



**Sussex Rural
Electric Cooperative, Inc.**
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Currents

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THROWBACKS 1937 - 2022

This year, SREC will be celebrating its 85th anniversary with a look back in time through its long history...



Follow us on social media and be on the lookout for #ThrowbackThursday



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Our Board of Directors

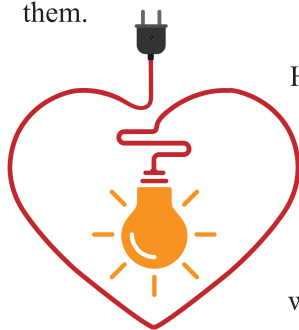
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Why We Love Our Members

By: Chris Reese, President & CEO
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It's February and love is in the air. Valentine's Day might be a holiday built around sales of cards and candy, but the sentiment behind it is real. It's a time to recognize and celebrate love. Romantic love gets the spotlight, but it's also an ideal time to share the love you have for your family, friends, and community to make sure they know you appreciate them.



Here at Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative, we think of the work that we do as a labor of love. We are heavily invested in the community that built us in 1937 and that we serve to this day. You and all your fellow members are our friends, family, and neighbors, and are the people that depend on us to provide the highest quality of service at the lowest possible cost. I am proud to serve my community, as is the rest of our team at SREC. Here are the top five reasons why we love our members and love the work that we do.

1. We love serving our members because without you, the Co-op wouldn't exist.

Our purpose is to provide you with reliable, affordable, and safe electricity. Simply put, Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative exists to serve you. Because this year is our 85th anniversary, we will be doing a lot of reflection on the Co-op's history and its reason for being and sharing this look back at the past with our members. We were originally formed to bring power to our local area when for-profit utilities would not, and our employees in 2022 carry on this mission every day.

2. You enable us to complete our mission by supporting our efforts to give back.

A major part of our mission is to serve our community and look after the greater good. With your assistance, we're able to help the most vulnerable members of our community. Recently, our members helped us collect hundreds of pounds of nonperishable food items to donate to the Sussex County Division of Social Services' food pantry just in time for the holidays. It is amazing to me to see the sheer amount of good that can be achieved with the support of our membership. We look forward to future projects where we can come together

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Why We Love Our Members

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with our members to help serve the greater good.

3. Our Co-op is led by its members.

You all are part owners of the Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative, so its direction as a Co-op is rightfully decided by the members. You vote in our elections for SREC's Board of Directors to set our priorities and goals as a business. On top of this, our directors are all members themselves. Because our board members live in the area, they're able to serve as the pulse of the larger community and identify immediate and long-term needs. We also consult the opinions of members through programs like our Member Advisory Committee.

4. You help us get it right.

Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative members are great about keeping us in the know. Members stay connected with us through social media and regularly provide great feedback that lets us know the topics that you're interested in, concerned about, or would like more information on. One of the most useful tools members use to help SREC continually improve is the Member Satisfaction Survey. You can visit www.sussexrec.com/surveys to let us know how we're doing, make suggestions, and ask questions about our service. Feedback from our members is key to help us grow while continuing to meet the needs of our membership. We greatly appreciate you taking time to share your thoughts!



WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!
LET US KNOW HOW WE'RE DOING:
TAKE OUR MEMBER
SATISFACTION SURVEY
WWW.SUSSEXREC.COM/SURVEYS

5. You and other SREC members make up the community we serve—and for us, it's all about community.

One of our guiding principles is a Concern for Community, and we make sure it impacts everything that drives our Cooperative. Our employees live and work here and care about our community, just like you. We're invested in this community and work to help it thrive. That's why Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative donates to local charities, schools, and volunteer fire and ambulance squads. Some of this is done through our Employee Directed Giving program, where employees are encouraged to donate to local causes with the benefit of SREC rounding their donation up to \$250. Our employees and directors are also involved in local organizations that work to do good for the people of our communities. Our Concern for Community also drives us to fund scholarships, such as our James Howard Goodwin Scholarship and Trade School Scholarship, to provide opportunities for growth to this community's next generation of leaders.



As a co-op, our mission is to enhance the quality of life in our community and look after its long-term interests. We love serving our members and our local community, and just like you, want to see it continue to thrive. I hope you all have a lovely Valentine's Day! We will continue to do our best to make sure that our membership feels the love we have for them.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

About 30% of a home's heating energy is lost through inefficient windows. Caulk and weatherstrip all windows to seal air leaks.

When running your home heating system, lock all operable windows to ensure the tightest seal possible.

Source: Dept. of Energy



Trade Up

By: Claudia Raffay, Director of Marketing & Member Services
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These days, so many high school students are dead set on going to college. Even in cases where they don't have a plan for their degree, a career path in mind, or any concern about paying back their loans, college seems to be the "default." When I was in school, things were different – many of my friends' goals pointed them towards the trades, where they found successful careers.

As much as the phrase "when I was in school" bothers me and makes me feel like an old woman, I feel that there is something to be said about how things used to be. I find it regrettable that interest in the trades among students is often not explored as a viable option. Moreso, I find it reprehensible that the option is looked down upon or seen as less important than going on to college.

