

Currents

Your Link to Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative



High Voltage . . .



Post No Bills

I remember this admonition from old movies and cartoons when building owners would put a sign on the wall or fence advising marketers to not attach posters, advertisements or playbills to the surface. They act like these essential marketing messages were graffiti or something. The very nerve! Naturally, any such placarded surface was festooned with all manner of poster and sign.

The point of this article is to ask that members "post no bills" when it comes to our power poles. While enticing and convenient spots to announce garage sales or solicit help in recovering lost pets, such signs can actually impede our crews when they need to service our facilities. The signs can make it hard to climb the poles and not because our guys stop to read what's posted.

We also get requests asking about attachment of banners and flags to our poles. These are an even larger issue for our crews and expose the individuals installing them to potential risk through contact with our power lines. It is not that we aren't supportive or patriotic, these attachments can quickly become a hazard and impediment.

The primary goal at your cooperative is to provide the most reliable service at the lowest possible cost. While signs, flags and banners might seem inconsequential towards this task, every little bit helps! Not wanting to invoke Trenton in this matter but it is illegal in the state to attach anything to utility poles. So, please don't put anything on our poles; you will be safer, our crews can work faster and you'll avoid a run in with NJ's finest.

Commentary by the President & CEO



AMR Benefits Everyone...

by Jim Siglin
President & CEO

In the spring of 2001, Sussex REC made the decision to convert its standard mechanical electric meters to allow for the implementation of an electronic automated meter reading system. Over the next four years, we made 100% of our meters capable of reading, recording and transmitting the electrical use of each individual member on an hourly basis. Modules inside the meter accumulate actual use and store it in their memory registers. At a specified time, this data is transmitted to our systems and stored for use in our billing processes.

How does an AMR system work? The picture below lays out our system in a general manner. Basically, we link all our substations to our office with voice grade communication lines.

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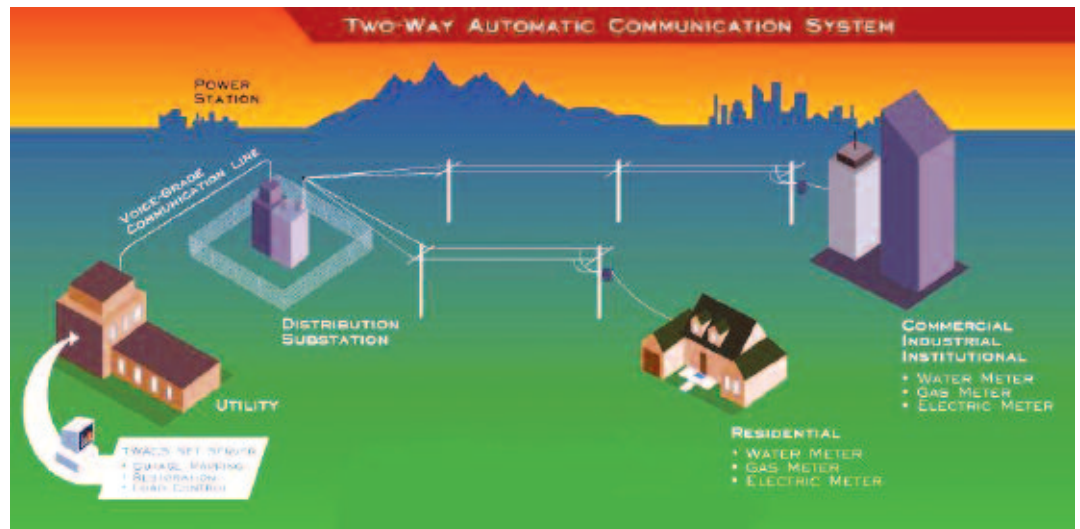
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Then, from each substation, data goes to and from each meter over our power lines. This is a true two-way system in that we can send requests to specific meters and get a response. In essence, it is like a big computer network with each meter acting as a tiny computer.

