

# Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives  
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## SOMERSET REC

223 Industrial Park Road  
Somerset, PA 15501  
814-445-4106  
800-443-4255  
Email: e-mail@somersetrec.com  
Website: www.somersetrec.com

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### Vice President

Jerry L. Engle, District 4

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Director of Marketing and Member Services

Phil Stern

Manager of Metering 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

## A Major Turning Point



AS A FAN OF WINTER, I have been let down by our lack of snow. However, another mild winter has given us a head start on our operational plans for 2023.

This year marks a major turning point in the prioritization of our work to continually upgrade and maintain our distribution system. Over the last several decades, linemen spent considerable time each year converting our system to 14,400 volts from 7,200 volts. This extensive work unfolded as hundreds of individual mini-projects.

Each of these projects began with a review of the existing equipment to determine what could be re-used and what needed to be replaced. Many of the early projects did not require poles and wires to be replaced since they still had useful life. Instead, insulators and transformers were replaced to accommodate the higher voltage standards. About 20 years ago, most projects expanded to include the replacement of many poles and all the old wire, as well.

This brings us to our current situation. The vast majority of our system has been converted to the higher voltage, but older wire remains in the portions of our system that were first upgraded. Even though this wire still performs as expected in normal conditions, it has lost strength over time, making it less reliable when loaded with ice or encountering high winds. Additionally, wire becomes less conductive over time. This is like trying to pump the same amount of water through a clogged pipe. Eventually, a pipe (or wire) will break if the same amount of water (or electric current) gets pushed through it.

Fortunately, with the higher voltage standard, we only need to push half as much current through our wires. This has given us additional time to replace the older wire while still maintaining reliable service. However, with hundreds of miles of wire to be replaced, we know we need to make this task a high priority.

For our members, this will mean you will likely see upgrades to portions of our system that have remained unchanged for many years. Please know that if you see our construction crews in your area, the goal of their work remains focused on long-term reliability for our members. Scheduled outages that often accompany this work will be shorter than outages that would be more likely — and more impactful — if we do not make these upgrades.

I remain hopeful this next phase of work will be as beneficial as the voltage upgrades we committed to decades ago. If so, when the wind, ice, and snow do finally arrive, our system will be ready to handle the conditions. As always, if you have any questions about the cooperative's work, please stop by the office or give me a call. ☎️

**RUSTON OGBURN**  
GENERAL MANAGER

# Your Phone Number is Important to Us

**JONATHAN HILLEGAS**, OFFICER MANAGER

**TO BETTER COMMUNICATE WITH OUR** membership, we are asking for your help.

When calling the cooperative during normal business hours, please be prepared to verify your current phone number. Sometimes, people change their cellphone number or eliminate their landline. When this happens, it's very important that you notify the cooperative. Accurate contact information allows us to better communicate with you, our members, during and after business hours.

For example, when a member calls to report an outage, our outage system recognizes the phone number the consumer is calling from. If the phone number you are calling from is the phone number on file, your account will be located, and the outage will be reported.

However, if the phone number you are calling from differs from what is on file, you will be prompted to provide additional information, such as your account number or meter number, to help the system locate your account. If you cannot provide the information, you will have the option to leave a message. Keep in mind that not knowing this information will slow down the outage reporting process tremendously. Also, as a courtesy when power is restored, the cooperative will call the phone number on file to verify the power is back on — yet another reason to keep your contact information updated.

