



United Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

United Electric Cooperative, Inc.
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Guest Column



Construction season

By Mike Flock, *Manager of Engineering*

ANYONE who lives in Pennsylvania can confirm that there are really only two seasons here: winter and construction season. Even though we update and improve our system year-round, the summer months are when we undertake most of our major construction projects and when we receive most of our requests for line extensions to new homes and various buildings.

United Electric continually develops and updates our work plans to better serve our members. A lot of background work goes into designing and constructing lines for any project. These projects will routinely take two to three years or more to complete, depending on the number of miles of line to be rebuilt. The factors that cause these projects to take years to complete include designing the route the new line will take, obtaining the right-of-way (ROW) from all members affected by the project, trimming trees to prepare the route for the new line, and the installation of the poles and conductors.

We are in the first year of a four-year construction work plan, and we anticipate spending roughly \$4.5 million per year on system improvement projects. Over the past 10 years, we have invested over \$35 million improving our electrical system throughout our service territory to provide better service.

There are numerous projects in various stages of design and construction. This year, we finished converting 2 miles of single-phase line to three-phase along Old Station Road in Kerrmoor. This created a tie-in to be

used for possible backfeeding in an outage situation between our Five Points and Erhard substations.

We also completed a section of underground cable that had failed numerous times on Kunselman Road. We replaced the underground cable with poles and overhead conductor to avoid lengthy outages.

The third system improvement job completed was 7 miles of line that began at our Henderson Substation and headed east to Donahue Road. This was a complete rebuild of our main three-phase lines with stouter poles and higher-capacity conductor to give us the capability to backfeed our Henderson Substation from our Laurel Ridge Substation during extended power supplier outages. This project was also the first step in a multi-year project aimed at increasing the reliability to our members fed from our McGees Mills Substation. The newly rebuilt Henderson lines will tie into 24 miles of line that will be rebuilt from McGees Mills north to Henderson. This is being upgraded from single-phase line to three-phase line to help balance our electrical load. This is one of our largest rebuild projects to complete in this construction work plan. We are also rebuilding 10 miles of line on the south feeder of McGees Mills to tie into our Five Points Substation. Both McGees Mills projects are in the engineering design stage.

We have four other planned system improvement jobs in the engineering stage of development. The first is

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replacement of approximately 4 miles of three-phase underground line along Ridge Road north of Hastings. The engineering and design will be completed this year with construction to begin in 2022.

The second planned job is 7 miles of three-phase line starting at Roller Coaster Road, heading north to Route 322 near Roseville. This is an older line needing larger conductor to create a usable backfeed between our Pinebrook and Howe substations. We anticipate construction will start later this year or early 2022.

The third planned job is along Mountain Run Road in Sabula and Penfield. This is a single-phase line that feeds the Pine Valley Trailer Court. We will be rebuilding and upgrading 4 miles of this line to three-phase to help with load growth.

The final planned system improvement job is the replacement of 4 miles of aging single-phase lines in the Bainey Settlement area. This area was chosen due to numerous pole inspection failures and the difficulty in accessing these lines.

Not every system improvement job we complete is planned. We currently have six unplanned jobs in the engineering phase. All six jobs are underground lines that have caused power outages due to cable failures at least



PHOTO BY RICHARD HEVERLEY

TWO WAYS TO BUILD: In the background, a lineworker climbs a pole on a right-of-way that is inaccessible to our line trucks. In the foreground, our bucket trucks help assist our lineworkers to rebuild line.

twice. It takes our crews an excessive amount of time to repair these lines, often in the middle of the night or in inclement weather. Replacement of these lines with either new underground conductor or pole sets with overhead lines is in the best interest of the members throughout these areas as well as the co-op.

We also have two jobs that have been waiting for dry weather to clear the ROWs. These lines are in the Ames Circle and Elk Road area near Sigel. We

anticipate completing both jobs this winter. We are rebuilding these lines due to underground cable failures. Both lines will be converted to poles and overhead conductor.

Two projects are nearing completion. The first is a short piece of underground cable that needed to be replaced on Crooked Pine Trail. Our crews are expected to have this finished by the end of July.

The second project in construction at this time is the Munderf rebuild. This is a complete rebuild of an aging three-phase line that is being replaced with new poles and heavier conductor. This job runs from Dixon Corner to Route 949. Upon completion, we will have the capability to backfeed our Sigel Substation from our Warsaw Substation and vice versa. This should help alleviate the power supply outages we have experienced in these areas.

None of these projects can be completed without the cooperation of our members and affected property owners. I am truly grateful to our membership for working with our staking engineers and forestry supervisor in order to create a more reliable, affordable system for everyone. Again, I thank you. 



PHOTO BY RICHARD HEVERLEY

UNDER CONSTRUCTION: Lineworker Kyle Heffner works on mounting a transformer to a new pole set.

Rustic Views

Gardeners' rewards

By Glenn Schuckers

PEOPLE usually think about December as a time for getting gifts, with Christmas and all. It's only natural that the time of trees and decorations, parties and gift exchanges would be the time that we associate with both giving and getting gifts.

But for gardeners and farmers, the month of August is the time for both giving and getting gifts. This is the time when all the months of work, money and planning will yield a reward. It is the time when nature gives us the gifts we have been looking for over the past four months.

I started the season in January when the first seed and nursery catalogs arrived. It's the same ritual every year: should I stick with the tried-and-true plan I've used for years, order the same seeds and plants, or "go wild" and order new varieties or even new kinds of plants that might or might not work out?

