

Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

SOMERSET REC

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OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

EMERGENCY OUTAGE NUMBERS

814-445-4106
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Guest Column

Getting Through Winter Together



EMILY BAER

IF THERE'S ONE THING WE ALL UNDERSTAND here in the Laurel Highlands, it's winter. By the time February rolls around, most of us have already shoveled our fair share of snow, scraped more windshields than we'd like to admit, and had at least one moment where we wondered if spring forgot about us entirely.

Heavy snow, frigid temperatures, and long bouts of freezing rain can make everyday tasks harder — and when the weather turns severe, keeping the lights on becomes a true test of preparation and teamwork. At Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), we take that responsibility seriously, and I want to share a little about how we keep our members protected in the heart of winter.

Living and working in one of Pennsylvania's snowbelt regions means our crews are no strangers to difficult weather conditions. Long before a storm hits, our team has already dedicated countless hours inspecting line sections, checking poles and equipment, stocking trucks, and maintaining the fleet that performs in some of the state's harshest terrain and weather patterns. Winter reliability doesn't happen overnight; it's something we prepare for all year.

When winter storms arrive, our employees respond quickly, safely and with a commitment that continues to impress me outage after outage. Many of our lineworkers spend nights and weekends away from their families during major storms so they can restore service as quickly as conditions allow. The work is demanding, and the conditions are often unpredictable, but their dedication reflects what makes cooperatives different: We serve our neighbors.

Of course, you play a big part in winter safety, too. If your lights go out and you hear or see something that you feel could be the result of a power outage, reporting this information right away helps us pinpoint trouble spots faster. Also, making sure generators are installed properly prevents dangerous back feeding. As always, staying far away from downed lines is one of the most important things you can do to protect yourself and our crews.

Whether you live in a quiet valley or on a windy hill, we're all doing our part to get through the cold weather safely. I am confident in our operations department, our preparation and the resilience of the members we serve.

Thank you for your continued trust in Somerset REC. Stay safe, stay warm, and if you need us, we're here. ❄️

EMILY BAER

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND MEMBER SERVICES

"If your lights go out and you hear or see something that you feel could be the result of a power outage, reporting this information right away helps us pinpoint trouble spots faster."

Somerset REC Completes Full Deployment of Radio-Frequency Meters

EMILY BAER, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & MEMBER SERVICES

SOMERSET RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE (REC) recently reached an important milestone in strengthening our electric system's reliability and efficiency: a full installation of radio-frequency (RF) meters across our service territory.

Our RF meter conversion started as a pilot program in March 2018, and it primarily focused on how this type of communication system would work with our terrain and foliage. Over the years, we have been pleased by how effective the meters are as they reach remote areas and maintain quality connections.

One of the main goals of Somerset REC's strategic planning sessions was to fully deploy RF meters by 2026 in a cost-effective way. Now, just shy of eight years, we are thankful to have this top-of-the-line metering technology deployed throughout our service territory. This upgrade is more than just a new piece of equipment on the side of your home or barn; it's a system improvement that delivers real, measurable benefits to every member.

RF meters give our cooperative the ability to securely collect meter readings and system data over a wireless network. With 14,227 meters spread across Bedford, Fayette, Somerset and Westmoreland counties — as well as Garrett County, Md., which includes rural roads, steep terrain, and remote ridgelines — this technology helps us respond to outages quicker, operate more efficiently, troubleshoot meters from the office and make better decisions for the future of your electric service. Most importantly, it helps us serve you better.

Faster outage response – even before you call

One of the biggest advantages of RF meters is how quickly they communicate with our system when a problem occurs. In many cases, the meter can notify us that an outage has happened before a member even picks up the phone.

This automatic notification helps our dispatcher quickly



OUTAGE REPORTING: Somerset REC Operations Assistant Tawnya Zorn monitors outage maps in real time, which helps dispatch crews safely and quickly while maintaining communication with staff in the field.

direct crews to the correct location. In an area where back roads, wooded rights of way, and heavy winter storms can slow down travel, saving time matters.

Improved bill accuracy and more information

With RF meters, readings are collected automatically and consistently. That means no more estimated billing, no missed readings and far fewer manual adjustments.

Even better, this technology gives Somerset REC access to more detailed use information. Over time, these insights can help members:

- ▶ Understand their daily or seasonal energy patterns, which can be reviewed on the SmartHub app
- ▶ Track how heating and cooling habits affect costs
- ▶ Receive text and push notifications about outage updates, billing information and electric use
- ▶ Identify opportunities to conserve energy
- ▶ Make smarter decisions about appliances, generators or efficiency upgrades

As we continue to develop member tools and online account features, this data will make it easier for every household and business to manage their electric use.

