

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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1-800-352-0014

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7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Amy Wellington, Editor

From the President & CEO



Five reasons we love serving our members

By Bill Buchanan, *President & CEO*

FEBRUARY may be the shortest month, but it's packed with special observances like Presidents Day, Black History Month and Valentine's Day, in addition to a host of unofficial "national" days you've probably never heard of like National Tater Tot Day. But they were each created to draw attention to a particular issue or theme.

Valentine's Day may seem like an observance originally created by a greeting card company, but it's become a day that generates millions of dollars spent on flowers, candy and, of course, greeting cards professing our love. But Valentine's Day isn't just for the lovebirds. It's also the perfect time to let our friends and family know we care about them.

So, in that vein, we've created our list of the top five reasons why we love serving you, the members of Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC).

1. We love serving our members because without you, the co-op wouldn't exist. Our purpose is to provide you with reliable, affordable and safe electricity. That's why we were formed in 1936 — to bring power to our local area when for-profit utilities would not.

2. You enable us to complete our mission by supporting our efforts to give back. With your assistance, we're able to help the most vulnerable members of our community through food drives and programs, like Operation Round-Up, that help local families pay their energy bills.

3. Members of our co-op also serve on the board of directors. They provide guidance for setting co-op priorities and helping make big decisions. Because our board members live in the area, they're able to serve as the pulse of the larger community and identify immediate and long-term needs. The broader co-op membership provides helpful input by voting in director elections.

4. You help us get it right. Northwestern REC members are great about keeping us in the know. We do our best to avoid power outages, but Mother Nature can occasionally throw us a curveball; our members are quick to report any power disruptions. We know outages are frustrating, and your support as we work through storms means so much to our employees.

5. You and other co-op members make up the community we serve — and for us, it's all about community. Our employees live here, too, and care about our community the same way you do. That's why Northwestern REC donates to local charities, food pantries, schools and scholarship funds. It's also why we invest in economic development, and why you'll see our employees volunteering at local schools and other community endeavors.

As a co-op, our mission is to enhance the quality of life in our community and look after its long-term interests. We love serving our members and our local community, and just like you, we want to see it continue to thrive. ❁

Our commitment to you

And a very important safety message worth repeating

By Amy Wellington, *Director of Communications*



STOCK PHOTO

WORKING SAFELY: Tree crew members must be OSHA-certified as line clearance workers to trim branches or trees this close to power lines. Not every tree trimmer available for hire is certified. Do your homework before hiring a crew to work on your property and, if power lines are involved, contact Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative at 800-352-0014.

FROM THE EDITOR: We were asked by our Director of Corporate Safety and Compliance to rerun this type of article. There have been reports of emergency responders and members of the public removing trees from power lines after a storm. Although we appreciate the help, this is extremely dangerous. Always assume a line — any line — is energized. It would be more helpful to have you secure the area by preventing others from entering the scene.

WE LOVE TREES. They beautify our landscape, provide shade and are an essential part of nature. But there can be a dangerous side to trees as well, particularly around power lines.

Unfortunately, there is a common misconception that power lines are insulated or have some type of rubber coating. Primary power lines

are, more times than not, bare metal wire. Secondary lines, typically found between the transformer and the house, are indeed insulated with a rubber coating, but the ground wire intertwined between the two live wires of a secondary service IS a bare wire.

There is really no other way to say it: Trimming branches or limbs near power lines can kill. Please do not attempt this task on your own. Do not try to remove a tree or branch from a power line. Call the cooperative any time,

day or night, to report these hazards. Line crews and certified tree trimmers are always on call.



TRY THIS EYE OPENER: Snap your fingers one time. Electricity will travel around the world **THREE** times in one snap of the fingers.

It doesn't take physical contact with a wire to cause a fatal shock. Electricity will jump, or arc, to find the quickest path of least resistance and travel to the ground. There are no second chances either. Electricity travels at the speed of light.