One year I ordered a bunch of sweet potato plants and put them in a raised garden I had used the year before. It was the first year I had tried sweet potatoes, having always thought they were only for climates warmer than ours with longer growing seasons. One variety was advertised as good for northern gardens with about a 100-day growing requirement. As a trial, I planted about a dozen plants and watched them grow through the summer. Come late August, the tops began to wilt and I took that as a sign they were ready to harvest. I started to dig and in about one afternoon, I had about a peck of fresh sweet potatoes.

Ann peeled them and we had fresh sweet potatoes for supper. The problem was that we do not have a root cellar and, with a finished basement, there really is not a good place to keep root crops. They stayed fresh for a couple of weeks in the garage and, by that

PHOTO BY GLENN SCHUCKERS



AS AMERICAN AS APPLE PIE: This is the month to enjoy fresh apples and even more delicious fresh apple pie, a truly fitting reward.

time, we had used many of them, but based on effort versus reward, along with the fact that they were really not any better than ones from the market, it was a one-year trial.

The same has been true of some new varieties of sweet corn. Over the years, I would guess I have tried out some 40 varieties of sweet corn. Old-time favorites like Butter and Sugar or Silver Queen, which we grew in volume when he had the fruit market at the barn, were standards. I can still recall the first year we had Silver Queen, which had been recommended by Ann's Grandfather Merley, who was a farmer near Johnstown. There was so much resistance to white corn that we gave away a half dozen with each dozen of yellow Iowa Chief, a corn everyone knew about. The next year, people came back asking if they could get more of that white corn we had the year before. A measured success!

Last year, and again this year, the Harris catalog had about 90 different varieties of sweet corn: Standard, Super Sweet, Sunken Gene, Synergistic yellow, Synergistic white, Augmented Supersweet, Sweet Breed. It was like looking at wallpaper samples and just as confusing. Some must be isolated; some germinate in cool soil; others need soil temperatures of 70 degrees.

In the end, this year I picked one variety with a cute name that ripens in about 68 days and another with a delicious name that should ripen in about 80 days. The deer should appreciate a longer feasting season. I am probably old-fashioned (probably???) , but I have always felt that the better-quality vegetables are the ones that ripen later in the season.

Nothing can be both early and good.

In other words, things like vegetables can be either early or they can be the best tasting. They cannot be both. That's probably an outmoded opinion, but it is just the way I've always seen it.

The same goes for all vegetables, including tomatoes, beans, eggplant, cabbage, cucumbers and squash. In some ways it applies to fruit as well, except that when we had peach trees, we did have a variety named Golden Jubilee that was both early and, maybe the best-tasting peach of all. The drawback was that it was not hardy enough for our climate. In nature, nothing is perfect.

So this month, we will begin to gather the rewards for our summer's work.

Corn will be ripe and ready for the deer to eat. Hopefully, they, along with the groundhogs and raccoons, will leave enough for us to have some and get some into the freezer. Peaches from the southern part of the state will be ready to pick, and apples like McIntosh, Macoun, Cortland, Rambo and Yellow Delicious will soon ripen. Those are mostly old-fashioned varieties, too, although not as old as ones like Ben Davis, Famuse, Snow or Pippin, which are now hard to find.

As summer ends, this is the month of rewards — gifts from nature to the folks who have chosen to enter into a partnership and spent more time in their gardens than on a golf course or tennis court. People can argue that a reward for work done is not a reward at all. A gift, they say, should not come with strings like time, effort and money attached. But just as we told the kids when they were young, they had to be good to get presents at Christmas. So, we have to be "good" and plant, cultivate, weed, and pick to get rewards in a garden. Like most things in life, it is a matter of tradeoffs. I give up my time, my back, and knees, and nature gives me my reward. 🍁



Glenn Schuckers, a longtime member of United Electric, operated Schuckers' Orchard in Luthersburg until the mid-1990s. He is a retired high school teacher and a contributing writer for *The Courier Express*.

We are pleased to have Glenn provide our *Penn Lines* readers with his take on rural life.

Member participation saves millions

THE LOAD Management Program has been in place for 27 years and has saved United Electric members over \$18 million in power costs by controlling electric use when peak demands occur on the electric system.

The peaks typically occur Monday-Friday between the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. The peaks do not occur on weekends and holidays when industrial loads are shut down. The winter peak hours are generally on the coldest days of the month between 7 a.m. and noon and 5 p.m. and 10 p.m. The summer peak hours are usually on the hottest days between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

During the summer months, you may hear an “Electric Shift” ad on your local radio station. This ad asks all members to reduce or delay their electric use until after 7 p.m. because summer heat brings higher demand for electricity due to air conditioning loads. United’s wholesale power bill — and ultimately, your electric bill — is determined for the year based on the five highest use periods throughout the summer. The amount of electricity being used by our members during these five peak periods will set the generation capacity we are required to purchase throughout the next year. Simply put, we have to buy the generation capacity needed during these peak periods for the next year, even though it is only needed during several unusually hot days in the summer.

Here’s how the Load Management Program works:

- ▶ A demand response unit (DRU) is installed free of charge at the member’s convenience on electric water heaters and/or electric heating/cooling systems.
- ▶ On days when demand for electricity is at its highest, a radio frequency signal is sent through the electric line to the DRU, temporarily switching off your electric water heater and/or your electric heating/cooling. This occurs for

periods of time usually 4-5 hours (sometimes longer), several days of the month, but not every day.

- ▶ Residential participants in the Load Management Program are eligible to purchase a high-efficiency water heater through the co-op for only \$100, and receive \$3 off their electric bill each month for having a DRU installed on the water heater.

For members participating in United’s Home Comfort Rate Program, we provide qualifying members with the sub-meter and a DRU that interrupts electric heat during winter peak demand periods and central air conditioning during summer peak demand periods. Participants receive a lower per-kilowatt-hour rate (Home Comfort Rate) on all electricity used by the heating/cooling system. ⚡



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