

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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Office Hours

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

Emergency Outage Number

814-445-4106
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From the General Manager



Focusing on the 'essentials'

By Ruston Ogburn

AS I AM writing this, the first major snowfall of the winter has created the usual pre-storm frenzy at grocery stores and gas stations. Every time I see this, I am reminded of the importance of preparing for the unknown and focusing on the essential items in our lives and here at the cooperative.

The concept of “essential services” has created many debates since last March. Regardless of how narrow the essential definition seems to go, electric service always makes the list. As your cooperative enters 2021, our focus will be on the essential aspects of ensuring your electric service remains reliable.

We implemented technology to allow our office employees to work remotely to handle calls, keep our regular accounting tasks on schedule, and to use all the tools we have available in the office. This process has worked remarkably well. The office staff did a remarkable job identifying areas for improving our existing processes and staying connected with our members.

We created smaller crews for our outside operations with minimal interaction between crews. This helps to ensure that even if COVID-19 or a quarantine impact a crew, the remaining crews will be available. This also allows the linemen and right-of-way crew to continue performing the important service calls, maintenance work, and system upgrades that help to keep our

distribution network functioning.

As pleased as I am that we now have the technology to make these adjustments and a workforce that finds ways to get the job done in new situations, I must admit that it comes at a cost. We simply cannot work as efficiently when groups are siloed or quarantined. And a teleconference does not perfectly replace a face-to-face discussion.

However, we cannot control the conditions that 2020 have — and presumably 2021 will — put us in. We can only control how we respond to them. Given the nature of our business, and the importance of maintaining reliable service to you, we must respond with a focus on a healthy workforce with the ability to maintain our high priority work and react quickly if outages or emergencies arise.

As you enter the new year in an unpredictable time, I hope you can find some comfort knowing that the cooperative will remain as steady as always on our goal of keeping your power flowing. And, while I take a broad definition of what “essential services” mean to our businesses, I take a narrow approach to what is most meaningful in our lives. I hope the essential parts of your life can remain active through 2021.

As always, if you have thoughts or questions about the cooperative's work, feel free to call or email me directly.

Happy New Year. 

Kimmel retiring; safety remains cornerstone of cooperative

By Emily Baer

WHEN IT COMES to providing and maintaining electric service to members within Somerset REC's service territory, safety will always be our No. 1 concern. For the past 11 years, Safety Coordinator Keith Kimmel has been the eyes and ears of safety around the cooperative. He is set to retire Jan. 6, 2021.

When it comes to safety, there are no shortcuts. It is very important for someone to oversee the equipment and materials needed to provide a safe work environment. Keith did just that. Always concerned that things were done the right way, some of Keith's duties have included making sure fire-retardant clothing and safety equipment are available for employees, regulatory requirements are met, and Pennsylvania Rural Electric As-



TAKING A BREAK: Keith Kimmel takes a minute to pose for the camera after stocking the warehouse shelves in his early years of being employed at the cooperative.



RETIREMENT: In retirement, Keith Kimmel looks forward to spending time with family. Pictured, from left, are: Cato, a Plott hound, daughters Jackie and Allison, wife Donna, Keith and Gruff, a Brittany spaniel.

sociation (PREA) training events are scheduled.

Keith graduated from Shanksville Area School District and continued his education at Penn State University where he received an associate degree. He then received his bachelor's degree from Slippery Rock University.

Keith came to the co-op with experience in the field of utility equipment. He was previously employed with Vanyo Supply, a company specializing in utility distribution equipment, for 26 years. At Vanyo Supply, Keith was the warehouse manager in Berlin, and later worked in the sales department dealing with cooperatives, municipal authorities, and private power companies throughout the country.

In January 2004, Keith started at the co-op as the warehouse clerk, handling and purchasing supplies and

materials. He held that position for five years before trying a career change as an over-the-road salesman for HD Supply. He quickly realized he missed the atmosphere of Somerset REC and applied for a different position within the cooperative. When he returned, Keith was assigned as safety coordinator to oversee required training programs for employees, working with PREA folks, and reporting mandated records to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). He also assisted outside operations with the right-of-way (ROW) program by communicating to members and landowners the importance of vegetation management near electric lines.

