

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
Website: www.screc.com

Staff

Craig A. Harting, CEO
Dennis Klem, Manager,
Finance and Administration
Walt Tubach, Manager,
Electric Operations
Diane E. White, Executive Assistant

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

From the CEO



Are you ready for the ‘big one?’

By Craig A. Harting

I'M WRITING this article during our first ice/snow storm, which took place on the Monday of hunting season. I'm wondering, are you ready for the “big one?” No, I'm not talking about a San Andreas earthquake, I'm talking about the next big power outage.

What's the next big outage? It could be from high winds, major ice, a blizzard or a flood. While most outages last only a few hours, these major events only happen every five years or so, but they could impact you for days or even a week or more.

Co-op prep

Your co-op works to minimize the impacts of these storms by doing regular maintenance — clearing rights-of-way, replacing poles, making improvements and adding backfeeds. But the biggest thing we can do is to clear rights-of-way.

For 20 years, we have been cutting 8,000 to 10,000 trees per year along with trimming 8,000 trees each year. And trees are still our major source of problems. Imagine what the service would be like if we didn't clear the rights-of-way?

We have a Mutual Assistance Plan with all 13 co-ops in Pennsylvania and the one in New Jersey. We coordi-

nate our needs and allocate men and equipment between co-ops to help each other. However, it takes time to get extra lineworkers here. They have to pack, stock the truck, and travel, which can take a day or two.

Your plan?

So, now I need to ask you, what's your plan? In spite of all we do, at some point you will be out of power for several days or more. Do you have a plan? Hope is not a plan.

All of us have different needs. Do you use oxygen or have medical equipment? Do you have a way to plow or get a vehicle out? Do you have a generator? If so, do you test it and know how to use it safely?

Water, heat, refrigeration, cooking — these are a few of the needs that you will have to plan for if the outage lasts for days. You also need a last resort escape plan, which no one wants to use, but you might need eventually. Don't risk your life or the life of your loved ones.

We will continue to do our best to prepare and prevent outages, but for your safety and well being, please do your part. Prepare a plan and practice it to be ready in case of the next “big one.” ☀

Soaring with the eagles

By John Zelewicz
Penn Lines Writer

WHAT'S that in the sky? It's a bird, it's a plane, it's Superman! Hmmmm, no, it's a drone. Chances are you've read or seen something about drones. Perhaps you've even seen one flying around in your neighborhood or buzzing along the beach during your last vacation. Drones have grown in popularity because the prices have become more affordable.

A report from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) states that sales of recreational drones are expected to continue to rise. Sales of drones are expected to grow from 2.5 million in 2016 to 7 million in 2020.

While drones may be popular now, it wasn't too long ago that some of us owned and operated radio-controlled helicopters. They were clumsy, hard to fly and seemed to crash more often than we'd like to remember, or admit.

John Yonkin started flying remote-controlled helicopters as a hobby. And while he never crashed his helicopter, he remembers it wasn't much fun to operate.

"I flew my helicopters inside most of the time," Yonkin says. "It was the hardest thing I ever flew. Later, I got a larger one and never crashed it, but it lacked the level of sophistication and



technology that unmanned aerial systems (UAS) or drones do today."

Sky Rider, Holy Stone, DJI Mavic, DJI Spark, Jetstream — the number of different drones available is staggering. They come in a wide range of sizes, options and prices.

"You can expect to spend around \$600 to \$1,500 for a decent drone," Yonkin notes. "You're going to pay more if you want something with a lot of bells and whistles — you get what you pay for."

One of the drones Yonkin got early on was a DJI Mavic.

"I was amazed at the technology it had," he says. "It had a 4K camera and a decent amount of flight time. It's a great starter drone. The only thing that I didn't like is that it didn't have a zoom lens so you have to zoom in or out by moving the drone."

Eventually, Yonkin purchased a Matrice 210 drone. It weighs in at a hefty 10.5 pounds and can carry a maximum payload of 3.1 pounds. The normal payload consists of two cameras. It has a maximum operating range of 6 miles (line of sight) and a maximum of 38 minutes of flight time.

EXPERIENCE HELPS: John Yonkin's flying experience is an asset when operating an unmanned aerial system, more commonly referred to as a drone.

Does his research

When Yonkin decided to get a larger, better drone than his first one, he did his homework

"I did a lot of research on distributors and found one I liked in California," he explains. "I chose to go with them due to their technical support. I flew out to meet their support team. What I liked was that their people are the ones who work on the drone so they know what they're talking about."