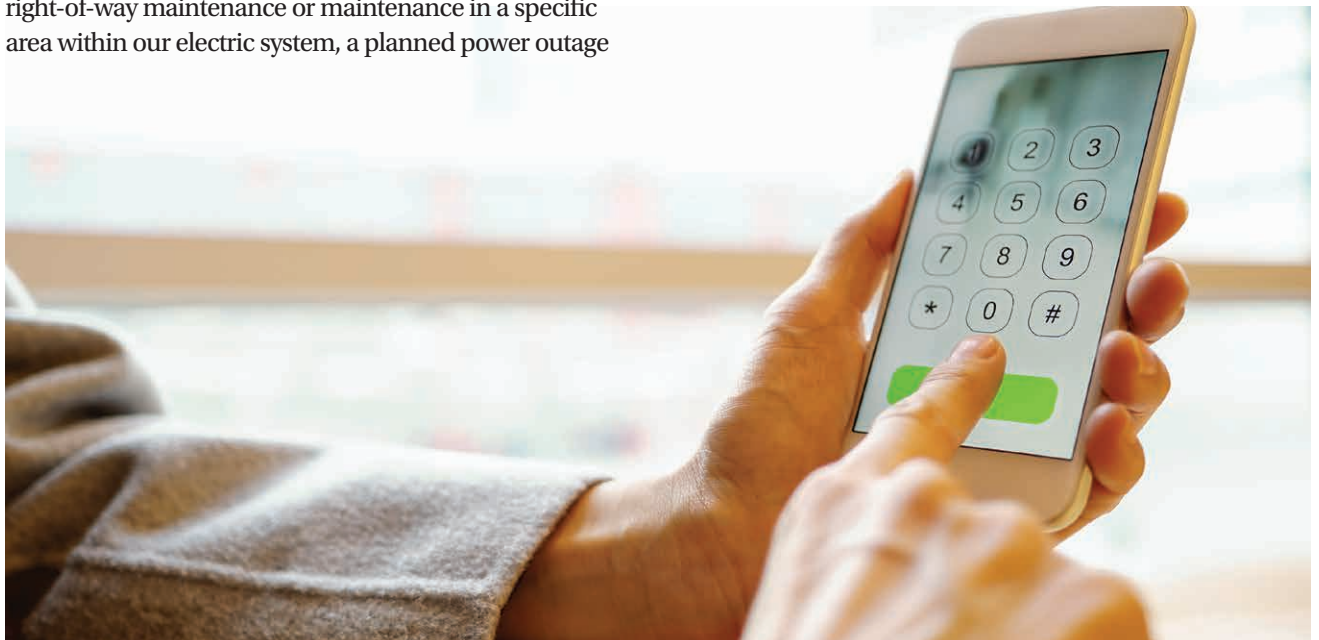
We also use phone calls to communicate with members during business hours. For example, when we plan routine right-of-way maintenance or maintenance in a specific area within our electric system, a planned power outage

may be required. We often provide a courtesy phone call to members living in the affected area to let them know the day and duration of the planned power outage.

We also may need to contact you if your account is past due and subject to disconnection, the credit or debit card on file is close to expiration, your check is missing a signature or has been made out to the incorrect business, or important forms have not been returned — all of which could result in a disruption of your electric service.

There are several ways you can update your contact information. You can call our office at 814-445-4106 and inform our billing department you have a new phone number or mailing address. Another way is to indicate a change of address or phone number in the designated box at the bottom of your billing stub and return it with your monthly payment. Lastly, you can email your changes to [service@somersetrec.com](mailto:service@somersetrec.com), submit the request through your e-bill account or update your account information in the SmartHub app.

Thank you for taking the time to read this article. I hope these examples give a better understanding of why it's important to let the cooperative know about phone-number changes. The next time you call the co-op, please take a moment to verify your contact information and, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. 📞



# Play it Safe: 10 Do's and Don'ts When Using Portable Generators

**STORM SEASON IS UPON US**, which means greater potential for power outages. If you're planning to use a portable generator in the event of an outage, Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative reminds you to play it safe.

With proper use and maintenance, portable generators can provide great convenience during an outage. However, when generators are used incorrectly, they can be extremely hazardous. In a 2022 report, the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimated 85 U.S. consumers die every year from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning caused by gasoline-powered portable generators.

Here are 10 do's and don'ts to keep in mind when using portable generators:

