

Northwestern
Rural Electric
Cooperative
Association, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric
cooperatives serving
Pennsylvania and
New Jersey

Northwestern REC
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Cambridge Springs, PA 16403
Home Page:
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OFFICE HOURS

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

Mary Mulligan-Haines, Editor

FROM THE MANAGER & CEO

Hurricane Ike storms through co-op territory



by Michael D. Tirpak
General Manager & CEO

SUNDAY, Sept. 14, 2008, started out as a pretty nice day. Many of us in my neighborhood mowed our lawns and had cookouts, never thinking that a hurricane that came ashore the day before in Texas, 1,400 miles away, could affect our lives.

Hurricane Ike stormed north from Texas up through the Ohio Valley

and still maintained 65 to 70 mph gusts of wind when it hit Northwestern's service territory Sunday evening. In Ike's wake, Northwestern had close to 9,000 members in the dark with over 100 electric lines down due to trees. Our line crews responded quickly and worked around the clock to repair most of the damage and turn the lights back on to the members in about 30 hours.

I am very proud of our line crews as we were the first utility in the area to get our system back in working order. After taking care of our work and getting only one good night's rest, 14 of our men volunteered to help Allegheny Power in Butler County make repairs for the next two days, then were released to travel to help Penn Power in the New Castle and Cranberry areas get their customers back in service for the next three days after that. I can't say enough about our employees' work ethic and dedication when Mother Nature dishes out some punishment.

Rate Change in 2009

Reasons our cooperative did not sustain even more damage during the high winds of the remnants of Hurricane Ike were our aggressive old con-

ductor replacement program and our rights-of-way maintenance program. We have rebuilt hundreds of miles of our old, original electric plant with new poles (often relocated along the roads for easy access), new wire and new hardware over the past 20 years, and it's paying dividends of better reliability and lower line losses. Maintenance dollars spent on right-of-way clearing each year also help to keep our system strong. It is for these basic reasons that our board of directors has approved increasing our residential cost of service rate by \$5 and our commercial cost of service rate by \$15.50 in January 2009. These costs more closely reflect the money we spend on keeping our basic distribution system up to date and keeping the trees and brush around our lines under control.

I understand the many financial challenges we are all facing these days from the prices for oil and gas to the prices we pay at the grocery store. I also understand the costs of keeping Northwestern REC focused on system reliability and providing quality service to our membership, and those costs have been rising. Your board of directors and management team consider all of our options carefully and try to maintain a balance of cost controls, reliability and quality of services provided. I know that I am biased, but I believe Northwestern REC provides an excellent value for the prices we charge, and I hope that you do, too!

Best wishes for a safe and Happy Thanksgiving! 🍁

Michael D. Tirpak
General Manager & CEO

Beaver Log Trading Post

BY ERIN BOGDA
Marketing Intern



JIM AND LAUREL KOHLER, owners of Beaver Log Homes in Saegertown, faced a difficult business decision nearly two years ago. The Navajo Corner in the Millcreek Mall was about to go out of business after being open for several years. However, the Kohlers, who had been longtime fans of the store, hated to see the business die.

Laurel Kohler reports, “Jim had approached me after we left the store that day and asked, ‘Do you think we could handle a store like that?’”

Even though neither of them knew what a retail business like that would entail, they decided to take on the challenge. Using inventory from the former store and stocking newly ordered items, the Kohlers opened the Beaver Log Trading Post.

The location for the trading post came easily. The Kohlers had been operating their log home business out of their own residence, just east of Interstate 79. And they decided their current location was the perfect spot for their new trading post.

“It’s nice for coming right off of I-79,” Jim Kohler notes. “It really is such a great location, and we get more road traffic than people realize.”

Once a location was established and the post was built, store opening was the only task left to be completed.

The Beaver Log Trading Post officially opened in August 2007. The trading post offers a variety of Native American-inspired creations, including

authentic dream catchers, bone necklaces, hand-crafted jewelry and pottery, and Kachina dolls. The store also features gorgeous paintings, log beds, wood furniture, colorful rugs, and a variety of hand-carved mirrors and wall hangings. The post, however, is not limited to these selected items and has much more to offer.

The post has great energy due to all of the native artifacts. Once customers take a step inside, they will be engrossed in the native feeling.

