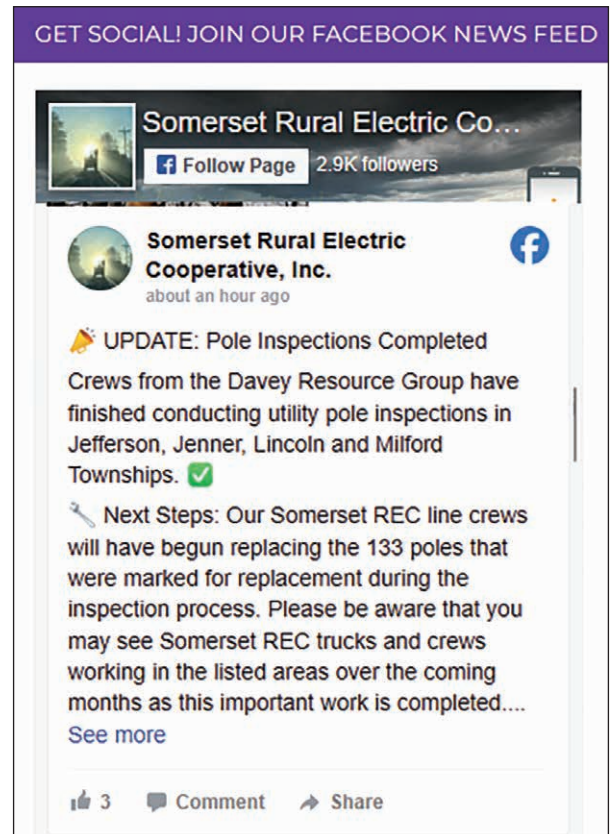
AT SOMERSET RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, KEEPING our members informed and engaged is one of our top priorities. That's why we invite you to follow our official Facebook business page, **Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.** You can also find us on Instagram @somersetrec.

Join our 2,900-plus followers for a convenient way to stay connected with your cooperative and the community we serve.

By following our accounts, you'll receive:

- ▶ **Timely updates:** Outage notifications, service announcements and cooperative news, such as annual meeting and Member Appreciation Day information.
- ▶ **Helpful resources:** Energy-saving tips, safety reminders and tools to manage your electric service more efficiently.
- ▶ **Community highlights:** Updates on local programs and events, such as Youth Tour, Electric City, scholarship opportunities and ways we are giving back to the communities we serve.
- ▶ **Direct engagement:** An opportunity to share your feedback, enter giveaways, ask questions and stay connected with us in real time.

Stay informed. Stay engaged. Stay connected. 📱





Safe Electricity.org®

Dress up with care for HALLOWEEN

When dressing your little ones (or yourself), keep these safety tips in mind:

- 👤 Always wear costumes that are labeled flame resistant.
- 👤 Wear bright, reflective costumes or add strips of reflective tape to improve visibility.
- 👁️ Do not wear decorative (colored) contact lenses unless you have seen an eyecare professional.
- 👤 Wear makeup and hats rather than costume masks that can obscure or obstruct your vision.
- 👤 Test the makeup you plan to use in advance for a possible allergy.

In addition, inspect any plug-in decorations for signs of wear and tear (fraying or bare wires or broken plugs) and replace them if damaged.