

# cooperative **REVIEW**

for members of Southern  
Maryland Electric Cooperative



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*Download the mobile app or sign up for SMECO's text service to make doing business with SMECO even easier. See page 8 for more information.*

## **SMECO applies for a 10% rate reduction**

SMECO submitted a filing to the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) on May 31, 2017, to reduce its base energy charges by more than 10 percent for residential customers. If approved, the lower rates will go into effect with August 2017 bills.

The residential base rate for August will be the lowest it has been in 12 years. Base energy rates for all customers—commercial accounts, schools, government buildings, and churches—will be reduced across the board. The base energy rate for an average residential customer with 1,300 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of monthly usage will be nearly \$9 less in August than in July.

SMECO's Standard Offer Service (SOS) rate is made up of the base energy charge and the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA). On SMECO's monthly electric bills, lower power supply costs have consistently been reflected in the PCA, which has been a credit for 30 of the last 34 months.

"We work diligently to manage SMECO's power portfolio. We purchase energy using a combination of long-term and

short-term contracts, as well as base load and peak load contracts. Lower rates can make a huge impact, especially on facilities that use a lot of energy,” said Austin J. Slater, Jr., SMECO president and CEO. “When SMECO reduces energy costs, those savings are passed on to customers—that’s the value of a cooperative.”

SMECO’s base residential energy charges for summer (May through September bills) will decrease by 8.76 percent, from 7.53 cents per kWh to 6.87 cents per kWh. Base residential winter energy charges will be reduced from 8.13 cents per kWh to 7.2 cents per kWh, an 11.44 percent reduction. The reduction for winter and summer months combined total about 10 percent on average.

The PCA, which changes monthly, was a credit of 0.4727 cents per kWh for June. The combination of the base energy charge and the PCA credit effectively reduced the SOS rate from 7.53 cents per kWh to 7.0573 cents per kWh.

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## Account Manager puts control in your hands

In today’s fast-paced society, people like to be able to do business when and how they want to do it. SMECO works hard to make sure its customer-members have convenient access to update their accounts. Customers can access their accounts in multiple ways, including the online self-service option of Account Manager.

You can choose how SMECO communicates with you. Sign in to Account Manager and go to Notification Preferences to adjust settings for email and text messages. Choose the types of messages you want, including payments, past due notices, outages, and paperless billing.

Thanks to customer feedback, SMECO added a new feature that will allow customer-members to update their AutoPay information, as well. In the past, when a credit card expired, customers had to call SMECO to provide new card information. Now you can update your credit card or bank account information directly in Account Manager.

# Join CoolSentry to save

SMECO has a load management program that helps save energy and money during the summer months. CoolSentry is an opt-in program where customer-members receive a credit on their electric bills from June through September to allow SMECO to schedule conservation events during times of peak demand. Peak demand times occur when everyone uses a lot of electricity at the same time, usually on the hottest days.

When members sign up for CoolSentry, they will either receive a free programmable thermostat, professionally installed, or a digital cycling unit (DCU) installed on the outdoor central A/C unit.

When SMECO holds a conservation event, a wireless signal is sent to the participant's CoolSentry thermostat or DCU. The signal places the central air conditioning units and heat pumps into conservation mode. The signal will coordinate your A/C or heat pump with others in the neighborhood to reduce electricity use. The temperature in the home may rise slightly, but will stay comfortable.

## Choose your level of participation

One level is 50 percent cycling, which means the compressor operates half the time it did prior to the conservation event. Members who choose 50 percent cycling will receive up to \$50 in bill credits.

The second level is 75 percent cycling, which means the compressor operates 25 percent of the time it did prior to the conservation event. Participants who choose 75 percent cycling will receive up to \$75 in bill credits.

Regardless of which level you choose, the A/C fan operates continuously throughout the conservation event to circulate air throughout your home.

**[smecocoolsentry.com](http://smecocoolsentry.com)**



## Help children stay safe around power lines

It's time for fun in the sun as children are out of school and we are in the thick of summer. Warm weather brings a lot of children outside to play and SMECO wants everyone to stay safe.

Electricity always tries to find the easiest path to ground. The best way to stay safe around overhead power lines is to never become that easiest path. Help your children understand these safety tips to keep themselves and their friends safe:

- Never climb in or play in trees that are growing next to power lines.
- Never climb power poles or transmission towers.
- Never touch a power line with a hand or with any other object, whether the line is in a tree or on the ground.
- Don't build a tree house, fort, or anything else in a tree that is next to power lines.
- Children should tell an adult if they see trees growing close to or touching power lines.
- If children see a power line that has fallen into a tree or onto the ground, they should stay away and tell an adult immediately.
- Don't climb the fence around an electrical substation. If your child loses a ball or a pet gets inside the fence, they should tell an adult who can contact SMECO.

- Keep balloons, kites, fishing lines, and aluminum ladders away from overhead power lines. Any of these items may conduct electricity and can bring that electricity through the person holding the object on its way to the ground.
- Keep electrical appliances away from water.
- Do not sit on or play around the electrical transformer boxes found in many neighborhoods.

### **Adults should be careful outside, too!**

Overhead power lines carry high voltages and maintain only a coating of insulation to protect them from weathering. If your body or anything you are touching comes in contact with the power line, the results could be fatal. Electricity will course through your equipment and you, and that current can heat up and burn the tissue inside the body. If you become the easiest path to ground, the results could be deadly.

