

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
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Cambridge Springs, PA 16403
www.northwesternrec.coop

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1-800-352-0014

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

Amy Wellington, Editor
Linda King, Managing Editor

From the President & CEO



Stay in the know

By Bill Buchanan

AT NORTHWESTERN, we are constantly striving to improve our operational efficiency so we can provide the most reliable electric service possible for our members (that's you!).

We rely on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, which is why we need your help. By making sure we have your most accurate and complete contact information, we can continue to provide the high level of service you expect and deserve. Accurate information enables us to improve customer service and enhance communications for reporting and repairing outages. It also allows co-op members to receive information about other important programs, events and activities.

Up-to-date contact information can potentially speed up the power restoration process during an outage. For example, the phone number you provide is linked to your service address to our outage management system. This means when you call to report an outage, our system recognizes your phone number and matches it with your account location. Accurate information helps our outage management system predict the location and possible cause of an outage, making it easier for our crews to correct the problem.

While we always do our best to maintain service, we occasionally plan outages to update, repair or replace equipment. In these instances, we can provide advance notification to affected members through automated phone messages, text messages, or email if we have your updated contact information

and communication preferences.

Keeping the co-op updated with your information also helps us when there's a question about energy use or billing. Emails and text messages are also used to notify registered members of any changes in co-op event details. In addition, discrepancies on your account can be taken care of promptly if Northwestern REC has accurate account information.

Many of you have been members of the co-op for years, and it's likely your account information hasn't been updated for some time. We recognize that many members now use a cell-phone as their primary phone service, and we might not have that number in our system.

I want to emphasize that in providing your contact information to the co-op, we will never share this information with any third parties. It is only used by us to send important information to you. Please take a moment to confirm or update your contact information by logging in to SmartHub or calling Member Services at 1-800-352-0014. By doing so, you will be helping us improve service and efficiency so we can better serve you and all members of the co-op.

Cooperative yours,

Bill Buchanan
President & CEO

P.S. — like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.



One SWEET tour you don't want to miss

By Amy Wellington, *Manager of Communications*

PUNXSUTAWNEY PHIL predicted an early spring, which means all systems are go for maple syrup enthusiasts in Northwest Pennsylvania. As soon as the first spring thaw appears, sap buckets and lines go up and boiling season has begun. Maple season typically begins in mid-February and ends in early April. Sugar making, as it is called, isn't a simple hobby for just anyone. The entire sugar-making process is a lengthy one that yields very little product compared to what actually goes into it.

Think of it this way . . . it takes 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup. In other words, 39 gallons of water from the 40 gallons of sap has

to be evaporated to yield the one gallon of maple sugar and other nutrients left over — which we formally know as Pure Pennsylvania Maple Syrup. But the process is far more intricate than just evaporating water.

Some small-scale sugar makers boil sap using a turkey fryer and propane fuel. When the sap reaches 7 degrees Fahrenheit above the boiling point of water and achieves a certain thickness — identified by observing the sap slowly drip from a thermometer — it is officially syrup and ready to be filtered into individual containers. In addition to the buckets, tree taps, lots of spare time and precise boiling utensils, sugar makers at this level

should plan on having several small propane tanks on hand or be prepared to invest in a small, wood-fired evaporator.

Medium- to large-scale sugar makers often invest in separate out-buildings called sugarhouses or sugar shacks. These sugar shacks house everything required for sugar making, including large holding tanks that feed sap into extensive evaporators. Some sugarhouses have exhaust hoods or large fans installed to remove steam from the building. Sap enters the evaporator looking like clear water, then meanders through a hot boiling maze — darkening and thickening with each turn, until it reaches the

