

DISCOVERING SOUTH KENTUCKY

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South Kentucky RECC: Working 24/7 to keep the lights on

Story by Kevin Osbourn and Joy Bullock

Members of South Kentucky RECC will sometimes lose power because Mother Nature has a mind of her own or the unexpected occurs.

When a local property owner recently cut a tree that fell into a high-voltage transmission line in the SKRECC service area, the incident knocked out multiple substations and involved complicated repairs. Transmission lines belong to East Kentucky Power Cooperative (EKPC), which is owned by and generates power for South Kentucky RECC and 15 other electric cooperatives in the state.

The way that we restore power will depend on what caused the problem, and the protocols we follow to restore service as quickly as possible.

Let's take a closer look at the major causes of power outages and how South Kentucky RECC deals with them. Often the causes involve the following:

1 Weather: Because electricity seeks the fastest path to the ground, utility poles and trees are easy targets for lightning. Wind can cause power lines to swing together, shorting out circuits, and wind can also blow limbs and trees into our equipment. During winter, the weight from snow

and ice can cause lines to break. Even heavy rains can cause floods that damage equipment.

2 Trees: Overgrown trees that come into contact with SKRECC's lines are frequent causes of power outages. That's why we work hard keeping overgrown limbs cut and out of the right-of-way.

3 Small animals: Snakes, squirrels and other small animals can climb on equipment and short circuit transformers and fuses.

If the problem involves South Kentucky RECC's distribution lines, our crews make the repairs. If the problem involves the substations or high-voltage transmission portion of the grid, it's likely crews from EKPC, along with assistance from SKRECC, will fix it.

In the event of a power outage, SKRECC prioritizes repairs. Services essential to community safety, health and welfare—police, fire departments, water systems, communications, hospitals, etc.—are first. We also restore service first to circuits with the largest number of members.

Some repairs, like fixing a distribution fuse, can be done quickly. Widespread damage to high-voltage equipment outside of our system can take much longer.

Please keep in mind that getting service restored to your street often depends on first making repairs to



Mother Nature can be cruel to South Kentucky RECC's system as shown above during Winter Storm Jonas in 2016. When crews have to battle weather conditions while trying to restore power, it can make restoration times even longer. Repairs like having to change a broken pole can take several hours—even longer if the weather is slowing progress. Photo: South Kentucky RECC Archives



Sometimes, just getting to an outage during a storm can slow restoration times. There are instances when crews have to cut trees to get to an outage, restore power, then cut trees to be able to get back out. Photo: South Kentucky RECC Archives

substations and main electric lines that feed power to your community.

In addition, remember that the South Kentucky RECC is part of a larger electrical grid system that includes other electric utilities. Sometimes, our members can be affected by an issue involving the equipment from another neighboring utility, and SKRECC cannot do anything about it. We have to wait for them to get the issue fixed and power restored.

Our commitment to you is that the dedicated staff at South Kentucky RECC—and at our power supplier—work 24/7 in all kinds of weather to keep your lights on and restore service when the unexpected happens.

If your power goes out, please call your local office number or (800) 264-5112. Better yet, set your service up so you can text your outages.

To be able to text outages:

- Make sure your service on file with the co-op includes an up-to-date mobile phone number.
- Once your mobile phone number is added or updated, there are two

ways to sign up for outage texting. You can text “skoutage” to 85700 or register for outage texting service at www.skrecc.com. You will find the link on the right side of the page. Just click it and follow instructions to enter your mobile phone number.

- Once you have registered, you will receive a text message confirming that you are now active, and you will be able to begin using the service.

When you experience an outage, simply text the word “OUT” to 85700. It will be entered directly into our outage management system. In addition, you will receive a text letting you know that the power has been restored.

Do not rely on posting your outage on social media or messaging it via social media. It is not monitored 24-hours per day.

Finally, to track your outage, you can visit our outage center on our website. You will find outages listed by county and size, and you can see if a crew has been assigned to your outage.

Our goal at South Kentucky RECC is to keep our members’ power flowing; our second goal is, when the power does go out, to restore it as quickly and safely as possible. **DSK**

Resolve to save money in 2020

Use your Co-op Connections Card this year for everything from service work on your automobile, to dining out with your family or helping to save money on vacation.

For nearly 20 years, South Kentucky RECC members have had the power to save money at their fingertips. The program has expanded through the years to include prescription savings for members who don’t have prescription insurance or their medicine is not covered by their insurance. Last year, SKRECC members saved about \$50,000 on prescriptions.

In addition to prescription savings, members can take advantage of Health Savings Discounts for lab and imaging services, chiropractic, dental, vision and hearing care.

