

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Claverack REC

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Brian Zeidner, Director, Member Services

Office Hours

Monday through Friday

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

Jeff Fetzer, Local Pages Editor

From the President & CEO



We're here for you

By Bobbi Kilmer

BY THE TIME this issue reaches your mailbox, I hope we have seen the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we can start to think about some of the things that bring us joy during the Pennsylvania springtime.

I'm drafting this column from my home office in late March and reflecting on recent events. Over the course of the last 10 days, we have closed our office, modified our work schedules and, in many cases, are learning to work in isolation, whether it be from our home or a remote corner of our office building.

Since the onset of the pandemic, our focus has been to maintain a reliable supply of electricity to your home or business. In order to accomplish this, we need to ensure that our employees remain healthy and able to respond to power outages.

We also need to be sure we can take your calls and answer your questions. We have some employees who are working from home and others who are operating on staggered schedules in order to staff the office. Our goal has been to minimize the exposure of employees to one another and to the public.

We have suspended all non-critical work involving our line crews to best ensure they are available to respond to critical work, such as power outages and emergency situations, when they occur.

We are following the progression of the pandemic in our service territory and look forward to gradually resuming normal operations. We are

also learning new ways to do our jobs through remote access to our computer systems and teleconferencing. I believe that once we master some of these new methods, it will help us well into the future by offering more ways for our employees to serve our members during severe weather and other emergencies.

We know that this situation is causing hardship for many of our members and their communities. We urge members who are struggling to pay their electric bills due to business closure, layoffs, illness or other hardships to call our office. We are expanding our member assistance programs during these challenging times, and we want to work with you to help you get back on track. We are also suspending late fees and disconnections during this emergency period.

We know there are many members affected by the COVID-19 pandemic who have never before asked for help, but be assured we are here to get you through this. We're all in this together, so again, please don't hesitate to contact our office so that we can work with you.

I am so grateful for the dedication of our employees, who have demonstrated flexibility and resilience as they adapt to changing work schedules and new ways to do their jobs while continuing to take care of their families, neighbors and communities. I'd also like to thank our members for your patience during this time. We look forward to getting back to our normal routines just as you do. 

Know the risks with portable generators

By Pete Yastishock

Director of Safety & Compliance

CLAVERACK REC has excellent experience in reliability. However, Mother Nature sometimes shows her power and is the No. 1 cause of major outages for all electric providers.

While we work hard to provide reliable service, there will always be occasional power outages. When outages do occur, some members turn to portable generators to meet their electricity needs.

It's important for anyone who uses or is considering purchasing a generator to be aware of the serious potential hazards involved in using portable generators.

If connected and used properly, they can be a blessing during a prolonged outage. But improperly installed or operated generators can have deadly consequences.

If you are thinking of using a portable generator, please take a moment to review some of the basic facts and risks associated with generators:

- ▶ Know the capability of your generator, the size and what load it can actually power in your house.
- ▶ Never set up a generator indoors or in garages. Using a generator inside of a building is one of the top causes of carbon monoxide fatalities.
- ▶ Make sure your generator is turned off and cool before you refuel the engine to prevent the potential of fire while refilling.
- ▶ Most portable generators are not meant to run continuously, so give your generator a break.
- ▶ For tractor-driven units, be sure to always turn off the tractor and PTO control to service the generator. Set the tractor brake before starting the generator.
- ▶ Avoid using generators in wet areas to avoid electrical shock.
- ▶ Only connect loads to the generator when it is fully running. Disconnect the loads before starting the generator and before stopping it. This protects your generator, as well as



your appliances, from damage.

- ▶ Make sure to use heavy duty cords sized for your power needs to prevent fires or shock.
- ▶ Most importantly, NEVER connect the generator into your breaker panel or into your house outlet without a transfer switch.

The transfer switch isolates your generator from the electric service and distribution lines. This keeps workers and the public from getting shocked by the electrical output of your generator, and it prevents your generator from burning up or shorting out.

If you use a portable or standby generator, it's important to know that your generator can, and will, put electrical power back through the transformer and onto the co-op's distribution lines if you fail to properly isolate it from the co-op's electric system.

Once that electricity goes from a non-isolated generator through the transformer, it is converted to high-voltage electricity and can seriously injure or kill or a lineworker repairing lines or a neighbor who touches downed wires.

There are two appropriate ways to prevent a generator from feeding

power back into our system. One safe method is to plug any appliance or tool you are using directly into the outlets housed on the generator.

But if you connect your generator to your house wiring or an outlet inside your home, the National Electrical Code requires you to install a transfer switch.

The transfer switch isolates your generator from the service and distribution lines. This keeps lineworkers and the public from getting shocked by the electrical output of your generator, and it prevents your generator from burning up or shorting out.

So what does the transfer switch do? In simple terms, it prevents the house wiring from being connected to the generator and the utility service at the same time.

A transfer switch must be installed by a qualified electrician. Any work that must be done at the meter base or between the main panel and the meter base also requires an inspection from a qualified electrical inspector.

For more information about emergency generators, please contact Claverack's member services department at 1-800-326-9799 or 570-265-2167. ⚡



SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS: Claverack apprentice linemen David Gardner, left, and Kyle Urban team up to restructure the equipment on a pole as part of a line relocation project near Lawton in Susquehanna County. The project involved relocating an old line section that crossed farmland and fields. The new line, built along Gage Road, required the installation of 21 poles prior to reconductoring. Crews from the Tunkhannock and Montrose districts converged at the site with nine trucks and a get-'er-done attitude, making quick work of the new line installation during a 3-hour planned outage. Bucky Camburn, manager of field operations, said the project went smoothly and provided the crews' apprentice linemen with some valuable hands-on experience in line construction. "Everyone pulled together and did a great job," he said. "It couldn't have gone any better!"