“There’s no store around that is like this,” states Jim Kohler. “We have different things that other people don’t have.”

There are other trading posts in the area, but they carry different things and they all support each other in order to encourage trading post purchases.

The Beaver Log Trading Post is open all year. It is closed on Tuesdays, but otherwise the post is open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from noon to 4 p.m. Sundays. A short ride out to State Highway 198 in Saegertown is certainly worth the trip. Whether you are a collector of Native American pieces or simply want a great way to spend your afternoon, the Beaver Log Trading Post is the place to go.

“Those who loved Navajo Corner will be captivated by Beaver Log Trading Post,” adds Laurel Kohler. ☀

Jim and Laurel Kohler’s Beaver Log Homes and Beaver Log Trading Post are located at 17946 State Highway 198 in Saegertown. They can be reached at 814/763-1578 during store hours 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday.

Safety & use tips – using space heaters

DURING WINTER, many people turn to space heaters as a way of adding extra heat to a room. While the space heaters are a source of supplemental heat, if not used safely, they can present a safety hazard. Space heaters can also be costly to operate.

When purchasing a space heater, always choose a model with a guard in front of the heating device. This is an important safety feature as it keeps people from touching the hot surface. Always check that the space heater has been tested at an accredited laboratory to ensure it meets proper safety standards. Also consider the size of the space you want to heat when selecting a space heater.

Carefully read the manufacturer's safety and operating information. Make sure everyone who will be using the space heater has read the directions as well. And, make sure the safety instructions are kept in a handy place where they can be referred to later.

It is important to remember to always turn off the space heater when it's not in use. When deciding where to place the space heater, make sure it is at least three feet from any flammable objects or chemicals. Also make sure nothing nearby can fall into the space heater and catch on fire. Place the space heater on a level, hard surface, never on carpet. This will keep it from tipping over and from starting a fire. In case the space heater should tip over, it is important to choose a model with a switch that will shut off the heater until it is turned upright again.

Pay attention when plugging in the heater. Make sure you are not plugging it in near places that may accumulate moisture. If a space heater gets wet, it can become a shock hazard. Avoid using extension cords if possible with space heaters. Check that the plug fits into the outlet securely because a loose plug can overheat. If the plug feels warm, disconnect it immediately.

Remember that the electric space heater will increase your kilowatt-hour (kWh) use on your electric bill. Depending on the room and your

activity, you may just be able to put on a sweater and eliminate the need for a space heater. If you do operate an electric space heater, you can use a formula to figure out how much it will cost you. Multiply the wattage of the heater by the number of hours used each day, divide by 1,000 and multiply this number by \$0.10101. The answer is the daily cost to operate the unit. For example, 1,500 watts X 2 hours = 3,000 divided

by 1,000 = 3 kWh and 3 kWh X \$0.10101 = \$0.30303 per day. So in a month, this space heater running for two hours a day will add \$9.09 to your bill.

Space heaters are a way of driving the chill out of drafty rooms on cold winter days. However, like other electric appliances, they must be kept in good condition and used carefully to keep your family and home safe. ⚡

Do phantom loads haunt your home?

Many everyday appliances – instant-on TVs, microwave clocks, VCR displays, telephones, computer attachments, and any device that sports a cube-shaped transformer on the end of its cord – consume electricity even when they appear turned off. Often called standby or “phantom” loads, these energy guzzlers cost U.S. consumers more than \$1 billion per year and waste billions of kilowatt-hours of electricity.

On average, most homes carry a total phantom load of between 1.5 kilowatt-hours and 4 kilowatt-hours per day, which adds several dollars each month to your electric bill.

Plugging phantom load-causing appliances into a plug-strip equipped with its own power switch can help eliminate their energy-wasting ways. When you need to use the appliance, you simply switch the power-strip on. You then turn it off when you're done.

Consumers can find appliances with minimal standby loads by looking for the ENERGY STAR label.

PHANTOM LOAD SCORECARD

Appliance	Standby Load (in watts)	Consumption (watt-hours per day)
Instant-On TV	28	672
Video Cassette Recorder	14	336
Microwave Oven with Clock	8	192
Wall Cube Power Supply	2	120
Stereo with Remote Control	8	192
Stove with Electronic Ignition	14	336
Total	75	1,968 watt-hours (or 1.968 kilowatt-hours)

Click, calculate, save

Online tool can help you manage energy costs

Consumers looking to lower their home energy bills can now go to the Northwestern REC website at www.northwesternrec.coop for some fast help. With a few mouse clicks, Northwestern's new HomeEnergySuite will analyze members' current energy use and allow them to simulate changes that could dramatically reduce their electricity costs.

