

Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Northwestern REC

P.O. Box 207
22534 State Highway 86
Cambridge Springs, PA 16403
www.northwesternrec.com

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Main Access Number
1-800-352-0014

Emergencies/Outages
1-800-352-0014

FAX
814-398-8064

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

Amy Wellington, Editor
Linda King, Managing Editor

From the President & CEO



We're ready for the storm season!

By Bill Buchanan, *President & CEO*

NOW THAT summer is in full swing, like many of you, I welcome more opportunities to be outdoors and enjoy the warmer weather. Summertime brings many of my favorite activities like cooking out with family and friends, afternoons on the water, and simply slowing down a bit to enjoy life.

But summer months also make conditions right for dangerous storms. These potential weather events can cause destruction to our electrical system, but I want you to know Northwestern REC crews are ready and standing by to respond should power outages occur in our area.

When major storms knock out power, our line crews take all necessary precautions before they get to work on any downed lines. I would encourage you to also practice safety and preparedness to protect your family during major storms and outages.

This is the perfect time of year to remind ourselves what the Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends as a starting point for storm and disaster preparedness, but you can visit ready.gov for additional resources.

- ▶ Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, such as canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (i.e., diapers and toiletries).
- ▶ Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies including towelettes, soap, and hand sanitizer.
- ▶ Ensure your first aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages, and

other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current.

- ▶ Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener, and portable, battery-powered radio or TV.
- ▶ Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.

In the event of a prolonged power outage, turn off major appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert damage from a power surge, and will also help prevent overloading the circuits during power restoration.

Listen to local news or a NOAA Radio for emergency information, and check Northwestern REC's website for power restoration updates. After the storm, avoid downed power lines and walking through flooded areas where power lines could be submerged. Allow ample room for utility crews to safely perform their jobs, including on your property.

Advance planning for severe storms or other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and can lessen the impact of the storm's effects. Sign up for NOAA emergency alerts and warnings, and download our app to stay abreast of power restoration efforts and other important co-op news and information.

I hope we don't experience severe storms this summer, but we can never predict Mother Nature's plans. From our co-op family to yours, we hope you have a safe and wonderful summer. 🌞

Change habits to beat the peak

AS WARMER weather sets in, our thoughts on keeping the house comfortable switch to cooling. But as temperatures rise and air conditioners are switched on, looking for ways to improve energy efficiency at home can help you and Northwestern REC reduce demand, saving energy and money.

Making small adjustments in when, where and how you use electricity won't only help control your energy costs, but it can also help keep temperatures in your home more pleasant on sultry days.

Housework hiatus

Avoiding peak energy costs is a good reason to put some chores on hold, at least until power demand dips. Consider some of the jobs one kilowatt-hour (kWh) of electricity can do before you use it:

- ▶ Wash three loads of laundry
- ▶ Complete one dryer cycle
- ▶ Vacuum rugs in two average homes
- ▶ Iron five shirts
- ▶ Run three cycles in a loaded dishwasher

All of these activities can be done outside of peak demand periods, also known as peak hours.

Love 78

At 78 degrees, most people are comfortable outside, so why not indoors? Most people aren't sensitive enough to notice much of a difference in air temperature whether the thermostat is set at 73 or raised to 78. But the closer your air conditioner setting is to the outdoor temperature, the less your unit will run.

Fans offer an economical alternative to air conditioning on mild days, and they can pitch in for comfort as temperatures climb. The key is evaporative cooling. At lower settings, a little air blowing across a room helps to bring down humidity levels.

When used in conjunction with your cooling system, set ceiling fans to blow air downward instead of pulling warmer air upward to get the most value in your cooling zone. Table and ceiling fans will offer more comfort if used to circulate air through areas where you are most active. You'll get a wind chill effect that will make you feel just a little cooler.

Kitchen comfort

When it comes to heat and humidity, changing your kitchen activities presents a wellspring of opportunities to reduce your household energy demand throughout the day.

Appliances on your countertops or stashed in your pantry could keep you cooler and use less energy. Microwaves use about 60% as much energy as full-size ovens, and a toaster oven or induction cooker consumes about half as much power. Because they are generally designed to heat food more efficiently in less space, the surface areas available for heating are smaller, reducing waste heat surfaces and keeping kitchens cooler.

Share the space

In simpler times, families spent more time together in the same room even as they pursued different interests. Some members might read books or magazines under the light of shared lamp, while others watched television or played board games.

Today, it's common for everyone to retreat to separate spaces, turn on their electronics, adjust their ceiling fans or window unit air conditioners, and close their doors to cocoon in their own environments.

Getting control of your energy use to reduce your home's overall demand can be really challenging when you have to consider the entire home, so bring back family time to beat the peak.

LCD televisions generally use 60% as much electricity as comparably sized plasma models. One laptop computer uses about 20% as much power as a desktop computer and monitor. And today's home assistant devices can play music using about 17% of the energy on a component stereo system, or about as much power as the boom box you use on the beach.

