

cooperative REVIEW

for members of Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative

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Hurricane Isabel rocked Southern Maryland in 2003. Learn more about SMECO history in Al Gough Jr.'s book, Lighting Up Our Lives: The History of Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative.

Smart meter plans filed with the PSC

SMECO submitted a filing with the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) in June outlining the cooperative's plan to replace existing electric meters with smart meters.

Smart meters measure energy use like standard meters, but smart meters are capable of two-way communication. They send energy usage information to the utility every day, and they send

Smart
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alerts when the power is out or when voltage is too low or too high.

In March 2011, SMECO installed smart meters at 900 homes and businesses in a St. Charles neighborhood in Waldorf. About 1,000 smart meters have also been installed at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, Webster Field, and the Navy's Solomons Recreation Center as part of the Navy's privatization agreement.

Smart meters can help save money by reducing operational expenses because the cooperative will no longer have to send meter readers to homes and businesses every month to read the electric meter. Austin J. Slater, Jr., SMECO president and CEO, explained, "Having 15–17 people on the road every day driving around reading meters is going to be a thing of the past. As a co-op, everything we do is for our members, and now that we have proven technology that is safe, reliable, secure, and cost-

"Work that used to require 50 man-hours can now be accomplished in less than 10 minutes."

*—Austin J. Slater, Jr.
SMECO president and CEO*

effective, we want to move forward."

To transmit data and communicate with the smart meters, SMECO uses the Sensus

Flexnet system, a technology that relies on base stations which are located in SMECO's substations. Slater said, "For the past year, we've been running the system through its paces. On average, SMECO contacts about 99 percent of the meters remotely for daily meter readings. Work that used to require 50 man-hours can now be accomplished in less than 10 minutes." He added, "Using up-to-date technology will make us more effective. We will be able to respond to power outages more quickly and efficiently. And after power is restored, we can use smart meters to verify that all customers in an area have their power back on."

In the filing submitted to the PSC, SMECO outlined a schedule for full deployment of smart meters. Upon

PSC approval of the Co-op's plans, SMECO will select a company to install the smart meters. Installations will ramp up to approximately 10,000 meters per month, with the majority of smart meters being installed between June 2013 and May 2014.

David Johnson, SMECO's Meter Operations Manager, has been working on this project since its inception about three years ago. "We've explored all of our options. We've completed cost-benefit studies. We've tested the technology. We are going to hit the ground running." Johnson explained further, "Smart meters are part of our overall efforts to improve reliability for the long term. Customers won't notice any immediate changes after their smart meter is installed. They won't see a meter reader every month, but they will continue to get their monthly bill like they do now."

In addition to the schedule for full-scale deployment of smart meters, SMECO's PSC filing outlines plans for a website that customers can use to access their energy use information. According to Johnson, "We are planning to provide daily updates to give customers information about their energy use that is easy for them to understand. If they want to actively manage their energy budget, they will have the tools they need."

"Customers frequently call the Co-op because they believe their monthly bill is too high," said Rose Pickeral-Brown, SMECO's Contact Center Manager. "And it's difficult for them to understand their bill if the only piece of information they have is a monthly meter reading." She said she looks forward to improving the level of customer service the Contact Center Representatives can provide. Brown added, "When we have smart meters deployed throughout our system and the website is active, customers will be able to see how much energy they use every day. If they understand how their energy use impacts their bill, they will be able to learn how to save energy so they can save money. These improvements in technology will help us to improve our customer service."

Do you need help paying your energy bill?

Having trouble paying your electric bill? You may be eligible to participate in one of two payment programs offered by the State of Maryland.

If you qualify for the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) or the Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP), you may receive payment assistance. EUSP participants are required to be enrolled in a monthly budget payment plan. MEAP customers have the option to participate in a special budget payment plan offered through the Utility Service Protection Program (USPP) that is designed to safeguard MEAP customers from termination of service during the winter.

To find out if you qualify for a MEAP or EUSP grant, apply at your local Office of Home Energy Programs. The locations and phone numbers are listed below. Be sure to call ahead to obtain an appointment to fill out the necessary paperwork.

If your electricity has been turned off, you may be able to be reconnected and placed on a MEAP or EUSP budget payment plan. If you fail to make your monthly payments after being placed on a payment plan, you can be dropped from the program and your service can be turned off.

MD Office of Home Energy Programs

Southern Maryland Tri-County Community Action Committee

8371 Leonardtown Rd., Business Rt. 5, Hughesville

410-535-1010

Calvert County

301-274-4474

Charles County

301-475-5574

St. Mary's County

301-870-3770

Metro Line

Prince George's County Department of Social Services

805 Brightseat Road, Landover

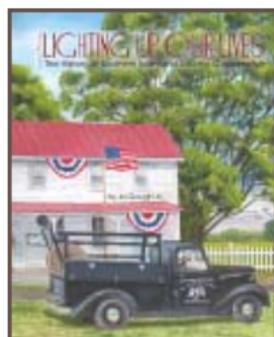
301-909-6300

Pr. George's County

Explore local history in SMECO's new book

Lighting Up Our Lives: The History of Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative by Al Gough Jr. is now available.

