

# 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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*Director of Marketing and Member Services*

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*Executive Assistant*

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*Manager of Metering*

### Office Hours

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

### Emergency Outage Number

814-445-4106  
800-443-4255

## From the General Manager



## Getting a jump start on 2022

By Ruston Ogburn

THIS year's unusually warm December has allowed us to continue our construction and right-of-way maintenance without having to fight with snowy conditions. Hopefully, this will help to jump start our busy plans for 2022.

A large portion of our construction-related activity will focus on pole replacement work associated with other utilities attaching to our poles. Telecommunication companies use our poles to carry their wires, fiber-optic cables and other equipment. The high cost of installing and maintaining poles makes this arrangement the most efficient way to get these services to our members, so our poles have been used in this manner for many decades.

Over the last few years, a significant amount of funding has become available to expand broadband services. This has created an unusually large number of new requests to attach to our poles. We are currently working with over a dozen companies to upgrade or expand their facilities across various portions of our system. Our agreements with these companies allow them to attach to our poles if they meet safety and structural requirements associated with this work. It is important to note that our agreements with other utilities do not give them a right-of-way across any property, so they must coordinate that permission with landowners.

Replacing existing poles with taller poles to accommodate additional attachments requires much more complicated and time-intensive work than building a brand-new line. As you

can imagine, the taller poles need to be lifted past the existing electric lines that serve our members. Depending on the situation, this may require our lineworkers to install special temporary covers on the lines to avoid electrical contact or may require outages that disrupt service to our members. Our plans for each project balance the most efficient way to perform the work with minimizing the number and length of these disruptions.

I anticipate more attachment requests over the coming years as broadband continues to expand across our area. This is welcome news to many of our members who lack access to these important services, and we will continue to facilitate that expansion and work to minimize any electric service impacts to you.

One last item I wanted to mention as we start the new year comes from a discussion that started in 2015. At that time, we laid out a plan to improve the clearing and maintenance of our rights-of-way. In 2022, we will complete the first cycle of this plan and continue to move through the start of the second cycle. Our attention to this goal has decreased the number and duration of outages for our members. With reliability as one of our primary objectives, we are proud of these improvements and hope you continue to receive the benefits of this work for many years.

As always, if you have thoughts or questions about the cooperative's plans or service, feel free to stop by, call or email me directly. Happy New Year. ❁

# Is a space heater right for my home?

By Emily Baer

SMALL space heaters are meant to do exactly as their name says: Heat a small space. Unfortunately, many people use portable space heaters to heat their entire home or in a crawl space to keep pipes from freezing, which can take a toll on your energy bills. The truth is, whether you should use space heaters really depends on your home's efficiency and energy needs.

If you're using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home, like inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors or an inefficient heating system, space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home.

If you're on a tight budget, caulking

and weather stripping around windows and exterior doors is a low-cost, easy way to save energy. Also, insulating pipes with specifically designed pipe insulation can prevent water lines from freezing in the coldest months.

Also, depending on the size of your home, adding insulation can be a great next step. Loose fill insulation typically costs \$1 to \$1.50 per square foot. Taking these proactive energy-saving measures rather than relying on space heaters for supplemental warmth can reduce your heating and cooling bills for years to come.

Perhaps your home is energy efficient, but you're cold-natured and want a specific room to be cozier than

the rest. In this case, a space heater may work for your needs. A good comparison is ceiling fans. We use ceiling fans in the summer to cool people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a similar way during winter months. Only use a space heater in small spaces that you're occupying and, if possible, try to shut off other rooms to contain the warmth provided by the space heater. If you decide to use a space heater to heat a small area in your home, make sure the heater is properly sized for the space; most heaters include a general sizing table.

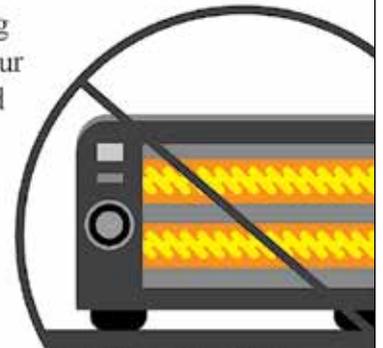
A word about safety: The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates more than 25,000 residential



## TIPS TO DITCH THE SPACE HEATER

Space heaters are energy hogs, and older models can be extremely dangerous. This winter, ditch the space heater and try these alternative solutions to stay cozy.

