

cooperative **REVIEW**

for members of Southern
Maryland Electric Cooperative



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Use extra caution in a vehicle accident involving power lines 3
- Three local students join the 2016 Youth Tour in D.C. 4
- AMI installation update 6
- Around Town 6
- New program needs pilot participants 8



Youth Tour participants visit Washington, D.C. Read the full story on page 4.

Be aware and stay safe from payment scams

Every few months a new version of a payment scam pops up. The situation typically starts with a residential or commercial customer receiving a phone call saying that the customer's electric service is going to be disconnected that day if the caller doesn't receive a payment.

SMECO issues alerts when new scam reports are received, but members should be prepared for any type of payment scam they may face.

"Not only are these calls a nuisance to customers, but scam artists can potentially steal thousands of dollars from unsuspecting residents and businesses," said Tom Dennison, managing director of government and public affairs.

Here are some helpful guidelines for customers:

- Only give payment information over the phone if you initiate the call to SMECO.
- If someone calls you and threatens to cut off service

within an hour or two, they are probably running a scam.

The best way to prevent falling victim to this crime is to know SMECO's processes.

It's important to know how much you owe and when payments are due. Electric utilities follow state regulations and have set schedules for billing and payment—SMECO bills are issued monthly. Overdue amounts are identified on a customer's bill and if payments are late, SMECO sends a pink termination notice.

SMECO has a set routine for collecting overdue payments from customers.

- SMECO will mail a termination notice if a bill is past due.
- SMECO only calls customers who owe a past due balance.
- SMECO usually uses an automated phone system with a recorded message; rarely will SMECO employees make personal "collection" phone calls.
- Collection calls are made about 10 days before service is to be terminated. SMECO does not require payment at the time of the call.
- SMECO does not make collection calls or terminate service on weekends or holidays.
- If service is going to be terminated, a SMECO collector will knock on the customer's door before turning off service.
- SMECO collectors will accept credit card payments, checks, or money orders, but they do not accept cash.

What to do if you receive a scam call?

If you receive a phone call from someone threatening to disconnect your power, hang up. If you want to verify your account information, you can call SMECO directly. Our customer care center is open 24 hours a day, every day, at 1-888-440-3311. The phone number is printed at the top of your bill.

Do not provide personal financial or electric account information to unauthorized callers. Customers should not provide Green Dot or Moneygram payments to callers claiming to be from SMECO.

Use extra caution in a vehicle accident involving power lines

If you encounter a vehicle collision with utility poles or utility equipment in which you suspect the vehicle is or may become energized, immediately call Emergency Medical Services (911) to report the situation. A SMECO crew will arrive to de-energize the equipment. Do not approach any downed lines or equipment. From a safe distance, instruct the vehicle occupants of the following methods to stay safe:

- When possible, instruct them to stay inside the vehicle. If no fire or immediate threat exists to the vehicle occupants, the best action is to have them remain inside the vehicle until a qualified SMECO employee confirms that the equipment is de-energized.
- If they must leave because of fire or other immediate threat, instruct them to try to drive their vehicle either forward or backward to clear themselves of the electric utility equipment. Once they are at least 30 feet away from all lines or equipment, they may exit the vehicle and receive any medical care.
- If they must leave the vehicle because of fire or other immediate threat and they are unable to move their vehicle, they should—without touching the ground—try to position themselves on a flat surface of the vehicle (top of hood, trunk or bed of the vehicle) that allows them to leap from the vehicle as far as possible. It is important that they try to land with both feet on the ground without stumbling. Once they get their balance, they must shuffle their feet with both feet continually touching the ground until they are at least 30 feet from the vehicle. Once they get 30 feet away, they must remain away from the vehicle and not go back under any circumstances until the vehicle and equipment are deemed de-energized.

Visit [youtube.com/somdelectric](https://www.youtube.com/somdelectric) for videos that address these life-saving techniques.

Three local students join the 2016 Youth Tour in D.C.

In early June, SMECO joined other cooperatives from around the nation at the 2016 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. with three local high school students from our service territory. SMECO chaperones **Natalie Cotton** and **Charlie Herbert** took **Bradley Basden** from Thomas Stone High School, **Megan Mattei** from Leonardtown High School, and **Isaiah Nance** from Gwynn Park High School to the Youth Tour.

The goal of the Youth Tour is to help students learn more about the United States government in action during their week-long study tour of the nation's capital. Students met members of congress and were able to attend workshops on the roles that cooperatives play in communities and an electric co-op opportunity fair.

During Youth Tour, one student from each state is selected to represent their state on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)



From left: Megan Mattei, Isaiah Nance, and Bradley Basden with chaperones Natalie Cotton and Cherie Herbert.

Youth Leadership Council (YLC). The selected delegates return to Washington, D.C. in July for a leadership workshop that focuses on the electric cooperative industry.

The YLC conference seeks to build attendees' leadership and public speaking skills while also enhancing their knowledge of the energy industry and the cooperative business model.

SMECO's student, **Megan Mattei**, was selected as Maryland's delegate for the 2016 YLC. After Megan attends the YLC conference, she will test her polished public speaking skills at SMECO's annual meeting on August 23. In spring 2017, she will also attend the NRECA's annual meeting with the other delegates, where they will participate in every facet of the meeting, which includes the resolutions process and helping members communicate with their legislators.

