

Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

SULLIVAN COUNTY REC

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STAFF

John Lykens, CEO
Dennis Klem, Manager,
Finance and Administration
Walt Tubach, Manager,
Electric Operations
Diane E. White, Executive Assistant

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ann B. Henderson - CCD*/BLC**
Chairman
Stephan Paul Brady - CCD/BLC/Gold***
Vice Chairman
Kathy A. Robbins - CCD/BLC/Gold
Secretary

David L. Aumen - CCD/BLC/Gold
Karen Beinlich
Jeff Hamilton - CCD/BLC/Gold
Jim Lambert - CCD
Jay Lewis - CCD/BLC/Gold
David R. Rakestraw - CCD

***Credentialed Cooperative Director**
****Board Leadership Certificate**
*****Director Gold Certificate**

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

An honest discussion about inflation



WHEN PREPARING FOR THIS MONTH'S column, I read an article in *Consumer Affairs*, written on Sept. 19, that addressed the rising food prices we've all experienced over the last 12 months. Within the article, federal agriculture officials reported grocery prices increased 13.5% in the last 12 months — the largest increase since 1979. Eggs, margarine, flour, beef, pork and poultry prices have risen anywhere from 3% to 40% over this 12-month time frame. These rising costs, better known as inflation, are putting a hurt on

our personal buying power.

The power industry is also seeing inflation affect the cost of the materials and equipment required to keep power flowing through the electric distribution system and into your home. Meters, wood poles, distribution transformers and wire have increased by as much as 50% since the beginning of this year. These rising costs have — and will have — an impact on cooperative costs moving forward, which will affect the distribution portion of your power bill.

In addition, the cost to transport energy from the generation plants to the cooperative's five delivery points has increased dramatically this year. This cost is captured in the cooperative's generation and transmission charge. This is a two-part cost, and the generation piece will remain stable over the next few years as former CEO Craig Harting described in the January 2022 edition of *Penn Lines*.

So what does this all mean for you, our cooperative members? Unfortunately, it means Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) must raise rates to recuperate the increase in transmission costs as well as distribution costs. Consequently, this means an additional inflationary hit to all our members. The last time the cooperative raised the generation and transmission cost to the membership was January 2013. The increased generation and transmission rate will take effect Jan. 1, 2023. Distribution cost increases will be passed through by increasing the basic service, or fixed, charge.

At the point of this writing, the cooperative has not finalized the exact figures, but anticipates the average residential consumer will see their total bill increase by approximately 10%. The cooperative's board of directors, employees and I understand that American families here and across the country are struggling to keep up with the largest increase in goods and services in more than 40 years. The cooperative has a Helping Hands Fund to support members who are struggling to pay their electric bills. The state also has funds to assist members in paying their energy bills. Trehab Community Action Agency administers this service for the state. Please visit our website, screc.com, and click on "Helping Hands Fund" under the "Member Services" drop-down menu to learn more.

It is never pleasant to be the one to pass on the news of a rate increase to the cooperative's membership, but it's even more unpleasant to pass the news along after serving only four months as the cooperative's CEO. For that, I apologize.

Please know the cooperative never takes increasing rates lightly and explores all options to stave off higher rates. Rest assured, the cooperative will continue to work to keep costs responsible and deliver safe and dependable electric power to our members. *Semper Fidelis.* 🇺🇸

JOHN LYKENS
CEO

From the operations department

WALT TUBACH, MANAGER, ELECTRIC OPERATIONS

I AM WRITING THIS ARTICLE on a very wet and rainy Thursday morning in early October. I try to catch up on paperwork and form submissions on days like this. I am very lucky that most of my time I can be outside on the electrical system and in the office only a small portion of the day. I enjoy going out, meeting new members, staking line and working on improvements to the system.

I have dispatched numerous crews to different outages this morning. Falling trees and limbs hitting the line are more than likely the cause. Our contracted brushing/trimming crews work through all kinds of weather to keep the lines and rights of way clear from these types of outages, but it is a difficult task to keep up with. The last few summers, the brush growth along with dead and dying trees have really been a challenge. To this date, our cutting/spray crews have trimmed 5,475 trees, cut and removed 7,643 trees and broadcast sprayed 71 miles of line. This is astounding!

I anticipate helping our cutting crews get even more mechanized. We already contract with them to use their off-road skidder/bucket to cover more ground per day, as well as a bucket truck for road work. I'm also hoping to add a skid steer with a chipper/shredder/mulcher on the front so we can mow brush, push over small trees and grind up limbs in the rights of way. This tool will not only make the rights of way look better, but will also speed up production. My goal is to be able to clear at least 160 miles of line each year (out of the 940 miles we have) so our cycle of clearing will be down to six years instead of seven and a half to eight years. This will really benefit your outage time from tree-related incidents by allowing us to get around the system in shorter time frames. I am hopeful to do this soon.

The outage time per member continues to grow this year; we are up to an average of 18 hours of outage time per member. Trees have caused 92 outages so far, along with 87 weather-related incidents. It seems as if we never get a gentle rain or snowfall, and the winds that come are always high. Weather seems to come in extremes — from not getting any rain to getting a whole summer's worth in just a few days.

Power supply outages to our substations have caused 4.5 hours of the total 18 hours of outages. The power supply outage time would be considerably greater if the cooperative had not been proactive in building backfeeds to each of the five substations we own. On average, it takes two



hours for crews to get to work and backfeed the substation that is out. However, this takes much less time than being at the mercy of the power company we buy power from and waiting for them to bring their operations back on. Hopefully, over the next few years we can establish a supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system that we can manage from our office. This will allow us to be able to remotely talk to our in-line switches and close the power from a different direction in just a matter of minutes. This will also lessen outage times to just a few minutes.

