

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Claverack REC

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Monday through Friday

7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Jeff Fetzer, CCC, Local Pages Editor

Guest Column



Looking out for you

by Brian Zeidner, *Director of Member Services*

CLAVERRACK recently went through an extensive safety inspection. Along with checking tools, equipment and safety protocols for our line workers, who have inherently dangerous jobs, the safety inspection team also inspected office safety practices. Hazards in an office environment are often obvious and easier to eliminate.

The ultimate goal of this safety initiative is to reduce injuries and help to ensure our employees go home to their families at the end of each work day.

Our safety efforts extend beyond our employees. We are also looking out for your safety. But the procedures the co-op takes in order to keep members safe can be a little more difficult to define and address.

Many know of the hazards associated with electricity. We do not let children play with electrical receptacles, nor do we use hair driers or curling irons while in the bathtub. We know bare wires can shock you.

However, most people do not realize the meter base and entrance cables feeding power to their homes can be dangerous as well. And, it's important to note, this is equipment that is owned by the member.

Your electrical equipment, including meter bases, wiring and breakers, can deteriorate over time and become un-serviceable and dangerous. We have all heard of house fires in which the cause had been determined to be electrical in nature.

On most electrical services, Claverack's lines end at the crimped connectors at the top of the house or pole.

Co-op members own the meter base and the wires bringing power to the meter base and into their panel box.

When a Claverack employee recognizes hazardous service equipment that belongs to a member, they complete a safety report. The member services department then reaches out to the member with a letter noting the hazardous condition, the needed repair, a time frame for completion and information about having electrical work performed.

Because of the emphasis on safety, we send the letter via regular and certified mail to ensure the member receives it.

We will work with any member who is trying to correct a hazardous situation at their home by offering information, references, deadline considerations and other assistance. Please note that if your electrical equipment poses a situation that is an imminent danger to life, safety or property, co-op policy and Pennsylvania utility law allow for an immediate disconnection of power to the home until repairs are completed.

So take a little time to check your electrical equipment. Look for holes rusted through your meter base or deteriorated insulation on the wires, both above and below your meter base. Make sure the Claverack seal is in place, securing access to the meter.

If you have any questions, give us a call; we will gladly help. We like to be proactive in helping members identify and correct problems in order to keep themselves, their loved ones and their homes safe. ☀

Remote possibilities

Machine shop moves from Billtown to Bradford County

By Jeff Fetzer

A BLACK Jeep Wrangler rolls up the muddy driveway and parks next to the front door of a months-new machine shop on a Bradford County back road.

The bearded business owner, sitting at a desk covered with stacks of papers and sipping a coffee, asks, with more than a little surprise, “Is that a customer?”

Presently, a white-haired gentleman enters J&S Precision Machining in Wilmot Township. Nope, not a customer. He’s a neighbor, stopping by to inquire about some three-phase electric converters J&S owner Steve Sweeley no longer needs to run his machining equipment since moving his business from the Williamsport area to rural Bradford County in September.

The converters are for sale because Sweeley’s new location, just off a dirt road 10 miles from the nearest town of Wyalusing, is served by three-phase power, something that was unavailable to him when his shop was doing business just outside of the City of Williamsport.

Sweeley, who had operated his machine shop for 26 years in Lycoming County, was well aware that his move from a more populous area to the remote Bradford County location would have obstacles difficult for most businesses to overcome: low foot traffic, slow internet service, limited labor pool. But he was OK with that.

With established, longtime industrial customers accustomed to doing business through UPS, and with family members as his only employees, Sweeley had no qualms about moving to the sticks. As an avid outdoorsman, in fact, he relished the idea.

What came as a bit of a shock to Sweeley, however, was learning the local electric provider, Claverack REC, was in the process of constructing a 6-mile stretch of three-phase electric



NEW DIGS: Claverack members Jane and Steve Sweeley, owners of J&S Precision Machining, settle into their new location in Bradford County’s Wilmot Township. The high-tech machine shop, formerly located near Williamsport, has been producing machined parts for industrial manufacturers since 1989. Steve operates the shop full time, and Jane works part time handling paperwork for the business.

service that would run right past his 100-acre property along Sick Road.

Power factor

“This is the last place on earth I thought I would have three-phase,” says Sweeley. “After I decided to move up here, Claverack sent me a letter that said I was going to have three-phase down my dirt road. I was thrilled.”

In fact, he says, the availability of three-phase service cemented his decision to uproot his business operation and move north. He notes that all of his machinery requires three-phase electricity, but three-phase service was

unavailable from PPL, the electric provider for his shop near Williamsport.

When Sweeley started the business in 1989, he says he inquired about three-phase service only to learn that it would cost about \$300,000 for PPL to extend the service three miles to his shop. So he opted, instead, to purchase three-phase converters to run his equipment.

“Now I have no use for them, so I can sell them,” he says, noting that while the converters worked well, they were noisy and consumed floor space.

Steve Allabaugh, Claverack’s director of engineering, says it was just

“pure luck” and good timing that the cooperative happened to be starting the project to upgrade its Lovelton line from the Hollenback Substation to Windy Valley just as Sweeley was considering relocating.

“This was a project in our four-year work plan to upgrade about 6 miles of mostly single-phase line to three-phase,” says Allabaugh, adding that the project was needed due to the age and length of the single-phase line, as well as increased load growth on the line.

While single-phase service meets the needs of the typical homeowner, three-phase power is required to run machinery that operates motors in excess of 5 to 10 horsepower.

For a business like Sweeley’s, access to quality, reliable power is critical to success. Although his operation houses traditional machining equipment for processes such as turning, milling, grinding and drilling, J&S Precision Machining specializes in wire electrical discharge machining (EDM), a non-conventional, computer-automated process that uses small diameter brass wire and electrical discharges to cut precision geometry in hardened tool steel.