**Here is a list of the 2020 participants
(those on co-op lines are indicated with a *):**

Boylan Farms, 26308 Crossingville Road, Edinboro, Pa.
Howles Maple Farm*, 27828 Patterson Road, Guys Mills, Pa.
How Sweet It Is, 19868 Greenleaf Drive, Saegertown, Pa.
The Willows at Little Conneautee*, 24507 Highway 99,
Cambridge Springs, Pa.
Austin's Maple Products, 13738 Route 8/89, Wattsburg, Pa.
Casbohm Maple and Honey*, 9750 Sherman Road, Albion, Pa.
Ft. LeBoeuf Maple, 27809 Dublin Road, Waterford, Pa.
Hurry Hill Farm & Museum, 11424 Fry Road, Edinboro, Pa.
K&B Maple Syrup, 10967 West Road, Albion, Pa.
Maple Lane Products*, 9437 Phillips Road, Union City, Pa.
Northwestern High School Sugarhouse, 200 Harthan Way, Albion, Pa.
Shumake's Sugar Shack, 11401 Hilltop Road, Albion, Pa.
Senita Maple*, 10750 Stateline Road, Clymer, N.Y.
Squirrel Creek Maple Products, 9404 West Lake Road, Lake City, Pa.
Sweet Traditions, 20110 Reed Road, Corry, Pa.
Triple Creek Maple Products*, 9225 Fillinger Road, Cranesville, Pa.
Yatzor's Maple Products*, 5860 Koman Road, Edinboro, Pa.
Maple Ridge Farms, 1920 Fox Hill Road, Russell, Pa.
Triple J Farms, 315 Voorhees Road, Titusville, Pa.



criteria mentioned above and is emptied through a filter as amber-colored maple syrup.

Northwestern REC has several sugarhouses and maple pump stations

on its lines, some of which are participating in the 17th Annual Maple Taste and Tour this month. This event is sponsored by the Northwest Pennsylvania Maple Association and is FREE

to everyone. If you would like to see the sugar-making process in person, plan on attending the tour scheduled for March 16 and 17, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

If you have a sweet tooth to satisfy, this is an event for you. Many of the sugar makers offer samples of their products, like maple mustards, maple peanut butter, maple spices, and a variety of nuts, creams, and maple cotton candy.

To learn the history of maple syrup, we highly recommend visiting the Hurry Hill Farm & Museum in Edinboro, Pa. Howles will also be offering a breakfast buffet at their Riverside Brewing establishment located in Cambridge Springs from 8 a.m. until noon. The Willows at Little Conneautee offers more of an "old school" maple syrup experience. Sap for this facility is gathered by hand from 370 buckets scattered around Cambridge Township.

More information about the 2020 Maple Taste and Tour and each participating sugar maker, can be found at pamaple.org. This is one SWEET tour you'll be glad you took. 🍯



SWEETNESS IN THE MAKING: Photos of the 2019 Maple Taste & Tour taken at The Willows at Little Conneautee. Opening photo shows the different amber colors for each year the sugarhouse has produced maple syrup.

YOU'RE INVITED

2020 Spring Member Meetings

District 6 Nominating Meeting

6 p.m. on March 30
Miller Station UMC, Cambridge Springs
* Dinner provided; door prizes

District 8 Nominating Meeting

7 p.m. on April 22
The Movies in Meadville
* Popcorn, soda, movie gift cards

District 7 Nominating Meeting

6 p.m. on April 23
Centerville UMC
* Dinner provided; door prizes

District 9 Nominating Meeting

6 p.m. on May 6
Smith's Country Gardens, Blooming Valley
* Dinner provided; door prizes

Member Resource Meeting

6 p.m. on May 13
Edinboro/McKean VFW 740, Route 98
* Dinner provided; door prizes

**Call ahead for reservations
800-352-0014**

Use caution near co-op lines and other equipment

AS YOU find yourself spending more time outdoors when it is nice weather or are cleaning up your yard after a storm, Northwestern REC reminds you to exercise caution near electrical equipment maintained by the co-op.

Substations and power lines carry extremely high voltages, and if contact is accidentally made, the results can be dangerous — or even deadly.



Electrical Safety Myths
Don't always believe what you hear

MYTH	VS	FACT
When live wires fall to the ground, they are automatically de-energized.		Always assume every downed power line is energized.