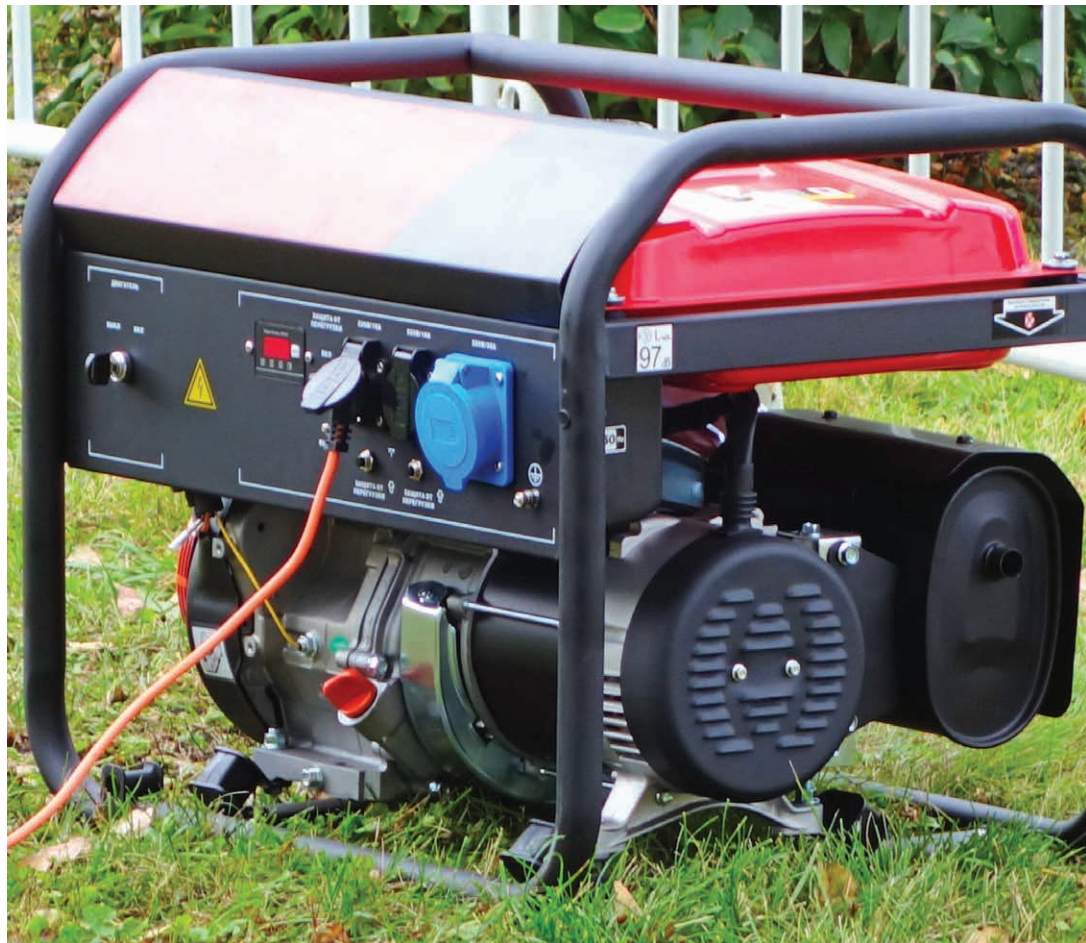
1. **DO:** Install backup CO alarms.
2. **DO:** Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times.
3. **DO:** Position generators at least 25 feet outside the home, away from doors, windows and vents that can allow CO to enter the home.
4. **DO:** Ensure your generator is properly grounded. Use a portable ground-fault circuit interrupter to prevent electric shock.
5. **DO:** Use three-pronged extension cords that are rated to handle the load of the generator. Inspect extension cords for cuts, frays and other damage before use.
6. **DON'T:** Operate a generator inside your home or an enclosed (or partially-enclosed) space. Generators produce high CO levels, which can be deadly.
7. **DON'T:** Open windows or doors while the generator is running.
8. **DON'T:** Rely on generators as a full-time source of power. They should only be used temporarily or in emergency situations to power essential equipment or appliances.
9. **DON'T:** Overload generators.

They should only be used to power essential equipment. Make sure your generator can handle the load of the items you plan to power.

10. **DON'T:** Connect generators directly to household wiring unless you have an appropriate transfer switch installed. If a generator is connected to a home's wiring without a transfer switch, power can backfeed along power lines and electrocute utility lineworkers making repairs.

While generators provide convenience during power outages, they can quickly become hazardous — even deadly — if improperly operated. Before you operate a portable generator, be sure to thoroughly read the owner's manual for important safety information and tips.

If you have questions about proper use of portable generators, the cooperative staff is here to help. Give us a call at 814-445-4106.





**SAVE THE DATE!**

**SOMERSET REC ANNUAL MEETING**

**THURSDAY, MAY 25, 2023**

**SOMERSET AREA HIGH SCHOOL  
AUDITORIUM**

- BUSINESS MEETING**
- ELECTION OF DIRECTORS**
- DOOR PRIZES**

**MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW. PLEASE REFER TO  
THE ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE AND MAY ISSUE  
OF PENN LINES FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Washing windows and screens is a great way to practice energy efficiency during spring cleaning. Clean windows and screens make your home brighter by allowing more sunlight in, reducing the need for lamps and fixtures. Clean screens also allow more fresh air in the home when the windows are open to recycle indoor air. Natural light and clean air are energy savers, and they enhance overall health and productivity.

Source: [energy.gov](https://www.energy.gov)



## \$1,000 scholarship reminder!

Applicants must be a graduating high school senior whose parents or legal guardians are Somerset REC members and enrolled or planning to enroll full time in an accredited post-secondary institution for the 2023-2024 academic year.

Scholarship applications are available on the co-op's website at [somersetrec.com](https://somersetrec.com) and are due April 10, 2023. If you have any questions, please contact Emily Baer at [ebaer@somersetrec.com](mailto:ebaer@somersetrec.com).

