

cooperative **REVIEW**

for members of Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Can your home handle the load? Make sure your home's wiring is not pushed past the limit 4
- Registration is open for the sixth annual SMECO 75 Bike Ride 6
- Don't forget, scholarship applications are due by April 3 7
- Around Town 7
- Save on lighting with instant discounts—get up to \$7 for LEDs 8



Registration is open for the 2017 SMECO 75 Bike Ride. Read more on page 6.

Considering solar? Know what to expect

Are you interested in investing in renewable energy for your home but are unsure of the process?

A growing number of homeowners in SMECO's service territory have been investing in solar panels for their homes. While there are numerous installers working in Southern Maryland, SMECO has standard procedures that are followed so our customer-members know what to expect.

The first step will be deciding if solar is right for you. SMECO has software, WattPlan, that can help. Visit smeco.wattplan.com and enter your address. WattPlan will estimate the potential for a rooftop solar array. You will get an estimate of the electricity you can generate and how much you might save each year on your electric bill. The figures shown are estimates only and will not constitute a guarantee of savings on your electric bill.

No matter what type of renewable generation you are considering, the application process is the same. Interested homeowners will complete the application online using SMECO's tool, PowerClerk. You can access

PowerClerk at **smeco**interconnection.

powerclerk.com/Account/Login. (Applicants will need a valid email address to use this tool.)

Most SMECO customers opt to use a solar installation company, and that contractor will normally complete most of the paperwork and provide the utility with most of the required information.

The majority of customers in SMECO's service area will qualify for a level 1 or level 2 installation.

- Level 1—solar installation of 10.0 kilowatts (kW) or less
- Level 2—solar installation greater than 10.0 kW

Below is an outline of the steps that SMECO and the customer take to complete the process.

1. The customer or solar installer submits an interconnection application to SMECO.
2. SMECO will email you and your solar installer when we receive the application. This email will include information regarding the status of your application and whether or not it is complete. You or your solar installer may be required to provide additional information if the application is incomplete.
3. After SMECO receives the complete application package, a SMECO engineer will review your system design to determine if it can be safely and reliably interconnected to SMECO's electric system.
4. SMECO will email you and your solar installer advising you of "conditional approval" or the need for further information. **No construction of a solar installation should begin until you have received the conditional approval.**
 - If you receive conditional approval, a Certificate of Completion will be available under your user profile. You and your solar installer should review it and you must sign it electronically. (For level 2 installations, a Standard Agreement will also be available for review and signature.)
 - If additional engineering related issues need to be addressed, you will be notified in the email. In some cases an electrical upgrade may be required.

5. You or your solar installer must submit the signed Certificate of Completion electronically and upload a copy of the county approved inspection.
 - For level 2 solar installations, you must also submit the signed Standard Agreement electronically.
6. **Customers: Follow up with your solar installer to make sure all the required documentation has been submitted.**
7. Once all of the required documentation is received, SMECO will review it and conduct a site inspection if it is determined that one is necessary.
8. SMECO will install a new smart meter. (This usually takes about a week once all documentation has been submitted and approved. *If it has taken longer than a week, call SMECO to make sure all documentation has been submitted.*)

SMECO will install a smart meter which is capable of measuring the amount of energy the customer purchases from SMECO (when the system is not producing enough to meet the customer's need) and the amount of energy the customer sells to SMECO (when the system is producing more than enough to meet the customer's need). Customers are billed for the difference—purchases minus sales. SMECO's meter doesn't measure how much energy you produced and used during the month. SMECO does not charge for exchanging the standard residential meter for a smart meter.

9. SMECO will notify you by email of final approval. At that time, the final approved documentation will be available under your user profile. Please retain the final approved documents for your records. The Maryland Public Service Commission may require the documentation if you decide to certify the generation facility production capability with the state.
10. Customers should contact the solar installer to have the solar system activated.

If you have questions at any time, contact SMECO at 1-888-440-3311.

Can your home handle the load? Make sure your home's wiring is not pushed past the limit

Upgrading and improving your home is a goal for many homeowners. Improvements can range from the small stuff, like changing the paint on the walls or switching out light fixtures, to more substantive changes, like adding an addition, finishing your basement, or adding a pool. It can be a lot fun and financially advantageous to improve your home, but it's important to make sure the changes are done legally and correctly to ensure your investment is safe. Many weekend warriors like to do projects themselves—and for small aesthetic things, that's fine—but when it comes to the bigger stuff, it's important to get permits for upgrades and hire the appropriate licensed contractors for the project.

Not sure if you need a permit?* Rules vary based on where you live, but you will likely need a permit for any project that goes beyond basic repairs and maintenance or beyond simple aesthetic changes.

A permit ensures that you meet certain criteria and safety concerns when it comes to:

- Zoning requirements
- Environmental (waste, water systems, and run off) requirements
- Building codes
- Electrical codes
- Mechanical codes
- Having a record of renovations, additions, and building projects to show your bank, insurance company and future homeowners, so they know a permit was properly issued and the work was deemed safe for the dwelling and done according to current codes.