A video game console consumes about 200 watts of power. One system pressed into service for spirited intramural competition between family members in one room uses about a third of the power of three players engaged in online games around the house.

Finish the space with energy-efficient LED fixtures for lighting, a couple sets of headphones and a few rechargeable power boosters for the family's handheld devices. You'll have a cool and fun place to spend a few hours with the family. ☀

Assistance Programs Available to Northwestern REC Members

Emergency Rental Assistance Program

*For those who rent and are on unemployment.

*Money can be used for rent and utilities.

Apply online at www.dhs.pa.gov.

Administered locally by:

Center for Family Services, 814-337-8450

Erie County Care Management, 814-923-5512

Mercer, Venango and Warren Counties, use COMPASS to apply.

Bridge Builders Community Foundation

*For NREC members who qualify in Venango Co.

*Administered by the United Way of Venango Co.

Apply by calling 814-676-6545

Member-to-Member, Inc.

*For all members with a referral from NREC.

*Administered by several local agencies, visit M2Mfund.org

Contact Northwestern REC at 800-352-0014



pa211nw.org

*Powerful search engine for all available help in your area.

Visit pa211nw.org, call or text 2-1-1



Member-to-Member, Inc.

800/352-0014  

NORTHWESTERNREC.COM

ANNUAL MEETING

Virtual 85th annual meeting will be held Aug. 21

FOR THE SECOND year in a row, the annual meeting will be held virtually. On Sat., Aug. 21, the event will be broadcast live from the New Beginnings Church of God on Leslie Road in Meadville. To view the event, visit Northwestern REC's website, NorthwesternREC.com. A recorded version will also be found on the website after the Aug. 21 event.

You will receive the Annual Report to the membership in your July issue of *Penn Lines*. There you will find important facts and figures regarding the financial state of your cooperative, as well as interesting tidbits of information that will help answer any questions you may have.

On June 22, the official annual meeting notices will be mailed to all active co-op memberships. Along with this notice, you will receive information about the board nominees, a ballot and instructions regarding how to cast your vote. This year, there will be three voting options for Districts 3, 5 and 10:

Option 1: As soon as you receive your annual meeting notice in the mail, you can complete the paper ballot and return it in the envelope

provided. The co-op has contracted with a third-party survey company to compile all the votes up until Aug. 19.

Option 2: There will be a link included with your annual meeting notice that you can enter on a computer. The link will take you to an online voting system where you will be able to cast your vote. This link can also be provided to you with a current email address.

Option 3: Using a computer, when you log in to SmartHub after June 22, you will find a VOTE button at the top right of your screen. That link will take you to an online voting system where you can cast your vote.

Please note, should you cast your vote electronically (option 2 or 3), the co-op will only be aware that you voted. Your vote selection will remain anonymous.

There will not be paper ballot voting at the annual meeting. Director elections will close at midnight on Aug. 19.

Once the elections close, the member panel for director elections will review all the votes in private. Election results will be presented during the annual meeting by the chair of the member panel.

(The member panel for director elections is made up of three to four cooperative members whose districts are not part of the current election.)

All memberships registered for annual meeting will have the ability to receive the free annual meeting gift on Aug. 21 at the New Beginnings Church of God. We will have a drive-thru registration open from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. Your board of directors has decided to award each attending membership a \$25 electric bill credit. In order to receive the bill credit, at least one adult member from the account must be present.

Most importantly, the co-op WILL be conducting a canned food drive during the annual meeting Aug. 21. This annual event has been so well received by the members of Northwestern REC that the amount of non-perishable food items continues to grow each year. Food items will be accepted at the drive-thru registration.

Please watch for updates in future issues of *Penn Lines*, on your electric bills and on our social media pages. Feel free to contact us anytime at 1-800-352-0014 or online at NorthwesternREC.com. Stay well. ☀



Help keep roadside crews safe: slow down and move over

EVERY STATE has laws that require drivers to slow down or switch lanes if possible when they pass emergency vehicles. In Pennsylvania, an emergency response area is defined as emergency vehicles with flashing lights, or where road crews or emergency responders have lighted flares, posted signs, or try to warn travelers to slow down. These are often referred to as “move over” laws, and include moving over for utility workers. Failing to comply can result in fines and, in some states, jail time.

Pennsylvania’s Move Over law went into effect on April 27, 2021. This law requires approaching drivers who are unable to merge into a further lane, to reduce their speed by 20 miles per hour less than the posted speed limit.

This law will impose two

points for failing to merge into the further lane or for speeding in an emergency response area. Set fines are \$500 for first-time offenders, \$1,000 for second offenses and \$2,000 for

third or subsequent offenses.

A 90-day license suspension is also possible for repeat offenders, or for accidents that seriously harm or kill another person. Additional fines up to \$10,000 will also be incurred when an emergency service responder or an individual in or near a disabled vehicle is seriously injured or killed.

