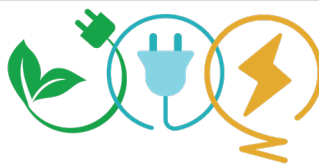




*Pictured: Sussex REC
lineman Tom Morgan
answers questions from
summer campers at the
Sussex County YMCA*



**Sussex Rural
Electric Cooperative, Inc.**
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

SREC's Member Newsletter
Volume 2, Issue 3

Currents

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Sussex Rural
Electric Cooperative



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The Big Picture

As a not-for-profit rural electric cooperative, our relationship with our members is incredibly important. Our organization was started by members of this community and we work hard every day to serve our members by providing them with safe and reliable power. We are constantly working with members to help them be more energy efficient, to educate them on safety matters and programs they can use, and make sure they receive the electric service that meets their needs.

However, we ask that our members keep in mind that, while each of you is important, we have almost 12,000 members in total. Every member's concerns matter, but there's a bigger picture to consider beyond one person's needs.

While our mission is to provide our

By Chris Reese
contacttheceo@sussexrec.com



members with the highest quality of service at the lowest possible cost, remember that we are a small business working with limited resources and limited time. To efficiently meet our mission, we must adhere to the responsibilities and efforts that best fit that goal. To put it simply, we do more with less.

A good example of this is tree reports from members. We encourage members to let us know if they know of trees that could pose a threat to our utility equipment by sending photos to trees@sussexrec.com. Each of these submissions is reviewed by a Sussex REC employee and the majority end up being inspected in-person by our forester. However, reporting a tree to us does not guarantee that the tree will be trimmed or taken down.

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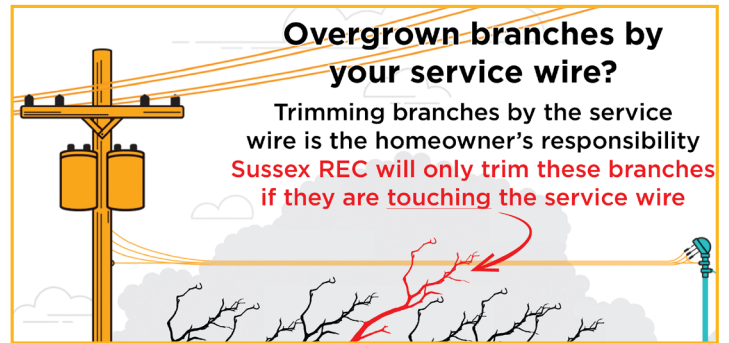
For us to trim a tree, there are certain conditions that need to be met. We take into account the tree's distance from our equipment, its health, and overall lean. Most importantly, it needs to be clear to us that there is specific utility equipment, such as our power lines, poles, or transformers, that would definitely be affected if the tree or its branches were to fall. In some cases, a high cost to remove a tree plus low risk to our lines means there's not enough justification for us to have the tree work done. We may decide to leave the tree alone. These are calculated risks we have to take because we cannot cut every tree near our lines. The severe storms we had over the summer took down many seemingly healthy trees and branches, and hardly any dead or dying trees.


Not every tree reported to us qualifies, which has upset some members. From their perspective, they're often worried because a tree looks like it could fall on their home, their vehicle, or their loved ones. We understand these concerns, but Sussex REC isn't responsible for all trees in our area. We need to prioritize trees that would most affect our electricity and our bottom line.

We are always, on a yearly basis, proactively trimming trees that will affect our service because that is our key responsibility – providing safe, reliable power. In situations where a tree wouldn't qualify to be handled by us, the responsibility falls on the property owner to have it trimmed or removed. Many people are understandably looking for a free way to remove trees that could potentially pose a danger to things they care about, but we have thousands of members and hundreds of thousands of trees across our

service territory to consider. It would be financially impossible and most importantly, irresponsible, for us to trim all these trees. Likewise, it would not be fair to provide a special service to one member that other members wouldn't be able to receive, even if they've been a member for decades.

This rationale is also why we only trim branches by a home's service wire if they're actively touching and pushing on the wire, and why we don't haul away wood left over from tree trimming work. We try to provide the best service we can, but also need to be practical to ensure we have the finances, manpower, and time to handle the necessary work of being a small electric utility. Setting priorities like these helps us work as efficiently as possible while treating all of our members fairly.



