

February AROUND TOWN CALENDAR

10

26th Annual Antique Show and Sale

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
La Plata High School, 6035 Radio
Station Road, La Plata.
301-259-2411

Sponsor: La Plata High School
Band and Orchestra Boosters

13

Singing Valentines

5 to 10 p.m.
Throughout Calvert County.
410-257-7814

Sponsor: Calvert Meals on Wheels

19

Presidents' Day Holiday

SMECO offices closed.
The Customer Care Center
is available 24/7.
1-888-440-3311
www.smeco.coop

Clear snow and
leaves away from
your outdoor HVAC
unit to keep it
working efficiently.

Managing the accounts of deceased customers

In the event that a current account holder passes away, the SMECO account should be put in the name of the financially responsible person. Your SMECO account cannot be held in the name of a deceased person.

To transfer the account, please call SMECO's customer care center at 1-888-440-3311.

Have a child preparing for college?

SMECO is offering four \$1500 scholarships to eligible high school seniors who want to be prepared for what the future has to offer.

Application deadline: April 3, 2018

Eligibility requirements:

- Be a high school senior graduating in 2018
- Live with parents or guardians who are SMECO customer-members
- Maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale
- Provide a copy of SAT or ACT scores

Get the application:

Download the application at smeco.coop/scholarships or visit your school's guidance counselor for details.

Submit the application:

- Drop off your completed application and supporting documents at SMECO's Hughesville office 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, Maryland 20637
- All application package items must be submitted together.

SMECO awards scholarships based on scholastic achievement, financial need, an interview, school involvement, and community involvement.

The Scholarship Awards Committee will interview the top seven candidates on Saturday, April 21, 2018.

Pick the perfect LED

Upgrade to energy-efficient ENERGY STAR® LEDs and get instant discounts—**up to \$7 per bulb**—at participating retailers. LEDs last up to 25 times longer than incandescents and use 75 percent less energy, meaning you save energy and save money. LED lights have a number of benefits, but many people feel overwhelmed when picking the right one for their home. Know what to look for when you pick your next light.

Color

There are three main categories of color and you can determine the shade that best meets your needs by selecting the appropriate color temperature number on the packaging.

Color	Temperature	Uses
Warm white, soft white	2700 or 3000K	Standard color of traditional bulbs
Cool white, natural white	3500 or 4100K	Good for kitchens and work spaces
Natural or daylight (blue-white)	6000K and higher	Good for reading because it increases contrast

Brightness

The lumen number indicates the brightness. The higher the lumen, the brighter the bulb.

Lumens	Incandescent	LED
1600 lumens	100 Watt	16–20 Watt
1100 lumens	75 Watt	9–13 Watt
800 lumens	60 Watt	8–12 Watt

Efficiency

The best way to determine light efficiency is to look at the Lumens per Watt, which shows how much light you get for each Watt used. Old-fashioned bulbs produced 10 to 15 lumens per watt, and fluorescent tubes produce about 50 to 100 lumens per Watt. LED lights can range from 20 to 60. The more lumens per watt, the brighter the output for less energy used.

Find a participating retailer or visit the online store for your LEDs at smeco.coop/lighting.



1

With Customer Choice it's important to know the price to compare and to be aware of what you sign up for.

2

Employees raise \$47,642 for four local environmental groups in 2017.

3

Utility accounts cannot be held in the name of a deceased person.

4

The scholarship application deadline is April 3, 2018.

5

Look for efficiency, color temperature, and brightness to pick the best LED for you.

Be informed about Customer Choice and alternate suppliers

Customer Choice—what does that mean?

It means that you are able to choose the company that supplies your electric energy. Currently, about 5,500 of SMECO's customer-members purchase power from alternate suppliers. The prices they charge for their power are not regulated, so alternate suppliers are free to set their rates at any level and can offer incentives to entice new customers. In some cases, the suppliers' prices have been slightly better than SMECO's, but in other cases they have not. So, before entering into a contract with a supplier, it is important that you compare the rate offered with the rate for SMECO's standard offer service.

By comparing the cost of energy that SMECO provides with the cost of energy provided by alternate suppliers, we have found that, in total, the customers who switched from standard offer service have paid \$2 million over the cost of purchasing energy from SMECO during 2017. That's an average of more than \$300 per customer. This is not to say that all these customers could have saved money by staying with standard offer service. Certainly some customers made smart financial decisions. But this is an average that holds true. So, if you are considering purchasing energy from an alternate supplier, compare rates and terms of service.

How does SMECO manage its energy costs?

SMECO purchases power on the wholesale market for all of its customer-members. Our power portfolio includes contracts with many firms, and we're able to negotiate prices for specific days and time periods. SMECO doesn't mark up its energy rates and makes no profit on them. As a customer-owned, non-profit

cooperative, SMECO is committed to delivering reliable electricity at the lowest possible price.

Alternate suppliers' representatives use a variety of sales techniques to sign up customers. You may have received phone calls or a door-to-door salesperson may have come to your home. In the past, some sales reps have told our customers that they're working for SMECO, but that's not true. As the local electric utility, SMECO is not allowed to market or promote standard offer service to customers. We are not allowed to state that standard offer service is preferable to supplies offered by other suppliers. But we are allowed to inform customer-members of the price and availability of standard offer service, and to show any of our customer-members a comparison of our standard offer service price and the price of electricity supply from a member's current supplier.

Be smart. Compare prices. Understand the terms of any contract you are being asked to sign. Make a decision that is smart for you.

Whether you receive an introductory offer with a low rate, a gift card, or a promise of big savings, make sure you understand the details before switching to an alternate supplier. Review the questions at right for guidance.

For customers who use an alternate supplier, if the supplier changes its rates, the new rates must be made available to the customer 12 days before the end of the billing period. If you have an existing contract with a supplier, you should receive notice of the expiration date 45 days in advance, so that you can consider whether you want to renew your agreement or switch suppliers.

Be smart. Compare prices. Understand the terms of any contract you are being asked to sign. And—most of all—make a decision that is smart for you.

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?
- 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. In December, that rate was 7.0339 cents per kWh. (Don't compare the supplier's rate to your total SMECO bill, just look at the cost of energy.)
- 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?

Employees raise \$47,642 for local environmental groups

SMECO employees held two fund-raising events in 2017 and donated \$11,910 to four different organizations that focus on the environment:

- **In Calvert County:** the American Chestnut Land Trust
- **In Charles County:** the Port Tobacco River Conservancy
- **In Prince George's County:** the Alice Ferguson Foundation
- **In St. Mary's County:** the St. Mary's River Watershed Association

SMECO employees raised the money through the SMECO 75 Bike Ride held in June and the SMECO Annual Charity Golf Outing in September. The events are supported by a group of employee volunteers, vendors, and the SMECO executive team.

Each year, the Co-op selects a different organization to benefit from the fundraising events and in just the last five years, SMECO employee fund-raisers have contributed \$215,000 to local organizations.

What's ahead in 2018?

2018 Charity: Hospice organizations in Southern Maryland

SMECO 75 Bike Ride: June 2, 2018

The SMECO 75 Bike Ride is open to the public. Participants can choose among three routes of 29, 47, and 75 miles that start at the co-op's headquarters in Hughesville and go as far as Colton's Point in St. Mary's County. Cyclists who want to participate in the SMECO 75 Bike Ride can register online at Active.com beginning January 1, 2018.