

March AROUND TOWN CALENDAR

2 & 9

Dr. Mudd House Docent Orientation

1 p.m. Dr. Samuel A. Mudd
House Museum, Waldorf.

301-452-2158

Sponsor: Dr. Samuel A.
Mudd House Museum

23 & 24

SOMD Fishing Fair and Boat Safety Exposition

8 a.m. to 3 p.m. St. Mary's County
Fairgrounds, Leonardtown.

301-904-0599

visitstmarysmc.com/events/
southern-maryland-fishing-fair-
and-boat-safety-exposition

Sponsor: Southern Maryland
Recreational Fishing Organization

smeco.coop/aroundtown

23

Celebration Gala

8 p.m. to midnight. Swan Point
Yacht and Country Club

301-609-4132

cmcfoundation.org/gala

Sponsor: Charles Regional Medical
Center Foundation

25

Maryland Day at St. Clement's Island Museum

2 to 3 p.m. St. Clement's
Island Museum

301-769-2222

[www.facebook.com/
events/1691136361001570](http://www.facebook.com/events/1691136361001570)

Sponsor: St. Mary's County
Museum Division

What's coming up?

Scholarship applications are due by April 12

Completed scholarship application packages (all items must be submitted as one package) are due by April 12, 2019.

Where to submit the application:

- SMECO's Hughesville or Leonardtown office between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., or
- Mail the package to:
SMECO, Attention: Bernadette Lewis
P.O. Box 1937, Hughesville, MD 20637

Learn more at www.smeco.coop/scholarships, see your school career counselor, or call 1-888-440-3311, ext. 4340

The 17th annual Gaff-n-Go Rodeo will be held May 11, 2019

Mark your calendars now so you don't miss the chance to see your SMECO linemen compete in events that test their agility, skill, and safe work practices—talents vital to the work they perform daily. This is a wonderful opportunity to see the skill, strength, and respect for electricity it takes to be a utility lineman.

This event is free to the public and it is held at the Meadow Event Park in Doswell, Virginia.

gaff-n-go.com • 804-968-4073

Be a part of the 2019 SMECO 75 Bike Ride

SMECO is hosting its 9th annual bike ride through Southern Maryland on June 1, 2019. Sign up for the 75-, 47-, or 29-mile routes.

The ride is open to the public and money raised will be contributed to: Spring Dell Center, Charles County; The Arc of Southern Maryland, Calvert County; and Bay Community Support Services, St. Mary's County.

Sign up to ride or to become a sponsor!
Visit smeco.coop/SMECO75 for more info.

Practice generator safety

Southern Maryland faced its first winter storm of 2019 in mid-January. While there were limited outages with that storm, many families prepare for the possibility of power outages by purchasing portable generators. Here are some things to consider if you plan to use a generator.

How do I use my generator safely?

The portable generator, while in operation, should be located outside in an unheated, covered, well-ventilated area. Do NOT operate the generator in a house, basement, attached garage, or any enclosed area. Exhaust gases contain carbon monoxide, which is an odorless, invisible, poisonous gas.

Portable generators have traditionally been used to run plug-in appliances like refrigerators, freezers and lights. Any appliance that is not permanently wired into the home's electrical system can be operated with polarized extension cords from the generator. Generally, #10 and #12 wire size extension cords are needed for 1,200- to 1,800-watt loads. Be careful! Overloading extension cords may cause a fire.

A double-throw transfer switch must be used for 240-volt appliances, as well as for hard-wired appliances like furnaces or water pumps. A polarized outdoor-rated extension cord connects the generator to a fused outlet that feeds the transfer switch. The switch prevents your generator from feeding electricity back into SMECO's lines and injuring or possibly killing linemen working to restore your power. The transfer switch must be installed by a licensed electrician and inspected by an electrical inspector to prevent house fires and ensure that the generator is not overloaded.

How can I get more information?

For more information about selecting and sizing a portable generator, contact your local generator dealer.



- 1 Know the facts if you are considering switching to an alternate supplier.
- 2 Don't miss out—find out what's coming up at SMECO.
- 3 If you use an portable electric generator, it's important to know how to operate it safely.

Have you ordered your complimentary Energy Efficiency Kit?

The kit includes six LED lights and an efficient-flow showerhead.

smeco.coop/EnergyKit

Offer valid for any eligible SMECO residential member.

(Limit one kit per household through 2020.)

Know the facts if you are considering switching to an alternate supplier

Two studies call for improving consumer protections

Recently, two reports issued by the Maryland Office of People's Counsel (OPC) and the Abell Foundation expressed concern about Maryland's third-party energy supply market. They found that many customers who purchase energy through an alternate energy supplier in total are overpaying by millions of dollars. In addition, they found that a high percentage of customers who purchase energy from an alternate supplier are low income customers who receive assistance. In many cases, they are charged more for energy by alternate energy suppliers than they would normally pay to their local utility.

