

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Claverack REC

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Office Hours

Monday through Friday

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

Jeff Fetzer, CCC, Local Pages Editor

Guest Column



Talking reliability, performance and acronyms

By Steve Allabaugh, *Director of Engineering*

WHAT is good reliability? What is the difference between reliability and performance? Both terms can elicit a wide range of responses.

We can all agree the hydraulic system controlling the landing gear of a jet needs to be more reliable than the hydraulics on my log splitter. My dial-up connection reliably connected me to the world wide web in 1999, but its performance wouldn't be capable of handling a video web conference today.

In the electric utility world, reliability and performance go hand in hand. Expectations of reliability and performance also tend to change over time.

As our uses of electricity have evolved, so have our expectations. The blinks or momentary interruptions that are a result of the automatic reclosers doing their job were no big deal years ago. Today, blinks can be an inconvenience for our consumer-members with electronics in the home and can be an even bigger performance issue for commercial or industrial facilities.

So how is the Claverack system performing? Are certain areas better than others? Are we investing in the right maintenance and improvements in the right areas? Where should we invest?


To help answer these questions, we use common electric utility reliability metrics with some great acronyms, including SAIDI, SAIFI, CAIDI and MAIFI.

SAIDI is a measure of the average length of time a Claverack member's service is interrupted in a year. SAIFI measures how frequently the average

customer is affected by a sustained outage; CAIDI is used to track how long it takes to restore to service to our members on average, and MAIFI is a measure of momentary interruptions. These indices let us track how our system measures up over time and allow us to compare our performance to that of other utilities and benchmarks.

We also calculate these reliability indices on a substation and circuit basis to help us further drill down and evaluate how well specific areas of our grid are performing. Details of every outage are meticulously documented and reported by our crews right down to the exact pole with a problem.

Outages are separated into categories: trees and vegetation, equipment failure, animal contacts, and car-pole accidents. Then, tree-related outages are broken down into those caused by trees outside the right-of-way falling into the line, those caused by dying ash trees killed by the emerald ash borer invasion, trees and limbs felled by heavy snow and ice, and those fast-growing species that are encroaching upon our lines.

It's a tall task to operate and maintain over 2,700 miles of electric line in some of Pennsylvania's most beautiful, rural wooded countryside, all while providing the affordable, reliable, high-performing electrical service our modern life demands. But with the performance data gleaned from some great acronyms combined with the efforts of our crews, we are able to keep track of how we are doing and where we need to improve. 

When dealing with winter outages, have a plan

By Jeff Fetzer

POWER outages can strike at any time, but during the cold-weather months they can be particularly challenging and potentially dangerous. That's why it's so important to be prepared when the weather forecast calls for wicked winter weather.

"You don't want to wait until an incident occurs to get your wits about you and figure out what you want to do," says Sarah Neely, emergency management coordinator for Bradford County. "We try to promote that every family has a disaster plan. If you pre-plan, you are more apt to follow that plan when an incident occurs."

Having a plan ensures you have all the supplies necessary to survive a winter storm-related outage in your home for an extended period of time. It also means you have identified alternative locations where you can stay temporarily if a medical condition or lack of heat force you from your home.

To develop an emergency plan, Neely

encourages people to visit the Federal Emergency Management Agency's website at www.ready.gov and follow the steps outlined in the "Make A Plan" page well before a major storm is set to strike.

"Once you have a plan, make sure you practice it," she says. "If it requires you to relocate during an emergency situation, you need to call your family members and let them know so they aren't calling here and freaking out."

For those weathering a prolonged power outage in their own homes, she recommends having a three- to five-day supply of non-perishable food and extra water, as well as flashlights and batteries, radios and telephones that do not require electricity to function. Please see "Winter Storm Checklist" sidebar on the next page for additional tips for sheltering in place.

PROTECT YOURSELF DURING A POWER OUTAGE

- Keep freezers and refrigerators closed.
- Disconnect appliances and electronics to avoid damage from electrical surges.
- Only use generators outdoors and away from windows.
- Use alternate plans for refrigerating medicines or power-dependent medical devices.
- Do not use a gas stove to heat your home.
- If safe, go to an alternate location for heat or cooling.
- Check on neighbors.

"You also should think about how you are going to prepare food and need to be very careful about heating sources you plan to use during a prolonged outage in the winter months," she says.

