



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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Powered by Purpose



LEN HAWKINS

THIS MONTH, ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ACROSS the country will celebrate National Co-op Month and reflect on the advantages of this people-first business model. It's also the perfect time to thank you, our members, who make it all possible. For us, it's not just a celebration; it's a chance to reaffirm the values that guide everything we do.

As the president & CEO of United Electric Cooperative, I see purpose in action every day. Unlike investor-owned utilities, our cooperative doesn't exist to make profits for distant shareholders.

We exist to serve you, our members, neighbors and communities. That purpose is what sets us apart. It's why we were founded, and it's what continues to drive every decision we make.

At its core, being a cooperative means we are member-owned and locally controlled. That's not just a tagline; it's the very heart of our business model. Members have a voice in how our cooperative operates. They elect our board members — people who live right here in our service area and who understand the unique challenges and opportunities our communities face. Decisions aren't made hundreds of miles away; they're made here at home, by people who care about the same things you do.

This local accountability means we can stay focused on what matters most: delivering reliable, affordable electricity and providing real value to the people we serve.

We do that by investing in essential infrastructure upgrades and technologies that strengthen our local grid and improve electric service. We work hard to manage costs and keep rates as low as possible because we understand how rising prices affect families and small businesses in our area. When storms hit and outages occur, United's employees are here and ready to respond quickly because we live here, too.

And our commitment doesn't end at the power lines.

Cooperatives were built to meet community needs. Whether we're supporting local schools, sponsoring youth programs or providing safety education, we are always looking for ways to improve the quality of life in the places we serve. Community support isn't just an afterthought; it's part of our mission.

We're also planning for the future. As electricity demand grows because of modern technologies and economic development, electric cooperatives are working to ensure we continue to meet those needs with a balanced, reliable energy mix. We know our members care about affordability and dependability, and we're committed to delivering both.

That's the power of the cooperative difference. That's what it means to be powered by purpose.

This National Co-op Month, I encourage you to take pride in your cooperative membership. You're not just a consumer — you're a vital part of a larger effort to keep our community strong, connected and energized.

Thank you for the trust you place in us and the trust you have placed in me. We're proud to be your local electric cooperative. 

Until next time,

LEN HAWKINS
PRESIDENT & CEO

Celebrating National Apple Month

GLENN SCHUCKERS

IN CASE YOU HADN'T NOTICED, apples are my favorite fruit. I love eating anything with apples, working with apples and talking about them.

October is National Apple Month, and when we were selling apples at the orchard, this was a big deal. We had posters all over the store, held contests, made candied apples and offered tours for school kids during which they watched us make cider.

When we had the orchard in the 1970s and 1980s, we had about 17 varieties of apples. They started with Lodi and Yellow Transparent in late July and went through about five months, depending on weather, into November. I always tried to finish the harvest in October, but it never seemed to work out because picking apples after a hard frost was never a promising idea.

Shoppers today will probably find some 30 varieties in stores and farm markets. At the time of the farm, the accepted method for storing fruit was to keep it in a refrigerated room at about 40 degrees. By keeping the fruit cool with high humidity, some varieties were good for six months.

These days, apples are often stored in sealed rooms where oxygen and carbon dioxide levels are lower, increasing storage life by as much as four more months. Now that apples are shipped from around the world, people can enjoy them year-round.

That's a good thing because apples can be enjoyed in so many ways. For one, they can be covered or wrapped in dough as either a pie or an apple dumpling, the latter of which has always been my personal favorite. One Northern Spy wrapped in dough, baked with a little cinnamon and sugar, and eaten while still warm from the oven with a little milk is about as close to heaven on Earth as I ever expect to get.

In addition to the use of dough, there's also apple cobbler, apple crisp, and baked or stewed apples. You also can't forget just plain apples sliced fresh and juicy. Really, any apple variety is good as long as it is fresh and crisp.

Today, there are some 300 varieties grown in America — and that doesn't count the "heritage" ones like Sheepnose, Cox's Orange Pippin, Arkansas Black and a few others. When I am in the apple aisle in a grocery store, I usually see about six or seven varieties, depending on the time of year. It amazes me because it usually takes a decade or more to develop a new variety.

Most apple trees that grow from a seed taste terrible. The trees John Chapman, also known as Johnny Appleseed, planted were like that, and they mostly produced fruit that

GLENN SCHUCKERS



PICKING APPLES FOR A CAUSE: In October 1981, the Brockway Area Senior High School Student Council raised money to benefit a children's hospital, and kids picked apples at our orchard. Students are shown with the fruits of their labor.

was used for cider.

Speaking of that beverage, it was a staple in Colonial times. Because much of the water that was available to early settlers on the frontier was not safe for drinking, cider was an important part of their lives. Most settlements had at least one cider mill, and cider could be kept for weeks after it was squeezed. After it aged past the drinking stage, it became vinegar, another important element of frontier life.

