

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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7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Emergency Outage Number

814-445-4106
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From the General Manager



Could it happen here?

By Ruston Ogburn

THE FEBRUARY cold snap across much of the South was most impactful in Texas where rolling blackouts left over four million homes and businesses without electricity. This serves as a reminder that we should not take our electricity system for granted. A lot of people have asked me what caused the recent Texas blackout and if it could happen here.

As with every issue these days, the rolling blackouts quickly became politicized. Many highly vocal critics quickly pointed to their disfavored generation source as the primary cause. As the finger-pointing gives way to a more detailed look at the situation, we can now see that many factors contributed to the cause.

Before I go further, it may be helpful to note a few things about electricity. North America has three main electric grids, one in the East, one in the West, and Texas. Within each grid, electricity flows at the speed of light from generators to everyone using electricity. Because electricity is difficult to store, generation resources must be able to produce enough power when every person needs it. Typically, grid operators increase or decrease generation to align with electric demand. However, when the available generation cannot meet the demand, grid operators must make the decision to start rolling blackouts to align demand with generation. It's beyond the scope of this article to discuss what happens if the grid operators do nothing, but

most likely it will end with a larger blackout.

I think it's important to note what should not be considered a cause. While many record low temperatures were recorded during this time, none of the temperatures were so extreme that they could have been unforeseen. Therefore, cold weather was a cause, but it certainly should not have been a reason for such an event.

Most of the significant reasons for the issues in Texas have to do with providing the right incentives to plan better. As noted above, Texas has its own grid, which covers most of the state. The Texas grid can import some power from the Eastern grid, but during most of the February events, the neighboring grid did not have much electricity to export into Texas. So, a direct interconnection of Texas into the Eastern grid could have helped, but it would not have solved all the issues.

Therefore, Texas needs to plan to supply their own generation. It appears that nearly every type of generator (natural gas, wind, solar, coal, etc.) had issues during this time. Very few generators had a back-up fuel supply or the ability to operate in cold temperatures. Back-up fuel capabilities or protecting a huge generation facility from cold temperatures costs a lot of money. But these costs are far outweighed by the benefits of saved lives, continuous productivity of businesses,

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GenerLink provides an easier connection between your home and generator

By Emily Baer

IN THE EVENT of an outage, a generator goes a long way in giving homeowners a sense of stability. When you are left without electricity, you are left without important parts of your home that are hard to live without. Examples could include a refrigerator, hot water heater, well pump and even the lights. GenerLink, a new product that Somerset REC is offering to members, provides peace of mind that comes with knowing not only that these essentials are covered, but that there has never been a safer and easier way to set up your generator if an outage occurs.

Portable generators, when not handled properly, can be dangerous. Old, damaged, or undersized cords can overload and overheat your generator, which could result in starting a fire. And you are not the only one at risk: generators connected improperly to your home can “backfeed” and send a dangerous electrical current back through the utility lines, where they can injure or even kill unsuspecting lineworkers there to restore your community’s power. But with GenerLink, the risk of backfeed is a thing of the past — when your generator is running, GenerLink ensures it is disconnected from utility lines.

With GenerLink installed, dealing with an outage becomes a quick and



easy, five-minute process. The GenerLink unit is installed behind your electric meter by an employee of the cooperative. This allows you to plug your portable generator right into your circuit box with a specialized cord, which is provided with the purchase of a GenerLink, that attaches quickly and locks into place with GenerLok.

From here, you can simply flip a breaker in your circuit box to decide which appliances you need to have running 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. And when the outage is over, a status light lets you know power has been restored, signaling that it is OK for your generator to be disconnected and put away.

Thinking about getting a GenerLink installed? Here are the specs:

- ▶ GenerLink units available are 30-amp surge, 30-amp non-surge, 40-amp surge or 40-amp non-surge.

Units currently in stock include 30-amp surge and 30-amp non-surge. Any 40-amp GenerLink is considered a special order.

- ▶ All 30-amp or 40-amp GenerLink units include a 20-foot GenerLok cord. If a 40-foot cord or larger is requested, it would be considered a special order.
- ▶ GenerLink will not work with an electric service that is 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.
- ▶ GenerLink is designed for use with a portable generator that is connected temporarily to a home and provides a maximum continuous power output of less than 12,000 watts (40 amps).
- ▶ GenerLink is compatible with most generators. To find out what GenerLink your generator is compatible with, visit generlink.com. *Please

GenerLink™

In-stock units

30-amp non-surge	\$675 + tax
30-amp surge	\$750 + tax

Special Order

40-amp non-surge	\$800 + tax
40-amp surge	\$875 + tax

*Prices subject to change.
*Price includes installation of unit and GenerLok cord.
*Special order delivery approximately 10-12 weeks.

note generators that are equipped with ground-fault interrupted circuit (GFIC) protection will NOT work with GenerLink. Please check your generator information manual prior to purchasing a GenerLink to avoid this problem.

GenerLink units are also available for purchase at chain retail stores. If a GenerLink unit is not purchased at the cooperative, the member will need to contact an electrician, schedule a disconnect of service and have an electrical inspection before service is re-connected. This may cost the member upward of an added cost of \$150-\$200 to install the unit.

All units purchased from the cooperative are installed by a trained employee of Somerset Rural Electric. When you are ready to purchase a GenerLink unit or have additional inquiries about this product, please contact the cooperative office at 814-445-4106 and ask to speak with Phil Stern or Emily. ☀

From the General Manager

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and reduced damage to infrastructure resulting from lost power.

One of the best ways to incentivize generation owners to make these changes has already occurred in the PJM Interconnection, which controls the power grid in our area. Some of these incentives resulted from the 2014 “polar vortex” that took PJM electric demand uncomfortably close to PJM’s available generation capacity. Within a few years of increased incentives, many generators have back-up fuel sources and higher availability during times of peak demand.

Could something similar happen here? The short answer is yes. Our electric grid is remarkably reliable but when many factors align to drive demand higher and stress our generation resources, rolling blackouts will remain a tool for protecting as much of the grid as possible. However, with the right market incentives, we will pay a little more to have significantly increased reliability. ☀

Save the Date!



Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative 82nd Annual Meeting - Drive Thru

223 Industrial Park Rd, Somerset | May 27, 2021

More details to follow in May Penn Lines



LINEWORKERS BRING THE LIGHT.

Lineworker Appreciation Day

On April 12, remember to
#ThankALineworker.



IT'S ELECTRIC: Ruston Ogburn, general manager, and Emily Baer, director of marketing and member services, present Electric City to the 4th grade class at Berlin Brothersvalley on Wednesday, March 10. It was a beautiful day to present outside and bring safety awareness when close to energized electric lines.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Some manufacturers set water heater thermostats at 140 degrees, but most households usually only require them to be set at 120 degrees.

Consider lowering your water heater's temperature to save energy and slow mineral buildup in the heater and pipes.

Source: www.energy.gov



5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines and underground facilities. Always call 8-1-1 first. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:



1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before your work begins. The operator will notify the utilities affected by your project.

2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.

2-3

3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.



5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project location.



Source: call811.com