



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

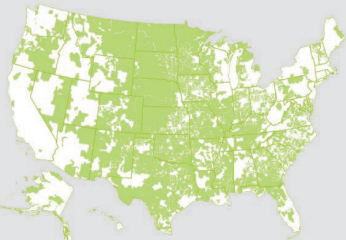


# Currents

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## WATTS UP?



SREC is the only electric co-op in New Jersey, but there are over 900 other electric cooperatives in the US. These co-ops power the homes and businesses of 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landmass. We are linked together through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, share resources and ideas, and provide mutual aid when needed.

*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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## The Causes of Outages

By: Chris Reese, President & CEO  
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Working at Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative means working to fulfill a commitment to our members. Lately, we have received some feedback from members who are concerned about the frequency of recent outages in some locations. It is true that over the last few months outages have been a little more frequent in certain areas, like Glenwood and Lafayette. While our line crews, engineers, and operations staff work hard to ensure that power is restored quickly and efficiently, we all understand the frustration.



Ultimately, most recent outages have been a result of two interrelated factors: extreme weather and trees. Living in a heavily wooded area like ours means trees are both a blessing and a curse. While they contribute greatly to the idyllic, natural landscape that we all enjoy, they are also a large contributor to power outages. In fact, trees and their branches are the #1 cause of power blinks and outages in our service territory. Trees that have been weakened by powerful storms are more easily knocked down and risk making contact with or fully toppling overhead power lines. This is something we work hard to mitigate, but some things, like the weather, are beyond our control.

We have been affected by two separate tropical cyclones during the last few months, Tropical Storm Elsa and the remnants of Hurricane Ida. These both posed significant challenges. This is not helped by the fact that, in general, weather patterns have become more erratic. Some organizations like the Environmental Protection Agency have speculated that weather is becoming more extreme due to a shifting climate. On page 2, we've included a map from the Iowa Environmental Mesonet tracking severe thunderstorm warnings departure from normal in 2021. You can see that our area has received 98 more warnings than in a normal year. I'm not taking a side on the climate change topic – but I do know we have certainly been affected by stronger and somewhat more frequent weather events.

In some cases, a strong storm only affects a small area. A good example of this is a Lake Panorama member's video from July, found at [sussexrec.com/panorama-storm](http://sussexrec.com/panorama-storm). That could just as easily look like a coastal storm, not one in Vernon, NJ. The storm was very powerful

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# The Causes of Outages

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in this area even while other pockets of our service territory saw nothing out of the ordinary. Due to the linear nature of power distribution, one part of our service territory can lose power because of system damage in another area “upstream” that is bearing the brunt of a storm.

Storm damage to trees has been an issue for a long time, and one that SREC has made significant investments to mitigate. The Co-op has the ability to trim tree limbs or branches in our right of way, the area within a certain distance around our power lines. We use this to limit tree contacts on our lines.

Tree-trimming is the Co-op’s largest yearly expense. For years, we have employed the services of Asplundh Tree Experts, LLC to trim the entirety of our service territory’s 700+ miles of lines on a four-year cycle. In addition, they are responsible for trimming branches or removing trees that are marked as a hazard following SREC’s supervisor or even member reports. As mentioned in my Q&A segment in our Online Meeting (which you can check out at [sussexrec.com/online-meeting](https://sussexrec.com/online-meeting)), we have been analyzing the growing cycles of local trees and are looking at the possibility of speeding up our trimming cycles in higher growth or higher tree density areas, going from four years to three years.

While we do all we can to mitigate the impact of tree damage by maintaining our right of way, I must be candid that this cannot completely fix the problem. Some of the trees that have caused recent outages have fallen from well outside of our rights of way, on the opposite side of the road from our lines. Storm damage, compacted with age of many tall trees in our area and damage from invasive pests like

the emerald ash borer, can cause trees to fall onto our power lines from 40 feet or more outside of our rights of way. This was the case for a recent outage on Wednesday, September 8th that affected hundreds of members around Clark Road in Wantage, when strong winds caused a tree to fall and pull down a 3-phase main line.

