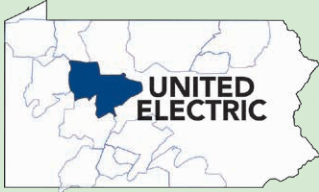




United Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

UNITED ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

P.O. Box 688
DuBois, PA 15801-0688
Customer Service: 888-581-8969
www.unitedpa.com
Outage: 800-262-8959
Office Hours: M - F 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

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Power Restoration – A Team Effort



LEN HAWKINS

HAVING WORKED AT UNITED ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE FOR

25 years, I am accustomed to members' questions about power outages. Given our reliance on electricity, there's simply never a good time to be without service. Members often ask about power outages and why it takes time to get the lights back on.

Before we head into the season of severe weather — the biggest culprit of outages in our territory — I'd like to talk about United Electric's power restoration process and what happens behind the scenes.

- 1. We need you.** When your power goes out, it might be affecting your home or a small group of members near you. There is always a chance we don't know about the outage because no one has reported it. Our meters capture real-time information, but they don't automatically send those details back to us. To report your outage, call 800-262-8959 or use our SmartHub app. Your cooperation in reporting outages is invaluable and greatly appreciated.
- 2. It's a team effort.** During business hours, our customer service representatives will take your outage calls (outside of business hours, our after-hours call center will answer them). Meanwhile, engineering and operations staff are surveying damage in the field and coordinating tree removal with tree-trimming crews. Lineworkers are gearing up to replace poles, wires and equipment.
- 3. We must assess the situation first.** Every outage is different. We don't immediately know how dangerous an outage may be and what equipment will need to be replaced. When responding to outages, our lineworkers must first locate the problem, then figure out what materials they will need. A coordinated effort then begins to make repairs without compromising service for the rest of our members.
- 4. We have to set priorities.** During outages, our crews must focus on responding first to public safety issues and critical loads, like medical facilities and emergency services. After this, we look for areas with the largest number of members without power. Lineworkers will start there and move their way down the outage list. Our goal is to restore power to as many consumers as possible, in the shortest time possible and as safely as possible.
- 5. Our employees face many dangers.** Besides working around high-voltage electricity, our crews are on alert for wild animals, weather elements, falling trees and fast-moving cars (please slow down and give plenty of space to our crews). Our employees are human, and for the safety of everyone, they must eat and rest. Therefore, you may see our trucks huddled in a safe, communal area to map out the next steps and refuel (the trucks and our people).
- 6. Blinking or flickering lights will happen.** Blinking lights are not outages or power surges. These momentary "blinks" mean our protective equipment may have successfully prevented an actual outage. That irritating blink (and subsequent reset of your digital clocks) likely saved you and your neighbors from being without power for a couple of hours. If you are experiencing persistent blinking lights, I encourage you to report this to our office. We'll ask you to provide details about the frequency and duration of the blinking so we can address and diagnose the cause effectively. Rest assured, our team will be actively monitoring the situation and working toward a resolution.

Continued on page 14D

A Busy March

GLENN SCHUCKERS

MOST PEOPLE THINK THE NEW year started in January, and they are technically correct. Farmers and gardeners, however, have their own calendar and, for them, the new year began months ago.

In my mind, the new year started sometime after Thanksgiving when the first new seed catalog arrived. Even though I usually only order seeds and plants from one or two catalogs, it has been fun looking at the 50 or so that are now stacked up on a table in our den. Not wanting to miss out on any seeds and knowing that sometimes the best varieties sell out in January, I placed my order early and made a copy of what I had ordered. (A few years ago, I forgot what I had ordered and, “just to be safe,” ordered again.)

There are two things I look forward to doing this month, but Mother Nature will have a say in when either of them gets done. The first is pruning the semi-dwarf apple and pear trees in our little “orchard.” The second job is planting seeds for plants that need a head start on spring. Generally, that means tomatoes, peppers and cabbage, but for the past three years, that list has been narrowed to

just tomatoes. Peppers need soil that is about 70 degrees, and since I no longer have a wall of windows facing southwest in my home, I no longer have heated soil. I now grow seedlings in our basement, and while tomatoes sprout well under the artificial lights, peppers do not. With somewhat limited space in the garden, the cabbage gave way to other plantings.

I decided I would plant some sunflowers this year, too, have a border of color around the edge of the garden. I used to have sunflowers in the old garden and decided it was time to go back, so the table in the basement will soon be covered with little pots, hopefully growing tomatoes and sunflowers.

