



**Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

# Currents

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## WATTS UP?

Be prepared in case an outage strikes! To prepare for a sustained outage, keep the following items on-hand: a three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day), flashlights with extra batteries, a three-day supply of non-perishable food (and pet food), a can opener, a first aid kit, and any necessary medication for those in your household.



For weekly fun facts on energy efficiency, electric safety, and more, follow us on social media and look out for #WattsUpWednesday!



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## Storm Prediction Predicament

By: Chris Reese, President & CEO  
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In the electric utility business, following the weather is imperative. Weather forecasts, radar, and wind speed maps are on at all times in several locations in our office building, including in my own office. Weather alerts are set on so many cell phones in our office that, if there is an emergency, it creates a cacophony of phone sirens. For me, this isn't just a professional consideration. I have mentioned in previous articles that if I had chosen another field besides engineering, it likely could have been meteorology.

While you can't predict the exact weather or which storm forecast might be verified, you can always plan ahead so that when a severe weather event strikes, you'll have the tools and resources needed to effectively weather the storm. The first step is to know how best to interpret the forecasting information that is available.

Credibility of sources is critical. Make sure you know where your sources are getting their information. Most of our television news channels are focused on New York City weather - rain for them may mean snow for us. The type of weather can even differ between individual towns depending on location and elevation. Remember the severe ice storm in 2008? I know Highland Lakes residents do. Everywhere else in our territory, it was just rain. No matter how much you trust your source or like your weather person, make sure to use a range of good sources so you can get a complete picture.

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# Storm Prediction Predicament

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Having a trusted source is good but knowing several is best. You need to identify what your sources agree on so you can be critical about discrepancies. We had the opportunity to interview one such source, accomplished meteorologist Walter Drag, for our second article in this issue of *Currents*. I'd like to thank Walter for taking the time to speak with us on his expertise and career history. I hope our readers find his answers as interesting as I did!

During a storm, check for forecast updates – the first look at a storm is never as good as the 5th or 15th. Remember that a forecast is just an estimate, or an “educated guess.” Take time to check for new information as it comes in. Taking advantage of new, more accurate information can help you determine a new plan or revise your current one. The further out a forecast is (in days), the less accurate it is.

No matter how experienced you are in dealing with storms, past experiences cannot always be relied on. Every storm is different and past storm experience is not always remembered perfectly. There are a million different factors that can affect a storm's outcome. A one-degree difference in temperature, plus or minus, can make a rainstorm an ice storm or create a snow/ice mix that can bend or break trees. A south wind instead of an northeasterly wind can be the final straw that topples a tree which has been standing for decades and withstood countless previous storms.

Heed warnings from emergency management professionals. While the media might get swept up in the hype of a storm, professionals in emergency management tend to wait for things to come into focus before recommending emergency measures. Orders to evacuate an area should be taken seriously. Experts know that an evacuation is not only terribly inconvenient but also creates a logistical nightmare. These orders are given as a last resort to keep everyone safe. Warnings to stay indoors and off the roads also help resolve problems more smoothly. With drivers at home, plows can more easily clear roads for our crews and, of course, first responders and other emergency personnel.

Stay in the know. Find your emergency management's Facebook page, your town and county's websites and other information channels, or follow your local electric cooperative on social media. It always pays to stay aware.

Keep your home prepared. Flashlights are only good if



you know where to find them and if the batteries work. How many times have you stood in the dark outside with the dog because someone in your family moved the flashlight? That scenario is made up. Certainly, no one in my family has ever used our flashlight to look for the back of their earring and then left the flashlight by the chair in the family room instead of back where it belongs. Go to our

website at [sussexrec.com/storms](http://sussexrec.com/storms) to find a host of tips to prepare you for a storm. We provide everything you need from lists of non-perishable foods to generator tips to help you be prepared.

In the event of an outage, turn off appliances, TVs, computers, and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert potential damage and will also help prevent overloading the circuits during power restoration. That said, leave one light on so you will know when power is restored. If utilizing a small household generator, consider using LED holiday lights to illuminate a living area. A strand of 100 white LED lights draws little energy yet produces considerable light. Solar lights also work if they can receive some sunlight during the day for charging.

Research and planning for severe storms or other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and can lessen the impact of the storm's effects. Act today, because there is always power in planning.

## HOW POWER IS SAFELY RESTORED

Please know that when the power goes out, we are doing all we can to safely and efficiently restore power. Here are the steps we take in the assessment and restoration process:

- STEP 1: ASSESS THE DAMAGE** - Icon of a house with a lightning bolt striking it.
- STEP 2: ADDRESS SAFETY RISKS** - Icon of a hand holding a lightning bolt.
- STEP 3: REPAIR TRANSMISSION LINES** - Icon of a power transmission tower.
- STEP 4: REPAIR DISTRIBUTION LINES** - Icon of a house with a power line connecting to it.

# Ask the Expert: Walter Drag

By: Claudia Raffay, Director of Marketing & Member Services  
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Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative member Walter Drag recently retired as Lead Forecaster at the National Weather Service in Mount Holly, NJ after over 37 years of service. After graduating from Newton High School, he attended Saint Louis University where he received a degree in Meteorology. Throughout his career, Mr. Drag has worked with AccuWeather, Weather Services Corp, and the National Weather Service. Mr. Drag has been published in several articles regarding weather patterns, post-event synopses, and a host of other meteorological issues. Mr. Drag was kind enough to allow us to speak with him for an interview about his expertise.



