SVEC Holds Tele Town Halls

Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative (SVEC) reached out to the communities it serves by holding a series of telephone town halls during the week of Dec. 4-8. More than 8,700 member-owners participated, giving them a forum to ask questions related to their service, Co-op programs, policies and more to SVEC senior staff.

In previous years, SVEC held telephone town halls for specific situations throughout its service territory. This time, the target audience was the entire residential member-owner base with a landline tied to their electric service account. Due to regulatory restrictions, the Cooperative was not able to call mobile phone numbers.

Over the course of four town hall events, Co-op staff answered nearly 60 member-owner questions, including inquiries about solar generation, “blinking” lights, the progress of a new combined headquarters/district facility in Rockingham County, and Cooperative rates. Each event lasted close to an hour.

SVEC will explore conducting similar events in the future. Some of the most common questions surrounded SVECs new Rockingham Complex (see the next page for an update), renewable energy production, blinking lights and rates.

On renewable energy, SVEC has two major solar projects under consideration. First, we’re exploring the feasibility of using solar to power the new Rockingham Complex. We’re looking at a number of options in terms of where the solar panels would be placed if we’re able to use solar there.

Second, we’re investigating if community solar projects make sense in our service territory. This is a way for member-owners who are unable to have solar on their own property to still invest in solar power. This can take a number of forms including a member-owner owning a set of solar panels that are located in a larger solar farm. It can also include member-owners opting to use electricity generated by a local community solar project ahead of other sources when available. If the Cooperative does pursue community solar, it’ll be on a voluntary basis. No member-owner will be required to participate in community solar.

As for blinking lights, or sporadic short outages, these are common occurrences, even on a sunny day. Power interruptions lasting less than a minute can be caused by a number of factors, including lightning strikes, damaged equipment, vegetation (tree branches or other debris) and animals interfering with Co-op facilities. Especially this time of year, squirrels are active and may disrupt service by grounding themselves as they contact equipment.

When lights “blink” and no extended outage occurs, it’s actually an indication that SVECs equipment worked properly. While an inconvenience, this outcome means that protective devices initiated to automatically shut off electricity to isolate the problem area. When the line is cleared of the problem (debris, animal or otherwise), the system resets itself and service is quickly restored.

Briefly shutting off power and isolating the problem helps prevent additional damage to SVECs system that could lead to even longer service interruptions.

Please visit www.svec.coop for an expanded overview of the topics addressed during the telephone town halls.
SVEC Lends Hand During December Snow

Cooperatives often help each other out when major, widespread outages occur, a practice known as “mutual-aid” events. An early December snowstorm caused major damage in Southside and Mecklenburg electric cooperatives’ service territories, leading 10 Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative (SVEC) linemen to assist with restoration.

Three two-man crews traveled to Gretna, Virginia, to help Mecklenburg on Dec. 9. After finishing restoration work that day, they were redirected the following day to Crewe, Virginia, where Southside had a large number of outages. Two additional two-man line teams from SVEC went to Crewe directly the late morning of Dec. 9. All SVEC linemen were sent home from Southside on the afternoon of Dec. 11.

The 6th Cooperative Principle is “Cooperation Among Cooperatives.” Co-ops serve their member-owners most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together.

“Storms come up at unexpected times and it’s sometimes inconvenient to have to leave, but we appreciate the help that we get when we need it, and we just like to return the favor,” said Todd Butcher, a lead lineman for SVEC’s Rockingham District.

Joining Butcher on the direct trip to Southside were 2nd Class Lineman Sherman Summers (Rockingham), 1st Class Lineman Brandon Long (Augusta County), and 2nd Class Lineman Alec Gutt (Augusta).

The crews who first went to Mecklenburg were Lead Lineman Kenny Grandstaff (Mount Jackson), 1st Class Lineman Josh Romick (Mount Jackson), Lead Lineman Mike Alexander (Winchester), 2nd Class Lineman Mark Mohler (Winchester), 1st Class Lineman James Cubbage (Luray), and 2nd Class Lineman Eric Gray (Luray).