Keith's top priority has always been making sure everyone was in a safe work environment. At the co-op, safety meetings with employees from var-



PULL: Keith Kimmel enjoys an afternoon of shooting sporting clays with lineworkers on Linemen Appreciation Day.

ious departments are held monthly to address safety concerns. All employees at the co-op are first aid- and CPR-certified, have their hearing tested once a year, attend fire extinguisher training every other year, and participate in numerous required PREA trainings.

“Whether at Somerset REC or Van-yo, I’ve always been proud to say that I worked for/with the cooperatives,” Kimmel states. “They are good people who still know how to help each other in times of need.”


Keith and his wife, Donna, reside on Whitehorse Mountain. They have two daughters, Allison and Jackie. Keith enjoys hunting and fishing. His retirement plans include spending time with family and working on his land on the mountain.

“I will miss the employees and time spent talking to the membership,” he says. “There never has been nor will there be a dull moment when one works at a cooperative.”

We wish you the best in retirement, Keith! Thank you for your years of service in helping make our cooperative and community a safer place.

Due to the current pandemic and

to keep cooperative employees safe, the co-op is currently operating on a work-from-home rotation to minimize the exposure of COVID-19 within the office. The front lobby is also closed to the public, but the cooperative is

still able to assist you. For assistance, please call 814-445-4106. You can also download the app called SmartHub on your smartphone or mobile device to report an outage, pay your bill, check electric use and more. 

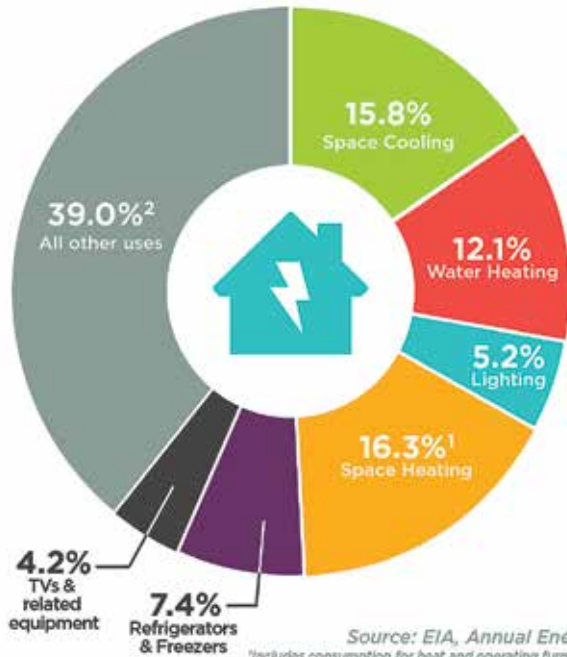
U.S. Rep. John Joyce visits the co-op



Somerset REC General Manager Rus Ogburn, left, meets with U.S. Rep. John Joyce (R-13th) at the co-op office on Oct. 28 during the congressman’s statewide energy tour. The two discussed energy and COVID-19 impacts on the workforce and operations, as well as rural broadband. Joyce said he is optimistic about getting rural broadband in place and is glad to see that Somerset REC is keeping options open for participating in this effort.

How Americans Use Electricity

The latest data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows the combined use of clothes washers and dryers, computers, dishwashers, small appliances and other electrical equipment (noted as “all other uses” below) accounts for nearly 40% of electricity consumption in American homes.



Source: EIA, Annual Energy Outlook 2020
¹Includes consumption for heat and operating furnace fans and boiler pumps.
²Includes miscellaneous appliances, clothes washers and dryers, computers and related equipment, stoves, dishwashers, heating elements, and motors.

DO NOT TAMPER WITH YOUR ELECTRIC METER

Meter tampering can result in electric shock, is illegal and increases electricity rates for other co-op members.



- ⊘ Never break a meter seal.
- ⊘ Never open a meter base.
- ⊘ Never remove a meter or alter an entrance cable in any manner.

If you know or suspect that someone has tampered with their meter, please contact us immediately.



DONATION: Linemen Tanner Smith, left, and Adam Barnes pack boxes of food donated by members of Somerset REC. The co-op collected 441 non-perishable food items and monetary donations. Each year, the donation site rotates. This year, the Boswell Food Pantry was the recipient of the donated goods. Thanks again to our wonderful members for donating!

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Replace standard power strips with advanced power strips to save energy. Advanced power strips look like ordinary power strips, but they have built-in features that are designed to reduce the amount of energy used by standby electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use (also known as phantom load).

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) estimates that the average home loses \$200 annually to energy wasted by phantom load.

Source: www.nrel.gov

