

Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Northwestern REC

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Amy Wellington, Editor

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From the President & CEO



Merry Christmas from Northwestern REC

By Bill Buchanan, *President & CEO*

“THE CHRISTMAS SEASON.” I love everything about this time of year. Just the thought of the holiday season brings a smile to my face and evokes a sense of comfort and nostalgia. Recalling family gatherings and traditions warms my heart and fills my senses.

It’s a time of reflection. I’m grateful for my own family as well as my co-op family. At Northwestern REC, we’re driven by a sense of mission and purpose. Our team feels a strong connection to our community and our members because we live here, too.

While many of our community-focused programs and activities, such as a recent \$10,000 donation to the Second Harvest Food Bank, ramp up this time of year, we have several programs and services in place to help our members year-round. I’d like to remind you about some of these offerings in hopes you’ll find them beneficial.

We hope you’ll take advantage of SmartHub, an app that empowers you to monitor, manage and pay your energy bill conveniently through your phone. Another service we offer is PrePay, or prepaid metering, which is intended to help budget your monthly energy costs. Northwestern REC members can pay for electricity before it’s used, then use the electricity until the credit expires. During the time period that’s been paid for, you’ll receive regular feedback on

your balance.

Our Operation Round Up program helps our most vulnerable members pay their energy bills. By simply choosing to “round up” your energy bills to the next whole dollar amount, you can help others right here in our community. Through members’ generous Round Up donations over the last 15 years, we’ve been able to give \$102,351 to those in need. If you’d like to participate in our Round Up program, please contact our member services office.

In addition to helping members save today, we’re focusing on the future. In our area, we’re seeing increased interest in renewable energy sources. Recent innovations and advances have led to significant cost decreases in renewable energy, making it more feasible and accessible. With our current generation portfolio, which is primarily nuclear and a mix of hydroelectric and renewables, our power generation is approximately 65% carbon free.

You may have noticed our electric vehicle (EV) around town. We invested in an EV to promote greater understanding of electric vehicles and promote their use, especially given the focus on electrification of the transportation sector.

But the most important investment we make is in our local youth.

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Holiday décor tips for an energy-wise home

By Amy Wellington, *Director of Communications*

From the President & CEO

(continued from page 12a)

Northwestern REC has logged hundreds of volunteer hours supporting schools, youth clubs and programs along with providing more than \$65,000 in grants for local educators.

Each year, through our Youth Tour program, we send high school juniors and seniors to Washington, D.C., for a week-long immersion to experience democracy in action. Cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey won't be participating in Youth Tour 2022 due to COVID-19 safety concerns. We are hopeful, however, that we'll return to this extremely important program in 2023.

At the heart of all of these programs is you — the members we proudly serve. Looking back, I'm grateful for so many wonderful community partners and for the positive impact we can continue to make.

This Christmas season, I wish you and your loved ones peace, joy and prosperity. Speaking on behalf of our team at Northwestern REC, I know the future will be bright — because of you. ❁



WHETHER you've already decked your halls or you're just getting started, there's still time to incorporate energy savings into your holiday décor planning.

If you haven't strung your twinkle lights, be sure to use LED light strands. LEDs consume far less energy than incandescent lights, and they can last 40 holiday seasons. They're also safer because they're made with epoxy lenses, not glass, making them more resistant to breaking — and they're cool to the touch, so no burnt fingers!

If you missed Santa's memo about energy-saving LEDs and your holiday lights are already up, you can still save on lighting costs. All you need is a programmable light timer. Most models cost between \$10 to \$25 and can be purchased online or at stores. With a light timer, you can easily program when you want your holiday lights turned on and off, which will save you time, money and energy. If you're using a timer for exterior lighting, make sure it's weatherproof

and intended for outdoor use.

If Clark Griswold's décor style is a bit much for your taste, consider a more natural approach. Many Christmas tree farms, and even big-box retailers, give away greenery clippings from recently trimmed trees. With a little twine, extra ornaments, and sparkly ribbon, you can create beautiful garlands and wreaths to hang over your front door and windows. To add extra twinkle at night, you can install solar-powered spotlights to illuminate your new (essentially free!) greenery. Solar spotlights can vary in price, but you should be able to purchase a quality set of four for about \$30 — and because they run on natural energy from the sun, there's no additional cost to your energy bill.

