

# Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

**Sullivan County REC**

P.O. Box 65  
 Forksville, PA 18616  
 570-924-3381  
 1-800-570-5081  
 Email: [screc@epix.net](mailto:screc@epix.net)  
 Website: [www.screc.com](http://www.screc.com)

**Staff**

**John Lykens, CEO**  
**Dennis Klem, Manager, Finance and Administration**  
**Walt Tubach, Manager, Electric Operations**  
**Diane E. White, Executive Assistant**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Ann B. Henderson – CCD\*/BLC\*\***  
*Chairman*  
**Stephan Paul Brady – CCD/BLC/Gold\*\*\***  
*Vice Chairman*  
**Kathy A. Robbins – CCD/BLC/Gold**  
*Secretary*  
**David L. Aumen – CCD/BLC/Gold**  
**Karen Beinlich**  
**Jeff Hamilton – CCD/BLC/Gold**  
**Jim Lambert – CCD**  
**Jay Lewis – CCD/BLC**  
**David R. Rakestraw**

\*Credentialed Cooperative Director  
 \*\*Board Leadership Certificate  
 \*\*\*Director Gold Certificate

**Office Hours**  
 Monday through Friday  
 7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

## From the CEO



# Taking a hard look at preventing outages

By John Lykens

ON SUNDAY, July 24, a severe thunderstorm rolled through Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative’s (REC) service territory, stirring high winds that caused trees to topple and members to lose electric service for as long as 20 hours. In the aftermath of the storm, more than 3,200 members were left in the dark. A majority of the members affected were in northern Lycoming County and south-central Sullivan County.

Weather events, such as the one experienced on the 24th, are becoming more frequent and more severe as each year passes. While the jury may still be out as to what is precipitating such events, the fact of the matter is severe weather events have increased since I began my career nearly 30 years ago. Unfortunately, this can correlate to more outages for you, our members.

One might wonder: “What is the cooperative doing to prevent outages from occurring during severe weather events and what are the cooperative’s plans moving forward to storm-harden the electric distribution system?”

I’m glad you asked.

The cooperative’s No. 1 cause of outages is trees. Due to the fact that an overwhelming majority of our electric distribution system is overhead, coupled with the fact that these facilities traverse vast tracts of forestland, trees will always be the top cause of outages. Preventing tree-related outages is both labor- and cost-intensive. The cooperative spends

nearly \$1 million each year clearing brush, trimming and felling trees within the right of way, chemically treating them where permission is granted, and felling “danger” trees outside the right of way that pose a threat to our distribution lines if they fall. A properly executed right-of-way program will not only prevent outages from occurring in the first place but will also prevent damage from occurring to the cooperative’s distribution system.

Proper use and coordination of electrical protective devices on the distribution system is also necessary, not necessarily to prevent outages, but to limit the number of members affected when outages do occur. Since 70% to 80% of the outages on an electric distribution system are temporary, automatic circuit reclosers are used to clear faults and restore power downline. The “blinks” experienced by members are a result of a recloser opening up the line to clear the fault (possibly caused by an animal, trees, wind, lightning, etc.) and subsequently closing it to automatically restore power. Fuses downstream of a recloser will clear permanent faults and isolate members affected to just those downstream of the fuse.

Electric-system hardening, also known as storm-hardening, is the practice of making improvements to the system so that it can withstand storms without crippling damage to infrastructure and equipment. What

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# Celebrating 85 years of service

By John Zelewicz  
Penn Lines Writer

ON FRIDAY, May 27, members, co-op employees and guests gathered for a special 85th anniversary celebration at the Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) office, south of Forksville on Route 87.

Ann Henderson, chair of the cooperative's board of directors, welcomed everyone and talked briefly about how Sullivan County REC came to be.

It may be hard to imagine a time without electricity. Many today have never known a time when they didn't have electric lights, electric heat, an electric washer, an electric stove ... the list goes on and on.

But there was a time when many could only dream of what it would be like to have electricity. In 1932, President Franklin Roosevelt created the New Deal program in the hopes of jump-starting the post-depression economy. On May 11, 1935, Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 7037 establishing the Rural Electrification Administration.

It wasn't long before a group of dedicated individuals worked to bring electricity to rural areas. It wasn't easy



WELCOME: Ann Henderson, chair of the Sullivan County REC board of directors, welcomes members and guests to the co-op's 85th anniversary celebration.

to get the co-op started. It took a lot of time and determination to convince people to join.

