Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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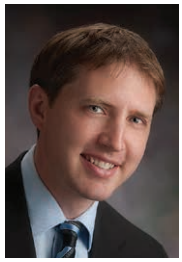
OFFICE HOURS
Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

EMERGENCY OUTAGE NUMBERS
814-445-4106
800-443-4255

Thank a Lineworker and Their Family



RUSTON OGBURN

THE DEVASTATION FROM RECENT HURRICANES focuses my attention on the magnitude of work to build or rebuild the infrastructure we all take for granted. Many of us have seen the images of flooding from these events but can only imagine the suffering of people directly impacted.

Our lineworkers have been helping a Georgia cooperative where 50,000 of their 60,000 members were without power for at least five days. After 10 days, about 25,000 still lacked electricity. The remaining work at this cooperative alone is expected to take at least several more weeks.

As bad as this seems, many areas were hit much harder. Take a moment to think about how your life would change in these conditions.

Our lineworkers have joined this restoration work as part of our mutual-aid agreements with other electric cooperatives. Having the ability to call on mutual aid allows each cooperative to operate efficiently while still providing reliable service to our members — especially when disaster strikes.

It's important to recognize the labor-intensive nature of linework and the long hours spent rebuilding lines and re-energizing members' homes and businesses. These hours away from home also impact our lineworkers' families. I have heard many stories of missed birthdays, holidays and school events.

While the work is difficult and the burdens spread to many others, helping those in need provides a sense of pride for those involved. Our cooperative is proud to provide this support when we can.

Parallel to this work on the ground, we are collecting donations for the people directly impacted by these recent storms. We plan to partner with other companies in the region to magnify the impact and provide our members who want to donate with a trusted path to do so. More specific information about this effort can be found on page 16D and our website or by calling the office.

As we approach Thanksgiving, please take a moment to remember those suffering from these disasters and be thankful for the many things we often take for granted. Please call or stop by if you have questions about how cooperatives support each other.

And, if you happen to see one of our lineworkers or their family, please thank them for the work they do and the sacrifices they make.

RUSTON OGBURN
GENERAL MANAGER

Answering the Call: Restoring a Power Outage

EMILY BAER, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & MEMBER SERVICES

"HOW LONG IS IT GOING TO TAKE?" Those are familiar words to everyone who works in the electric industry. It's a question I've been asked many times, and it's the first thing people think when the lights go out. It doesn't take long sitting in the dark to realize how dependent we are on electricity.

As your member service liaison and occasional on-call dispatcher, it's always a good feeling to help people get those lights back on.

But what does it take to restore an outage, and why do they sometimes last for hours — even days? Most people will never get to experience or witness the work that goes into ending outages. Hopefully after reading this, you will have a better understanding of the process and the work that Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) line crews are doing to restore your power.

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The electricity you use travels a great distance and goes through several steps to get to your home. It starts with a power plant that produces electricity. Then, in the power plant's substation and switchyard next door, a transformer increases the voltage and sends it out on transmission lines to other substations. At the next substation, a transformer will reduce the voltage and transmit it to smaller local substations.

These local substations — the ones you see around our territory — are the last pitstop before the electricity reaches your home. Here, another transformer reduces the voltage — either 7,200 or 14,400 volts — so it can be delivered to the poles outside your home. Once it arrives outside your home, one last transformer reduces the voltage down to 120 or 240 volts.

To better understand the total line miles in Somerset REC's territory, hop in the car and drive to Yellowstone

ANSWERING THE CALL: Sunrise or sunset, Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative employees will be there to answer your call and strive to provide quality member service.

National Park, all while passing 40,000 poles along the way. That's a lot of exposure for something to happen and cause an outage. And just like your home, our system has breakers, which help us reduce the lines' exposure and allow us to split our system into sections. Doing so helps limit the size of the outages and allows us to keep electricity on for as many members as possible. Breakers also help to protect equipment on the line. Ever wonder why your lights blink a few times before going off? That's the breaker. They operate a few times, trying to give the fault a chance to clear the line before they open for good.

Now that the lights have blinked, your breaker has opened and the power is off, what happens next? The outage begins.

6:35 p.m. — a Somerset REC employee receives the outage call

When an outage is reported, the on-call dispatcher, which is a co-op employee, relays the location and other important information to the crew.

7 p.m. — the outage has been dispatched and crews are on their way

The crew leaves as quickly as it can. As noted above, the Somerset REC system covers a wide area, so travel time does factor into response time, and often, a lineworker may be on another call when your lights go out. Members should know, however, that someone is trying to respond to their outage as quickly as possible.