For a complete listing of local and national savings opportunities with your Co-op Connections card, visit www.connections.coop. If you have questions about your card, or need a new one, contact your local South Kentucky RECC office.



Make an easy to-do list for 2020

Welcome to the new year. Did you make any resolutions? Did you pledge to cut down on that doughnut-a-day habit, lose a few pounds or get in shape?

If you're like most of us, you may not keep those resolutions. Research shows that just 8% of people achieve their resolutions. Tough odds.

South Kentucky RECC has a better idea: ditch resolutions in favor of a to-do list. A short ledger of tasks, with a place to check off each when completed, is far more satisfying.

To help you get started, here are some programs offered by South Kentucky RECC that you should check out this year. You can earn money, save energy, protect the environment and help neighbors—no resolution required.

- **Save money with the Co-op Connections Card.** Discounts on everyday expenses, including 10% to 85% off medical prescriptions, are yours when you flash our free Co-op Connections Card. The card's Healthy Savings package includes savings on medical expenses for dental, vision, hearing, lab work, imaging and chiropractor visits.
- **Manage your account with a smartphone app or online.** Pay your bill, get payment reminders, view your electricity use and billing history, report outages and more, all from your computer, phone or tablet. Search SKRECC in the Play or App Stores.

Take advantage of South Kentucky RECC's programs by calling your local office and speaking to one of the energy advisors.



TIM WEBB

- **Tap into sun power.** Cooperative Solar is an easy and cost-effective way to enjoy the benefits of renewable solar energy. For a one-time payment of \$460, you can receive a 25-year license to one solar panel. Your monthly power bill will be credited for the energy generated by your panel, as well as the market value of its capacity.
 - **Make an impact through the People Fund Program.** Join other co-op members in rounding up your monthly electric bill to the next highest dollar, and contribute to helping a variety of worthy community causes, such as schools, food pantries, etc.
 - **Monitor your energy use.** Getting information about your electricity is fast, easy and convenient with BillingInsights, our free home energy analysis tool. Use your mobile device or computer to track electricity use in your home, customize energy-saving solutions and get answers to your billing questions 24/7.
 - **Button-Up your home.** Earn up to \$750 in rebates by increasing your home's energy efficiency and your comfort through simple upgrades like air sealing and insulation.
 - **Take advantage of our rebates.** Whether you're building a new home or upgrading an existing one, selecting energy efficient residential equipment can earn hundreds of dollars in rebates from South Kentucky RECC.
 - **Enroll in SimpleSaver.** Volunteer to help the co-op manage electricity use during peak demand periods and earn up to \$20 in bill credits annually for each central air conditioner you enroll.
 - **Get help through CARES program.** If you are a low-income homeowner, ask how you can apply for incentives to improve your home's weatherization and energy efficiency.
 - **Invest in other renewable energy.** Participating in the voluntary Envirowatts program gives you the power to choose which renewable energy source you wish to support—solar, wind, biomass and/or hydro. Portions of renewable energy are available for \$2.75 each, with no maximum.
- For more details on these beneficial programs and others, call an energy advisor at your local SKRECC office or visit our website at www.skrecc.com.
- Signing up for these programs can do yourself and others a lot of good in 2020—and you don't even have to give up the doughnuts.

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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:



Beware of scammers

Scammers are constantly looking for ways to make a quick, easy buck. South Kentucky RECC warns members to beware of people that pose as co-op employees, particularly by telephone.

SKRECC receives reports regularly from businesses and members regarding phone calls they supposedly receive from the co-op that state if they don't pay their bill immediately, they will have their service disconnected. Many tell members that they need to get a certain money card or gift card to pay their bill.

Fortunately, most members are shrewd enough to realize it is a scam.

If there is a need for South Kentucky RECC to contact members about delinquent bills, the co-op uses an automated phone call, after business hours, and does not personally call members to tell them their bill is due. During the course of this automated call, members are given the option to pay their bill, but it is electronically. Members are not giving their account information to a live individual.

Should you receive a call from someone claiming to be with the co-op, tell them you will call your local office and make the necessary payment. South Kentucky RECC urges members to never give out financial or personal information to anyone that calls them and claims to be from the co-op, or to send money via Western Union or any other wire transaction or by gift or money card. If members initiate the call to the co-op to pay their bill or for some other business transaction, then it is safe to tell employees such information.

In addition, employees and contractors from South Kentucky RECC that are working in communities or at your home should be in company vehicles, or vehicles marked as contractors, and have an identification badge. If they do not, you are asked to call your county's sheriff's department or the local South Kentucky RECC office.

South Kentucky RECC is concerned about members and their safety and would rather they call the office to ask than to be the victim of a scam.



TAYLOR GROTE VIA UNSPLASH



Update your member information in our system, if you have moved or changed phone numbers.