New Facility on Track for Spring

 Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative (SVEC) expects to move into its new Rockingham Complex, just south of the Rockingham County Fairgrounds, late in the spring of 2018. The building will house SVECs Headquarters and Rockingham District office, which includes a garage and equipment warehouse. The existing headquarters and current district office in Dayton have both been sold and remain in use by SVEC pending completion of the new building.

The current headquarters in Mount Crawford was built about 26 years ago when the Cooperative had a much smaller membership. Back then, no one could have predicted the dramatic growth that SVEC has experienced, especially in the past 10 years thanks to the acquisition of parts of Allegheny Power’s service territory.

Today, the current headquarters is simply too small to maintain our operations. It’s also in need of significant maintenance and upgrading to meet current needs. Expanding at the current site is also impossible due to limited availability of adjacent real estate.

Once built, the Rockingham Complex will allow us to add the staff needed to continue to provide excellent member service and safe, reliable electricity. It will feature bank-style drive-thru lanes with a self-service payment kiosk and allow members to have greater privacy when discussing their accounts face-to-face with our staff.

The good news is that the new headquarters shouldn’t impact the rates member-owners pay for electricity. Low interest rates and lower demand in the construction industry are allowing SVEC to build the new Rockingham Complex for a very competitive cost using current cash flow and our existing financial strength.

Harman Construction is the general contractor on the project, while Mather Architects and Blackwell Engineering have provided their expert services as well.

For more information, please visit www.svec.coop/New-Facility.
Dan Bonner learned long ago that to be the best, he had to beat the best — by out “tasting” them.

From the time the ball is tipped until the final buzzer sounds, it’s Bonner’s job to explain to a television audience why something just occurred in a men’s college basketball game. If only it were actually that simple for a color commentator, however.

In describing the action, Bonner has to provide a mix of proper delivery, relevant information and timely excitement all while being a good listener to his play-by-play partner’s running dialogue. But, first, to be ready for the action he must watch hours of game tape, read numerous articles, and talk to people around both teams for a better understanding of their season.

Somewhere in between, the Augusta County resident has to arrange travel, which leads to frequent trips to Dulles International Airport outside of Washington, D.C.

Bonner has successfully done all of the above for almost 40 years, largely because of advice his first television boss, C.D. Chesley, handed to him.

“It’s all about taste,” he recalled during an interview at his home in December. “People will either like you or they won’t. You have to be yourself. Don’t try to be someone else.”

FITTING RIGHT IN

Bonner calls about 50 games a year, mostly covering the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), which includes the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech, during the regular season for Raycom Sports. He also works for the Big Ten Network and CBS, and then for CBS/Turner Sports’ coverage of the NCAA Tournament come March, when he’s on a three-man team that includes NBA Hall of Famer Reggie Miller.

Bonner has been a mainstay on Shenandoah Valley television sets since November 1980, given the regional coverage of the ACC. A Pittsburgh native, he has long been settled in the Valley, too.

Bonner and his wife, Terry, met at UVA, and 10 years into their marriage, they moved to Staunton in 1987. Bonner coached the Robert E. Lee High School girls’ basketball team, among other school duties, in the early 2000s.

The couple moved into a home they built outside of Verona four years ago, offering perfect views of surrounding mountain ranges and plenty of space for their three dogs to roam. But Bonner didn’t necessarily require a life off the beaten path. From his former 18-year career working with the Social Security Administration — he would call games on weekends — he said he found out that a “small, small, small minority of people care anything about sports.”

On the off chance someone recognizes him from his TV work — after all, commentators are only on-camera during a game for a few minutes, at most — there’s never been any problem, Bonner said.

“This is a place where, for God’s sake, for many years we had the Statler Brothers. They had the most popular show on TV [the Nashville Network],” he said. “The community left them alone. I think that’s

Left: Augusta County resident Dan Bonner (far right) calls men’s college basketball games throughout the season and then during CBS/Turner Sports’ coverage of the NCAA Tournament in March. His broadcast team for the tournament in 2017 was, from left to right, NBA Hall of Famer Reggie Miller, play-by-play announcer Kevin Harlan, and sideline reporter Dana Jacobson.
Right: Bonner (right) has called Atlantic Coast Conference games for almost 40 years, and is frequently teamed with play-by-play announcer Tim Brando.
IT'S ALL ABOUT PREP

The job of a commentator can only fully be appreciated after recognizing all of the behind-the-scenes work that goes into it. Bonner uses DirecTV to tape games involving teams coming up on his work schedule so he can watch them later and also downloads additional contests for viewing on his computer or iPad. Whenever a game at the University of Maryland is on the schedule, he circles the date because of how fast he can download files. Maryland plays at the Xfinity Center.

