

New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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From the General Manager/CEO



Happy to help

By Mark Morrison

THERE ARE more than 800 electric cooperatives in the United States. While they all are separate businesses and operate independently, they all follow seven common principles. I would like to bring special attention to principle No. 6 on the list: cooperation among cooperatives.

In early January, a powerful winter storm made its way east, impacting areas as far south as Georgia and the Carolinas before turning up the coast toward Virginia and states north of it. States of emergency were issued in preparation for the storm's impact. Northern Neck Electric Cooperative, a 17,000-meter electric cooperative in Warsaw, Virginia, was added to the list of those preparing for the pending impacts from this weather event.

Early Monday, Jan. 3, the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives reached out to the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA), our statewide cooperative, requesting storm response resources. PREA coordinated responses from Pennsylvania electric distribution cooperatives that were able to send crews to Virginia for power restoration. In all, 16 crews, consisting of more than 30 lineworkers from nine Pennsylvania electric cooperatives, responded to the request from our friends in Virginia.

Locally, New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) linemen Randy Walker and Roman Dell

volunteered to make the four-hour trip to Northern Neck, which due to road conditions became 11 hours, and join the effort to restore power to approximately 9,000 cooperative members at the peak of the storm. A status report delivered to those of us back home on Wednesday, Jan. 5, showed 650 member outages remaining. By Saturday, the remaining outages were restored, and our crew was released to return home.

There are always opportunities resulting from challenging times like this early January storm. We all share storm recovery processes, procedures, and ideas that create safety improvements and efficiencies for getting the power back on in extreme circumstances. Internally, we have a storm wrap-up meeting to discuss any ways we can improve operations at home should we have a major storm event. Most important, the relationships created in helping others get through their toughest times is rewarding. It reassures the fact that if major restoration aid is needed here, other electric cooperatives will remember cooperative principle No. 6, cooperation among cooperatives, and reach out to assist us in keeping the lights on to our members.

I would like to thank Randy and Roman and all our lineworkers at New Enterprise REC for volunteering and being happy to help. 🌟

There is still time to get assistance with your electric or heating bill

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps low-income families pay their heating bills.

Both the cash and crisis programs opened Oct. 18, 2021. The program is scheduled to end May 6, 2022.

To receive help through a cash grant:

- ▶ You don't have to be on public assistance.
 - ▶ You don't need to have an unpaid bill.
 - ▶ You don't have to own your home.
- Cash grants help families pay their

heating bills. This one-time payment, which is sent directly to the utility or fuel provider, ranges from \$500 to \$1,200. The grants are based on household size, income and type of heating. **Your bill does not have to be past due to qualify for this program.**

Crisis grants are for emergency situations, where you are in danger of losing your heat or receiving a disconnect notice.

The maximum benefit amount is \$1,200, and all money is sent directly to the co-op or your heating fuel company.

Emergency situations are:

- ▶ broken heating equipment or leaking lines that must be fixed or replaced;
- ▶ lack of fuel;
- ▶ termination of electric service; and
- ▶ danger of being without fuel or of having utility service terminated.

To apply, go to compass.state.pa.us or call your county assistance office:

Bedford County – 800-542-8584 or 814-623-6127

Fulton County – 800-222-8563 or 717-485-3151

Huntingdon County – 800-237-7674 or 814-643-1170

When you apply, you will need the following information:

- ▶ names of people in your household;
- ▶ dates of birth for all household members;
- ▶ Social Security numbers for all household members;
- ▶ proof of income for all household members; and
- ▶ a recent heating bill.

Disconnection for non-payment resumes

Disconnection for non-payment will begin again on April 5 after taking a winter break. A disconnection message will be printed on bills sent in March, plus an additional disconnect notice will be sent within a week of your bill statement.

If you are unable to pay the full balance due before April 5, please call the office right away to make a payment arrangement. Do not wait until the last minute to call as we cannot make a payment arrangement the business day before or the day of disconnection. The signed arrangement needs to be formalized and in our office before April 5.

If you are having trouble paying your bills and meet the income guidelines, you can call your county Energy Assistance Office for assistance. See the article above for more information and phone numbers.



Surge protection: Is it something I need?

By Ron Houck, *Technical Services Representative*

SURGE protectors can extend the lifetime of sensitive electronic equipment by protecting against many different types of electrical disturbances.

Surge protectors can “smooth out the bumps” from everyday electrical fluctuations. “Invisible” power disturbances have a tendency to build up damage over time and can lead to early failure of the entire piece or part of the equipment. Many disturbances can originate from inside the home, as well. Typical lightning strikes can also be tamed with these devices.

Depending on your homeowners’ and contents insurance policy, surge protection may be suggested or required, depending on your claims history. Even if you have a low deductible, such as \$250, losing equipment is costly and inconvenient, especially if it happens several times. Purchasing surge protection for a one-time cost can prove to be just as valuable as paying your yearly insurance premiums.

