

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

Craig A. Harting, CEO
Dennis Klem, Manager,
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David L. Aumen – CCD*/BLC**/Gold***
Chairman
Ann B. Henderson – CCD/BLC
Vice Chairman
Kathy A. Robbins – CCD/BLC
Secretary
Stephan Paul Brady – CCD/BLC/Gold
Benton J. Fiester
Wayne E. Gavitt – CCD
Jeff Hamilton – CCD
Jay Lewis – CCD

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

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

From the CEO



Set my truck on fire

By Craig A. Harting

IN 1994, singer Joe Diffie had a No. 1 hit with “Pickup Man,” and the chorus started with “You can set my truck on fire, roll it down a hill, but I still wouldn’t trade it for a Coupe DeVille.” To me, these are some of the greatest lyrics ever written.

I like trucks. The only two “cars” my wife and I drive are four-door, full-size pickups. Now I have nothing against cars (my first car was a 1966 GTO) but I do like trucks.

You may be surprised I would consider an electric vehicle (EV). What would make me consider one? Well, you need to drive one before you judge one. Last fall, I had the privilege to drive a Tesla Model 3 and it was memorable.

Lots of technology

Wow ... lots of technology. For a guy who can shift gears, use a hand choke, a starter button and a high beam switch on the floor, EVs are literally in a whole other world.

There are very few buttons or switches or knobs. Heck, there isn’t a dash or a door handle. How do you drive without a dash? Well, there’s a lot going on behind the scenes and the rest is on a tablet screen. I can hear the groans starting already.

It’s really not as bad as it seems, but it is an adjustment. There’s more than enough technology, but you really only need to use a little to actually drive the vehicle. And it is quite the drive.

Drive one

I would advise you to drive one, but do so with an open mind. They really are a lot of fun after one adjustment. When you let off the “gas,” the regeneration braking system (going down a hill recharges the batteries) slows the vehicle down and basically, you don’t need the brake pedal very often.

It sounds weird, but you quickly get used to feathering the “gas” pedal between accelerating and slowing down. With heavy batteries mounted low and the amazing torque of the electric motor, I guarantee you won’t forget the ride.

You don’t need to drive it like a GTO but there are practical applications. They are practical for most trips and the driving cost would be around \$1 per gallon. In just nine years, it is expected that 20% or more of the new vehicles will be EVs. I can see the time when you will pay more for an internal combustion engine.

EV rate

The co-op has an EV-charging rate and we have a Time-Of-Use rate. We continue to research charger technology and learn more about EVs. Give us a call if you want to visit more about these options or have questions.

EVs are coming and I accept that, but it’s really hard to imagine someone writing a song years from now about setting their cyber truck on fire ... 

New year off to a bad start

By John Zelewicz
Penn Lines Writer

AS 2020 drew to an end, people looked forward to a new year filled with hope, health and happiness. Some waited up until midnight and welcomed in the new year with a glass of champagne. Some followed a well-known Pennsylvania tradition by eating pork and sauerkraut on Jan. 1 to ensure good luck throughout the coming year.

Unfortunately, pork and sauerkraut didn't seem to help much. It wasn't long before the new year showed it wasn't going to offer a brighter tomorrow ... at least not right away.

As Jan. 3 approached, it became apparent that a large part of Pennsylvania (including Lycoming, Bradford and Sullivan counties) could see 1 to 3 inches of heavy, wet snow. The amount of snow predicted to fall continued to grow until it was announced some areas could see up to 6 inches.

Early in the afternoon of Jan. 3, the snow began to fall. Soon, sidewalks, driveways, roads and trees were covered with snow. As the day progressed, tree limbs began to bend beneath the weight of the snow. In the end, some areas re-



TEMPERATURE MATTERS: It's amazing how the difference of a few degrees can affect outages. With temperatures hovering around 32 degrees, a heavy wet snow fell causing area-wide outages Jan. 3. Outages can also occur after a storm if power lines "bounce" when the snow falls off, causing them to hit other lines.



HIDDEN PROBLEMS: Not all causes for an outage can be readily seen. A broken insulator resulting in an outage can take a great deal of time to locate, especially at night.

ceived 8 to 10 inches of snow before the storm tapered off around 11:30 p.m.

At first, power outages were random. But as the day went on and the snow accumulated, power outages began to trickle in until it became apparent that this wouldn't be your average storm. It may be hard to believe, but a few degrees difference in temperature can make all the difference between widespread outages or no outages at all. Just a few weeks before, our area received up to 24 inches of snow. Due to it being cold (around 22 degrees), the snow that fell was light, and the co-op didn't have one power outage.

