Sumter Electric Membership Corporation

SEMCO NEWS

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections®

Official Member Newsletter | March 2022

You have the power with prepaid metering

Prepaid metering is as simple as it sounds: Consumers pay for electricity before it is used, then use the electricity until the credit expires. A terrific analogy for prepaid metering is putting gas in your car. Say you only have $30 for the week to pay for gasoline. You drive down to the station, pump in $30 worth of gas, and drive off. As you drive during the week, what happens? You monitor the gauge and make sure each trip is necessary. If you drive too much, you burn up your $30 before the week is out. By checking the gauge throughout the week, you become more prudent with your gas use, and make informed decisions on when and how much to use.

Now let's transfer that analogy to your account with Sumter EMC. With normal metering, you get a bill after you have used the electricity. Sometimes, it comes as a shock. "How could I possibly have used so much electricity?" Prepaid metering is designed to ease—and hopefully eliminate—that shock. Let's take a look at how it works.

The components of a prepaid metering system aren't too different from regular metering. Two extra pieces are required—a way to turn off the power when all your money is used and a method for Sumter EMC to tell you how much you have left in your account. Think of this as your "electricity tank gauge." On the Cooperative's side, we handle the extra software and processes.

Now let's see it in action. You request to have the prepaid metering equipment installed. Prepaid users often receive electricity use notifications on their smartphones, in an email, and/or through a text message.

You now get to decide how often you want to buy electricity. Monthly? Weekly? Then, you budget for a certain amount of power and pay the Co-op. Members may use any of Sumter EMC's payment options, including online through our payment portal, over the phone using a debit or credit card, or through Sumter EMC's mobile app. During the time you have paid for (let's say a week for this example), you receive regular feedback on how much you have left in your "tank."

As you approach "empty," you add more money to your account and are then set for the next period. If you run out, the power goes off just like your car stops when it runs out of gas. This forces you to become pretty aware of how you are using electricity. You turn things off more often. You may change the setting on your thermostat, so you don't cool or heat as much. You might cook outside to avoid using the oven or make sure your dishwasher is full before running it.

Industry studies show that consumers who participate in prepaid metering plans use as much as 10% less electricity than their counterparts. Prepaid metering teaches the value of electricity, what uses watts in your home, provides absolute control over how much you pay, and helps you reduce your energy use. It is an excellent way to power your life.

To learn more about prepaid metering, visit Sumter EMC's website at *www.sumteremc.com/prepay* or call (800) 342-6978 to speak with a customer service representative.

Utility notification requirements for contractors, farmers, well drillers, and landowners

Contractors and landowners have substantial compliance responsibility when working near an electric utility's underground and overhead distribution power lines. Georgia law and Sumter EMC regulations require contractors and landowners to contact Georgia 811 or, in some cases, Sumter EMC before working near power lines.

Sumter EMC hopes to avoid personal injuries, unnecessary power outages, and line damage associated with accidents involving its electric distribution facilities. Contractors can avoid substantial equipment damage and repair costs, as well as personal injuries to their employees, if they abide by these requirements.

These regulations apply to contractors, well drillers, farmers, landowners, and others who may have a personal business interest in work performed near power lines. While the following rules address overhead power lines, Georgia law requires that anyone digging in Georgia must contact Georgia 811 at least three days before construction begins, so utility companies can be notified to mark underground facilities.

High Voltage Safety Act

The High Voltage Safety Act became law in Georgia on July 1, 1992. This act requires individuals performing work within 10 feet of overhead high-voltage electric power lines to notify Georgia 811 during its regular business hours at least 72 hours prior to beginning the work (excluding weekends and holidays).

Georgia 811 will then contact the owner of the power lines to take appropriate safety measures to prevent injuries, property damage, and interruptions of utility service resulting from accidental or inadvertent contact with high-voltage electric lines. Failure to call Georgia 811 constitutes a violation of the law and can result in fines and penalties, in addition to liability for repair of damages.

Contractors are encouraged to become fully familiar with the details of the High Voltage Safety Act. Information is available directly from Georgia 811. Use the same telephone number for notifications or contact them online.

Georgia: 811
Statewide: 811
Nationwide: 811
www.gaupc.com

Special notice to farmers

Modern farm equipment can be raised or lowered to allow for harvesting greater amounts with fewer delays. Use of this equipment requires that you check fields and roads where your equipment may come within 10 feet of overhead power lines.

The power lines were installed to comply with the National Electrical Safety Code clearance guidelines at the time of construction. If any part of your equipment will be within 10 feet of overhead power lines, you must notify Georgia 811 at least 72 hours before you work under the power lines.

Wells and pumps

Both the well driller and landowner bear responsibility to notify Georgia 811 when any equipment or materials will be within 10 feet of overhead high-voltage power lines. For safety reasons, installation of wells and well pumps at distances closer than 30 feet from any overhead power line should generally be avoided, but in locations where the options for well placement are limited, Sumter EMC will help determine the minimum clearance requirements, as specified in the National Electrical Safety Code.

Minimum clearance requirements for the location of wells and well pumps vary according to the line voltage and certain site-specific attributes, and Sumter EMC should be consulted to determine the appropriate minimum recommended distance. Clearance requirements vary with the voltage of the power line, whether the line is insulated, the height of the line above ground, the distance to poles that support the line, and other local factors that determine where a drilling rig will be stationed for installation and future maintenance or pump replacement activities.