When a lightning storm is near, the best way to protect your equipment from a strike is to unplug it from the outlets. We can’t always be home when a storm hits, and unplugging certain items may be inconvenient. Having your equipment protected at all times gives you some peace of mind.

Using top-quality surge protectors will give you a very high percentage of protection from everyday electrical issues and typical lightning strikes, but when

lightning hits directly, all bets are off.

Helpful hint: A plug strip is not necessarily a surge-protection device. It may be acting only as an extension cord that provides you with extra outlets.

The following descriptions seem to fit most situations that cooperative consumer-members encounter:

- ▶ **Surge** — A voltage surge is a temporary increase in “normal” electrical line voltage, which is usually not more than 500-600 volts. Surges not only travel through the electrical cables, but also through TV antennas, telephone cables and any other object that acts as a conductor. Appliances and electronics aren’t the only thing that surges can destroy. They can ruin electrical outlets, light switches, lightbulbs, air conditioner components, garage door openers ... and more.
- ▶ **Spike** — It’s the same as a surge, but for a very short period of time. Spikes can measure in the thousands of volts and be caused by downed power lines, transformers, lightning, electric power grid switching, etc.
- ▶ **Voltage sag** — A voltage dip happens when higher-power electrical devices (air conditioners, dishwashers, and refrigerators) come on and create sudden, brief demands for power, which interrupt the steady voltage flow in the electrical system.

There are basically two types of surge protectors:

- ▶ **Service entrance surge protectors** — These are hardwired to the service panel (main electrical panel), where your circuit breakers are located, or installed in your meter base ahead of your electric meter. These devices are designed to stop harmful surges before they can travel toward the electronic equipment in your home.
- ▶ **Point-of-use surge protector** — These devices are used near the appliance being protected. These include the surge protectors that plug into a wall outlet and protect telephones and cable and satellite systems.

What is the difference between a surge protector and a UPS?

A UPS (uninterrupted power supply) usually has surge protection built in. It also has a battery backup that offers you 10 to 15 minutes — sometimes longer — to save your work and turn off your computer or another device properly.

How they protect

Proper grounding is important for surge protectors to work. Most are made with metal oxide varistors (MOVs) and are designed to “turn on,” or activate, at a given voltage level.

When the surge protector detects voltages over a certain amount, it immediately tries to push the surge
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Surge Protectors

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to the ground. Surge protectors must be plugged into three-prong outlets, and the grounding system must be in working order. If there are any grounding problems, a capable electrician should be consulted to make the necessary repairs and/or changes.

Unfortunately, MOVs will wear out. Newer, high-quality suppressors come with lights and audible alarms that tell you when the MOVs have worn out. Service entrance and point-of-use surge suppressors are both available with this convenient feature.

How you can protect yourself

No matter where you purchase surge-protection equipment, you should look for the following information:

- ▶ **Transient voltage surge suppressor (TVSS):** TVSSs are rated and designed to be used after the main disconnect (main breaker or switch). In the U.S., they are tested according to Underwriters Laboratories standards (UL 1449). UL 1449 assigns a clamping voltage to the TVSS that you can use to compare one product to the next. The clamping voltage is the maximum amount of voltage that a surge protector will allow through itself before it will try to “squash” the surge. The plug-strip styles fall under this category.
- ▶ **Diagnostic lights:** Diagnostic lights are very helpful in monitoring the effectiveness of the surge protector. For instance, a ground indicator light displays whether or not the device is properly grounded. This is

important because you will not be protected if it isn't.

- ▶ **Telephone and coax protection:** Look for a surge protector with telephone and coax cable jacks for protection of those lines. Remember, surges can enter through the telephone or cable/satellite lines.
- ▶ **Response time:** This rating indicates how fast a surge protector can react. The faster, the better.
- ▶ **Circuit breaker:** A breaker stops the flow of electricity when a circuit is overloaded.

Hopefully, this information can help you when faced with the question: Do I need surge protection?

Please call or stop by the office if you have questions or would like information about products available through the cooperative. ☼



NEW EMPLOYEE: Please help us welcome Conner Kagarise to New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative. Conner joined our team in January and works as a lineman. He has been a lineman for eight years. His responsibilities include building and maintaining the cooperative's distribution system, restoring outages and helping members. Conner and his wife, Adrian, have two children. In his spare time, he enjoys the outdoors, hunting and spending time with friends. Conner is also a new member of the Southern Cove Volunteer Fire Company.



LENDING A HAND: In early January, New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative linemen Randy Walker and Roman Dell joined other crews from Pennsylvania electric cooperatives to assist with power restoration efforts at Northern Neck Electric Cooperative in Warsaw, Virginia.