Adding a new space or changing the use of an existing space generally requires a building permit. Finishing your basement or attic? You will need a permit. Adding a detached garage? Need a permit.

Many times, projects require additional electrical work to meet the requirements for a finished space.

It's necessary to always hire a licensed master electrician for electrical work done around the home. Aside from the danger that goes along with any residential electrical project, faulty electrical work can lead to fires. Homeowners' insurance may not cover damages caused by unlicensed electrical work. In addition, electricians are taught how to safely work with electrical systems, and they ensure that work is done in accordance with local laws and codes.

For work that impacts the electrical system in your home, such as adding a heat pump, it's important to employ a licensed electrician for the job because they can verify your home has the electrical capacity to safely handle the changes.

For instance, if your home has an oil heating unit and you switch to an electric heat pump, a licensed electrician will make sure that your home's wiring can handle the added electrical demand for this unit.

Homes are built, and the electrical service is sized, in accordance with the rules of the National Electric Code and the local authority having jurisdiction. Adding equipment that exceeds the rating of the electrical service can cause equipment problems and damage to your home. When you add to your electric service needs—whether that entails upgrading or adding appliances, adding a pool or hot tub, or adding an addition to your home—it is important to have a licensed electrician verify that your wiring can safely handle the additional electric capacity.

Remember to contact SMECO when adding to the home, or upgrading electrical power. All electricians must schedule a time to work with SMECO in order for the meter to be pulled and power turned off for safe work conditions. Only SMECO is authorized to cut the meter seal and pulled the meter for required work.

**For specific permitting in your county, please check with your local permitting office.*

Registration is open for the sixth annual SMECO 75 Bike Ride

SMECO is hosting its sixth annual 75-mile bicycle ride beginning at the Cooperative's headquarters building in Hughesville on **June 3, 2017**.

The ride will feature a 75-mile route for experienced cyclists and two shorter routes, as well. Four rest stops will be stocked with appropriate fuel for cyclists, and lunch will be served at the finish. Participating cyclists will also receive event-themed items.

Proceeds will be donated to four different organizations that focus on the environment: the American Chestnut Land Trust in Calvert County, the Port Tobacco River Conservancy in Charles County, the Alice Ferguson Foundation in Prince George's County, and the St. Mary's River Watershed Association in St. Mary's County.

In 2016, SMECO donated \$53,476 to Melwood's Operation: Tohidu. The money was raised by the SMECO 75 Bike Ride and SMECO's annual charity golf event. Operation: Tohidu is designed to help active and veteran service members overcome obstacles to their recovery.

Mark your calendars! The SMECO 75 Bike Ride is a great opportunity to enjoy the local scenery with your fellow customer-members. Registration is now open on active.com. For more information, visit smeco.coop/SMECO75.





Don't forget, scholarship applications are due by April 3

The deadline to apply for 2017 scholarships is close.

SMECO has four scholarships available to high school seniors who live with parents or guardians who are SMECO customers. Completed scholarship application packages (all items must be submitted as one package) are due by **April 3, 2017**.

They may be taken to a SMECO office or mailed to:

Attention: Bernadette Lewis, SMECO Headquarters
P.O. Box 1937, Hughesville, MD 20637

For more information, visit www.smeco.coop, see your school career counselor, call SMECO at **1-888-440-3311, ext. 4340**, or visit a customer service desk at the SMECO office in Leonardtown or Hughesville.

aroundTOWN

March 1

Charles County Drug and Alcohol Abuse Council

Sponsor: Charles County

5:30 to 7 p.m. Charles County Health Department, 4545 Crain Highway, White Plains. The meeting is open to the public.

301-609-6609



March 26

American Legion Bluegrass Concert Series: Sideline Bluegrass

Sponsor: Sons of the American Legion

2 to 5 p.m. American Legion Post 238, intersection of Routes 231 and 381, Hughesville. Includes 50/50 raffles and door prizes. Doors open at noon, dinner special starts at that time. The show begins at 2 p.m.

301-737-3004

americanlegionbluegrass.com



Save on lighting with instant discounts—get up to \$7 for LEDs

When you upgrade to energy-efficient light-emitting diodes (LEDs), you not only save energy in your home, you can also save instantly at the register when you shop at participating retailers.

LED lights last up to 25 times longer than incandescent bulbs and use 75 percent less energy. That will save you money with lower electricity costs and fewer replacements. LEDs now come in a variety of sizes and shades of light to suit every décor and mood.

SMECO offers discounts on select ENERGY STAR® LEDs at participating retailers in Southern Maryland.

Find a list of participating retailers at smeco.coop/shine. You can also visit SMECO's online store at smecoenergystore.com to get the same instant discounts and have the bulbs and other energy saving products delivered right to your door.