Bonner will also engage people on and around teams, especially radio broadcasters, to learn as much as possible about the state of the programs and, in some cases, verify the pronunciation of someone's name.

“One of the most important things about a person, especially someone I don’t know, is their name. I feel like I owe it to them,” he said. “Usually it takes me eight or nine hours of work, everything combined, to prepare for a game. It’s not just a matter of sitting down and talking to you [the viewers]. I could do that, but I don’t think I would be employed very long.”

Since Bonner is part of a team, his individual preparation could go to waste if he doesn’t find the right chemistry with his play-by-play announcer. There are some broadcasters he’s worked with for decades whom he could predict their words.

Other times, he could be assigned a partner he’s never worked with before.

“But, my job is to fit in,” Bonner said. “I have to explain why something happened. My partner is to explain the what. To do that, you can’t both be talking at the same time. It’s my responsibility to fit in with my partner. It’s not my partner’s responsibility to fit in with me.”

DREAM JOB

Bonner's work hits the biggest stage every March, when millions of people tune into the NCAA Tournament. This task includes calling four games in one day for the first round of the so-called “March Madness,” an experience that has previously led him to talk to voice coaches and collect books on maintaining one's voice. Among his tricks are to drink room-temperature water and avoid caffeine and carbonated drinks on game day.

“At that point in the season, you just hope that you’re not sick,” Bonner said. The constant travel can take a toll on the body, he said, but that’s the only area where you’ll hear him give the closest thing to a complaint about his job.

“There are people who actually have to go to work for a living. I’m somebody who lives for what he does,” Bonner said. “I think there are about 300 million people in the country who would trade places with me, but I can’t think of anyone that I’d trade places with.”

For anyone who dreams of becoming a broadcaster, he falls back on the “taste” advice he received in 1980 from C.D. Chesley, his first television boss. Be natural, don’t pattern your broadcasting after someone else, and hope that the response is positive, Bonner said.

“Go for it,” he said.
SVEC Offers Scholarship Opportunities

Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative (SVEC) is pleased to offer ten $1,000 scholarships in 2018 to students whose parents or guardians are member-owners of SVEC.

The eligibility requirements and judging criteria are outlined in the application form that is available online, at any SVEC office, or in the students' school guidance department. All applications and essays must be hand delivered to one of SVEC’s district offices by Feb. 21, 2018, or postmarked no later than this date.

If you have any questions concerning this scholarship opportunity, please check our website at www.svec.coop or contact Cammie Tutwiler or Preston Knight at Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative at 1-800-234-7832.

Recipients of SVEC’s scholarships in 2017 received plaques commemorating their achievement. They are flanked by President and CEO Michael Hastings (right) and Robbie Marchant, who was SVEC’s Board Chair at the time.

Take your participation as a member-owner of Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative to a new level by downloading our free mobile app, MySVEC. Pay your bill, report a power outage, and receive outage-related notifications through this fast, user-friendly program.

Features enable you to:
- Manage and make timely, secure payments;
- Report an outage;
- Receive up-to-date outage-restoration information;
- View the area’s outage map; and
- Contact SVEC by phone or email.

This app is designed to provide an additional convenience for you, our member-owner, and serve as another way in which you can be connected to your electric cooperative. It builds on existing resources such as our website (www.svec.coop) and our social media channels, including Facebook and Twitter. During extreme weather or emergency situations, this app also offers another way to contact us and monitor the area’s outage map. Remember, you are more than a customer of Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative. You are a member-owner. Take advantage of everything the Cooperative has to offer by downloading this app. We will continually evaluate your needs and work to exceed your expectations, pursuing opportunities that will benefit you.