How does this investment benefit you, our members? In a variety of ways. First, there is accuracy. The meters transmit the data to us on a daily basis so when your bill is calculated there is no chance of human error. Our members are never subjected to estimated meter readings that may not reflect the true consumption nor are they required to read their own meters and send us the data. Our AMR system does this automatically.

The second benefit comes from the amount of data we have. Before, we had a monthly reading. If you had a question about your consumption, we could not pinpoint exactly when the power was used. Now we can help you analyze your consumption with a complete record of your use by the hour. For instance, a spike in consumption at odd hours may help track down a failing well pump or a system running in your home when you don't want it to. You can also look at what we term the "base load" of your home. This is the power that your home uses when everyone is asleep and all non-essen-

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Facts of Life from the 1500s

In the crush and bustle of modern life, we have all opined about how nice it must have been back when times “were simple”. I’m guilty. And, from the comfort and security of modern life, this notion has a certain appeal. Yes, its harmless fun but it is also interesting to understand what life was truly like. A short time back, my father e-mailed a list of facts from the 1500s and the modern sayings they engendered. I have selected a few to share and disabuse you of some of that romantic mindset.

Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water.” Gee, this would never happen with a nice Marathon water heater from SREC.

It’s raining cats and dogs

Houses had thatched roofs-thick straw-piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the small animals (domestic and wild) lived in the roof. When it rained hard enough, it would flush out the “critters”. Hence the saying, “It’s raining cats and dogs.”

Dirt Poor

The average floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence the saying, “Dirt poor.”

Chew the Fat

Sometimes people could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could “bring home the bacon.” They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and “chew the fat.”

Upper Crust

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf,

the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the “upper crust.”

Saved by the Bell – “A Dead Ringer”

England is old and small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people. So, they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a bone-house, and reuse the grave. When reopening these coffins, 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So, they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, thread it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night, “the graveyard shift” to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be “saved by the bell” or was considered “a dead ringer.”

We’ve come a long way, baby. Another good place to check to revitalize your enjoyment of what we have nowadays is to tour any medical or dental instrument museum. No wonder no one ever went to see a medical practitioner.

CALENDAR ENVY

By now, most readers have been exposed to the inclusion of the odd and offbeat holidays we publish in Currents. Perhaps you have been graced with a “How do you know this stuff?” reaction when flexing your newly won knowledge in social or business settings (and isn’t it just so satisfying?). Well, let me sweeten your calendar a tad more with the inclusion of candy dates worthy of note. Given their caloric content, it ought to “fill” or “round out” your calendar quite nicely. Enjoy or, should I say, “Bon Appétit.”

March

3rd week – American Chocolate Week
19th – National Chocolate Caramel Day
24th – National Chocolate-Covered Raisin Day

April

12th – National Licorice Day
21st – National Chocolate-Covered Cashews Day
22nd – National Jelly Bean Day

Don’t fret – here are the regular holiday updates for the next couple of months. Must keep your edge when contesting for the trivia crown.

March

Mar. 1-31 National Caffeine Awareness Month
Mar. 1-31 National Craft Month
Mar. 1-31 National Frozen Food Month
Mar. 1-31 National Nutrition Month
Mar. 1-31 National Umbrella Month
Mar. 1-31 Save Your Vision Month

Mar. 4 Int’l Scrapbooking Industry Day
Mar. 9 Check Your Batteries Day
Mar. 15 National Quilting Day
Mar. 17 St. Patrick’s Day
Mar. 20 Spring Begins
Mar. 21 Good Friday
Mar. 23 Easter
Mar. 24-30 Egg Salad Week
Mar. 25 Pecan Day
Mar. 23-29 National Cleaning Week
Mar. 29 National Mom & Pop Business Owners Day