But the temperature on Jan. 3 hung around 32 degrees, resulting in the heavy, wet snow that caused wide-

spread outages, not just for Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) but also for other utilities.

"The temperature has a great deal to do with snow and ice," notes Walt Tubach, manager of electric operations. "The 8- to 10-inch snow came when we had a temperature of around 32 degrees, which made it a very heavy, wet snow. It was enough to break trees and snap wires."

Normally during the weekend or on holidays when the co-op's dispatcher (John Zelewicz) is not on duty, an answering service handles outage calls. With major outages, they may switch outage calls back to the co-op. And so it was on Sunday around 8:40 p.m. that Tubach took over dispatching at

the co-op office. Later that evening, Zelewicz came in and worked with Tubach on dispatching crews and handling outage calls using the Outage Management System (OMS).

All available co-op lineworkers were called in to work. It wasn't long before it was determined that more crews would be needed to assist in making repairs and restoring power to members.

Additional crews called in

Calls went out and before long, two crews from Spako's Tree Service were on hand offering assistance. A call also went out to the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) Emergency Center and a two-man crew was dispatched from Central Electric Cooperative to assist us. Additionally, another two-man crew from Citizens' Electric was dispatched to assist.

"After several hours of seeing our outage numbers rise, with the snow still falling and not having all my crews available due to quarantining, I decided to get extra help from the right-of-way crews and PREA," Tubach explains.

"I knew our crews would be working throughout the night and the next



HARD AT WORK: Co-op line crews are made up of dedicated employees who work long hours, often in poor weather conditions, to restore power to members when outages occur.

day," Tubach notes. "I was concerned that if we didn't have extra help, we wouldn't have as much restored."

Of course, getting additional crews is not always an easy matter. Many times when Sullivan County REC is getting hammered by a storm, other nearby co-ops are also hard hit and can't spare lineworkers to assist.

"Sometimes it's hard to get outside help because the storms come from west to east as a rule and the other co-ops usually are affected and can't send help," Tubach says. "But, in this situation, we were lucky because only the Northern Tier co-ops were hit."

Lineworkers traveling throughout the storm found road conditions hazardous. Local fire companies reported numerous vehicle accidents due to the weather. Adding to the difficulty of travel was the fact that many roads were unplowed or untreated. Another difficulty lineworkers faced was visibility due to the snowfall.

"Heavy snow falling caused the linemen to walk more areas of the line because their visibility was restricted," Tubach says. "This means that it takes more time to find a problem and fix it. Darkness also hinders your ability to see. Even though we have some of the best hand lights on the market, it's still hard to see."

Some of the problems lineworkers encountered during the storm were due to trees from outside the right-of-way (ROW) falling on lines. There were also equipment failures, such as hotline clamps, wire saddles and stranded wires that burned wires and created outages.

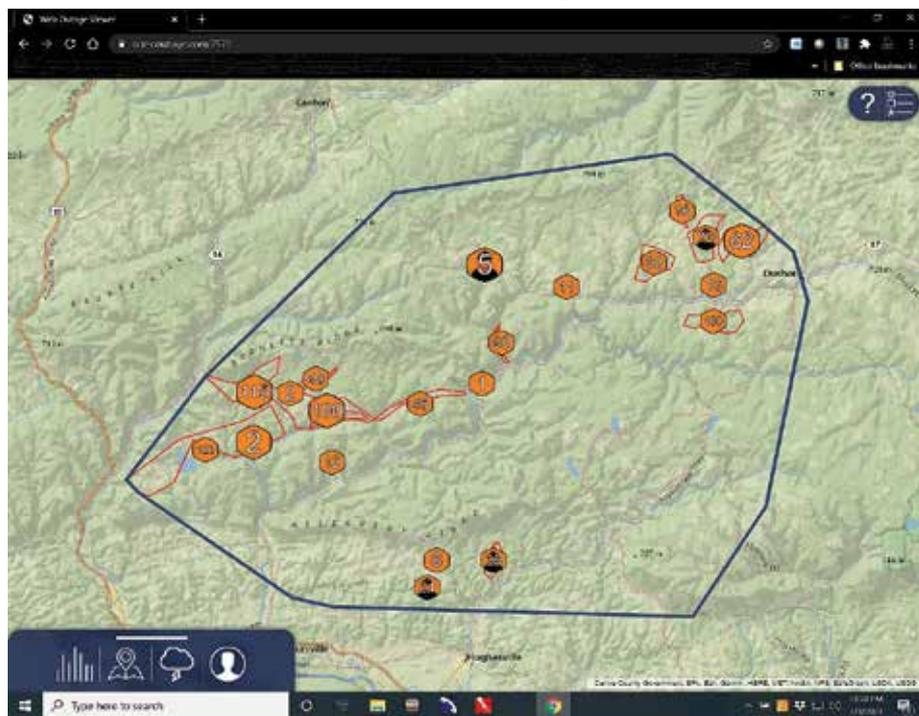
Storm could have been worse

While some members were without power for an extended amount of time, it actually could have been a lot worse.