Despite our size, we have accomplished great things like having one of the lowest electric rates in the state, being NJ's most technologically advanced utility, having an 80% carbon-free power mix, and regularly giving back to the community. We simply ask that our members work with us to understand the bigger picture: everyone has a part to play. We'll always be here to handle our part, which is delivering safe and reliable power to all of our members. 



MEDICAL ALERTS

Medical Alerts are a vital resource for members who rely on electric-powered medical equipment!

If anyone in your home uses lifesaving-equipment like this, you should enroll in our Medical Alert program. By signing up, you'll make your Co-op aware of your situation and ensure that you will always receive advance notice of planned outages.

Planned outages are sometimes necessary to make repairs or upgrades to our system. Ahead of a planned outage, all Medical Alert members in the affected area will be contacted directly so they can know to make

other arrangements for the duration of the outage.

While we can't provide notice of unplanned outages caused by weather, trees, car accidents, or other circumstances, having notice of planned outages can make a huge difference in quality of life. We encourage these members to look into generators or transfer switches (like the GenerLink) to power their equipment during unplanned outages!

You can find our Medical Alert Program Enrollment Form at sussexrec.com/medicalert! 



BEAR CUB RESCUE

April 17th, 2024

As many of our members have seen, in April three of our lineworkers found themselves involved in an un-bear-ably cute rescue!

Sussex REC Chief Lineman Fred Hosking, First Class Lineman Travis Monahan, and First Class Lineman Tony Salokas were called on by NJ Fish and Wildlife to assist them in the rescue of an abandoned bear cub.

The cub found itself stuck up on a tree branch off of Eric Trail in Vernon after its mother and siblings were scared away by the sounds of nearby construction. The poor cub's mother did not come back for it, and it was left stranded for about 20 hours - long enough for human intervention to be needed.

As the other linemen held a net at the base of the tree, First Class Lineman Salokas made use of his bucket truck to ascend to the cub's level, where he grabbed it by the scruff of its neck to bring it down to safety.

While separated from its birth family, the cub has been relocated to a den in Stillwater where it was successfully adopted into another bear family.

This story quickly became the subject of one of our widest-reaching posts on social media ever, and gained national attention through othe National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's magazine. A big thanks to our linemen for making sure this cub could find its new home! 🌱



YOUTH TOUR 2024

We had another great Youth Tour this year, bringing seven local students on an unforgettable, all-expenses paid trip to Washington, D.C. Our students joined thousands of other high school juniors from across the country, sponsored by their local co-ops, on this once-in-a-lifetime trip!

Highlights from 2024's trip include visits to D.C.'s many momuments and museums, including the Smithsonian Museums, the Udvar-Hazy Annex, the Planet Word Museum, and the Holocaust Museum. Our PA/NJ group explored Arlington Cemetary and the Pentagon Memorial, and rode the Capitol Wheel. Our students also met with Congressional staffers to learn what it's like to work on Capitol Hill and took part in Youth Day celebrations with students from all across the country.

All of this and more is available as part of the Youth Tour experience! Children of Sussex REC members can attend this trip for free the summer after their junior year of high school. If your child would be interested, visit www.njyouthtour.com to learn more ahead of 2025's trip! 🌱



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Annual Meeting Recap

By Steve Sokolowski,
Marketing Associate
ssokolowski@sussexrec.com

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP

Now is the time to schedule annual maintenance for your home's heating system. During fall months, HVAC technicians are typically less busy, making this an excellent time for maintenance and any necessary repairs before the winter months.

A qualified technician can clean filters, check for leaks and ensure all system components are working efficiently to keep your home cozy and warm when the temperatures begin to drop.



Currents

The quarterly newsletter of
Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative
64 County Route 639, Sussex, NJ 07461
Website: www.sussexrec.com
Email: currents@sussexrec.com
Phone: 973-875-5101



Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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Brad Sparta		Joseph Barca
Michael Abate		Karen McDougal

Our Annual Meeting season may be over now, but we can look back at 2024 as another great success!

As a member-owned electric cooperative, since our founding in 1937 we've had the responsibility to hold an Annual Meeting of Members every year. This yearly event is an opportunity for our employees, management, and directors to meet face-to-face with our membership, hear what is important to them, and give them an update on the Co-op's operations over the previous year. Of course, we've also always made these events as fun as possible!