7:45 p.m. — arrival and line inspection

Often, lineworkers see members outside when their power is off, sitting on their porch or working in the yard. This may prompt the members to wonder, "Are they just driving around?"

Yes, in a way, they are. The first time you see our lineworkers, they are most likely driving to the breaker to verify that it's open. The second time you see lineworkers drive by, they are visually checking the line for what may have caused the outage. Checking the line can take some time. It's one of the more time-consuming steps but also one of the most important parts of restoring an outage.

Lineworkers can't simply flip the switch and restore the power. That could be dangerous for many reasons. A line could be down in someone's yard, or the outage may have been caused by equipment failure. Re-energizing the line under those two circumstances would be hazardous to the public and could cause more damage or extend the outage longer. So, it's very important to visually check the line before trying the breaker.

Terrain can also add time to the line inspection. Somerset REC tries to put poles along roads but that can't always be accomplished. Electric co-op lines go where they are needed, and that might be in extremely remote places. While poles and lines along the road can be inspected and repaired faster, terrain and direction of the lines sometimes require them to be installed off-road. If it's not along the road, the line must be checked on foot. If it's dark, that can make this job even more difficult and time-consuming.

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Donations Accepted for Co-op Cheer!

If you have donated to the Co-op Cheer Program, we thank you for your generosity. This year marks seven years of members donating items that have been given to nursing homes, personal care homes, the Children's Aid Home, Tableland and the Salvation Army.

This year's Co-op Cheer Program will focus on collecting items to support our fellow cooperative members in the southern states that were affected by recent hurricanes.

Please see the list of requested and suggested items below, which should be in *original packaging or new condition:*

- Warm clothing
- Socks (unopened)
- Blankets
- Hats, gloves, scarves
- Undergarments
- Toiletries
- Tissues
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Cleaning supplies
- Children's toys (for Christmas gifts)
- Diapers
- Baby wipes
- Bug spray
- Sunscreen
- Non-perishable food
- Pet food (dog & cat)
- Feminine hygiene products
- Heavy-duty work gloves
- Trash bags
- Plastic utensils
- Paper products
- Cases of water

Donations accepted through December 18. All donations can be dropped off at the cooperative office.

As a thank-you for participating, members who donate items will be entered to win one of ten $25 bill credits available.

Thanks for participating in spreading the cheer! Donated items will be delivered to disaster relief areas affected by Hurricanes Helene and Milton.

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8:30 p.m. — outage cause located, but first, safety

Once the cause of the outage has been found, lineworkers take some precautions before they start the work. These safety procedures add time, but they are vital. During the safety briefing, the job plan is discussed and explained, hazards are identified, and everyone is made aware of the grounds, their location, and the location of the breaker.

9 p.m. — all safety procedures are in place; work can begin

Let's say for this outage a 50-foot-tall oak tree fell on the line, which is off the road. The tree broke a crossarm, but the pole is still good. The wire isn't broken either but is under the oak tree. Lineworkers grab the chainsaw — it's time to free the wire. Anyone who has cut up a downed tree will understand the danger. Special care and awareness must be used to remove the tree. While crews work to clear the tree from the line, a crossarm, crossarm braces, insulators, bolts and ties to tie in the wire are on the way.

10:30 p.m. — the tree has been cleared, the material has arrived

Because the pole is off the road, crews can't get to it with a bucket truck. Somerset REC crews will have to climb the pole. A lineworker will put on his belt and hooks and climb to the top. The process of removing the broken material and installing the new crossarm requires precision and expertise by both the lineworker on the pole and the workers on the ground.

11:45 p.m. — repairs complete

If you still happen to be on your porch, you will see a bucket truck drive by a third time. This is good news because your power is about to be restored. Crews are heading for the breaker, where they will close the device, and your power will be restored.

12:05 a.m. — power restored, outage over

Keep in mind, this is just one scenario; not every outage is the same and the restoration times vary. This example outage took around five and a half hours to restore. If the tree had broken a pole, it would have taken even longer.

1 a.m. — lineworkers return home, safe and sound

We work for you, our members, neighbors and friends. All of us have become so dependent on electricity that every outage, whether short or extended, can be stressful. The longer outages last, the more frustrating and irritating it can become. I hope this provides a better understanding of the restoration process so you have an idea of what's happening while you wait. Just know that your co-op line crews are doing their best to get the lights back on as quickly and safely as possible.