Beware of scam artists posing as utility workers

Claverack advises members to be suspicious of anyone who attempts to get inside their homes by stating he or she works for Claverack.

"Claverack workers do not perform repairs on household wiring systems," says Brian Zeidner, director of member services. "In fact, our employees have instructions not to enter customers' homes unless it is an emergency or for pre-arranged visits for services such as conducting energy audits."

Each Claverack employee carries a laminated plastic identification card with his or her photograph. Employees drive vehicles that are clearly marked with the Claverack logo on the doors.

If someone unexpected comes to your door and states he or she is a Claverack employee, protect yourself by:

- ▶ Asking to see identification
- ▶ Calling Claverack at 1-800-326-9799 to verify work and employee identities if there is any doubt
- ▶ Looking for clearly marked service vehicles
- ▶ Reporting any suspicious activity to the police

Operation Round-Up

MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS

Financial hardships created by the COVID-19 pandemic have caused many cooperative families to struggle keeping up with their energy bills.

You can help some of your neighbors in need by participating in Claverack's Operation Round-Up program.



This voluntary program allows you to assist members of the cooperative experiencing difficulties paying their electric bills. Participating in the program is inexpensive – less than \$1 a month – and allows you to help make a difference in a neighbor's life.

CONTRIBUTING IS EASY

The concept is simple. Claverack rounds up your monthly electric bill to the next dollar amount. The difference between the round-up amount and your actual bill amount goes into our member assistance fund.

For example, if your electric bill is \$100.32, then you would pay \$101. The extra 68 cents goes into our member assistance fund for needy families of the cooperative. The average yearly donation is \$6. And you can halt participation in the program at any time by simply calling the office.

CAN YOU SPARE MORE THAN CHANGE?

If you'd like to help your fellow members even more during this unprecedented time of financial uncertainty, we have created additional options for you to contribute more than the traditional round-up amount.

Members can add an extra dollar amount to their monthly donation. Simply enter the even dollar amount that you would like to add to the Operation Round-Up form that can be found on our website, www.claverack.com, or call our office and ask your member service representative to make the change for you. Your bill will reflect the total amount donated each month.

If you would prefer to make a one-time donation to Operation Round-Up, that option is also available. Enter the one-time amount in the associated field on our online Round-Up form, and we will add that to your account. With the next bill you receive, the amount of your donation will be added to the total amount due, and you will see it listed as "Roundup Amt."

BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

If you would like to help others, Operation Round-Up is an easy way to do so.

Sign up today to start helping others by calling us at 1-800-326-9799, or by visiting the Claverack website and clicking on Operation Round-Up under the "Your Bill" drop-down menu at the top of the screen.

Teach kids about electrical safety

HOME should be a place of comfort for you and your family. That comfort includes family, familiarity and safety. Safety requires some work and education, especially with kids in the house.

To help protect your family, educate your children or grandchildren at a young age about electrical safety.

Some of the important lessons that Safe Electricity recommends sharing with your kids are:

- ▶ Let them know that water and electricity are a dangerous mix. Never sit, stand, or attempt to walk through water that is in contact with

an electric appliance or toy.

- ▶ Emphasize that electronics and their accessories have to be handled with care. Encourage younger children to ask for help when they want to use an electronic device.
- ▶ Electrical cords and outlets can be of interest to curious young minds, but should be left alone. Never put fingers or objects such as forks or knives into electrical outlets.
- ▶ Also, never stick fingers or objects into toasters or any other electrical appliance.

To learn more about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Co-op offers scholarship to MU students

Applications are being accepted for a \$1,000 scholarship that is available for the 2020-21 academic year to a Mansfield University student who is a Claverack member or dependent.

To be eligible for consideration, students must:

- ▶ be enrolled full time at Mansfield University
- ▶ demonstrate financial need
- ▶ be a member or dependent of a member of Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative
- ▶ demonstrate the highest traits of leadership, citizenship and character.

Students can also apply online by visiting our homepage, claverack.com, and clicking on Scholarships under the "Your Community" drop-down menu at the top of the screen.

Claverack endowed the scholarship fund at Mansfield University in 2000, with a goal of providing financial assistance to any Claverack member or dependent pursuing a degree at the university.

A member of the State System of Higher Education, Mansfield University attracts many students from throughout the cooperative's service territory.

Keep in touch with us on Facebook

Looking to keep up with the latest news involving your local electric cooperative? Join us on Facebook.

By "liking" Claverack REC on Facebook, you will receive updates about power outages, current events and activities involving the cooperative, as well as information about system projects, photos and other items of interest.

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

All Claverack offices will be closed on Monday, May 25, in observance of Memorial Day.

Plant the right tree in the right place

Trees beautify the landscape around our homes and, when planted in the right spot, can even help lower energy bills. But the wrong tree in the wrong place can be a hazard to electric lines.

Claverack discourages members from planting trees of any kind under our electric lines. Low-growth trees such as magnolia, lilac, crabapple and fruit-bearing trees with maximum height and spread of 25 feet should be planted at least 25 feet from our lines.

Members with concerns about trees growing on or along rights of way on their properties are asked to contact the Claverack office at 1-800-326-9799.

Tree Planting Guide