Since 2022, we've taken a different approach to our Annual Meetings. Early in the summer, we host an Online Meeting on our website to cover the business portion of the event. You can read more about our 2024 Online Meeting below!

Then in August, as part of the NJ State Fair at the Sussex County Fairgrounds, we welcome members to join us for an in-person Member Appreciation Event. This year's Member Appreciation Event was held on Monday, August 5th at the Fairgrounds' BBQ Pavilion.

We had an amazing time throughout the day speaking with members and answering questions. Our prize wheel made a return from last year and was a big hit! Members spun to win free giveaways such as mini diecast bucket trucks, thermal lunch bags, waterproof dry bags, and more!



2024 ONLINE MEETING

Our 2024 Online Meeting went live at sussexrec.com/annual-meeting on Monday, July 1st. Each of the videos posted on that day are still available on this webpage. There, you can find the report from our Chairman of the


Board, our Board Secretary's Financial Report for 2023, the results of our 2024 by-mail Board of Directors Election, and our Q&A where President & CEO Chris Reese answered member questions!



For attending, each member received a \$10 bill credit and entry into our prize drawing. We gave away over 26 great prizes this year to our lucky winners whose names were drawn randomly from a list of all attendees. Prizes included model bucket and digger trucks, gift cards, bill credits, and more!

The grand prize was once again a free year of electricity for one lucky winner – a bill credit of \$1,250, based on the average annual usage of a residential member. Congratulations to all of our winners!

We are incredibly proud to say that 2024 was another record year for attendance at our event! We would like to thank every single member who attended this year's Member Appreciation Event as well as the folks behind the Fair for allowing us to be a part of their event.

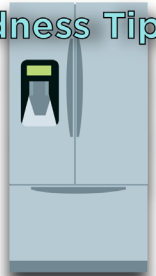
If you missed out on 2024's event or are looking forward to next year, please be on the lookout for a "Save the Date" for 2025, coming soon! And don't forget, we offer up to two free Fair tickets you can use to attend our event if you register within a certain time frame of the Online Meeting. Be sure to stay in the loop so you don't miss out on this added benefit. 



Pictured, Above: The son of the Adamskys poses with the model digger truck his family won in our Member Appreciation Event's prize drawing. 26 members were randomly selected as winners in this prize drawing and contacted shortly after the event.

Outage Preparedness Tip

If you're worried your power may go out, make sure your freezer is as full as possible so it can properly maintain its temperature while closed. The fuller the freezer, the colder it will stay.



Before a storm, fill Ziploc bags 3/4 full with water and pack them into the freezer. If the power goes out, this will keep frozen food colder for longer.

If the outage lasts longer than expected and the contents of your freezer thaw, you can then use the melted ice in the Ziploc bags as drinking water.

Use the "Quarter Trick" to confirm that the food in your freezer is still safe to eat after an outage. Keep a cup with a half inch of frozen water in your freezer with a coin placed on top of it. Following an outage, you'll know your food is safe to eat if the coin is still laying on top of the ice. If it's sunken into the ice, you'll know you need to throw away the food in your freezer.



This year's Q&A featured insight into the state of the U.S. electric grid, electric vehicles, how we deal with problem trees, and credit card fees when paying your

bill online. If you've been wondering about any of these topics, I recommend that you check out this video and the others as part of our Online Meeting!

WATCH OUR



2024 ONLINE MEETING

Rain, Rain, Go Away

By Claudia Raffay, Director of Marketing & Member Services
craffay@sussexrec.com

A popular nursery rhyme, “Rain, Rain, Go Away” can be found throughout the world. The modern English language version can be dated to the 17th century. An 1865 collection of nursery rhymes put the rhyme to music, creating the song you are most likely singing in your head at this very moment.

This past summer, we’ve seen storms rush into our area and then “go away” in the blink of an eye. One such storm in July lasted less than ten minutes and hit only select areas of our service territory. While some members dealt with large hail and uprooted trees, at the same time other members were calling wondering why the power was out when there was not even a whisper of wind by them. The 10-minute storm caused over \$225,000.00 worth of damage.



Just a couple of weeks before, we dealt with thunderstorms that caused another quarter-million dollars’ worth of damage to our system. The winds were so powerful at points that they brought down many healthy, living trees, not just weakened or dead ones. With the extent of the damage dealt, we had to call on crews from Pennsylvania cooperatives to aid in the outage restorations for both storm events.