Tree trimming within 10 feet of a power line is illegal. And for good reason. Only OSHA-certified line clearance workers are



ABOVE: Tim Vorous, left, and Justin Sullivan, both longtime journeymen linemen for the co-op, have been promoted to field services right of way supervisor and staking technician III, respectively. Behind them is the new outage management center at Northwestern's headquarters in Cambridge Springs. Both positions deal with trees in rights of way and ensure that the scenario shown at right never happens on our lines.

authorized to trim near power lines.

In addition to annual chainsaw safety and tree-trimming training for line crews, Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) employs an experienced tree expert who manages the co-op's right of way (ROW) program. Tim Vorous, a veteran journeyman lineman for Northwestern, recently transitioned into this role when Rob Burns, the former ROW supervisor, retired from the co-op in December 2021.

Although most trees do not present a problem, some can grow into or crowd power lines and other utility equipment. When greenery becomes too close for comfort, it is Vorous's responsibility to address the concern. If you

receive a notice from the co-op about ROW maintenance work in your area, these notices come from Vorous. He is

also the guy to contact with any tree/power line concerns you may have on your property.

Trees still account for most of our power outages, despite our aggressive ROW program. Maintaining clear power lines makes it easier and safer for lineworkers to access lines and fix problems that may occur. When clearing around lines, we make sure proper pruning techniques are used to preserve tree health, as much as



possible. Pruning is the first line of defense against unruly trees, although sometimes a tree must be removed as a last resort.

In 2018, Northwestern REC was one of hundreds of co-ops across the nation to join the Zero Contacts initiative, promoted by Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange. This commitment, which has always

been our No. 1 priority, is to eliminate serious injuries and fatalities due to electrical contact and enhance co-op safety efforts.

You, the member, are part of our commitment. Trimming trees without power line involvement can be dangerous in and of itself, but never take tree/power line matters into your own hands. It's a matter of life and death.

Always contact the cooperative at 800-352-0014 or email info@northwesternrec.com to report these issues. Any emergency situation should be reported by calling 9-1-1.

SCHEDULE AN ELECTRIC SAFETY DEMONSTRATION: Northwestern REC has two types of electric safety demonstrations. The portable tabletop unit is geared toward elementary students, while the life-sized mobile hot-line trailer is best for adults and older children.

Both demos can be scheduled at your convenience and are free to everyone. Contact Amy Wellington, director of communications, or Chuck Hickernell, Director of Corporate Safety and Compliance, by calling 800-352-0014. You can also email us at info@northwesternrec.com. ❁

Five ways to save energy when working from home

TODAY, more Americans are working from home than ever before. More time spent at home means more energy used throughout the day.

If you're punching the clock from home, there are small steps you can take to reduce your energy use and save on electric bills. Here are five easy ways to save energy when working from home:

1. Use a smart power strip. Plugging in your most-used devices, like computers, monitors and routers, to a smart power strip ensures these devices aren't drawing power when they're not in use. Smart power strips also give you the option to select which devices should stay in "always-on" mode.

2. Unplug your least-used equipment. If your home office includes equipment like printers and scanners, you're probably not using these electronics every day. In this case, go ahead and unplug your least-used electronics and devices since many of these draw energy, even when they're not being used.

3. Choose Energy Star®-certified



office equipment. If you're looking to purchase new equipment for your workspace, look for the Energy Star label to ensure you're getting the most energy-efficient features. Computers, monitors, imaging equipment, and other office electronics that receive the Energy Star rating include power management features to make saving energy easy, and most are designed to run cooler and last longer.

4. Flip the switch and use natural light instead. It's still chilly out there, so take advantage of natural light and additional warmth from the sun. When you're working during the day, open blinds, curtains, and other window coverings to let natural light in — and don't forget to turn off the lights to reduce energy use.

5. Lower the thermostat. Home heating makes up a significant portion of your energy bills. Turn the thermostat down a couple degrees during the day to reduce energy use and save money. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends setting the thermostat to 68 degrees or cooler during winter months. You're more likely to stay focused and alert when it's cooler in your home, so all the more reason to mind the thermostat.

Working from home doesn't have to take a toll on your energy bills, and whether you're working remotely or not, these practical tips can help everyone reduce their energy use.

Contact Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative at 800-352-0014 if you have questions about your bills or want additional information about saving energy at home. ❁