Because apples were a vital commodity in early America, it is not surprising that they became a universal part of the language. Even though it never says anything of the sort in the Bible, early teachings suggest it was an apple that Eve used to tempt Adam — and we all know how that turned out. People have "Adam's apples," and "the apple of my eye" is a phrase that describes someone's favorite person.

Apples today are grown in most American states, but the southern ones are generally not a good place for them. Apple trees require a certain amount of cold weather — specifically between 800 and 1,100 hours below 45 degrees. As a result, they don't thrive in areas like Georgia and Florida.

Most varieties survive cold winters, so states like Vermont, Michigan and even Maine have commercial orchards. Pennsylvania is among the Top 10 apple-producing states, and many of us are lucky to have an orchard within a short drive of home.

All of this was probably a lot more than you wanted to know about my favorite fruit, but the next time you have a glass of cider or a slice of apple pie, I hope you enjoy it a little more. 🍏

Four Best Bets to Stay Cyber Safe

October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month

COREY KELSO, FACILITIES & IT MANAGER

PROTECTING YOURSELF ONLINE DOESN'T HAVE TO be complicated or expensive. A few simple habits can dramatically reduce your risk of falling victim to cybercrime. While you can never be “hackproof,” you can become resilient in the online world.

There are four essential behaviors at the heart of online safety that we should all keep in mind. These steps help shield personal information, protect online accounts and keep devices secure.

1. Use long, unique and complex passwords. Your passwords are the first line of defense between a criminal and your sensitive information. Follow these tips to create secure passwords:

- ▶ **Mix it up.** Every password should be at least 16 characters long, which significantly overwhelms password-cracking programs. Use a random mix of letters, numbers and symbols.
- ▶ **Don't reuse passwords.** Every account needs a unique password. Unfortunately, making small changes, such as adding numbers or switching an S with a \$, doesn't count as a unique password.
- ▶ **Use a password manager.** If you're wondering how to manage so many unique, long passwords, the answer is a password manager. There are many free, secure software options. However, if you prefer to use a physical password notebook, treat it like cash — and keep it somewhere safe.

2. Enable multifactor authentication (MFA). Multifactor authentication (sometimes called 2FA) adds an extra security layer by requiring something more than just your password to log in. Think of it as using two locks on your digital door instead of one. This could be:

- ▶ A one-time code sent to your phone
- ▶ A biometric scan like a fingerprint or face ID

Enable MFA on your accounts — especially email, banking and

social media. It's a simple way to supercharge the security. Also, never share MFA codes with anyone, including over the phone, through texts or via email. Only scammers will ask for MFA codes.

3. Keep software updated. Software updates don't just bring new features, they often fix security flaws that criminals exploit. It usually takes a few minutes, but updates are worth it. Here are some tips:

- ▶ Turn on automatic updates, when possible, for your devices and apps. You can usually find these options in your settings menu.
- ▶ Install updates promptly for your operating systems, browsers, antivirus tools and apps.
- ▶ Don't click “Remind Me Later” because the security is worth it.
- ▶ Remember that your phones, smartwatches and tablets are computers, so keep these devices updated as well.

4. Look out for phishing and scams. Phishing remains the most common online threat. Criminals send fake emails, texts or social media messages to trick you into

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revealing sensitive information or clicking on malicious links. These messages encourage you to click before you think by playing with your emotions. Here's how to look out for phishing and scams:

- ▶ Be highly skeptical of unexpected messages, especially those urging immediate action or asking for personal details.
- ▶ Phishing emails can light up positive emotions ("You've won our sweepstakes!") or negative ones ("You've been hacked!").
- ▶ Don't click suspicious links or download unexpected attachments.
- ▶ Report phishing attempts to your email provider, social media platform or IT department.
- ▶ If you are unsure if a message is legit, ask a friend, co-worker or family member. A second set of eyes can be invaluable in spotting scams.

Please remember to stay vigilant and call our office at 888-581-8969 if you feel anything is suspicious with your electric account or service. Keep in mind, United Electric Cooperative employees and contractors carry cooperative identification and use clearly marked vehicles with the co-op's logo. 🚚

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Do you know the warning signs of an energy scam? Scammers will often use **high-pressure tactics** that create a sense of urgency. They may also ask for **unusual payment methods**, such as gift cards or cryptocurrency. **Dodgy communication**, including poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses, is typically associated with a scam. If you spot any of these warning signs, take a moment to pause and determine if it's legitimate or if it's a scam.



Our commitment
goes beyond
power lines.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

As winter approaches, now is the time to inspect your home for air leaks around windows. Leaks reduce indoor comfort and lead to higher heating costs.

If you can see daylight around the edges of a window frame or if a window rattles slightly when touched, air is likely leaking.

Caulking and weatherstripping are simple, effective methods for sealing windows. These materials are available in a variety of compounds and forms, each designed for different types of surfaces. Choose the right product and apply it properly to reduce heat loss, improve comfort and lower energy bills.