Staying informed about pending storms and other weather events is also critical. All Pennsylvania counties are required to have an emergency notification system to alert residents to potential emergencies. The two most common mass notification systems used by counties in our region are Swift911 and Code Red.

You can sign up for emergency notification through these systems through your county's emergency management department or through your county government's website.

When a major weather event or other emergency is pending or in progress, the notification system will alert residents in the affected geographic areas who have signed up for the service via an automated telephone call, text message or email message.

"We rely heavily on the National Weather Service, which has proven

Generate safely

To ensure the safety of our lineworkers, Claverack requires that backup power sources such as standby and portable generators must be completely isolated from the cooperative's power lines to avoid backfeeding electricity into the co-op's distribution system.

During an outage, lineworkers trying to restore power, or anyone who contacts a downed line, could be seriously injured or killed by backfeed from an improperly installed generator.

Properly isolating your generator from the co-op's electric lines requires the installation of a double-throw transfer switch, which must be installed by a professional electrician.

The switch makes it impossible to connect the main power source to the generator. Its use is required by the National Electric Code when connecting an auxiliary power source to an existing system.

If you have questions about the proper installation of an emergency generator, contact Claverack's engineering department at 1-800-326-9799. For additional information about generators, visit our website at www.claverack.com.

Winter storm checklist

If extreme weather is forecasted, be prepared for a power outage. Assemble supplies like bread and milk to have on hand before the storm hits. Rotate your supplies to keep them fresh and use the following checklist to help prepare for winter power outages:

Have Plenty of Food

- ▶ Keep a three- to five-day supply of drinking water in plastic bottles. Plan on two gallons of water per person, per day.
- ▶ Have a supply of nonperishable foods that will last for three to five days. Canned meats, tuna fish and peanut butter are good foods to store. Be sure you have a manual can opener. And don't forget baby food, formula and pet foods!
- ▶ Use paper plates and plastic utensils to conserve water
- ▶ Have a camp stove, canned heat or grill for outdoor cooking.

Stay In Touch

- ▶ Have a portable, battery-powered radio and alarm clock.
- ▶ Have one non-portable phone that will work even if power is interrupted.
- ▶ Plan where to meet and how to communicate with family members, if separated.
- ▶ Keep essential family member contact information available.

Keep Things Going

- ▶ Keep plenty of gas in your car.
- ▶ Keep extra batteries, matches, propane, charcoal and firewood.

Stay Healthy and Warm

- ▶ Coordinate with neighbors for care of the elderly and disabled living alone.
- ▶ Maintain a supply of prescriptions, nonprescription drugs, vitamins and special dietary foods.
- ▶ Keep sanitary and personal hygiene supplies replenished. Pre-moistened cleansing towelettes help sanitize and conserve water.
- ▶ Put first-aid kits in your home and car.
- ▶ Make sure you have cold weather clothing, foul weather gear, blankets and sleeping bags.
- ▶ Consider purchasing alternative UL-approved heating devices. Portable heaters and woodstoves are helpful, but remember to use them safely.
- ▶ Use flashlights and other battery-operated lighting instead of candles.
- ▶ Keep fire extinguishers fully charged.
- ▶ Fill your bathtub with water for bathroom use before the storm.

to be really, really accurate, for the notifications that we send out regarding snowstorms, ice storms or flooding events," Neely says.

When severe weather results in major power outages, Claverack ramps up its communication efforts to keep consumer-members informed about the status of the outage and to relay additional pertinent information.

During major outages, the electric cooperative posts regular storm restoration updates and other pertinent information on its website, www.claverack.com, as well as through Facebook.

"Our website is really the main driver of information during outages,"

says Brian Zeidner, Claverack's director of member services. "In addition to providing regular outage updates on the Facebook feed on our web page, we have a real-time outage map that shows where there are outages on our system."

Zeidner also points members to the co-op website for additional information about outage preparation, as well as generator safety.

"I really encourage pre-planning," says Zeidner. "Typically, we get some notice in advance of a big storm, so members should make a plan ahead of time and determine if they are going to need to pack up and leave or if they need to make preparations to be in a home without power for a prolonged period."