Some things to remember:

- If you are using farm equipment or other machinery, including metal ladders, and any part of it comes in contact with an overhead line, the equipment and you will become the easiest path to ground. If you are doing any work close to power lines—such as trimming trees, working on your roof, or doing exterior renovations—keep yourself, your ladder and anything you are handling a safe distance from the power line.
- Keep equipment away from overhead lines when carrying ladders, pool skimmers, and pruning tools.
- If a tree is in contact with an overhead power line and you attempt to remove the tree, you can become the easiest path to the ground.
- Contact SMECO to disconnect power if you are doing work that requires close contact with overhead lines attached to your home.
- Use a licensed electrician for all electrical work.
- Plant trees away from power lines. Trees that will grow 20–50 feet tall should be planted at least 30 feet from overhead lines.
- In addition to overhead lines, SMECO has many underground electric lines. Call Miss Utility at 811 before you dig to have underground utilities marked.



## Practice boating safety around lines

Many people in Southern Maryland spend time out on the water enjoying summer fun. SMECO would like to remind sailing enthusiasts to be aware of power lines. Check out these safety tips to ensure safer sailing.

Many sailboats have masts of 30 feet or more. Most of these masts are made of aluminum, which conducts electricity. When rigging or aluminum masts come into contact with electric power lines, a lethal hazard is created.

Before you sail, be sure to step the mast in an area clear of power lines. Ensure that the path you take to the launching ramp will not allow your mast to come into contact with overhead lines. The National Electrical Safety Code requires that power lines maintain a certain clearance over water or posted launching areas suitable for sailboats. This doesn't guarantee that your mast will not come into contact with the lines. Take the responsibility yourself to see that your mast and rigging stay at least 10 feet away from all power lines.

Once you are on the water, continue to keep an eye out for overhead lines because power lines do cross over waterways. Make sure that your boat has proper clearance from any overhead lines. Your mast must never make contact with power lines.

When you are removing your boat from the water, be sure to inspect the area for possible power lines that may come into contact with the mast as you step it and store it for travel.

## August 7

### Red Hot and Blues First Friday

Sponsor: Leonardtown  
Business Association

5 to 8 p.m. Leonardtown. The monthly First Friday community event is an evening of fun, live music, art gallery receptions, and specials at participating stores and restaurants throughout Leonardtown. For July 7, local musicians Bob Schaller and Friends will be holding a jam session on The Square in Leonardtown. Bring a chair or blanket. Come early and stay late for this free, family-friendly event.

301-475-2744

firstfridaysleonardtown.com

## August 11

### 29th L'il Margaret's Bluegrass and Old Time Music Festival

Sponsor: Jay Armsworthy

Noon to 10 p.m. Goddard Farm, Clay Hill Road off Fairground Road in Leonardtown. Featured will be Flatt Lonesome; Lorraine Jordan and Carolina Road; David Parmley and Cardinal Tradition; Mickey Galyean and Cullen's Bridge; Randall Hibbitts and Appalachia; Chris Henry and the Hardcore Grass; The Tyler Williams Band; The Feinberg Brothers; and The Northern Connection Bluegrass Band. The event will be held rain or shine, with the concert area under a permanent pavilion. Bring your lawn chairs. Plenty of parking on site, 24-hour security, home-cooked food, ice cream, and non-alcohol beverages. Vendor spaces will be available.

301-737-3004

lilmargaretsbluegrass.com

## August 12

### Recycling Turn-In Event

Sponsor: SMECO

10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Great Big Home Show, Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department, 24801 Three Notch Road, Hollywood. Turn-In your old working window A/C unit or dehumidifier for recycling and receive a \$25 reward. We'll even unload it from your vehicle, making drop-off easy and convenient.

1-888-440-3311

smeco.coop/save-energy-and-money/recycle-refrigerators

## August 23

### Aerial Inspirations: Fine Art and Flight Exhibition

Sponsor: Patuxent River Naval  
Air Museum

10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Patuxent River Naval Air Museum. Exhibition featuring the batik artwork of Mary Edna Fraser on display in the main exhibit hall of the museum. Artist's opening reception will be held on August 23 and an artist's lecture on August 24.

301-863-1900

paxmuseum.com

## August 25

### Brothers Osborne at Calvert Marine Museum

Sponsor: Calvert Marine  
Museum

6 to 10 p.m. Calvert Marine Museum. Brothers Osborne, recent winner of the "Vocal Duo of the Year" at the 50th CMA Awards, will perform live at the PNC Waterside Pavilion.

410-326-2042

calvertmarinemuseum.com



## Paying your bill is as easy as texting

SMECO knows that many of today's customer-members prefer to pay bills and interact with businesses through their mobile device. So the cooperative has introduced many alternatives to calling in to a customer service line to do business. One option customers have is Account Manager through the website (see page 2 of this newsletter for more information on that option). But did you know that SMECO also offers many service options through the SMECO 24/7 mobile app or by text?

The texting service lets members report an outage; check outage status; obtain account balances; pay bills using the secure wallet; and receive outage, payment, and past due notices. You can also choose an amount to pay, and then either pay immediately or on the due date. Want to sign up? Text REG to 76326. You will need your account number if your phone number does not match our records.

You can also download the SMECO 24/7 app to report an outage, check the outage status, and reference our outage map, receive news updates, and make payments. The app also enables you to use your Account Manager credentials to log in through the app, which lets you review your bills and payments, manage your notification preferences, and make payments. For security, the app does not store payment information. You can download the app **free** from Apple iTunes or Google Play. If you have any questions, call 1-888-440-3311 or visit [smeco.coop/SMECO247](http://smeco.coop/SMECO247).