But first, I have to prune the apple and pear trees and remind myself not to touch the plum tree. Stone fruits like cherries, plums and peaches should not get pruned in our zone for another month. I learned this many years ago when the Penn State Extension Office sponsored a pruning demonstration at our orchard.

Dr. Marshall Ritter of Penn State University came to the orchard along with roughly 20 people, who watched him



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888-581-8969, ext. 8507
ksmith@unitedpa.com
www.unitedpa.com

*Must be a United Electric Cooperative member or dependent. Directors, employees and their families are ineligible to apply.

demonstrate how to prune trees. After he pruned several apple trees, we went back through our cherry orchard and asked if I wanted him to prune one of the trees. He warned us that it was probably too early to prune a stone fruit, but we picked a tree that was sort of in the way anyway, and he went ahead and trimmed it. The tree looked pretty good in May and into June, but soon after that, the leaves began to wilt. By mid-July, Ritter's prediction was right: The tree was dead. I'll always remember that advice.

But there is no reason to wait to trim the young apple trees. This month is usually a good time, especially if the ground is still frozen. Walking on frozen ground is a lot easier than plodding around in soft soil and mud where boots get a little heavier with each step.

A lot of folks have told me they are afraid they will trim the tree too much and ruin it. I also heard Ritter answer that question, and his response was: "Unless you use a chain saw and cut the trunk 6 inches above the ground, you won't trim off too much." The truth is, most of us, myself included, don't cut off enough.

To be healthy and fruitful, trees need two things: sunlight and air. A tree that is too thick and bushy will not get enough of either. In March, there are no leaves on the trees, and by the end of May, they will be full of leaves. That means I must picture the trees full of leaves and with new growth. A tree that looks like a skeleton this month will probably be full and healthy by June.

Pear trees? They are the opposite of apple trees — a little pruning on them goes a long way. Too much on a pear tree just encourages a lot of new growth, which is an open invitation to fire blight. I'll just do enough to open the middle of the tree, keep the size in check and let sunlight and air move through it.

And just this last note about pruning: Leave the small hand pruners in the barn. If I have them in my

pocket, I'll be tempted to do a little sniping here and a little cutting there to make the tree "look good." The goal of a fruit tree is to grow and bear fruit, not fulfill Joyce Kilmer's poem about who can make a tree. If I only carry the bigger two-handed pruners, I will prune by taking out the larger limbs closer to the trunk, which is how the tree will be encouraged to bear fruit.

Then, I'll plant the seeds I ordered with faith they will grow. There isn't much to planting — just cover the seeds with a little soil and keep them damp. Don't drown them and then wait for them to sprout.

Enjoy March, and good luck with the jobs you need to do. 🌱



UNITED ELECTRIC SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

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7. Sometimes it's a waiting game. At times, United Electric members will experience outages when other electric providers in the transmission system, such as Penelec (FirstEnergy), lose service. We maintain positive relationships with these providers and communicate with their operations employees when electric service goes down at our substations. We allow them time to perform repairs and continually reassess timeframes.

8. Everyone needs a backup plan. We do our best to help those who need it, but you must have a backup plan if you depend on electricity for life support services. We don't always know how long restoration efforts will take; members can call our outage number to get updates or reach out to our customer service representatives.

To stay informed about outages in your area, you can always refer to our outage map on unitedpa.com. It's a great tool that provides near real-time information by county, township and other local identifiers. Our map can be accessed from any internet-capable device, ensuring you have it when you need it. I encourage you to take advantage of this valuable resource.

Finally, we do our best to avoid disruptions, but they will happen. Because we're locally owned by the members we serve, our employees are likely without power as well. They are your neighbors, friends and community volunteers. We ask for your patience while all of United Electric's 52 local employees work to get our power restored as soon as possible. 🙏


LEN HAWKINS
PRESIDENT & CEO

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

March is an ideal time to service your home cooling system, ensuring it runs efficiently when the heat of summer arrives. Routine maintenance, like cleaning or replacing filters, checking refrigerant levels and inspecting parts, can improve your system's energy efficiency and lower your energy bills. By addressing potential issues early, you can avoid costly emergency repairs and extend the lifespan of your unit. Scheduling service in the spring helps you beat the peak-season rush, giving you faster access to qualified technicians. A well-maintained cooling system can save energy and keep your home comfortable all summer long.



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