The bulk of Sweeley’s business involves producing cut-off dies, stamping dies and custom-machine parts for industrial manufacturers, including Springs Window Fashions, Osram and several other companies in the Williamsport area.

The die is cast

Sweeley started his working career on the production floor of the GTE-Sylvania flash bulb plant in Montoursville after graduating from Loyalsock Township High School. Finding production work unsatisfactory, he enrolled at Williamsport Area Community College, where he earned an associate degree in tool-making technology.

Following college, machinist jobs Sweeley landed in Lansdale and Allentown ended in layoffs and plant closings. In 1987, he returned to his first place of employment, the flashbulb plant in Montoursville, by then owned by Osram-Sylvania. This time, how-

ever, he was employed as a machinist, working under his father, Tom Sweeley, who was the foreman of the machine shop there.

In 1989, Sweeley found himself facing another furlough when Osram announced plans to shutter the plant. Tired of moving and layoffs, Sweeley opted to go into business for himself.

It’s a decision he doesn’t regret.

“It always made more sense to me to be my own employer rather than work for somebody else,” he says. “I had that desire from a young age. Running your own business is very satisfying.”

Initially, Sweeley operated a traditional machine shop, performing hands-on milling, lathe work and grinding. In 1996, he decided to get into CNC (computer numerical control) machining and milling and purchased his first wire EDM machine.

“It’s a niche not a lot of machine shops get into,” he says, “and it has worked out very well.”

He runs three wire EDM machines at his Bradford County facility, in addition to traditional machining equipment. Because the EDM equipment is operated by computer, there is little hands-on work required.

“I program the job on a computer, put the program into the machine, set up the job and push a button,” he says. “The machines do all the work.”

That occasionally gives Sweeley the opportunity to slip out of the shop and enjoy his 100-acre property surrounding his home and business.

Sweeley and his wife, Jane, purchased the property from Jane’s parents, Ken and Eloise Squier in 2001. Before that, it had belonged to Jane’s grandparents, who purchased the land in the 1920s.

In 2014, the Sweeleys decided to construct a house on the property, primarily to serve as a weekend home in the summer and as fall hunting headquarters for Steve and the couple’s three sons.

But after maintaining two homes for two years, the couple decided to downsize and sell their Williamsport property.

“I always wanted to live up here,

just because it’s so beautiful and the hunting has always been good,” says Sweeley, who had been hunting on the property since he and Jane married 35 years ago.

Last summer, Steve had a 40-by-70-foot steel building to house his machine shop erected on the property, and in September, the couple moved their belongings and business to Bradford County.

“I’m very happy here; I can walk to work,” says Sweeley, a self-proclaimed homebody, “and if I have a job running, I can go work on my tractor or, if I want to go up on the hill and hunt, I go up the hill and hunt.”

The 60-year-old notes he expects one



AUTOMATED MACHINING: J&S Precision Machining owner Steve Sweeley uses compressed air to clean a key hole die created using a manufacturing process known as wire electrical discharge machining. The computer-automated process uses electrical discharges through a thin brass wire to create shapes in hardened tool steel.

of his sons, an engineer and machinist who has worked part time at the machine shop for about five years, to eventually take over the business.

“I’m pretty content with what I do and where the business is right now,” Sweeley says. “Few people know I’m here — I haven’t even put a sign out yet. But my son might change the direction of the company when he gets more involved. He wants to grow the business.”

For additional information about J&S Precision Machining, call 570-833-4888. 🌞

Dry hydrant program aims to improve rural fire protection

IN MANY rural areas, locating a water source can add precious minutes to a fire company's response time during a fire. The nearest lake, stream or pond may be miles away, inaccessible to large fire trucks, or covered with ice. Without water, even the smallest fire can turn into disaster.

To combat the problem, Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative spearheaded a dry hydrant initiative to help improve rural fire protection. A dry hydrant is non-pressurized pipe system permanently installed in a lake, pond or stream. Rural fire companies can quickly attach a hose to the hydrant head and pump large quantities of water through it to fill tank trucks or to battle a blaze directly.

Historically, Claverack's dry hydrant program brought together those interested in installing a dry hydrant and provided some of the equipment needed for the installation.

Because there are often excavating and other costs associated with the installation of a dry hydrant, Claverack now offers \$1,000 donations to interested fire departments to assist with installation and equipment expenses.

A donation request form is available at the Claverack office, by mail or online at www.claverack.com. The form specifies the requirements of submitting a request to be eligible for the donation. Funds are limited, so the donations are offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

Municipal Emergency Services, Inc. provides discounted pricing to local fire departments working with Claverack Electric for dry hydrant equipment purchases. This change will ensure the most up-to-date equipment is always available, and needed parts can be shipped directly to fire departments.

To qualify for the donation, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) must facilitate the design and

approval of the proposed dry hydrant locations. NRCS representatives will be involved throughout the process and will provide an approval letter to be included with all donation request forms.

Please contact our member services department at 1-800-326-9799 with any questions or to have a form sent to your fire department.

Cooperative members who are interested in having a dry hydrant installed on their properties should contact their local fire company directly to encourage them to apply for funding through Claverack's dry hydrant program. ☀

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To find us on Facebook, simply click on the Facebook icon on our homepage at www.claverack.com. You can also view all of our Facebook posts by checking out the Facebook feed on the right side of our homepage.

HERE'S SOMETHING THAT WILL REALLY WAKE YOU UP.



ELECTRICITY

1937.....	5¢
2017.....	13¢

INCREASE..... 2.6X
BASED ON AVERAGE COST PER KILOWATT HOUR

POUND OF COFFEE

1937.....	14.5¢
2017.....	\$4.47

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