Before a pole was put in place and line strung, there had to be a guarantee of at least two or three members per mile of line, a signed right-of-way agreement, and a paid membership, which, at the time, cost \$5. Five dollars may not seem like a lot of money today

— you probably spend more than that on a fast-food meal, a lottery ticket, and maybe even a specialty cup of coffee — but at the time, \$5 was a lot of money.

The original electric system was built by Hess & Barton of Pittsburgh, a company contracted in 1937 to build the first 130 miles of line. After five years of operation, Sullivan County REC only had four employees, Wes Thomas, Marcel Thomas, Robert Lambert and John Norton, who was the only lineworker. The staff had to use their own vehicles and got paid mileage since the co-op didn't own a building or any vehicles.

Sullivan County REC has come a long way since its hum-



A JOB WELL DONE: State Rep. Joe Hamm (R-Lycoming), right, presents a citation from the House to former Sullivan County REC CEO Craig Harting.



A THANK YOU: State Sen. Gene Yaw (R-Lycoming), right, presents former Sullivan County REC CEO Craig Harting, left, with a certificate from the Senate, recognizing his years of dedicated service to the co-op. Harting retired in June. Also shown is Ann Henderson, chair of the co-op's board of directors.

ble beginnings. At first, the co-op only had 36 members, but now it has grown to approximately 5,300 members in Bradford, Lycoming and Sullivan counties.

The 85th anniversary celebration was a way to look back and ahead to the future. It was a time to welcome your new CEO, John Lykens, and say goodbye to Craig Harting, who had served as CEO since September 1989 and retired June 2.

During the ceremony, state Sen. Gene Yaw (R-Lycoming) was on hand to present Harting with a certificate from

the Senate, which congratulated him on his long and successful career. Harting also was honored with a citation from the House of Representatives, which was presented by state Rep. Joe Hamm (R-Lycoming).

Following the celebration, co-op members were invited to attend an open house, where they met with co-op employees, toured the office and enjoyed a light lunch.

The cooperative would like to thank all of our members for a successful 85 years and looks forward to serving you all for many more. ❁



SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE: What kind of celebration would it be without cake!



OPEN HOUSE: Co-op members gather at the May 27 open house, where they met with co-op employees, toured the office facilities and enjoyed a light lunch.

## Cooperative bids farewell to employees

Over the past several months, Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) has bid farewell to three longtime employees.

- ▶ **Craig Harting** started as the cooperative's third CEO on September 11, 1989. During his 32-year career, Craig's leadership brought about many improvements. Most notably, the cooperative increased its emphasis and spending on right-of-way maintenance and infrastructure, which have ultimately led to fewer outages and improved resiliency.
- ▶ **John Zelewicz** was a cooperative employee for 32 years when he retired July 5. Everyone knows John as the *Penn Lines* writer for the cooperative. John also worked behind the scenes, dispatching crews to out-of-service calls.
- ▶ **Tom Eberlin** was a cooperative employee for 30 years when he retired May 19. Tom, the cooperative's member service representative, answered a variety of members' questions during his career. Whether a member had a question about their bill, generator transfer switches or water heaters, Tom was available to assist.

We at Sullivan County REC would like to wish the very best to these employees on their retirement. ❁

## From the CEO

(continued from page 14a)

can your cooperative do to prevent damage from severe winds associated with thunderstorms and hurricanes, floods, and heavy wet, snow?

Upgrading materials, such as poles (increased class size), crossarms (fiber-glass arms and conductor supports), wires (steel-reinforced aluminum), and guying (increased guy wire size and number of guys), and accompanying that with shorter pole-to-pole spans increases the resiliency of the overhead electric distribution system. Looking for opportunities to relocate our facilities away from streams and areas prone to flooding and from densely forested areas provides additional opportunities to prevent storm damage to our infrastructure. To quote one of our nation's Founding Fathers, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." And to add to Benjamin Franklin's quote, I would say a significant amount of money, as well.

Keeping the "lights on" for our members in a safe, cost-responsible way is the core of the cooperative's mission. To that end, all of us — from your board of directors and CEO to every Sullivan County REC employee — will continue to take measures to prevent outages from occurring in the first place and invest in "hardening" the electric plant that serves each and every co-op member. ❁

**OFFICE CLOSING**  
**SULLIVAN COUNTY REC'S**  
**OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED**  
**MONDAY, SEPT. 5, IN**  
**OBSERVANCE OF**  
**LABOR DAY.**

# From the Operations Department

By Walt Tubach

OVER THE past months, we have experienced 35 tree-related outages.