April

Apr. 1/Sept 30 Home Improvement Time
Apr. 1-30 Car Care Month
Apr. 1-30 Customer Loyalty Month
Apr. 1-30 Fresh Florida Tomato Month
Apr. 1-30 National Decorating Month
Apr. 1-30 National Kite Month
Apr. 1-30 National Lawn Care Month
Apr. 1-30 National Pecan Month
Apr. 1-30 Soy Foods Month
Apr. 1-30 Straw Hat Month
Apr. 13-19 Women’s Nutrition Week
Apr. 10 National Siblings Day
Apr. 12 National Licorice Day
Apr. 15 Income Tax Pay-Day
Apr. 22 National Jelly Bean Day
Apr. 20-26 Administrative Professionals Week
Apr. 20-27 Passover



Spring is Around the Corner –

Whip that yard and garden into shape

Alright folks, we're the Garden State so let's look like it. Now drop and give me twenty five rows of flowers and vegetables. What did you say? All I want to see is trowels and clippers now move it, move it, move it!

Phew. Well, with that R. Lee Ermey (Want more R. Lee? Here you go! <http://www.rleermey.com/>) Drill Instructor harangue out of the way, it is time to tackle the yard and garden. What's your pleasure? A manicured lawn, a bountiful vegetable garden, a cutting flower bed, herbs? Regardless of your preference, the work done now will help maximize your results. Plus, it is a great excuse to get out and shake off those winter doldrums. The smell of the damp earth on a cool late winter day is almost intoxicating.

Where to start? If you are looking for good information, surf over to the Rutgers University Extension website <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/garden/>. They have a wealth of information that you can peruse at your leisure. Many of their items are available for downloading as a PDF file. I have a handful on my PC. They are easy to read and have excellent tips and information.

For most, the first order of business is to

clean winter's debris from the yard. I marvel at how many leaves I find after the snow has melted. I was positive I had them all raked and properly deposited. If you don't do it already, now is a great time to begin a compost pile. You can compost just about everything that comes from your yard and kitchen with the exception of meat products and fat. I generally separate leaves from the rest of the compost unless I have chopped them up with the mower. Find a spot at the back of your property and start a leaf pile. For best results, you should turn it occasionally. As the leaves decompose, you can begin to work them into your lawn and garden. Put all the other compost material in another pile and turn it as well. Gardeners Supply has some great composting devices and aids. Check them out at: <http://www.gardeners.com/>

Composting enriches the soil and keeps a lot of material out of the landfills.

Prepare your garden beds. While we can still have a killing frost until mid May, we can prepare the garden. Apply organic matter (compost if you have it), repair or build your raised beds and garden structures, put down weed control and fertilizer. Our resi-

dent gardener advises not turning your soil when it is wet as this will give it the consistency of cement and we all know how well things grow in cement. Organic options exist for just about everything these days so check with your local gardening supply place or head back to Gardeners Supply as noted above. The seed catalogs should have been arriving for months now. Order your favorites so you can start them inside towards the end of April. Transplanting seedlings after the last frost gives you a jump on the growing season.

Trim and prune landscape shrubbery. I like doing this in the late winter as it forces the new growth into a smaller area making the plant healthier and more robust. Some plants don't fare well under this method so be sure to confirm this practice where you are uncertain.

Now stand back and admire your prep work. I find it refreshing to see my neatly groomed yard and garden plot glowing pristinely against the backdrop of leafless trees and shrubs knowing my efforts will pay off handsomely in a few weeks.

Take Note of TV Power Consumption and S-A-V-E



The big game is past and March Madness looms tantalizingly on the horizon. High definition content and channels are growing at a frenetic rate. All this means more prime television viewing opportunities and you may be considering a large screen television to take advantage of all this broadcast eye candy.

Never wanting to be one to rain on any gadget parade I feel it incumbent upon me to post this warning: purchase your television with care. Not from the standpoint of warranty or fly-by-night outfits selling off the back of a truck in some parking lot. No, I mean take a look at the power consumption of the television you are considering.