Later that month on Sunday the 19th, despite fair weather, two large oak trees on Pond School Road in Wantage fell from the opposite side of the road onto our power lines, breaking a pole and bringing down five spans of 3-phase wire (pictured here). This caused a power outage for about 155 members in Wantage and into Lafayette and created a safety hazard. A car drove right into the fallen trees across the road while our crews had just arrived and were assessing the situation. Thankfully no one was hurt. This shows that trees create a risk to both the flow of power and to driver safety.

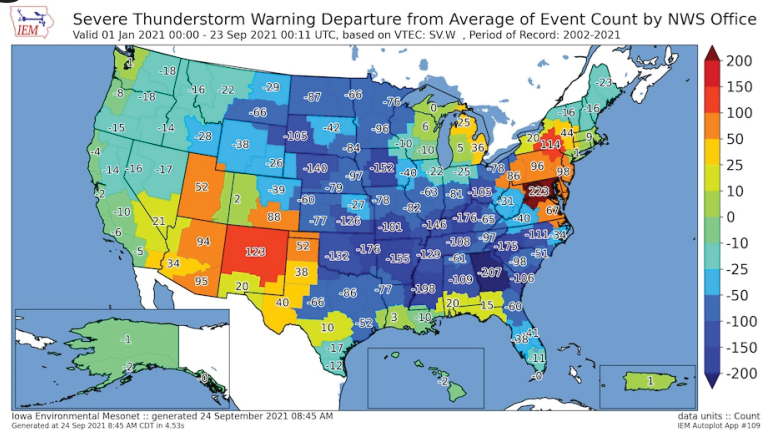
As with weather patterns, we have no control over trees outside of our rights of way.

Unfortunately, this means that heavily wooded areas, like parts of Sussex and Wantage or our various lake communities in Vernon, have seen an increase in outages. While not all outages are preventable, our members can take comfort in how we respond to these events. Of the two outages mentioned above, the September 8th outage was resolved in 97 minutes and the September 19th outage was resolved within a few hours, which I think is reasonable considering the need to clean up the large trees, install a new pole, and deal with the aftermath of the vehicle collision.

Members ask from time to time why we don’t switch to underground power lines as a solution to the tree problem. Aside from the very high price to do that and the time investment that would go to making this switch, underground lines sometimes can prolong outages due to both the time it takes to identify a fault when you cannot see the wire and to excavate before making repairs. That being said, we evaluate each situation and location independently, and underground replacement is considered if it makes sense.

With some outages, we can take advantage of the ability to redirect power to certain spots of our service territory. This is where we can switch power or “backfeed” from another line or circuit via remote controls that we can operate from our office control (SCADA) system. While this cannot be used in all situations, when it can it helps affected members get power back to their homes sooner while we work on the damage that caused the original outage.

All in all, we remain committed to our mission: providing the highest quality of service at the lowest possible cost. While some circumstances are beyond our control, we will always continue to do everything in *our* power to keep *your* power flowing. And if a tree falls in the woods and knocks down our power lines, we will hear it. You can always count on SREC crews to resolve the issue.



# Vegetation Management

By: Mike Osborne, Sr. Staff Engineer  
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Vegetation - trees, shrubs, and brush - growing too close to power lines and distribution equipment leads to 70 percent of SREC outages. Needless to say, the number of trees in our area plays a major part in this statistic.

SREC invests roughly a half-million dollars annually into vegetation management, tree trimming, and tree removal. Making investments in the electric system infrastructure to improve efficiencies and reliability continues to serve the Cooperative and its members well.

To “cut back” on potential tree-related problems, Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative operates an aggressive tree-trimming program. In our right of way, our tree-trimming contractors look for incompatible foliage growing under lines, dead overhanging branches, trees that could grow into lines, and other types of “danger” trees that could pose a hazard to the power lines. SREC currently has a contract with Asplundh Tree Experts, LLC for a four-year cycle in which time they will trim the entire cooperative territory.

Over the last few years, the number of vegetation related outages has increased. This year SREC contracted a Vegetation Management Consultant from ACRT, which provides Consulting Utility Foresters (CUF) to perform identification, inspection, and evaluation of trees and brush along utility lines. In addition, all ACRT utility foresters are trained continuously. ACRT Arborist Training is the largest licensed arboriculture training organization in North America.