A Sumter EMC representative will meet with the well driller and/or landowner to determine the minimum acceptable distance if the desired pump location is closer than 30 feet from an overhead line.

Easements

Sumter EMC's Service Rules and Regulations require the contractor to notify Sumter EMC directly if proposed work and/or construction will be performed inside the utility's easement. In most cases, the easement extends 20 feet on each side of the power line. Sumter EMC will provide the necessary protection to avoid hazards. Again, consideration should be given to providing plenty of time to respond.

Call Sumter EMC's Engineering Department at (229) 924-8041 or (800) 342-6978 and ask to speak with a representative.

Be prepared for spring storms

PAT GAINES

Lightning from thunderstorms kills more people each year than tornadoes or hurricanes, according to the American Red Cross. As spring arrives, make sure you're prepared to handle storms that come with the changing season. Follow these tips to stay safe:

• **Stay away from downed power lines.** Electricity could still be flowing through them. Report downed power lines immediately to Sumter EMC by calling (229) 924-8041 or (800) 342-6978.

• **Hear thunder? Head inside.** If you can hear thunder, you could be in danger of being struck by lightning. Stay indoors at least 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder—a recommendation from the National Weather Service. If you're outside and can't seek shelter indoors, avoid high ground, water, tall isolated trees, and metal objects like bleachers or fences.

• **Unplug your electronics.** Avoid using electrical items and landline telephones, which can carry power surges. Keep a battery-powered TV or radio on hand for weather updates.

• **Delay outdoor activities.** If conditions are right for a thunderstorm, postpone outdoor activities and stay inside. It doesn't have to be raining for lightning to strike.

• **Assemble an emergency preparedness kit with the following items:**

- Water—1 gallon per person, per day
- Nonperishable food
- Flashlight
- Battery-powered radio (preferably NOAA weather radio) and extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- Seven-day medicine supply
- Copies of personal documents
- Cellphone with chargers
- Emergency contact information
- Cash

Source: American Red Cross

Time to "spring forward"

The time changes on Sunday, March 13, so plan to set your clocks forward one hour before you go to bed Saturday night, March 12.

Now is also an excellent time to change smoke alarm batteries and review your family's fire safety route in the event of a house fire. If you and your family don't have a plan, make one today.

Southern Pimento Cheese

Courtesy of Georgia Grown

2 cups freshly grated sharp cheddar cheese
1/2 cup pimentos, drained
1/2 cup mayonnaise
Dash of cayenne pepper, to taste
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
Dash of hot sauce, to taste

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In a large bowl, stir together cheddar cheese, pimentos, mayonnaise, cayenne pepper, Worcestershire sauce, and hot sauce. Cover and refrigerate mixture for 2 hours. This can be used as a spread on sandwiches, a topping for hamburgers or an appetizer served with crackers. Yields about 3 cups.

Visit Georgia Grown's website at *www.georgiagrown.com* for information on farms and producers across our state.

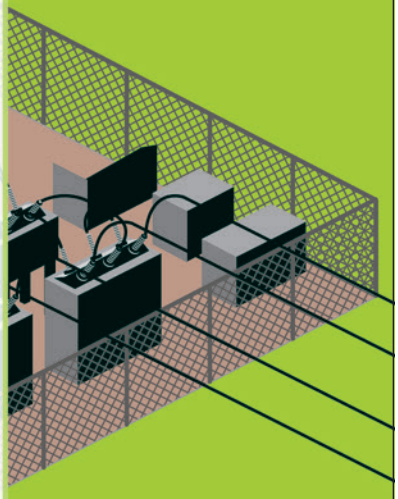
ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT WORD SEARCH

Energy Explorers

Did you know we use a variety of equipment to send electricity to your home?

Read the facts below to learn about the equipment we use, then find and circle the bolded words in the puzzle below.

C	Y	F	S	S	B	U	R	U	X	S	Z	P	Z	S
T	U	R	S	O	E	Q	N	S	G	E	W	S	E	K
N	H	Z	T	B	V	N	Z	E	B	F	U	S	K	C
Z	N	B	Z	R	S	M	I	K	Y	X	U	I	J	U
E	J	A	D	K	X	Z	T	L	Z	S	E	E	E	R
S	G	L	F	Y	M	O	G	I	R	E	N	C	O	T
V	Z	Q	O	W	K	V	D	C	H	E	U	K	O	T
U	S	C	T	A	S	W	J	I	E	O	W	B	H	E
S	N	O	I	T	A	T	S	B	U	S	E	O	X	K
X	S	R	E	M	R	O	F	S	N	A	R	T	P	C
E	L	E	C	T	R	I	C	M	E	T	E	R	S	U
Y	B	G	V	H	U	N	P	D	L	K	C	R	R	B
B	L	P	T	G	I	F	N	Z	T	S	M	B	G	E
U	H	U	J	Y	Z	L	K	A	S	L	H	H	E	C
Z	B	R	I	Y	Q	I	U	J	M	F	H	Z	D	R



- **Transformers** look like large metal cans on top of utility poles or big green boxes on the ground. They reduce the voltage of electricity for safe use in your home.
- **Power lines** hang overhead or are placed underground to carry electricity from where it's generated to homes and businesses.
- Lineworkers use **bucket trucks** to reach power lines and poles when making repairs and updates to the electrical system.
- **Electric meters** are placed on the outside of homes to measure the amount of electricity you use.
- **Substations** are facilities that contain equipment to help control the flow of electricity.