A safer way to keep the power flowing

RF metering also improves safety for both members and employees.

Fewer manual meter readings mean our lineworkers don't have to enter yards as often as they previously did or access hard-to-reach areas on foot. During winter storms or after severe weather, the meters' ability to send voltage and status information helps crews quickly verify if a line is energized, reducing time spent in dangerous conditions.

And when members have questions about power quality — such as blinking lights or voltage concerns — RF meters allow us to remotely retrieve data that helps diagnose issues more efficiently.

Another new feature detects when a meter becomes hotter than expected. Usually, heat inside a meter base indicates a loose or corroded connection. This information is important because it may alert us to a problem before it becomes severe.

Efficiency that helps control costs

Every innovation and decision we invest in must benefit the membership, and RF meters do exactly that. By upgrading to RF meters, we have significantly reduced vehicle fuel use, wear and tear on trucks, time spent on manual meter routes, field visits to disconnect or reconnect service and labor hours dedicated to routine meter reads in



BEHIND THE SCENES: Meter technician Jeff Brant tests an RF meter at the Somerset REC office. These meters improve billing accuracy and provide a more reliable electric system for our members.

remote areas of our service territory.

These cost-savings allow Somerset REC to direct more resources to system upgrades, maintenance and reliability improvements. This helps us operate more efficiently and that helps keep rates as stable as possible for members.

Strengthening the grid for the future

RF meter technology is an essential building block for the modern grid. As electricity demand continues to grow and expectations for reliability increase, these meters position the co-op to detect issues proactively, integrate future energy technologies, improve peak load management, charge for on-demand electric use and enhance system monitoring across all five counties we serve.

We are proud to complete this systemwide upgrade, and we look forward to the many ways it will strengthen your electric service. 📡

Welcome New Employees Cole Glessner and Austin Hemminger

SOMERSET RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE (REC) is pleased to welcome two new employees, Cole Glessner and Austin Hemminger.

Cole joined the cooperative as an apprentice lineman on Nov. 17, 2025, and brings a strong hands-on background to his new role. Prior to joining Somerset REC, he worked with



Cole Glessner

the Plumbers and Pipefitters Union Local 354 and gained additional field experience with B&L Tree Service. His skill set also includes welding certification and a plumbing license, providing him with a well-rounded technical foundation that translates well to linework.

He is a 2018 Berlin Brothersvalley High School graduate. Outside of work, Cole enjoys spending time outdoors. He is a member of the New Baltimore Sportsman's Club and can often be found fishing or hunting when he's not on the job.

We're glad to have Cole on the Somerset REC team and look forward to watching him grow in his apprenticeship while serving our members safely and reliably.

Recently, a familiar face returned to Somerset REC when

Austin Hemminger went to work as an apprentice lineman on Nov. 18, 2025.

Austin brings valuable industry and local experience to his role. He previously worked for Donegal Construction as an operator for seven years, developing a strong foundation in equipment operation and jobsite safety. A 2017 graduate of Somerset Area High School, Austin also has a history with Somerset REC, having served as a right-of-way summer intern in 2017 and 2018.



Austin Hemminger

Outside of work, Austin enjoys hunting and farming. He and his wife, Bree, live in Somerset, where Austin maintains strong ties to the community he now helps serve through his work at the cooperative.

We're glad to welcome Austin back to Somerset REC and we look forward to his continued growth as an apprentice lineman while serving our members.

Please join us in welcoming Cole and Austin as they start this next chapter with Somerset REC. The work of a lineworker requires commitment and resilience, but through hard work and training, Cole and Austin are well on their way to succeed in their demanding roles. 🇺🇸

HELPING MEMBERS IN NEED

Within the membership of Somerset REC, there are members who face crisis situations beyond their control, leaving them with financial hardships. There are also cooperative members who generously contribute monetary donations to keep the lights on. Then there are some who have fallen into both categories.

If you know of someone who is experiencing a financial hardship such as loss of job, cancer/illness, car accident, house fire, etc., our Lights On and Pennies from Heaven programs are available to help. These two member-funded programs are available to assist those who have hit some hard times and need a little financial assistance with paying their electric bill.

To inquire or refer someone, please contact your billing representative.

A special thank you to those who have graciously donated. Although you don't always hear about your financial donation at work, we have seen your contribution make a positive impact on someone's life.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
PLEASE CALL 814-445-4106