We are constantly cutting and



Walt Tubach  
Manager, Electric  
Operations

trimming rights of way to minimize the outages, and to date, our tree crews have cut more than 5,200 trees and trimmed more than 3,600. Can you imagine what the outage time would be without all the work our tree crews have

done? We certainly appreciate all the hard work they put into the system!

There were numerous planned outages in the Upper Fairfield area this spring. Each year, we contract the American Testing Company to test 10% of our poles to be sure they are solid and safe for our lineworkers to climb and to protect the public. We have more than 22,000 poles on our 940-mile system in the three counties we serve. This year, we had 140 bad poles to replace out of the 2,200 that were checked.

We can change out numerous poles with the line energized, but some of the assemblies we cannot. Therefore, I make phone calls and send out text messages to alert our members. I do my best to let everyone know, but if you do not keep your phone number updated in our system, you will not be called. Please be sure to inform us if you change your phone number. Also, we do numerous slips and work orders every day, and it is impossible for me to contact everyone for every job. I appreciate your help and understanding on this.

Our equipment failures caused six different power outages. Lightning, wind, ice and sleet caused another 11 outages. Small animals and birds getting into the line caused six interruptions in service. We had two motor vehicle accidents, two fires and customer-owned equipment that caused four outages.

There were 41 outages due to

unknown causes. These cause codes come from the lineworkers patrolling the system and not finding the cause. I have had people ask me how that can be, and I explain that a limb, animal or lightning could have hit the line — it is surprising what can cause an outage.

Line transformers that weren't working caused three outages; wires snapping from snow load or fallen trees caused four outages; and poles and fixtures breaking down caused 18 issues.

The main transformer lightning arrestors at our Laporte substation broke and caused an outage, so we immediately backfed the line from our Mill Creek substation to restore service until repairs could be made.

Our outage time average so far this year is 11 hours per member, and this number is higher than we like to see. Two of those hours can be attributed to our power suppliers. Four of our substations are supplied by FirstEnergy (Penelec), and one is supplied by PPL. When we lose the power supply to a substation, we do not have electric to serve you. Thankfully, over the years we have built tie lines and are able to backfeed all of the substations regardless of which power supply is out.

Our Dushore substation lost power supply on Feb. 3 around 5 a.m. Our

crews were dispatched to backfeed this substation, and members were only out of service for about an hour. The Kellyburg substation was experiencing severe blinking from power supply on Feb. 3, as well. We switched this feed to the Mill Creek sub so our members would not continue to have this issue. At 2:13 a.m. Feb. 18, we again lost power supply to the Dushore substation. We again backfed this area so our members were only out of power for an hour. Our LaPorte substation lost power supply on Feb. 18, as well. We backfed this substation from the Mill Creek substation, and our members' power was restored in less than an hour.

All three of the substations in Sullivan County were out from power supply during the April 19 snowstorm. We were able to backfeed the LaPorte sub and part of the Estella sub, but we had issues on the lines and could not feed all areas this way.

On Thursday, June 16, power supply had our Estella sub out at approximately 7:30 p.m. The issue turned out to be a problem with the metering equipment on a pole just outside the substation. I sent the crews to backfeed this sub from the Dushore sub so our members were only out of service for an hour and a half. ❁

## New director elected for District 2

At the cooperative's annual meeting on May 17, new Director Karen Beinlich started her term representing District 2, which covers Elkland and Hillsgrove townships in Sullivan County.

Karen has lived on cooperative lines for 52 years. A graduate of the Pennsylvania College of Technology with a degree in business, she has been employed by the 44th Judicial District Court of Common Pleas for 33 years. She has also been a commissioned notary public for the State of Pennsylvania since 1993.

Karen has been an active volunteer in the Sullivan County community. She has organized the Sullivan County Health Fair and was instrumental in bringing the COVID-19 vaccination clinics to the county. She is also a volunteer at the Sullivan County Fair and a volunteer coach at Sullivan County High School.

When asked why she chose to run for District 2 director, Karen stated with smile: "I have always given back to the community through volunteering, and I thought this was a way I could give back by service."

Karen lives in Elkland Township with her husband, Dave, and three children.

The Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative would like to welcome Karen as our newest co-op director.



Karen Beinlich