Approximately 1,700 students and chaperones representing 43 states attended the Youth Tour for its 52nd year.



Above: Bradley Basden, Isaiah Nance, and Megan Mattei touring Washington, D.C.

Left: Megan Mattei was selected to represent Maryland in the 2016 Youth Leadership Council.

AMI installation update

SMECO will install over 13,500 smart meters throughout Southern Maryland during the summer of 2016. The new meters that are currently installed are operating correctly, communicating with our base stations, and providing meter readings as expected. The smart meters are stringently tested by the manufacturer to ensure they hold up well and are reliable. They are also UL listed and ANSI certified.

The smart meter project is a long-term initiative meant to upgrade SMECO's technology to better serve its members. Many of the existing electric meters are 35 to 40 years old and require manual meter readings every month. The new smart meter is a digital electronic meter capable of two-way communications. Having two-way communications enables SMECO to offer a number of key

September 3

Summerseat Farm Artisan Market

Sponsor: Summerseat Farm

8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Summerseat Farm, 26655 Three Notch Road, Mechanicsville. Rain or shine. Sale items may include homemade, handmade, vintage, or baked items. No yard sale items or direct sales items will be permitted.

The market helps support the volunteer-run Summerseat non-profit organization in its mission to protect and preserve the estate with its natural resources and agricultural history.

301-862-1666

summerseat.org

September 5

Annual Labor Day Supper

Sponsor: St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Noon to 5 p.m. 4535 Piney Church Rd, Waldorf. The menu includes fried chicken, old and fresh ham, potato salad, cole slaw, green beans, yams, and rolls. \$. Free for children age 4 and younger.

301-848-3060

stpaulspiney.org

September 7

Little Explorers: Weather

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary's City

10 to 11 a.m. 47414 State House Road. Meet at The Shop at Farthing's Ordinary. Designed for preschool-age children 3 to 5 and an accompanying adult. \$ Admission. One accompanying adult free. Full-day admission included.

240-895-4990

HSMCdigshistory.org

September 10

Fourth Annual Car Show

Sponsor: Mt. Zion United Methodist Church and The United Methodist Men

2 to 7 p.m. 27108 Mt. Zion Church Road (by the Apple Basket), Mechanicsville. \$ Admission.

Free for children 12 and younger.

Proceeds benefit United Methodist Men's Group Charities. Trophies for the top 30 and five specialty awards (vehicle must be registered by 4 p.m. to be judged) Awards presented at 6 p.m.

DJ music, blessing of the cars, vendors, food, and more.

301-481-0360

mtzionmech.org

benefits, including more detailed billing information and the ability to respond to outages more quickly and effectively. As smart meters help SMECO operate more efficiently, the cooperative can pass on benefits to customers.

Completion of full deployment is expected by the first quarter of 2018. Members are able to opt out of receiving a new smart meter by making a request to SMECO's Contact Center at 1-888-440-3311. Members who choose to opt out of the smart meter installation will incur fees determined by the Public Service Commission.

If you have any questions, please call our Customer Care Representatives at **1-888-440-3311** or visit www.smeco.coop/gettingsmarter.

aroundTOWN

September 10

Indian Discovery Day

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary's City

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. 18751 Hogaboom Lane, St. Mary's City. Explore and celebrate Indian lifeways and culture. Learn skills, try crafts, watch demonstrations, and gain a new appreciation for the people who called this place home before Maryland was founded. \$ Admission. Free for children age 5 and younger and for Friends members.

240-895-4990

HSMCdigshistory.org



September 21

Little Explorers:

What Makes Us Well

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary's City

10 to 11 a.m. 47621 Old Cove Road. Designed for preschool-age children 3 to 5 and an accompanying adult. \$ Admission. One accompanying adult free. Full-day admission included.

240-895-4990

HSMCdigshistory.org

September 24

Militia Muster

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary's City

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. 47414 State House Road. Park at The Shop at Farthing's Ordinary. The St. Maries City Militia musters for drills, mock battles, and fencing. Visit an encampment, march along, watch a musket fire demonstration, and more. Free.

240-895-4990

HSMCdigshistory.org

RiverFest

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary's City

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. 47414 State House Road. Activities will be on the State House Lawn and Waterfront. Park at The Shop at Farthing's Ordinary. Hosted by the St. Mary's River Watershed Association. Wade-In for Clean Water with former Maryland Senator Bernie Fowler. Live music, environmental and children's activities, kayaking. Free.

240-895-4990

www.smrwa.org



New program needs pilot participants

SMECO launched an electric water heater load management pilot in August. Participants in the program will have a load management device installed on their water heater.

On days of high electricity usage, SMECO will perform conservation events, which would reduce the amount of load used by water heaters for a short period of time. Events would only happen Monday through Friday. Pilot participants should not notice any difference in the amount of hot water available for use.

Eligible customer-members who are interested in participating in the pilot will receive a one-time \$25 credit on their SMECO electric bill for the installation of the load management device. In addition, participating customers receive \$25 in annual credits while participating in the pilot. The \$25 annual credit will be divided per month and applied as a credit on the SMECO monthly bill.

Who is eligible to participate?

The electric water heater pilot program is available to residential customer-members in Charles County.

How can you sign up?

Eligible customer-members who would like to schedule an installation appointment can contact Converge at 1-866-921-9474.