Please move over and slow down. Not only is it the law, it is simply the right thing to do. Because power lines often run along streets and highways, our crews are frequently required to work near or on roadways. Cars that are driven too fast or get too close to a utility truck can cause the truck and the extended bucket holding a worker to sway. This is especially dangerous if a crew member is working on an energized power line. ⚡

Pennsylvania's Move Over Law

Drivers approaching an emergency response area must safely merge into a lane further away from the response area.

Can't merge safely?
Slow to at least 20 mph less than the posted speed limit.

Considering a new home or apartment?

Check out electrical concerns, too

WHETHER YOU are renting or buying, the process of looking for a house, condo, or apartment can be overwhelming, especially for young people moving out on their own or new families ready to relocate to larger places. Along with looking for a good value, the right neighborhood, and curb appeal, it's also a good idea to look for signs of potential electrical trouble before making a home-buying or renting decision.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, electrical failures or malfunctions are present in an estimated average of 47,000 home structure fires per year in the United States, which result in 430 deaths, 1,280 injuries, and \$1.5 billion in property damage. Based on figures from the National Center for Biotechnology Information, electrical injuries in general cause approximately 1,000 deaths per year in the U.S.

Aside from having a professional electrical inspection completed, look for the following warning signs of larger electrical safety hazards before signing on the dotted line:

- ▶ Outlets and light switches that are warm to the touch.
- ▶ Outlets that are loose, scorched or discolored.
- ▶ Wall or light switches that cause shocks upon contact.
- ▶ Strange smells (such as something burning or overheating).
- ▶ Smoke or sparks.
- ▶ Exposed wires.
- ▶ Lack of GFCIs (ground fault circuit interrupters) on certain outlets (those near a water source or that could get wet).
- ▶ Lack of AFCIs (arc fault circuit interrupters); these help to prevent fires and are required in new builds.
- ▶ Faulty appliances.
- ▶ Evidence of frequent blown fuses or circuit breakers.
- ▶ Missing or broken wall plates.
- ▶ Delayed responses after switching lights on or off.
- ▶ Flickering lights.

Another good house-hunting practice is to take note if there are too few outlets to accommodate your needs — for electronics, appliances and other items that will increase the electrical load. If you will need to use extension cords and large outlet strips on a regular basis, you risk overloading your electrical system and creating an electrical hazard.

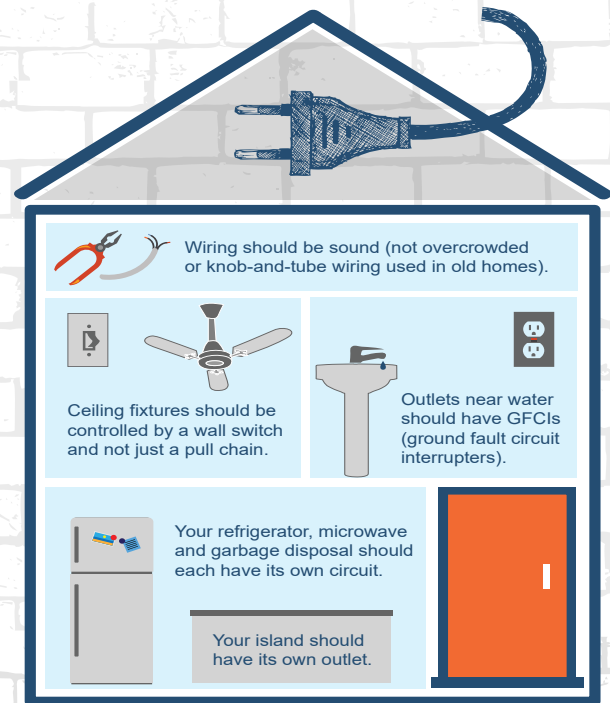
If you are buying a home, a reputable home inspector should note electrical wiring or other electrical deficiencies and code violations. Make sure electrical items are addressed by a qualified electrician before you call your new place home. If you already own your home and detect electrical issues, call a reputable electrician so that problems can be addressed immediately.

If you are or will be a renter and notice any of these issues, advise the landlord right away. If your landlord won't make

Home Electrical Inspection:

Pass or Fail?

Would your home pass an electrical inspection? Local electrical codes vary, so check with your qualified electrician, but here are **five things your home should have**:



Learn more at

[Safe Electricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org)

repairs, tenants have the option to hire someone to make the repairs and deduct the costs from the rent (at least in most states). However, remember that a certified electrician is the only person who should be hired to assess and repair electrical hazards or address issues, so be sure to verify credentials before hiring one. Renters may also have the option to withhold rent until the landlord makes repairs. Research laws in your area to determine renter protection provisions.

Both renters and homeowners should test all GFCIs once a month to make sure they are working and keep an eye out for other electrical hazards. For more information on electrical safety, visit [NorthwesternREC.com](https://www.NorthwesternREC.com). 