"We want to provide our members with more information and control over their electric bills," says Northwestern REC General Manager and CEO Michael D. Tirpak. "This interactive tool takes the guesswork out of where their energy dollars are going and it shows how much money can be saved by implementing certain conservation measures."

The cooperative selected the HomeEnergySuite, provided by Apogee Interactive Inc., because of the software's ease of use and ability to accurately approximate

savings for homes in the utility's service territory.

"Users can try changes like adjusting their thermostat settings, turning down their water heater thermostats, adding storm windows or switching their heating systems to see how much those measures might save," says co-op Communications/Marketing Manager Mary Mulligan-Haines. The calculator automatically factors in local weather and current electricity prices.

Statistics show that web-based tools like the energy calculator are becoming essential to cost-effective customer service as consumers rely on the internet more and more to help manage their busy households.


"This calculator, along with other upcoming programs like online meter reading and bill payment options, will greatly expand what our members can accomplish at their convenience — after business hours," Tirpak emphasizes. "These tools will also offer cost savings to the co-op through reduced member calls and on-site visits."

According to Susan Gilbert, Apogee president, the HomeEnergySuite is one of the firm's most popular applications.



"Northwestern REC joins more than 200 utilities nationwide that have added this educational feature to their websites," Gilbert notes. "(The calculator's) ability to answer customers' questions 24/7 and reduce inquiries helps the co-op to accomplish its goal of increasing customer satisfaction while lowering operating costs."

Apogee Interactive Inc. is the leading provider of online solutions to the energy industry. The company also provides eLearning systems, call center and bill analysis programs and load management platforms to utilities and their trade associations throughout North America and New Zealand.

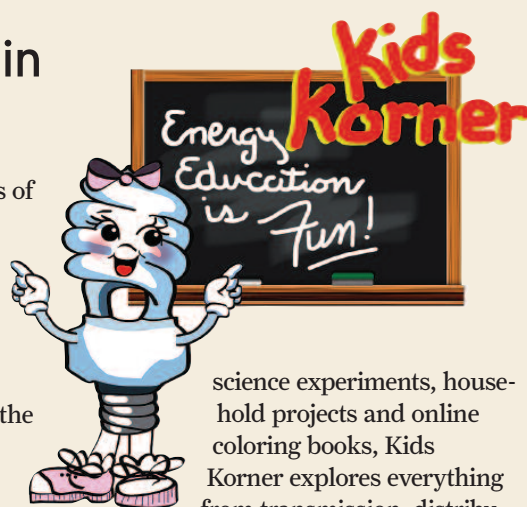
For more details on how to cut energy costs, contact Northwestern REC at 800/472-7910 or email at mmh@northwesternrec.coop. 

Technology aids in educating youth

Capturing the hearts and minds of today's younger generation is a tough job. After all, it's hard to compete with video games and other high-tech entertainment.

Recognizing the power of the internet, Northwestern REC has added an action-packed section to the HomeEnergySuite link on its website. It's called "Kids Korner" and its aim is to increase interaction with younger customers.

Kids Korner delivers engaging and informative "energy edu-tainment." Using colorful animations, playful graphics, interactive games, puzzles,



science experiments, household projects and online coloring books, Kids Korner explores everything from transmission, distribution and power generation sources to electrical safety, energy efficiency and utility careers.

Using the Kids Korner lighting and appliance calculator features, kids

can easily compute how many of their favorite toys or candies can be purchased for the amount of money saved by converting incandescent lamps to compact fluorescent lightbulbs or by changing their appliance use. Over 100 pages of content are presented online.

"We believe it's our responsibility to encourage and educate our children about what we know best — electricity. Kids Korner is an excellent vehicle for not only reaching the kids, but adults, too. And it's a great supplement to our local school involvement and other educational programs," says Mary Mulligan-Haines, communications/marketing manager at the co-op.

Kids Korner can be accessed free at www.northwesternrec.coop.