"Alternate energy suppliers" are able to sell energy to SMECO members at rates that are not regulated by the Maryland Public Service Commission. SMECO is concerned that not enough is being done to protect consumers from high rates and deceptive marketing tactics, and we will be working with our state legislators during the 2019 Maryland General Assembly session to help establish some reforms that will discourage predatory sales practices.

Consumers overspend millions of dollars

According to the OPC report, "Maryland's households are paying approximately \$54.9 million more for electricity and gas than if they had purchased energy from their utilities."

When Maryland deregulated the energy market 20 years ago, alternate energy suppliers were expected to offer rates that were competitive with the electric utilities' rates. But during 2018, the amount that SMECO members paid to alternate energy suppliers was nearly \$2.1 million higher than what those same members would have paid if they had purchased energy through SMECO's standard offer service (SOS). With an average of 5,120 members purchasing energy from alternate suppliers, that's about \$415 per account.

How does your cost compare?

SMECO residential members who purchase energy through an alternate supplier will have information printed on their bill that calculates how much they saved—or how much they overpaid—in comparison to SMECO's residential SOS energy rate. (Personalized cost information is printed on the Alternate Supplier page of a residential bill under "Comparing Costs.")

Maryland OPC offers tips

In an interview on November 26, 2018, Paula Carmody, the People's Counsel, made the following points (edited for brevity):

- We see reliance on door-to-door marketing and that is a concern for us. We also see they are targeting neighborhoods that are low income. People are knocking on doors saying "We're going to save you money."
- Energy sales reps who go door-to-door are required to have a printed ID as well as identification on their clothing.
- If they say they are from the utility, close the door; they are misrepresenting themselves. (Energy sales reps do not work for SMECO.)
- If they ask to see a copy of your bill to see how much you are paying, do not give it to them: they want to get your account number.
- Energy sales reps should have written materials they can provide. You can take the materials

Comparing Costs

SMECO's Standard Offer Service (SOS) rate is the cost customers pay for energy if they do not choose an alternate supplier. SMECO provides electricity to members at cost, with no markup.

SMECO's Price to Compare is made up of the Standard Offer Service Energy Charge and the Power Cost Adjustment.

The table below shows your price to compare for this month's usage based on the current SMECO total SOS rate.

SMECO's Price to Compare is
\$0.081057

Monthly kWh Usage	SMECO JAN 19 Price to Compare
1200 kWh	\$97.27
1300 kWh	\$105.37
1449 kWh	\$117.45
1500 kWh	\$121.59

You would have saved \$99.76 on SMECO's Standard Offer Service energy rate.

Page 3 of a residential bill shows the difference between an alternate supplier's rate and SMECO's rate. This image shows an actual bill.

and compare prices. You don't have to sign up on the spot.

- You can look at other suppliers and contact them to see if you can get a better price.
- Consumers who decide to talk with someone in person (or over the phone) should ask questions.
- Instead of a variable rate, look for a fixed rate that doesn't fluctuate.
- Check for cancellation fees; in some cases, a cancellation fee can wipe out any savings you may have had.

To see the interview, visit the OPC's website and click the link for Direct Connection: opc.state.md.us/Home/HotTopics.aspx or go to the YouTube video: [youtube.com/watch?v=CBQiRWpFSWY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBQiRWpFSWY)

Co-ops work for members, not for profits

Because we are owned by our customers, every dollar that you pay to SMECO goes into purchasing energy, constructing power lines and substations, or running the co-op. At the end of the year after expenses are paid, any money that is left over goes toward your Capital Credits. Later, Capital Credits may be refunded as bill credits, checks, or payments to estates.

Questions?

If you have questions about customer choice, alternate energy suppliers, or any billing related matters, call SMECO's customer care center at 1-888-440-3311. We're open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Know the terms

Before entering into a contract with a supplier, be sure you understand the terms.

- What is the exact price per kWh?
- What does the price include? Are there any fees, taxes or charges that are not included?
- Is there a monthly minimum or maximum usage?
- Is there a fee for a credit check or a deposit?
- Is the offer for a fixed rate, a variable rate, or a combination? If it's a fixed rate, how long does it stay fixed? If it is variable, does it change based on the season, the time of day, or the amount of usage?
- How long is the contract good for and what happens when it ends? Will you be charged a variable rate that is different?
- Can the price change during the contract period?
- Can you cancel the agreement at any time?
- Is there a termination fee for canceling the contract?
- What happens if you move?
- Do you have to pay to switch to a different supplier?
- What is the total price to compare for your estimated kWh usage? (Use the amount of kWh on a recent SMECO electric bill. SMECO's Standard Offer Service price to compare is the Energy Charge and the Power Cost Adjustment combined. Don't compare the supplier's rate to your total SMECO bill, just look at the cost of energy.)