Even the shortest storms can be packed with strong winds which uprooted trees, knocked down utility poles, and toppled power lines. We’ve seen a concerning rise in extreme weather events over the last few years, with this summer’s storms being a good example. Even when a storm is a short one, it can be powerful enough to leave our service territory littered with down trees, poles, and wires. Situations like these can take a long time to fix, as the many fallen trees need to be removed before we can safely make repairs to our equipment.

We’re lucky that, as an electric cooperative, we can rely on mutual aid from co-op crews from Pennsylvania and other nearby areas when needed. Mutual aid comes with “Cooperation Among Cooperatives,” one of our guiding cooperative principles. Not only have we had to rely on Pennsylvania’s crews for these recent storms, but we’ve also had to send our own linemen to various co-ops in Pennsylvania

>> *Continued on pg. 8*



KIDS' CORNER

with Pluggy the Pug

Lineworkers like Sussex REC's team of linemen use a variety of special tools and gear to stay safe while working near power lines and other electrical equipment.

Each of the below items helps keep our linemen safe. Find the words in our word search to the right!

FIND THESE WORDS:

GOGGLES

HARD HATS

GLOVES

HARNESS

BOOTS

HOT STICK

- Safety **goggles** keep debris out of a lineworker's eyes while they work.
- Rubber **gloves** are insulated and protect lineworkers from electric shock.
- Steel toe **boots** provide extra protection when lineworkers lift heavy objects.
- **Hard hats** protect lineworkers from potential head injuries.
- Lineworkers wear a safety **harness** to prevent falls while climbing poles or working in a bucket.
- Lineworkers use a **hot stick**, a tool made from fiberglass, when working on energized lines.



Pictured: Art by 2023's winner Makenzie B.

* Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative * * Holiday Card Art Contest * * 2024 *

Our Holiday Card Art Contest has returned for its third year!

As a Sussex REC member, your child or grandchild can enter this contest for a chance to have their holiday-themed artwork featured on our 2024 holiday card!

Children in Kindergarten through 5th grade can participate by channeling their excitement for the upcoming holidays into a piece of artwork to submit to the Co-op. Artists don't need to live on our lines if their grandparent is a member.

Artwork must be no larger than 8.5" x 11" and must be an original creation of the child. The artwork should be in color, whether that's crayon, colored pencil, watercolor, or paint - whatever is preferred by your young artist! And of course, to be considered for this contest all artwork must be winter or holiday themed!

Upon review by Co-op staff, our top piece of art will be printed on the cover of our 2024 holiday card that is sent to friends and associates of the Co-op. Our first place winner will also receive a \$25 Amazon gift card and 30 printed cards with envelopes for mailing to family and friends. Second and third place winners will also receive a \$20 and \$15 Amazon gift card, respectively. Winners will be announced Nov. 5th!

Find our contest form and more details at www.sussexrec.com/holiday-card. Submissions will be accepted until **Oct. 25th**. When mailing, please do not fold the artwork! You can submit it to us at:

Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative, Attn: Holiday Card Art Contest, 64 County Route 639, Sussex, NJ 07461

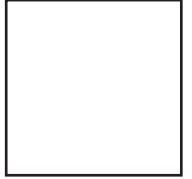
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-  **Youth Tour 2024**
-  **2024 Annual Meeting Recap**
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-  **Pluggy the Pug's Kids Corner**
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Rain, Rain, Go Away

<< *Continued from pg. 6*

multiple times this year to assist with large outages in their territories. These weather patterns are affecting co-ops and their members, as well as investor-owned utilities and their customers, throughout the region and beyond.

Just like the nursery rhyme, we'd all love these storms to go away. Unfortunately, they are a reality that we cannot control. What we can control, however, is how we prepare for them and how we respond to them.

We recommend that members stay ready in case of an outage by putting together storm preparedness kits to cover their basic needs during an outage. Installing a whole-house generator or transfer switch for a portable generator is also a great option to keep your family comfortable during an outage, especially for those who rely on medical equipment at home.

Even if we get a stretch of time with good weather and no outages, the storms will certainly come again another day. Though storms are a fact of life, trust that Sussex REC will be ready to respond to them. ⚡