As you can imagine, since drones first became available to purchase, their sophistication, operating systems and cameras have improved. Newer drones come with a lot of features such as hover, return to home and even obstacle avoidance. These options not only make flying a drone easier than in the past but it also helps lower (though not eliminate) your chances of crashing it. They even work to ensure they can get back to you.

"It calculates all the time for what



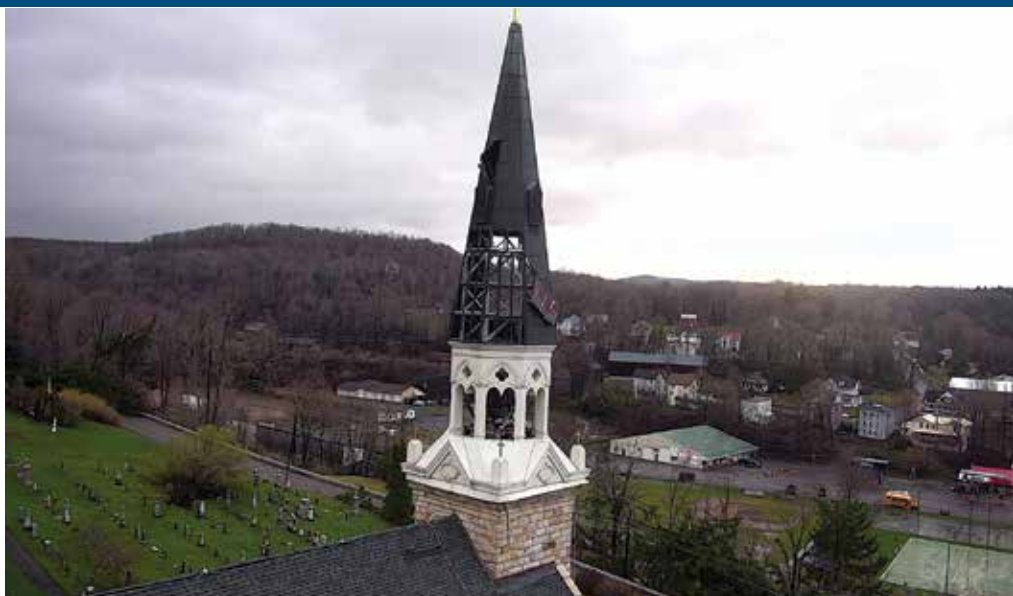
LANDING STRIP: To ensure the safety of the drone, John Yonkin uses a portable drone landing mat. While his drone can land automatically, he prefers to land it manually now and again to ensure he can do so if needed.

it needs to come home,” Yonkin says. “It’ll let you know several times when the battery is getting low. It doesn’t come back automatically, and you can ignore the warnings and keep flying. But if you ignore it for long, you’d better start looking for a place to land. The drone I have can land automatically. But I like to land it manually a few times a week to ensure I can do it if I need to.”

The type of drone you might purchase depends a great deal on what you want to do with it. Depending upon the one you get, a little drone might be able to go about 20 minutes and a larger one around 30 to 35 minutes. Flight time depends a lot on how you fly it, the size of your payload and how windy it is.

So what exactly can you do with a drone? Again, it depends on what you want to do with it and the type of drone you get. They can be used to do roof and gutter inspections (no need to climb on the roof), as well as aerial photography. If you have a thermal camera on a drone, it can be used to check a home or business to determine if it needs insulation and where.

Yonkin uses his drone for business



and hobby purposes. After the tornado struck the area in 2019, Yonkin went around to several buildings and took damage photos that were used for insurance purposes.

Lends a hand looking for lost hunter

When a hunter got lost in the Dutch Mountain area, Yonkin was called upon to lend a hand, or in this case, a drone.

“I flew 27 missions over six days,” he says. “I was able to fly at night because I have a waiver that allows me to do so.

EYE IN THE SKY: When tornados hit the Dushore area last year, John Yonkin used his drone to take photos of storm damage. Here is a photo of St. Basil's Church steeple taken by his drone, clearly showing the amount of damage the steeple sustained.

I have a waiver that also allows me to operate the drone over people and out of the line of sight. Getting a waiver can be a challenge. There's a lot of paperwork involved.”

Another time, Yonkin was contacted by the Bradford County District Attorney to use his drone to take images of an accident. According to Yonkin, this was the first time that aerial media was used to aid in a prosecution in Pennsylvania.