I attended Newton High School in the late 80s. At that time, it seemed more of my fellow students went onto a trade job than to college. Most of my friends have had successful careers in the trades and, as they get older (as we all do), they are finding it harder and harder to find employees. Successful, respected plumbers, electricians, and HVAC professionals are lamenting about today's youth at every deli, bagel shop, and all other places tradesmen congregate across the county — heck, across the whole country!

Not every CEO went to college and no mortarboard or degree guarantees a big bank account. The reality is far less rosy for recent graduates. It turns out that going to college has become more of a rite of passage than a means of finding a career. I know some students who say they want to go onto college but have always hated school. These kids feel they have to do it even if they don't want to do it.

A multitude of high-paying skilled trade jobs are available in plumbing, electrical, healthcare, IT and more! They not only pay extremely well but are also vital to our communities and are in high demand. For example, electric linemen are in need across the nation as more than 50% of current linemen are approaching or are at the age of retirement. The next generation of linemen is needed to replace them and fill this critical need. The same goes for the many other professions that keep the world moving day-to-day.

How do we change the narrative? We need to build up the reputation of the trades among our country's young people. Sussex Vo-Tech and Sussex County Community College do a great job creating programs to help individuals who don't feel pressured to pursue college just because most of their peers are and instead choose to go confidently into the world of work. But there are still many students who are on the fence, aiming to pursue college even if they don't feel a deep need to.

How do we stress the importance of the trades as an option? It is up to all of us — parents, community members, teachers, guidance counselors, and coaches. We need to speak about the need and special nature of trades and assure them that these professions are not "lesser" than others that require a college degree. Even if your child wants to become a doctor, they will at some point in their life need a plumber. If any of you have had to call one lately, you know the odds of getting to see a doctor are a lot faster than getting to see a plumber. A shortage of these jobs affects everyone, so it is important for the next generation to understand that these fields are not just lucrative, but essential as well.

Let's work together to change the narrative. Let's show kids that there is a choice. If college is not for them, they can TRADE UP! Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative offers two \$1,000.00 scholarships to members' children pursuing a certification or trade education. Visit sussexrec.com/scholarships for more information.



Surge Protection 101

By: Steve Sokolowski, Marketing Associate
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A power surge is an unexpected increase in voltage, and it can occur from a variety of sources. Regardless of the cause, power surges can damage sensitive electronic devices and equipment in your home.

Let's take a look at common causes of power surges and how you can protect your sensitive electronics.

Lightning - This is one of the most common causes of power surges that affect homes. When lightning strikes an electrical system, the power surge must be channeled somewhere—unfortunately in many cases, it's sent through a home. Your best bet to protect against this is to preemptively unplug all unused devices and electronics during severe thunderstorms.

Electrical Overload - This can occur when devices or appliances are plugged into an outlet that can't handle the required amount of voltage, or if multiple devices are plugged into one outlet through an extension cord. If you're experiencing frequent power surges due to electrical overload, it's time to call a qualified electrician to evaluate your home's circuits and electrical needs.

Faulty Wiring - Imperfections in a home's wiring can also cause power surges. Damaged or exposed wires can cause spikes in voltage, creating a potentially dangerous situation. If you notice signs of faulty wiring like visible burns on outlets, buzzing sounds from outlets or frequently tripped circuit breakers, your home may be due for electrical wiring repairs and updates.

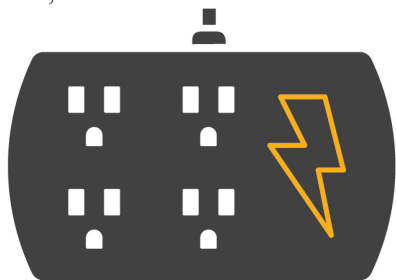
Voltage Spikes - In some cases, an unusually high amount of voltage can enter a home through electric or communication lines. This can sometimes occur when power is restored after an outage and there is a quick surge in current.

All of these events can do major damage to your home's electronics and appliances. Aside from unplugging devices when you suspect a power surge, there are two ways you can take additional precautions to protect electronics in your home.

Point-of-use surge protection devices, like power strips, can protect electronics during most surges. However, not all power strips include surge protection. It is important to read the packaging label carefully before you buy and not overload the power strip with too many devices. You can also install specialized electrical outlets that offer additional surge protection. You can consult a trusted electrician to learn more.

Another option is a whole-house surge protector, which is typically installed behind your electric meter. Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative sells and installs Tesco brand surge protectors to its members to protect their homes from power line overvoltage conditions. These devices instantly "clamp" when a higher-than-normal voltage is detected, preventing the surge from entering your home. They also come with a 10-year manufacturer warranty which offers to replace the surge protector and covered household devices that were damaged in the event of the surge protector's failure.

Occasional power surges are inevitable but utilizing both point-of-use devices and whole-house surge protections can keep your home and its electronics safe when a surge strikes, whatever the cause. For more information on SREC's surge protectors and surge protection in general, visit www.sussexrec.com/surge.



SURGE PROTECTION

Keep your electronic equipment safe.

A power surge is typically caused by lightning, changes in electrical loads, faulty wiring or damaged power lines.

Install power strips with surge protection to protect sensitive equipment.

- Easy to use (just plug them in)
- Protect electronics plugged into the device
- Must be replaced over time or after a major surge event