

cooperative **REVIEW**

for members of Southern
Maryland Electric Cooperative



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SMECO works for its members, not for profits

In January 2017, SMECO and its contractor, Utility Partners of America (UPA), began installing smart meters throughout the Cooperative's service area. Nearly every SMECO customer-member now has a smart meter.

Smart meters are safe, smart, and secure—providing key benefits to SMECO and its customer-members.

- Faster service for customers who open and close accounts
- Fewer estimated bills
- Data to help resolve billing and usage questions
- Lower costs for meter reading and billing
- No need to send technicians into the field for off-cycle meter readings or customer-requested service disconnects and reconnects
- Detailed hourly usage data to be made available to customers online
- Improved outage detection and power restoration capabilities

Smart meters help SMECO and its customer-members work together toward a smarter energy future.

With smart meters, tasks that used to take hours can now be completed in minutes.



Smart meters help SMECO operate more efficiently, and those savings will be passed on to customers.

So far, smart meters have already helped SMECO avoid more than 15,000 trips to customer locations for service connects and customer-requested disconnects. The impact of smart meters also saved more than \$3 million by the end of September 2017.

While smart meters will help SMECO respond to outages more quickly and effectively, it's important for you to continue to report your outage. SMECO has many communication options that will provide outage updates when you have reported your outage, including restoration calls, texts, and updates to the SMECO 24/7 app.

During the roll-out, UPA and SMECO inspected each meter installation on the system. So even customer-members who opted out had their installation inspected and a standard digital meter installed. During the 20th century, meter technology did not change much, and some of the meters on our system were 35 to 40 years old and technically obsolete. Many of these meters had also gone untouched for years. Opening the meter base and inspecting each meter installation provided the Cooperative with the added benefit of finding and fixing issues that were previously undetected.

Throughout the installation process, UPA and SMECO discovered electrical code violations, loose connections, settling wires, and burnt terminals in some customers' meter bases. Many of the problems were related to deterioration caused by age, but they all created a potential for an outage at the location and possible damage to structures and electrical equipment. About two percent of the installations inspected needed additional work to resolve problems.

“As things heat and cool over time, metal connections expand and contract, resulting in loose connections,” Automation/Meter Operations Manager David Johnson said.

SMECO owns the meter and all equipment up to the service delivery point. Service entrance equipment, including the meter base and service entrance cables, are the property of the customer.

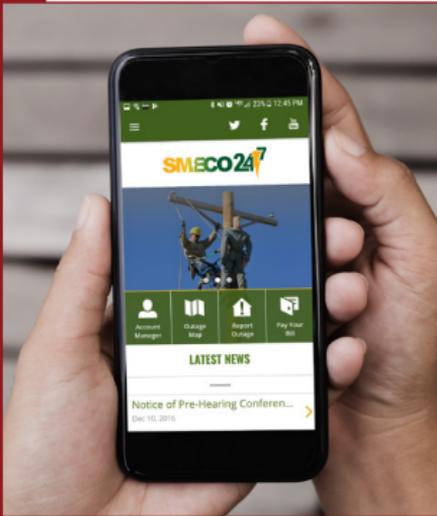
While many of the issues discovered during the smart meter installation were the homeowner's responsibility, the Cooperative worked with customer-members as part of the full-scale deployment to resolve those issues and install the new meters. The smart meter may be able to assist in catching new problems that arise—concerns that, with the old meters, would previously have gone undiscovered until an outage.

With the deployment nearly complete, SMECO is now installing additional communication devices in its substations and plans to introduce a web portal in late 2018 that will provide hourly usage data to customer-members. Knowing how much energy you are using on a day-to-day, hour-by-hour basis will provide a greater awareness of what is driving energy use in your home and will help you make more energy efficient choices and detect appliance problems earlier. It's easy to keep an eye on the smart meter and see how much power you are using. Want to learn how to read the new meter? Go to smeco.coop/videos and click on “How to Read Your Smart Meter.”

If you have any questions, please call 1-888-440-3311 or visit smeco.coop/gettingsmarter.

Convenient service— just download the free SMECO 24/7 mobile app or send a text

Smart phones, tablet computers, and laptops open up a world of opportunity in how we interact with the world around us. People can be connected to their family, friends, and even businesses when it is convenient for them. SMECO knows that many of its customer-members prefer to pay bills and interact through those mobile devices, so the Cooperative provides multiple ways to stay connected with your electric utility.



Use the online Account Manager

When you sign in to Account Manager on SMECO's website, you have the power to set up AutoPay or Budget Billing, review and pay bills, manage your secure wallet, and set notification preferences

for email and text notices. You can also sign up to receive past due notices by text or email. Account Manager gives you control over your billing and communication preferences at the touch of a finger.

Download the free mobile app

When you download the SMECO 24/7 app, you will be able to report an outage, check the outage status, and reference our up-to-date outage map, or receive news updates and make payments from your phone or mobile device. You can also 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 purposes, the app does not store payment information.

You can download the SMECO 24/7 app **free** from the Apple App Store or Google Play.

Prefer texting?

Signing up to receive text updates from SMECO is simple—just text REG (for register) to 76326 (SMECO). With SMECO's easy-to-use texting service, you can report an outage and get status updates; 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. To sign up, you will need your account number if your phone number does not match our records.