Something to keep in mind if purchasing a drone is that there is a difference between using one for recreational use or commercial use.

If you're operating a drone strictly for fun as a hobby, you don't need a drone license. But if you plan on operating a drone for work or business (commercial use), you will need to acquire a license.

There are various online sites that will help anyone interested in getting their drone license. Recently, while attending the Commercial USA Expo, Yonkin became aware of an online site (<https://remotepilot101.com>) where anyone interested can become a certified licensed drone pilot for about \$149. They also provide recurring training.

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DRONE IN USE: Anyone who's ever played a video game should be quite adept at operating a drone using the remote. The quality of the camera used determines the quality of the image seen when using a phone or other mobile device.

Sometimes too much information is too much

WHEN outages occur, the number of members calling in to report it can vary wildly. During a small outage, perhaps only one person will call in. During a large outage, hundreds of members may call in.

If all goes smoothly, the Outage Management System (using caller ID) will provide the dispatcher with important information such as the member's name, phone number, street address, account number, phase and line section. The system can also provide information that can aid lineworkers in determining where the outage is located and how many members may be affected.

When calling in to report an outage, members are asked to leave a voice message if they have information as to the cause of an outage (tree on the line, line down, etc.) or the phone number they're calling from in case it is not in our member database.

This can be both a blessing and a curse to a dispatcher. It can be a blessing if the member leaves important information concerning the outage such as a line down or broken pole. This information can aid in locating

where the problem is and also aids in restoring power to members sooner.

But if someone leaves a message stating that power is out due to the wind or simply to state that they don't know why the power is out, it can slow things down.

During an outage, especially a large one, each message left by a member must be listened to individually. Listening to 20, 30 or even 40 or more messages take time, and may result in important information not being received in a timely manner.

You should leave a voice message only if you have specific information concerning an outage or if the computer asks you to leave one.

So, when leaving a message, be sure to give the name on the account, a phone number where you can be reached and street address. If you are leaving a message due to a specific problem such as a tree on the line, please state the problem and where it is located.

Members who provide vital information during an outage can be a huge help to lineworkers and help power to be restored sooner. 🌞

Soaring with eagles

(continued from page 16a)

Even if you plan to simply use your drone for recreational use, there are still rules and regulations that have to be followed. Here are just some of the rules you must follow:

- ▶ You must register your drone and carry proof of registration with you.
- ▶ Keep your drone within line of sight.
- ▶ Never fly over groups of people, public events or stadiums full of people.
- ▶ Never fly near emergencies such as any type of accident response, law enforcement activities, firefighting or hurricane recovery efforts.
- ▶ Never fly in regulated air spaces such as airports.

Now it might seem like there are a lot of regulations and rules to follow, but according to Yonkin, it shouldn't dissuade you from getting a drone if you want one.

"Living here in Sullivan County, you can fly your drone with little or no problem," he says. "You just shouldn't fly over populated areas or people. And if you plan on getting a drone, then you'd better know and understand the regulations. If someone calls in and complains about your drone, the FAA has no choice but to look into it." 🌞

Bylaws updated

Recently the board revised, amended and restated the cooperative bylaws in their entirety. A copy of the bylaws is available on our website at screc.com under the heading "About Us." Contact the office if you would like a paper copy.



Attention high school juniors: win a free trip to Washington, D.C.

Are you a junior in high school? Does your parent or guardian receive electric service from Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative? You could be selected to represent Sullivan County REC on an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C.

Youth Tour 2020 is a fun-filled week in Washington, D.C., from June 21-26. More than 1,800 students from approximately 43 states will visit the nation's capital to learn about rural electrification, electric cooperatives, the federal government and Washington, D.C. Students also visit the historical sites in the capital, make friends with students from across the United States and just have fun.

Juniors from the following high schools are eligible: Sullivan County, Montoursville and Hughesville. The parent or guardian of the student must be a member and receive electric service from Sullivan County REC.

Application forms are available at the guidance office in your school. Stop by and see your guidance counselor for an application and details on your chance to win a trip to D.C.; don't delay. Your guidance counselor has a deadline for submission of applications.

"The Youth Tour was the best experience I have ever had. I made so many new friends and have memories I will cherish forever. I could not be more thankful for this wonderful opportunity." – Anna Myers, 2018 Youth Tour attendee and Sullivan County High School senior