Our Vegetation Management Consultant started at SREC in September 2021 and will evaluate member tree concerns and tree removal for construction, quality check regularly scheduled right-of-way trimming, evaluate possible danger trees in our rights of way, and conduct analysis on post-tree-related outages as well as check on tree and vegetation concerns submitted by our members. By contracting an ACRT consultant we are able to respond to member concerns more quickly, provide our tree contractor with more timely quality assurance checks, and address potentially dangerous conditions before they become an outage.

You may see our ACRT consultant in your area. His truck has the ACRT logo as well as identification that he is contracted by Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative. Our ACRT consultant has a SREC badge that states he is working with us. We look forward to further advancing our vegetation management program and stemming the tide of vegetation related outages.

In working to keep a safe, reliable, and affordable supply of power flowing to your home or business, we need your help. Let us know if you notice trees or branches that might pose a risk to our power lines along the roads and highways. Please remember our focus is maintaining power delivery in a safe and efficient manner. Sometimes a tree in need of trimming is not within the scope of our tree trimming program. However, we will coordinate with your tree trimming professional if a power line needs to be temporarily taken down, relocated, or de-energized for safety purposes.

These improvements allow us to better weather the next storm and to restore service more efficiently and expediently. Also, and even more importantly, before planting trees in your yard, think about how tall they may grow and how wide their branches may spread. In the future, it can end up impacting the flow of power to you and hundreds of your neighbors!



## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Old, uninsulated and improperly installed exterior doors can waste energy and money.

Shut the door on wasted energy by weather stripping and sealing all exterior doors. If you have an old exterior door, consider replacing it with a newer, energy efficient model.



Source: energy.gov



# Photo Contest Winner

By: Steve Sokolowski, Marketing Associate  
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Fall has begun and the summer of 2021 is firmly in our rearview. During the sweltering heat, everyone's main focus is trying to keep cool - which means higher demand for electricity as members crank their air conditioners.

On these days, we encourage our members to take voluntary conservation measures in order to reduce overall demand on our system and ultimately keep our electric rates as low as possible. This doesn't have to include switching off your AC. Unplugging devices you aren't using, opting to do high energy tasks (like laundry or dishes) later in the evening, and changing your thermostat temperature by just a couple degrees can make a big difference to your home's energy use.

During hot summers, these messages can come multiple days per week, which is why we always accompany them with photos of animals keeping cool. Pet owners are all too aware that humans are not the only ones who try to beat the summer heat!



In July, we announced our Summer Animals Photo Contest. We ended up with 29 submissions. Once finalists were chosen, the open voting stage selected a photo of golden retriever Cooper as the winner! Belonging to Kathleen and Michael Pisani from Vernon, Cooper is a very well-trained and photogenic canine. We awarded the winners with a deluxe prize-basket, full of both energy items *and* toys for Cooper to enjoy. The Pisanis chose the Vernon Township Animal Shelter to receive the \$250 donation.

Our congratulations go out to Cooper and the Pisanis. Thank you to all who participated in our Summer Animals Photo Contest. We look forward to seeing some of your photos shared with our membership when next summer rolls around!



## Notice of Important Changes



### Changes That May Affect Delivery Times of Your Bills and Payments

1.) The address for our bill payment center has changed from Lewiston, ME to Philadelphia, PA. If your payments go through your bank, make sure that you update the address to:

**Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative  
P.O. Box 70724  
Philadelphia, PA 19176-0724**

2.) Effective October 1, 2021, the United States Postal Service (USPS) has revised its service standards for certain First-Class Mail items, resulting in a delivery window of up to five days. Please note that this may delay your receipt of mail from us and our receipt of mail from you (including mailed payments). Please take this change into account when mailing items to us via USPS. For more information, visit [usps.com](https://usps.com).

What can you do? If you haven't already, consider options available through [www.srecbillpay.com](https://www.srecbillpay.com), like switching to online statements for quicker delivery, making payments to your account through Automatic Bank Draft, or setting up alerts for payment due reminders. You can learn more about these options at [www.sussexrec.com/bill](https://www.sussexrec.com/bill).

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