**SREC – Mr. Drag, thank you for participating in our first *Currents* interview. You have been a friend of ours for a long time. When did you become a member of Sussex Rural Electric?**

**WD** – When we moved to Wantage in November 2012.

**SREC – What inspired you to pursue a career in meteorology?**

**WD** – As a child, I'd watch the snow fall from the window seat of my parents' stone home on Foster Street in Newton, rooting for no school. I would listen to various radio station weather forecasts and gradually began to figure out the more reliable sources. It was my good fortune that my parents supported my interest with purchases of a rain gauge, a weather predicting tool, and a book on weather lore.

**SREC – Do you have a favorite television weather person?**

**WD** – Here in NJ, I tend to watch and compare against WNBC NY. During my many years in Boston, Don Kent and Harvey Leonard were my favorite reliable resources.

**SREC – Considering where we live, what information channels would you suggest our members listen to for weather forecasts?**

**WD** – Since we are mostly online and receiving info via cell phones, I strongly recommend the National Weather Service - Mount Holly for our area ([www.weather.gov/phi](http://www.weather.gov/phi)), but for other opinions you should check your favorite media outlets, especially from NYC. Information by the NWS offices and media tends to be localized, in an attempt to offer reliable detailed information.

**SREC – How do you feel when people say a storm “caught them completely off guard?”**

**WD** – I am asking everyone to forgive me, but this would generally be the person not receiving, or not believing, the weather message. Sometimes, it's good to ensure each of us have more than one source of weather information. The National Weather Service does a good job serving everyone. Your taxpayer money (estimated \$8/year/person) is well spent. Surprises are fewer and fewer as the modeling continues to become more accurate. Looking back on storms, it is easy to see that storms are not a “surprise.”

**SREC – Is there one forecast you made that really sticks with you over your 37+ years?**

**WD** – The so called “Perfect Storm” of October 1991 was an unusual hybrid of extra-tropical and tropical cyclones

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

**Use wool or rubber dryer balls in the clothes dryer to reduce drying time and static.**

Wool dryer balls can also absorb extra moisture. These are an efficient alternative to dryer sheets, which can create buildup on the dryer's filter and reduce air circulation. If you prefer dryer sheets, scrub the filter once a month to remove buildup.

Source:  
[www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)



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# Ask the Expert - Walter Drag

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that merged into a powerful ocean storm and arrived from an unusual direction, the northeast. It was well advertised in advance but caught some mariners and east coast residents from Puerto Rico and Florida to New England off guard with huge waves, and multiple well above normal flooding high tides. In 1993, I was honored to share the American Meteorological Society Award for an Exceptional Specific Prediction for that storm.

**SREC – Congratulations on the award. Most of us are familiar with the book, *The Perfect Storm* by Sebastian Junger or the American drama film of the same name that released in 2000, starring George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg, which was based on true events from that time.**

**Is there a forecast you made where no one else listened to a correct prediction of yours, or a case where you learned a lifelong lesson following a wrong prediction?**

**WD –** As far as a memorable bad forecast (“BUST,” in our weather lingo), yes! There was a major snowstorm in March 2001 that was half of predicted and subsequently changed NWS procedures for snowfall forecasting. A collaborative program was developed with our national Weather Prediction Center that included embracing a developing new aspect of our science: Ensembles!

**SREC – At one point we discussed your appreciation of a *Currents* article we ran in March 2019, “[Storm Approaching](#),” which discussed the hard-hitting news issue of people hoarding milk and bread to prepare for a storm. What do you and your family members stock up on before a storm strikes?**

**WD –** Bread, milk, eggs, like everyone else, also gas and a bit of cash in case power outages occur.

**SREC – You were kind enough to share a NOAA government document that speaks officially on climate change for our agency and Commerce Department. I know our younger members are particularly concerned with climate change and the warming of the past 40+ years. Any advice for our younger members?**

**WD -** It’s real. Myself, I pack out what I pack in and care for our environment. I think that there is much to learn regarding climate change. We need to be careful with what we have and adjust our behaviors to mitigate the potential adverse impact of a continued warming climate. You can read more about it at <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov>.

**Outages & After Hours**  
877-504-6463

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**WAIT! DON'T EAT THAT**

**Make sure food is SAFE TO EAT after an outage**

If your power is out for over four hours, the food in your refrigerator or freezer may not be safe to eat.

After an outage some foods can look harmless, but bacteria growing in them can cause a slew of symptoms like nausea, chills, cramps, or vomiting.

**During an outage, keep these food safety tips in mind:**

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed to keep in the cold air.
- Time the outage. Foods in an unopened fridge up to 4 hours should be safe to eat.\*
- Know the numbers:
  - A freezer that is half full (and is kept close) can keep foods frozen for 24 hours.\*
  - A freezer that is full (and kept closed) can keep foods frozen for 48 hours.\*
- Never taste food to determine if it is safe to eat: WHEN IN DOUBT, throw it out.
- Throw our perishable foods in your refrigerator after 4 hours without power or a cold source like dry ice.
- Perishable foods include meat, fish, cut fruits and vegetables, eggs meat, and leftovers.

\*According to the CDC

**Remember, when in DOUBT, throw it OUT.**

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives

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