- Use an electric blanket to keep warm during the night.
- Caulk and weatherstrip around all windows and doors to prevent heat loss.
- Consider adding insulation to your attic and around duct work.



fires are associated with the use of space heaters every year, resulting in more than 300 deaths. If you must use a space heater, purchase a newer model that includes the most current safety features and make sure it carries the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label. Choose a heater that's controlled by a thermostat to avoid energy waste and overheating and place the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children and pets away from space heaters.

Consider alternative ways to stay warm, too, like extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you have hardwood or tile floors, lay down area rugs to provide additional insulation (and appeal!) and maintain warmth.

I know it's cold out there, but remember in addition to safety concerns, space heaters can greatly increase your energy bills if used improperly.

If you're looking for alternative ways to save energy and increase comfort in your home, contact the cooperative office. We're here to help you manage your energy use. Our HVAC department can make suggestions on more efficient — and affordable — heating options.

### Space heater safety tips:

1. Buy a unit with an automatic shut-off in case the unit tips over or you forget to shut it off. Always unplug it before you leave the house or go to bed.
2. Plug your space heater directly into the wall outlet and avoid extension cords. Extension cords can cause the heater to overheat and can be a tripping hazard.
3. Keep your space heater at a safe distance (at least 3 feet away) from kids, pets and flammable items.
4. Don't place your space heater near curtains, clothing, furniture or bedding.
5. Keep your space heater in low-moisture rooms. ❁

## Somerset REC honored for communications excellence

MEMBERS of the Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) communications staff were recognized during the 2021 Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) Communications Awards Ceremony, held Oct. 6. The program, sponsored by the statewide organization representing 13 electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and one in New Jersey, is designed to recognize the work of cooperative communicators.

Awards were presented by Craig Harting, CEO of Sullivan County REC and chairman of the PREA Awards Committee.

Somerset received an Award of Excellence for Best Photo and Best Use of Cooperative Principle.

The awards program was held in conjunction with the 2021 PREA Communications Forum. Both were online events. The half-day forum featured a presentation on techniques and tools for producing podcasts. Communicators also participated in a roundtable where they shared information and news from their respective cooperatives.

Nineteen representatives from the Pennsylvania and New Jersey cooperatives, including Emily Baer, Somerset REC's director of marketing and member services, attended the online forum. ❁



AWARD WINNERS: Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative staff pose with the awards they received during the 2021 Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association Communications Awards Ceremony. Shown above are co-op General Manager Rus Ogburn and Emily Baer, director of marketing and member services.

# Celebrating 25 years of dedicated service

BRIAN MARKER began his career at Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative on Sept. 30, 1996. For the past 25 years, Brian worked on the brush crew, spent three years going through the lineman apprenticeship program, and is now a chief lineman.

His current job duties at the cooperative as a construction crew chief include installing new overhead and underground line, rehabilitating old line, setting poles and performing maintenance.

Brian is a graduate of Berlin Brothersvalley High School and the son of Dave and Mary Ann Marker of Garrett. He and his wife, Jill, have one daughter and two sons.

Brian enjoys spending time with his family at the Youghioghney Lake on



CONGRATULATIONS: Co-op General Manager Rus Ogburn congratulates Brian Marker for his 25 years of dedicated service.

their boat, and camping. He and his father also have a hobby farm, where they enjoy raising beef. 🌿



**SAFETY FIRST:** Cooperative member Doug Basinger of A & I Fire Extinguisher Company, right, coaches co-op bookkeeper Kathy Armstrong on how to correctly extinguish a fire. Doug has provided fire safety education and fire extinguisher training to employees for more than 10 years. He reminded employees of an easy way to remember how to use a fire extinguisher with the acronym PASS, which stands for "pull, aim, squeeze and sweep." It is important to Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative to promote safety practices in the workplace, as well as when working with the general public.

## WHAT'S THE EASIEST WAY TO POCKET \$5? GO PAPERLESS!



Enroll in paperless billing now thru February 25, 2022 to receive your \$5 bill credit. As a thank you to current paperless members, you will also receive a \$5 bill credit for helping to keep costs low for the co-op. Credits will be applied to the February bill you will receive in March.

### TO ENROLL:



Download our Smarthub app on your mobile device.



Visit our website at [www.somersetrec.com](http://www.somersetrec.com) and click the green Sign-Up button on the home page.

For more information or assistance, please call 814-445-4106. Paperless billing gives you the same information as a paper bill, the only difference is how you receive it and the best part is - you'll get \$5!

## 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.