Reporting a power outage


The first thing you want to do when you lose power is **call the cooperative at 1-800-326-9799 to report the outage.**

Please don't assume that we know you are out of power or that your neighbors called in to report the outage. *Also, please don't report the outage to our Facebook site because it is not monitored at all times.*

Here are some simple steps to follow when an outage occurs:

- ▶ Never attempt to fix or move an electric line yourself. Fallen lines often remain energized. Contact with live wires can result in injury or death.
- ▶ Check your circuit breakers and fuses. If nothing appears out of the ordinary, call the cooperative.
- ▶ Call 1-800-326-9799 to report an outage. This number is answered by our operators 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- ▶ Provide the telephone number of the account that is out of service.
- ▶ Report when you lost power. Also tell us if all or only some of your lights are out, or whether your lights are flickering or dim
- ▶ If possible, tell the Claverack operator whether or not your neighbors have electricity.
- ▶ Report if you noticed downed lines, trees on electric wires, sparking transformers, flashes of light, explosions or unusual noises, broken poles, tree-blocked roadways, car accidents, etc.

One thing members don't have to worry about when a big storm approaches is whether their electric co-op will be ready.

"In the utility world, if you are not prepared every single day — your trucks, your people, your equipment — to respond to disaster, then you are not prepared," says Doug Nichols, Claverack director of operations. 

Claverack's offices will be closed in observance of Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, Nov. 22.

Be Aware of third-party payment agencies when paying your Claverack bill

We all have bills to pay, and convenience and security when making those payments is important to everyone. We offer multiple secure payment options to our Claverack members, free of charge:

1) Send a check with your bill stub via USPS.

2) Visit our Wysox office to pay by cash or check during regular business hours or after hours in our secure drop box.

3) Pay by phone using a check or debit/credit card with our automated system: 1-877-853-6463.

4) Pay online using a check or debit/credit card with SmartHub: www.claverack.com (Pay Bill). The SmartHub mobile app is available to iOS and Android users.

5) Set up automatic payments with the PAiD Plan so your payment is automatically posted on the due date each month. You can set this up through SmartHub at our website.

Recently, some of our members have been utilizing third-party payment agencies to make payments to their Claverack account. We'd like to point out a few things that you should know if you choose to make your payment this way. First, a processing fee may be applied to your transaction by the agency. Second, although the payment may be withdrawn from your bank account the day you initiate the transaction, the agency may be sending a paper check to our office, which could delay the posting of your payment by the due date, resulting in a late fee being applied to your account. Finally, although the agency website may display the Claverack logo, www.claverack.com is the only registered website for Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative.

The most important thing to do is research the "fine print" if you choose to utilize any third-party payment options. If you have any questions about Claverack payment options, please contact us at 1-800-326-9799.



DONATION: Claverack Board Chairman James Luce presents a \$5,000 donation to Animal Care Sanctuary's Give Them a Leash on Life capital campaign. The donation will go toward renovations to the dog kennel at the East Smithfield pet shelter. On hand for the check presentation are, from left, capital campaign Chairman Doug Ulkins, shelter Assistant Director Rachel Rossiter with Isaac the dog, Claverack Director Steve Sliwinski, Animal Care Sanctuary board member Robert Barnes, Luce, Claverack President & CEO Bobbi Kilmer, and Animal Care Sanctuary board member Maggie Ulkins.

Claverack helps members save even more when buying Energy Star appliances

TO ENCOURAGE members to practice energy conservation and responsible energy use, Claverack offers rebates of up to \$100 to consumer-members who purchase qualifying Energy Star appliances.

With Claverack's new Energy Star rebate program, members not only benefit from energy savings generated from the product itself, they get the added benefit of a direct rebate from the co-op for their purchase. For Energy Star-rated refrigerators, the rebate amount is \$100; for washers or dryers, members will receive a \$50 rebate.

To apply for the rebate through the Claverack Energy Star Rebate Program members must:

- ▶ Purchase an Energy Star-rated refrigerator, washer or dryer in the current calendar year.
- ▶ Complete a rebate form, which can be found on the Claverack home page, www.claverack.com, or by call-

ing the office at 1-800-326-9799.

- ▶ Include a receipt or invoice showing the date and purchase price of the Energy Star items.
- ▶ Include a copy of the Energy Star label from the appliance.
- ▶ Mail all documentation to: Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, Attn: Appliance Rebate Program, 32750 Route 6, Wysox, PA 18854.

Once all documentation is received, a bill credit will be applied to your account. Rebates are available on a first-come, first-served basis. There is a limit of one rebate per appliance type per member account, and appliances must be installed within Claverack's service territory.

Funding for rebates is limited, and the rebate program is subject to change or cancellation without notice.

For more information, contact the Claverack member services department at 1-800-326-9799. ☀