Enjoy a journey through the history of the electrification and transformation of Southern Maryland from rural farm land to its modern-day incarnation. Learn about local history, the trials and tribulations, and ultimate triumph of the human spirit that made it possible to bring power and prosperity to Southern Maryland. Through political maneuvering, blood, sweat and tears, natural disasters and lucky breaks, the people who built these lines and Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative throughout the years will come to life on each page.



The book is available for \$8 per copy. To pick up your copy, visit our website for more information at www.smeco.coop/history, visit the cashier window at any of our regional offices, or mail a check (please add \$5 for shipping and handling) to:

SMECO, 75th anniversary
P.O. Box 1937
Hughesville, MD 20637

Before you dig, make the call



Call Miss Utility by dialing **811** before you plant a tree or shrub, start a garden, or install a fence. SMECO will mark the location of underground power lines on your property.

Don't plant your trees near overhead power lines. Trees that will grow 20–50 feet tall should be planted at least 30 feet from overhead lines.

One call will save you a lot of time, trouble, and money. It could also save your life!



Get ready now for colder weather! SMECO can help you prepare your home for fall and winter temperatures with rebates from \$100–\$750 for heating equipment upgrades and services. You'll save energy and save money. Find a participating contractor at SMECO.coop/save.

around **TOWN**

Oct. 6

Vendor Show

Sponsor: Hollywood Vol. Rescue Squad Auxiliary

10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Hollywood Vol. Rescue Squad. Space is limited. Only one table per company. Call to rent a table.

301-536-0619

Oct. 6–7

Fall Festival and Craft Fair

Sponsor: Brandywine Lions Club

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days
Brandywine Lions Club Park,
11501 Cherry Tree Crossing
Road, Cheltenham

Children's activities, raffles, food and drink, door prizes, demonstrations, and special exhibits. Vision and hearing screenings will be offered, along with lazy eye screening for preschoolers.

brandywinelions.com

Visit the SMECO 75th anniversary corn mazes in October at Zekiah Farm and Spider Hall Farm. Visit www.smeco.coop/75years for more information.

Patuxent River

Appreciation Days (PRAD)

Sponsor: Calvert Marine Museum

10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons. FREE family fun with boat rides, arts and crafts fair, food, and live music. Parade Sunday at 2 p.m.

410-326-2042

calvertmarinemuseum.com

Riverside WineFest

Sponsor: Sotterley Plantation

Gates open at 5 p.m., music begins at 6 p.m. Mini tours, demonstrations, exhibits, children's activities, and fine food. **\$ Admission.**

sotterley.org

Oct. 13

Cow Pie Bingo

Sponsor: Ridge Vol. Rescue Squad and Auxiliary

Noon to 5 p.m., Flat Iron Farm, 45480 Highway to Heaven Lane, Great Mills. Featured will be a car show, shops, and a petting zoo.

240-258-8496

rvrscowbingo.org



Visit www.smeco.coop/ourcommunity/aroundtown.aspx for more events.

Fall Craft Fair

Sponsor: La Plata Vol. Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary

9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

La Plata Fire House, 911 Washington Ave., La Plata Crafters and vendors, food for purchase, and kids crafts.

Donations appreciated.

301-535-5973

laplatafiredepartment.com

Oct. 20–21

St. Mary's County

Oyster Festival

Sponsor: Rotary Club of Lexington Park

10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday,

11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday

St. Mary's Fairgrounds,

Leonardtown. Includes

National Oyster Shucking

and Oyster Cooking Contest.

\$ Admission. Free parking.

443-286-1519

usoysterfest.com

Oct. 27

Colton's Point

Costume Caper 5k

Sponsor: St. Clement's

Museum and Colton's

Point Marina

9 a.m., St. Clement's

Museum, 38370 Point

Breeze Road, Colton's

Point. All entrants get

a t-shirt. Proceeds benefit

the Chopticon High

School Band

chopticonband.org.

Scarecrow Making

Sponsor: St. Mary's

Crafts Guild

Noon to 3 p.m.

Crafts Guild Shop, 26005

Point Lookout Road. The

Guild will provide all the

straw and clothing.

\$ Admission.

301-885-8926

craftguildshop.com

Grave Matters

Sponsor: Historic

St. Mary's City

6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Historic SMC, 48751

Hogaboom Lane, SMC

Walk historical paths by

starlight. **\$ Admission.**

stmaryscity.org/events.html

September golden ticket prizes heat up with a Mary Lou Troutman painting

In September, SMECO will be giving away five signed and numbered, matted copies of an original Mary Lou Troutman painting depicting both the Bushwood Post Office and a SMECO line truck from the early days of the cooperative. These prints are 24 inches by 18 inches and each is valued at \$85.



Not a golden ticket winner?

Customer-members who do not win one of the five golden ticket prizes in September may purchase prints, as well. To purchase the print, you can visit our website for more information at smeco.coop/history, visit the cashier window at any of our regional offices, or mail a check (please include additional cost for shipping and handling) to:

SMECO, 75th anniversary
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All prints will be matted.

Prices and available sizes are:

- 8"x10": \$5 (+\$5 s/h)
- 11"x14": \$10 (+\$5 s/h)