"At the peak, we had around 800 members out of service," Tubach says. "That's still a lot of members. But if the ROW program wasn't in place, we might have had over 4,000 members out, and restoration time would have been over a week. Thanks to planning and maintenance of our electric system, we have better reliability and restoration time during an outage."

No crystal ball can determine how bad a storm will be. It can seem like line crews are making progress, but sometimes outages continue to occur. Problems can even continue once the

(continues on page 12d)



OUTAGE MAP: During the peak of the January storm, the co-op had around 800 members without power. Members can see where outages are occurring, as well as where line crews are working using the outage viewer on the co-op's website at screc.com.

New year off to a bad start

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storm is over. As power lines clear after having snow on them, they often bounce and touch each other. This can cause a fault resulting in blinking lights and the power going out. Most of the time, it's just a matter of going out and replacing the fuse or resetting the breaker, but there are times when the line burns, and it needs to be spliced and put back up, which takes additional time.

Co-op line crews are made up of dedicated employees who work long hours, often in poor weather conditions, to restore power to members. But the fact of the matter is that they're human like the rest of us and can wind up cold, wet, hungry, and tired after being up and working for a long time.

"It's not a difficult decision to have the linemen come in after working 36 hours," Tubach says. "It comes down to needing rest so they can think clearly and not make bad decisions when they're exhausted. Everyone needs rest no matter what job they have. Another difficulty this time, thanks to the pandemic, is that some restaurants are not open at night or not at all. So finding something to eat can sometimes become an issue."

Once line crews have worked the initial 36 hours, they are scheduled to

work 18-hour days with six hours rest until the entire system is restored.

The co-op does everything it can to provide reliable power to its members. But like anything else — a car, refrigerator or television — things break down over time due to normal wear and tear. And when Mother Nature gets upset and hits us with a snowstorm, thunderstorm, freezing rain, or severe winds, the fact is that outages will occur no matter how much time, energy, and money the co-op puts into maintaining and improving lines and equipment.

But when outages do occur, no matter the reason, lineworkers do all they can to get power back to our members as safely and quickly as possible. But as Tubach notes, it's the support of the members during times like this that helps keep the lineworkers going.

"I want to thank all of our members for the patience they give us and the understanding that we're doing our best to restore power," Tubach says. "We don't like the power being off either as it causes heartache for all employees. It keeps them from being able to enjoy time with their families or friends and getting rest from a hard week of work. All of the employees at Sullivan County REC are dedicated to the best service possible and give up many outings with families and friends to serve you better." ☀

Directors Aumen and Brady recently recertified

Directors David Aumen and Stephan Brady recently received their Director



David Aumen



Stephan Brady

Gold status through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's director education program. Director Gold recognizes directors who are committed to continuing their education beyond the Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) and Board Leadership Certificate (BLC) designations. Both directors had to take three courses in the past two years to recertify. Through the recertification of their Director Gold status, they have demonstrated their ongoing commitment to advancing their knowledge and performing their fiduciary duty.

Aumen is the board representative from District 8, which includes Plunketts Creek Township. Brady is the board representative from District 9, which includes Cascade, Gamble and Lewis townships in Lycoming County. ☀

Notice of the 2021 director election

The C & E Committee met on Jan. 21 and approved the following candidates to stand for election:

DISTRICT 3 – Overton Township (Bradford), Forks Township and Forksville Borough (Sullivan)

- ▶ James F. Lambert
- ▶ Noreen R. Keeney

DISTRICT 4 – Albany Township (Bradford), Laporte Township, Cherry Township and Laporte Borough (Sullivan)

- ▶ Jeffrey S. Hamilton (Jeffrey Hamilton is currently serving on the board of directors)

DISTRICT 8 – Plunketts Creek Township

- ▶ David L. Aumen (David Aumen is currently serving on the board of directors)

DISTRICT 7 – Upper Fairfield Township

- ▶ David R. Rakestraw (This district is vacant)

All members can vote in ALL director districts. Your completed ballot should be returned in the blue envelope that is self-addressed and postage paid. We must receive the ballot by 9 a.m. Wednesday, May 19, 2021. Please allow sufficient time for delivery. ☀