If you have any questions, call **1-888-440-3311** or visit smeco.coop/SMECO247.

'Tis the season to give and to receive

Sign up for Members Helping Members to add \$1, \$5, or \$10 to your SMECO electric bill every month to lend a hand to neighbors who are struggling.

Donations are sent every month to the Southern Maryland Tri-County Community Action Committee, which will administer the funds to those customer-members who seek aid and meet the qualifications.

As a thank you, members who sign up between **November 15, 2017, and February 15, 2018**, will receive a reward based on their level of giving.

- \$1** Sign up for the \$1 per month level and receive **five LED lights**.
- \$5** Sign up for the \$5 per month level and receive **five LED lights and a two-pack of directional night lights**.
- \$10** Sign up for the \$10 per month level and receive **10 LED lights, a two-pack of directional night lights, and a desk lamp**.

After you enroll, the reward will be mailed to your billing address. Please allow up to four weeks for delivery.

Visit SMECO.coop/MHM or call **1-888-440-3311** for more information.

Prepare for higher electric bills as it gets colder

The winter season is upon us and, as the temperatures outside drop, electric bills will rise. Heating and cooling costs are usually the biggest part of your electric bill, accounting for up to two-thirds of your usage. When it gets cold, energy usage increases. When energy usage increases, electric bills go up.

Knowing the type of heating and cooling system you have, how the system works, and how to properly maintain it will help you get the most efficiency from your system. The most common type of heating system in the local area is an air source heat pump.

A heat pump system transfers heat from one location to another. In the winter, heat energy is absorbed from the outside air and used to warm the inside air.

Heat pump systems need to be serviced annually by an HVAC technician to operate at peak efficiency. Here are some additional tips to get the most efficient service from your system:

- Clean or change filters once a month, or as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Never set thermostat to emergency heat unless the outdoor unit stops working, then call your HVAC technician immediately.
- Keep thermostat heat settings at one temperature. The recommended setting for winter is 68°F.
- Heat pumps need to breathe, so keep all vents open and free from blockages inside the home.
- Keep the outdoor unit free from snow, ice, and leaves.
- Keep plants, shrubs, and other obstacles at least two feet away from the outside unit.
- Replace older thermostats with programmable models—ask your HVAC technician which will work best.

Other common heating systems include gas or oil systems, which generate heat from a furnace

or boiler. A furnace heats the air and blows it through heat ducts to the registers or grilles in the home. A boiler heats water, and the water is circulated through pipes to radiators or baseboards.

Getting the most efficient use out of a gas or oil system requires some maintenance, as well.

- Keep radiators or convectors clean.
- Replace or clean the filter on a forced-air system at least once a month.
- Check flue and chimney for possible obstruction and have cleaned, if necessary.
- Have oil furnaces serviced yearly by a trained technician.
- Have gas furnaces serviced every two years by a trained service technician.

Keep safety in mind, too. A poorly maintained or malfunctioning gas or oil furnace can produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. It is recommended that any home with a gas or oil system have a carbon monoxide detector.

Electric baseboard heating systems use resistance heating like electric stoves and space heaters. This is the most expensive form of heating, so use it as sparingly as possible. Turn off baseboard heaters in unoccupied rooms.

Knowing the type of heating system you have and maintaining it properly will help you save energy and money as the weather turns cold.

aroundTOWN

January 1

New Year's Day

SMECO offices closed.
The Customer Care Center is available 24/7.

1-888-440-3311
www.smeco.coop

January 15

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

SMECO offices closed. The Customer Care Center is available 24/7.

1-888-440-3311
www.smeco.coop

January 27

Silent auction with reception

Sponsor: St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Piney Parish

7 to 10:30 p.m. 4535 Piney Church Road, Waldorf. Silent Auction items will be presented during four rounds, allowing 20 minutes per round for bids to be placed. Food and drinks will be available throughout the evening. Approximately 200 baskets, antique items, furniture, jewelry, art, sports tickets, and other items will be offered.

301-645-5536
stpaulspiney.org



Tips to help you save money this winter

One of the key steps to saving energy over the winter months is to know the type of heating system you have and to maintain it properly. Learn more about efficient heating and cooling on pages 6 and 7. Try the tips below for more ways to help you save energy and money during the winter months.

- Have an energy audit performed on your home to check for air leaks and to check insulation levels. A tight and well-insulated house will make you feel more comfortable and will reduce energy costs. SMECO offers a program that takes a comprehensive look at your home to determine opportunities for savings.
- Weatherize your home to keep conditioned air in—air leaks are the biggest culprit in making homes uncomfortable—use weather stripping, caulk, spray foam, and clear plastic to seal drafts.
- Open curtains and blinds during the day to let the sun shine in. Use cellular blinds and insulated curtains.
- Insulate your attic to at least R-38. A clue to know how well insulated your attic is? If snow melts quickly from the roof, you don't have enough insulation. A Quick Home Energy Check-up will assess insulation levels as part of the walk-through.

Energy use varies based on many factors, including the amount of insulation and the type of heating system in the home. Adjusting your energy use on cold days can help control winter electric bills. Find more ways to save this winter at smeco.coop/save-energy-and-money.