Every year, the cooperative also contracts a pole-testing company to inspect approximately 2,200 poles. The co-op has 22,000 poles on the system in the three counties we serve, which means we look at every pole for soundness every 10 years. In 2021, we had 140 poles that were found to be deficient and needed to be replaced. This project takes months of planning to not only schedule outages for some of the changeouts but also to perform the work safely. We have completed these 2021 changeouts and are waiting for the contractors to finish the 2022 pole testing so, in the next month, we can start removing another group of rejected poles to maintain a safe electrical system.

Outages caused by customers, motor-vehicle accidents, fires and trees that fell onto lines when people cut them came to a total of eight.

Unknown causes of outages came to a total of 38. These are outages where lineworkers are unable to find the cause.

Our equipment failure caused 28 different outages, and power lines breaking caused an additional six outages.

The employees at Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative work very hard to deliver reliable electric and serve you. Remember: We are only a phone call away, if you need us.

I hope you have enjoyed reading my article about your electric system, the outages we incur and the problems we face. Please stay safe! 🙏

Online resources available for members

COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET HAVE changed the way we work, have fun and gather information. Need to order your wife some flowers? Just go online, and before you know it, a bouquet will be heading her way. Need a pizza? Go online and order one just the way you like it. Need to know what movies are playing, what the lottery numbers are or what the weather is going to be like? The internet can answer all of your questions.

That's why Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) has a website that provides a wide range of information, including the following:

- ▶ **A link to manage your co-op account online** — You can set up an account to pay your bill online or check your electric usage. You can even submit your monthly meter reading.
- ▶ **Capital credits information** — There is a list of capital credits checks owed to members who we are trying to find.
- ▶ **Learn about GenerLink** — GenerLink eliminates the use of extension cords and other connections for generators that can be hazardous. GenerLink detects when a generator is operating and automatically disconnects it from the utility grid, eliminating dangerous backfeed.

- ▶ **A list of approved electrical inspectors.**
- ▶ **Penn Lines** — Lost your issue of *Penn Lines*? Don't worry, our website has back issues of *Penn Lines* available for your viewing.

This and much more is available on our co-op website. Simply go to screc.com.

Facebook

In addition to our website, we're also on Facebook. If you're on Facebook, simply look for Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative. "Like" us, and you'll receive posts about outages, energy-saving tips, reminders of our annual meeting and much more.

Please keep in mind Facebook and emails are not monitored regularly. If you experience a power outage, you should not email or post the outage on Facebook. The best way to ensure your outage is handled in a timely fashion is to call our outage numbers: 570-924-3418 or 800-596-8397.

Technology is a wonderful and useful thing. It can provide us with a world of knowledge at our fingertips. So, check out our website and Facebook page to learn more about your co-op and see what we have to offer our members. 📺

Residential Generators

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU BUY

INSTALLATION TYPE	PRICE	OPERATION ¹	CAPACITY	LENGTH OF OPERATION ³
<i>permanent</i>	<i>expensive</i>	<i>automatic</i>	<i>whole house</i>	<i>can be indefinite</i>
<i>portable</i>	<i>more affordable</i>	<i>manual</i>	<i>typically partial ²</i>	<i>depends on fuel tank size</i>



¹ Permanent generators start upon loss of grid power. They also exercise themselves automatically.

² Frequently powered: refrigerator, pumps (well, sump, septic), furnace, some lights, stove.

³ Permanent generators use propane or natural gas, portable use gasoline. Permanent models offer significantly longer operating times.

Image of portable generator provided by SafeElectricity.org

Notice of 2023 director elections

Candidates sought for Districts 1, 5 and 7

Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) will hold director elections for Districts 1, 5 and 7 in 2023.

To be eligible for director candidacy and to serve on the board, you must be a legitimate, permanent resident of the district you seek to represent. Additional qualifications may be found on our website, screc.com, by clicking on "About Us" and "Bylaws." All directors attend in-person meetings once a month.

Residential members from Districts 1, 5 or 7 interested in running for a position on the cooperative's board of directors must be nominated by a petition, signed by at least 10 members residing in the candidate's respective district. Petition nomination forms and further instructions are available by contacting Diane White at 570-924-3381 or dianewhite@screc.com. Petition nomination forms can be requested starting Nov. 17, 2022.

Petitions must be received by 3:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 16, 2023, to be considered. The petitions will be reviewed by the cooperative's Credentials and Election Committee, and directors will be elected via mail-in ballots. Qualified candidates will also be asked to submit a brief biography, which will be included with the official ballot and published in *Penn Lines* and on our webpage.

Director districts up for election in 2023:

District 1 (three-year term): Fox Township (Sullivan County), McNett Township (Lycoming County) and Canton Township (Bradford County)

District 5 (three-year term): Shrewsbury and Davidson townships (Lycoming County) and Penn, Franklin and Jordan townships (Lycoming County)

District 7 (three-year term): Upper Fairfield Township (Lycoming County)



HEAT YOUR SPACE SAFELY!

Plug space heaters directly into an outlet. Do not use an extension cord or power strip, which can overheat.

SafeElectricity.org

THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS GIFT

Do you have difficulty finding a Christmas gift for a friend or relative? If you do, why not get them a Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) gift certificate?

Gift certificates are available in any amount. Just give us a call or stop by the office, and we will credit the receiver's account. A gift certificate will be printed that shows how much was credited to the account and who purchased the gift certificate. You can give it to them or we can mail it for you – it's as simple as that. We can even keep your name anonymous, if you don't want them to know.

So, if you know someone who is having a hard time making ends meet or aren't sure what to give them for the holidays, why not consider giving them a gift certificate from Sullivan County REC?



**Office closed
Nov. 24, 25 and 28**

Happy Thanksgiving & Happy Hunting!