

DISCOVERING SOUTH KENTUCKY

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Right-of-Way maintenance is key in outage prevention

Story and Photo by Joy Bullock

South Kentucky RECC takes the reliability of our members' electric service seriously. But sometimes Mother Nature intervenes, as she did last February when we experienced repeated severe ice and snow storms, knocking out power to thousands.

One of the biggest issues during a winter storm is trees or limbs on co-op lines, causing them to break, or causing poles to break.

Right-of-way, or the corridor through which South Kentucky RECC's electric lines pass from pole to pole, is a big factor in the cooperative being able to provide reliable electricity. Electricity needs a clear path to travel, and the co-op's right-of-way program strives to keep the corridors clear. Currently, South Kentucky RECC's Right-of-Way department takes care of about 7,000 miles of right-of-way for the co-op.

Don Bethel, right-of-way manager for South Kentucky RECC, says the typical width for single-phase right-of-way is 30 feet—15 feet in each direction from the center. He adds that if the property owner allows, SKRECC will make the corridor wider. On a multiphase line, Bethel says the co-op allows for a 45-foot right-of-way.

"One of the best allies South Kentucky RECC has in maintaining

clear rights-of-way, which will help lead to minimal power interruptions, is our members," says Bethel. "South Kentucky RECC members can assist by preventing outages before they ever happen by allowing our right-of-way crews to trim trees growing into co-op lines or to cut down any trees that may be a threat to our lines."

Bethel adds that people also need to consider what they are planting in the spring and fall.

"When members are selecting trees and shrubs for their yards, we ask that they consider a species that won't present problems for power lines. For example, a maple grows taller and has to be controlled, whereas a dogwood or an ornamental tree can look nice, but not pose problems."

Other suggestions from Bethel, include:

- Avoid planting under overhead power lines.
- Never attempt to cut a tree that has the possibility of falling on a power line—call South Kentucky RECC for assistance instead.
- Before planting, research and find out how tall a tree will eventually grow. If it is apt to reach within 10 feet of a power line when it is mature, plant it far from the line. (Many nurseries have planting guides that show the width and height of trees at maturity.)
- Don't plant anything that can reach within 6 feet of an electric meter.



South Kentucky RECC tree trimmer Kevin Cornett is one member of the co-op's right-of-way team that works diligently to keep trees trimmed and out of co-op power lines.

Maintaining rights-of-way is an enormous job, and one that South Kentucky RECC takes very seriously. Prevention is key to keeping rights-of-way in check, but with the help of co-op members, South Kentucky RECC can tackle the job and keep the power on!

Update your account information

It is very important that South Kentucky RECC members have updated account information available when they need to report an outage or request service.

If your account information is up to date, you can easily report an outage by calling your local office or our toll-free number, (800) 264-5112. South Kentucky RECC's cutting-edge system, Porche Interactive Voice Response (IVR) will recognize the account associated with the phone number and automatically report the outage

to the co-op's outage management system.

With updated account information, South Kentucky RECC can provide more efficient service to members. If an address has changed, co-op servicemen can spend quite a bit of time searching for the correct location of an issue.

To update your account, visit our website, www.skrecc.com, or call your local office or (800) 264-5112 and speak to a member services representative.



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UPDATE YOUR ACCOUNT INFORMATION

Make your changes at www.skrecc.com or call us at (800) 264-5112. Let us know if you have an address change, new phone number or new email address.

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Follow us on social media and keep up to date on outages, co-op programs and all things South Kentucky RECC.



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Four easy ways to save on winter heating bills

This time of year, cold (even extremely cold) temperatures are in the forecast. Is your home ready?

Alan Coffey, South Kentucky RECC's energy services/member engagement manager, suggests these easy ways to quickly and inexpensively keep your home warmer and the electric bill lower when the cold winds blow.

Doctor the ducts

Many Kentucky homes waste energy and valuable dollars because of leaks in the heating system's air duct system. In a forced-air heating systems, efficiency can be improved by as much as 30% by sealing these leaks. This is accomplished by applying duct sealing mastic with a paintbrush to every duct seam. You can buy inexpensive mastic at most home improvement stores.

Leave the thermostat alone

Pushing your electric heat pump's thermostat up every time you feel cold is a costly bad habit. Even an adjustment of a degree or two can drive up your electric bill. Moving your thermostat more than three degrees can trigger your auxiliary/emergency heat, which is even more costly. Setting your thermostat to 68 degrees—and leaving it there—creates the perfect trade-off between comfort and efficiency, according to ENERGY STAR. If you want to turn down the heat at night or when you're away, install a

programmable thermostat. It will gradually increase the temperature without activating auxiliary heat.

Stop drafts

If you can see daylight around the edges of a closed exterior door, you have an air leak problem that can chill a home. Weatherstripping the top and sides of doors is an inexpensive DIY project that will increase your home's energy efficiency while stopping drafts. Home improvement stores carry a variety of materials for weatherstripping around the top and sides of the door. To stop drafts from coming under the door, replace any worn thresholds and add door sweeps. You can also stop leaks by applying caulk to open seams around window frames.

Use space heaters sparingly

Space heaters and the popular Amish heaters are energy hogs that will quickly drive up your monthly electric bill. For example, a 1,500-watt space heater operating 12 hours per day at a cost of 10 cents per hour will add around \$50 more to your monthly electric bill. Beyond cost, space heaters can also be a fire hazard when used improperly. Once you've sealed air leaks around the house, you'll likely find no need for a space heater. If you're still a little chilly, resist the urge to touch the thermostat and instead dress in layers or cuddle up under a warm blanket.



Sealing heating ducts by applying duct sealing mastic can make systems more efficient and save members a great deal on heating costs. Photo: Tim Webb

For do-it-yourself instructions, South Kentucky RECC has detailed energy information bulletins available on these and other topics at <https://togetherwesaveky.com/energy-tips>.

You can also do our Virtual Energy Assessment at www.skrecc.com. This do-it-yourself home energy audit will show you additional ways to save on your home energy bill.



Virtual Energy Assessment
from the comfort of your home!

Home energy solutions... at your fingertips.

Complete a no-cost online analysis of your home today at www.skrecc.com. We can help identify opportunities to save on your energy bills. Your personalized energy report allows you to budget home expenses and make informed decisions when it comes to buying energy-efficient appliances.

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South Kentucky RECC is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Visit www.skrecc.com to pay your bill online, to visit our outage center, or for more information about the Co-op Connections Program.

To report an outage 24/7/365, please call your local office, (800) 264-5112, or set up your account to be able to text outages. Please do not report outages via social media.

Plug into South Kentucky RECC. Follow us on social media:



WINTER SAFETY

Prepare for prolonged outages, dangers

During this time of the year, dangerous conditions could confine families to their homes for days at a time. **It is never too early to begin planning and preparing your home for the winter months.**

To better prepare you and your family for a power outage, keep a storm preparedness kit fully stocked. The basic supplies in this kit should include bottled water, nonperishable food, emergency blankets, first-aid kit/medicine, flashlight, battery-operated or hand-crank radio, extra batteries and toiletries.

WHAT TO DO IF THE LIGHTS DO GO OUT:

Keep warm air in and cool air out by not opening doors to unused rooms. Do not open doors to the outdoors unless necessary.

Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible, and eat perishable food first. If you know a winter storm is coming, stock up on ice so you can keep things in coolers to keep them from going bad if an outage lasts longer than a day. Once the refrigerator reaches temperatures higher than 40°, foods can become unsafe to eat.

Turn off and unplug all unnecessary electronics or appliances. This will keep equipment from being damaged by surges or spikes when the power returns.



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