To download the app, visit stores for Android and Apple devices, or find the links under the “MySVEC App” page on www.svec.coop.

SVEC Holds Food Drive Through March 9

Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative (SVEC) is holding a food drive for the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank now through March 9. All of our district offices and headquarters in Mount Crawford will have barrels inside the front door for SVEC member-owners to drop off food for the hungry. All locations are open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank serves about 118,600 people each month in 25 counties and nine cities. All jurisdictions that SVEC serves are also served by the food bank, which is based in Verona. Food from SVEC’s drive will be donated to the food bank’s Winchester and Verona area branches.

We appreciate your help in feeding the hungry during this winter season. For more information on the food bank, visit www.brafb.org. For more information about the SVEC food drive, you can contact Cammie Tutwiler at Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative by calling 1-800-234-7832.

The most-needed items are:

- Cereal
- Peanut or Almond Butter
- Canned Tuna and Chicken
- Canned Soups, Stews and Chili
- Canned Fruits
- Canned Veggies
- Beans, Canned or Dried
- Boxed Mac & Cheese
- Pasta and Rice
- Spaghetti Sauce
- Paper Products
- Baby Food, Formula and Diapers
- Soap, Toothbrushes and Feminine Products

PLEASE DO NOT DONATE GLASS ITEMS

Download Our Free Mobile App: MySVEC
SVEC Warns of Scams

Here are a few common signs of a potential scam activity, from the Utilities United Against Scams:

1. **Threat to disconnect.** The impostor utility representative aggressively tells the cooperative member-owner that his or her account is past due and service will be disconnected if a large payment is not made.
2. **Request for immediate payment.** The caller instructs the member-owner to quickly purchase a prepaid debit card that is widely available at retail stores.
3. **Request for prepaid debit card information.** The caller asks the member-owner for the prepaid debit card’s number, which grants the caller instant access to the card’s funds.

Visit www.utilitiesunited.org for more information and tips about how you can protect yourself from scams.

Cardinal Safety Rules of SVEC

SVEC takes the safety of its employees and member-owners very seriously. The Cooperative abides by the following five “Cardinal Safety Rules,” which by the end of 2017 had helped guide us to more than 1 million hours of work without a lost-time accident.

1. **Rubber Gloves and Sleeves:** Shall be worn from the ground up and from cradle to cradle on all energized structures (more than 600 V).
2. **Visual Opening:** Required before installing protective grounds.
3. **Testing and Protective Grounds:** Shall test with a device approved by management, and install grounds between every possible source of energy.
4. **Danger-Hold Tag:** All lines or protective devices shall be tagged with an SVEC tag before any work begins. This applies to non-reclosing as well as de-energized lines.
5. **Rubber Cover-up:** Energized conductors or equipment shall be covered to limit exposure to only one potential at a time.

Change in the Virginia Sales & Use Surcharge

Since September 2004, Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative (SVEC) has been paying Virginia sales tax on items such as utility poles, transformers, wire, conductors and other materials used to provide electric service that were previously exempt from such tax. This change was a result of legislative action by the Virginia General Assembly.

Along with the change requiring the Cooperative to pay taxes previously not paid, the Virginia legislature provided that the incremental additional taxes could be recovered on a dollar-for-dollar basis through a revenue surcharge rider on SVEC members’ bills. The rider is the “Sales and Use Surcharge” on the bills rendered for electric service.

After reviewing the taxes paid and recoveries made under the existing surcharge, along with projected future sales taxes, the change in the recovery factor per month per account, effective for bills rendered on and after Jan. 4, 2018, will be a $0.56 charge until further notice.

SVEC November/December Major Outages

**Nov. 8** Town of Shenandoah
3,043 members out for 0.25 hour
Power supplier

**Nov. 14** Town of Luray
1,052 members out for 0.25 hour
Undetermined

**Dec. 16** Town of Shenandoah and nearby area
817 members out for 4 hours
Animal burned wire

**Dec. 22** Strasburg area
579 members out for 4.5 hours
No cause determined

**Dec. 23** Clear Brook area
1,454 members out for 3.5 hours
Equipment failure

www.svec.coop