Learn more at: SafeElectricity.org

Never remove or cut trees touching power lines. If you make contact with a tree that is touching a power line, your body could become the path of electricity from the line to the ground. Always assume the power line is energized. Call Northwestern REC at 800-352-0014, Option 1, OR 9-1-1, if you encounter power lines down or trees on power lines.

These days, we are seeing more remote-controlled flying devices, like drones and airplanes, which can be a great way to have fun outdoors. But these gadgets also bring new safety concerns. Remote-controlled flying devices should never be flown near power lines, substations or other electrical equipment.

Remember these safety tips when flying a remote-controlled device:

- ▶ Keep a safe distance from electrical equipment when you fly. If contact is accidentally made with a power line or a transformer inside a substation, many members of your community could be left without electricity.
- ▶ Keep the remote-controlled device in sight at all times.
- ▶ Avoid flying if weather conditions are unfavorable. High winds could cause you to lose control of the remote-controlled device.

Here at Northwestern REC, your safety is important to us. We hope you will share the message of electrical safety so that you and others can enjoy plenty of summer days filled with fun! Visit NorthwesternREC.coop for more electrical safety tips. ⚡

Electric vehicle? Why not an electric lawn mower?

SPRING IS in the air, and you can practically smell the freshly cut grass. If you're in the market to upgrade your lawn care equipment, you may want to consider electric (or battery-powered) options.

Gas-powered lawn mowers and trimmers may be your go-to, but times, they are a changin'. Electric lawn care equipment options are becoming more popular than ever, offering consumers faster charging times, longer battery life and quieter, greener products compared to their gas-powered counterparts. Here are three ways you can electrify your lawn care this spring:

Electric lawn mowers

Electric lawn mowers have come a long way over the last few years. Early models required corded connections, which were tricky to manage — but the cord has been cut. Newer cordless electric mowers are certainly more expensive than gas-powered mowers, but much of the upfront cost can be recovered since electricity is a less expensive fuel than gas, and electric engines generally require less maintenance than gas engines. Cordless electric mowers typically range from \$200 to \$500.

Electric mowers are suitable for most lawn care needs, with batteries that typically require about one to two hours to fully charge, and most batteries can run for a full hour. That said, if you have a large yard (half an acre or larger), a gas-powered option may be best to suit your needs.

Electric trimmers

Cordless electric string trimmers are a great option for most lawns. Traditionally, like lawn mowers, string trimmers have typically been powered by gas. But new versions of electric trimmers are improving and are now considered worthy competitors of gas-powered models.

Cordless electric trimmers are much quieter and easier to use, but most batteries last about 30 to 45 minutes. So, if you have a lot of space to trim, you may want to consider a back-up battery or plan to work in short bursts. If you're interested in purchasing an electric trimmer, the main factors to consider are the battery's life, charge time and power. Costs can vary depending on your needs, but you can find a quality version for about \$100.



Electric leaf blowers

After cutting and trimming your lawn, you'll need to clear off those walkways and patios for the finishing touch. If you don't want to deal with the maintenance of a gas-powered blower or the restraints of a corded blower, a cordless electric version is a great option.

Cordless electric leaf blowers are lightweight and easy to maneuver, but they don't offer quite as much power as gas-powered and corded blowers. If your leaf blowing and clearing needs are minimal, a cordless electric leaf blower can get the job done. Costs for a cordless electric blower vary depending on power and battery quality, but you can purchase a dependable model for about \$150 and up.

If you're looking to electrify your lawn care equipment, be sure to do your homework. Search online for the latest reviews and check trusted websites like [ConsumerReports.org](https://www.ConsumerReports.org). With a little research, you'll be well on your way to Lawn of the Month — with less maintenance, hassle and noise (and your neighbors will thank you!).

For more helpful energy efficiency tips, visit our website at NorthwesternREC.coop. Don't forget we have an online chat option, should you ever have any questions for us. Our chat feature is available during our regular business hours of Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. You can also contact the Energy Solutions Department during those same hours at 800-352-0014. 🌱