Regardless of how you decorate your home for the holidays, there are plenty of ways to save energy throughout the season. Visit Northwestern REC's website or Facebook page for additional energy-saving tips. ❁

More than 4,500 poles to be inspected



AS PART of Northwestern REC's commitment to safe, reliable, and affordable electric service, contracted Osmose crews will be inspecting electric poles in southern Crawford County and northern Venango County through spring 2022. These crews will be looking for decay and will report their findings to the co-op.

As shown in the photos above, the inspector will expose the pole below grade to examine its condition. When he is done, there will be a small mound of freshly disturbed dirt around the base of the pole.

The crews can be easily identified by the Osmose decals on their vehicles and safety vests. Should they identify

any poles that need to be replaced, Northwestern REC will send crews to the location in a timely fashion.

If you have questions, please email us at info@northwesternrec.com, chat with us online at NorthwesternREC.com or call Field Services at 800-352-0014. ❁

Gift certificates available for any holiday

The gift of electricity is welcomed by anyone with an electric bill. Best of all, you don't have to agonize over colors or sizes. You also won't have to stand in line to make an exchange — or even wrap it.

An electricity gift certificate makes your gift-giving easy. But as with all presents, it truly is the thought that counts.

If you would like to make a gift of electricity to a fellow cooperative member this year, just fill out the coupon below and return it with payment enclosed to Northwestern REC. We'll either send you the certificate, or if you wish to remain anonymous, we'll send the acknowledgement to the member.

If you have any questions, please call

consumer services at 800-352-0014. Our address is: Northwestern REC, P.O. Box 207, Cambridge Springs, PA 16403



To: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

I would like to purchase a \$ _____ gift of electricity to be credited to the account of the person(s) above.

From: _____

I wish to remain anonymous

Please remember to enclose payment. Thank you.

Need a break this holiday season? Give your energy bill one, too!

IF YOU plan to spend time away from home this holiday season, Northwestern REC's Energy Solutions Department has tips to lower your energy bill and keep your home safe while you are gone.

- ▶ Unplug some of your household appliances. Your house has many items that use electricity while plugged in, even when turned off. This is known as "phantom power draw." Unplugging these items not only saves energy, but in some cases, it can prevent fires in your absence. Appliances guilty of phantom power draw include television sets, DVD players, VCRs, cable TV boxes, microwave ovens and toasters.
- ▶ Adjust the refrigerator control to a warmer setting. The fridge's



temperature can be as high as 40 degrees without spoiling food; the freezer can reach 5 degrees. On these settings, refrigerators use up to 40% less electricity. If you are going on an extended trip, consider

emptying the fridge and turning it off (remember to leave the door open to prevent mildew).

- ▶ Set the thermostat higher or lower than the typical comfort level. You should consider lowering your thermostat, but to no lower than 55 degrees. Typically, by doing this, your heating will cost 10% to 30% less. You can shut the air conditioner off during your absence or at least consider setting it to a higher-than-normal temperature, such as 80 degrees. A programmable thermostat can make these adjustments automatically.
- ▶ Turn down the water heater. A large percentage of the cost of running a water heater comes from just keeping the water warm. If you are going on a lengthy trip, turn the water heater's temperature to the coolest setting. This can save you up to \$10 a month.

Going away for the winter?

NORTHWESTERN REC offers members who will be away from home for an extended period — including "snowbirds" who migrate to warmer climates for the winter — two convenient and timely ways to receive their electric bills while they are gone.

ONLINE BILLING

Northwestern's SmartHub program gives members the ability to receive and pay their electric bills online or through the SmartHub mobile app, which is available for smartphones and tablets.

With SmartHub, members receive an email notification when a new bill is generated. They can then pay their bill electronically using a checking account or a credit or debit card.

SmartHub participants also have access to their account information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

To explore SmartHub's features, visit our website, NorthwesternREC.com, and click on the SmartHub option on our homepage.

SEASONAL ADDRESS PROGRAM

The co-op also has a Seasonal Address Program that allows members to receive their electric bills at an alternate mailing address.

It's easy to sign up for the program. Just call the Member Services Department and provide your alternate address along with the dates you expect to be away. During this period, your correspondence from the co-op will be mailed directly to the seasonal address, eliminating the need for the postal service to forward it to you.

For more information on the Seasonal Address Program or SmartHub, contact the co-op at 800-352-0014 or chat with us online. ❁

Northwestern REC wants to remind everyone this holiday season that a safe and efficient celebration is the best celebration. Please keep your holidays bright and enjoy these energy-saving tips. ❁