The old cathode ray tube models use a fair amount of power but they aren't over the top. Flat screen models logically appear to use less because there is less to them, right? After all, how much juice can a TV only 3" deep use? Well, if it is a typical plasma model, about the same amount as one and one half refrigerators!! Wow! One of my favorite electronic vendors, Crutchfield, came out with some data on how much power televisions use. Check out info at: <http://www.crutchfieldadvisor.com/S-zCM9TVHJ8dV/learningcenter/home/TV-power.html?page=2>

Healthy Happy Water Heaters are Within Reach

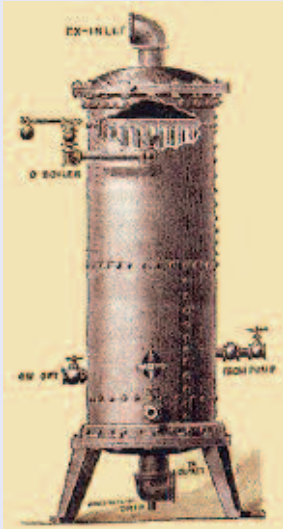
Dateline Sussex County (TELETYPE CHATTER IN THE BACKGROUND).
This just in:

“Water in Sussex County wrecks havoc on water heaters and their elements! In as little as three months, your element could be fouled! Fouled elements can become failed elements resulting in hot water shortages.”

(END OF AUDIBLE IMAGERY SECTION.)

Don't want to be caught with a shortage of hot water? Implement this simple monthly PM (that's preventive maintenance) procedure: drain a gallon of water from your tank. That's it, fairly simple yet very effective. Doing this will remove sediment and prevent or at least delay its accumulation that can lead to the foul circumstances described above.

If you have never done this, and I fall in this category, the sediment might already be perilously close to the bottom element. Try draining several gallons to catch up. If you have a water softener connected to your water supply, you probably don't have much of an accumulation. If you want to make sure, drain out some water and see if it is milky or has other signs of sedimentation and proceed from there.



MEMBERS ASK

In this case, a member suggested we expand on our chain saw safety tips. He called and reminded me that the article made no mention of electric chain saws. And here I am, working for the electric cooperative. His is an excellent point and electric chain saw safety has a couple of extra areas of concern. **First**, be sure your extension cord is rated to handle the saw.

Too small and it can overheat. **Next**, be sure your outlet is able to carry the load without tripping the circuit breaker. **Third**, be sure the cord is in good shape, free from cracks and exposed wires. **Fourth**, do not use in wet conditions or in dew soaked grass. And finally, keep the cord clear of the sawing area or your work day will be shortened abruptly!

Make the wise choice

When it's time to buy a new water heater, there are a number of choices you can make. You can purchase a heater warranted for six or eight years, one that will be cheap to buy, but expensive to operate. Or you can invest in a Marathon and save money in operating costs...for a lifetime. Marathon - super efficient and warranted not to leak for as long as you own your home.



- **Seamless Polybutylene Tank** will never rust, corrode or leak.
- **Environfoam® Insulation** completely surrounds the tank. Superior efficiency with no Ozone-depleting chemicals.
- **Heating Elements** designed to maintain water temperatures and perform in the harshest water environments (just like ours here in NJ).
- **Bowl-Shaped Tank Bottom** developed to allow more complete tank draining.

Contact us today for model availability, pricing and complete information. 973.875.5101 x117 or go to our website:
<http://www.sussexrec.com/brochures/Marathon.html>

Marathon WATER HEATERS *Simply the wisest choice in water heaters.*

AMR Benefits

continued from page <None>

tial energy using appliances and equipment are turned off. If this level is too high for your tastes, you can begin to look for energy conservation alternatives such as EnergyStar appliances, improved weather stripping and so on. With the renewed importance of making the best energy decisions, having this kind of information is a tremendous asset.

The new system also affords you conveniences not available with standard metering solutions. Moving out and want a final reading? We can query your meter remotely without having to send a person to get that read. Have a seasonal home and want to turn the power off (or on)? With the proper addition to your meter, we can remotely connect and disconnect your power, again without the time required to send one of our employees. The bottom line is that we are able to give you better service and more complete information when it comes to your electric consumption.

We are one of the few completely automated systems in the country and the only one in NJ. Over the coming months and years, we plan to build on this system and other technology to provide our members with the highest quality service at the lowest possible price.

Currents

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Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative

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The power of human connections

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