

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Claverack REC

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Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

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Guest Column



Members can help slow spread of spotted lanternflies

By Joshua Baublitz, *Right-of-Way Program Manager*

AS I sit to write this column for you, I am ending a week of training sessions for our Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative employees about an important topic and one that is starting to affect our operations more and more: the spotted lanternfly (SLF).

This little insect, native to Asia, has continued to spread across Pennsylvania since it was first identified in the United States in Berks County in 2014. Since then it has moved across the state, causing the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to establish quarantines in counties where it has been detected.

I'd like to take this opportunity to give you some of the same training information our employees received so you can help prevent the spread of this destructive, invasive insect.

The spotted lanternfly feeds on the sap of more than 70 species of trees and plants. It will not harm people or animals, as it does not sting or bite; however, it has the potential to negatively impact forest products, like standing timber, as it feeds on maples, walnuts and many other species of valuable hardwood trees.

Agricultural products, such as apples, grapes, and hops, are also at risk from an SLF infestation. It is estimated the total economic impact to our state could be as high as \$18 billion due to this destructive pest.

In March, the state Department of

Agriculture updated the list of quarantined counties to include Lycoming County and several others. Claverack currently has facilities in three quarantined counties — Lycoming, Luzerne and Lackawanna — and must comply with state-mandated permitting and vehicle inspections to ensure that our vehicles are not transporting this invasive pest into non-quarantined areas of our service territory.

I would ask you to do the same. Please consider staying up to date with information on this pest to help slow its spread. Know when you are in a quarantined county and follow best practices to avoid transporting this insect into an area that is not under quarantine. Those best practices include:

- ▶ avoid parking under trees;
- ▶ leave your vehicle windows closed; and
- ▶ check yourself and your vehicle for hitchhiking pests.

If you do come across this insect, kill it. If you encounter SLFs in an area that is not under quarantine, please report it to the Penn State Extension office in your county.

The more people who know about this insect ahead of time, the better off we can all be by taking preventive measures.

You can learn more about spotted lanternflies or report a sighting by visiting the Penn State Extension website at extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly.

Safe hookups: Isolating your generator from our lines

By Nick Berger

Director, Engineering and Operations

CLAVERACK Rural Electric Cooperative is focused on providing safe and reliable power to our members.

However, Mother Nature sometimes shows her power and is the No. 1 cause of major outages for all electric providers. This past year, the ash tree die-off, coupled with frequent wind storms and a freak April snowstorm, wreaked havoc across our electric system, causing multiple prolonged outages for members.

While we work hard to provide reliable service, there will always be occasional power outages. When outages do occur, some members turn to portable generators to meet their electricity needs.

It's important for anyone who uses or is considering purchasing a generator to be aware of the serious potential hazards involved in using portable generators.

If connected and used properly, generators can be a blessing during a lengthy outage. However, improperly installed or operated generators can have deadly consequences.

If you are thinking of using a portable generator, please take a moment to review some of the basic facts and risks associated with generators:

- ▶ Know the capability of your generator, the size and what load it can actually power in your house.
- ▶ Never set up a generator indoors or in a garage. Using a generator inside a building is one of the top causes of carbon monoxide fatalities.
- ▶ Make sure your generator is turned off and cool before you refuel the engine to prevent a fire while refilling.
- ▶ Most portable generators are not meant to run continuously, so give your generator a break.
- ▶ For tractor-driven units, be sure to always turn off the tractor and PTO control to service the generator.



Don't forget to set the tractor brake before starting the generator.

- ▶ Do not use generators in wet areas to avoid electrical shock.
- ▶ Only connect loads to the generator when it is fully running. Disconnect the loads before starting the generator and before stopping it. This protects your generator, as well as your appliances, from damage.
- ▶ Make sure to use heavy-duty cords sized for your power needs to prevent fires or shock.
- ▶ Most important, NEVER connect the generator to your breaker panel or directly into an electrical outlet without a properly installed transfer switch.

The transfer switch isolates your generator from the electric service and distribution lines. This keeps workers and the public from getting shocked by the electrical output of your generator and prevents the generator from becoming overloaded, which can damage or destroy it.

If you are using or plan on using a portable or standby generator, it's important to know that your generator can, and will, put electrical power

onto the co-op's distribution lines if you fail to properly isolate it from the co-op's electric system. Using a backup generator without a properly installed transfer switch presents a serious risk of injury and could potentially kill a lineworker repairing lines or a neighbor who touches downed wires.

There are two appropriate ways to prevent a generator from feeding power back into our system. One safe method is to plug any appliance or tool you are using directly into the outlets housed on the generator.

But if you connect your generator to your house wiring or an outlet inside your home, the National Electrical Code requires you to install a transfer switch.

So what does the transfer switch do? In simple terms, it prevents the house wiring from being connected to the generator and the utility service at the same time.

A transfer switch must be installed by a qualified electrician. Any work that must be done at the meter base or between the main panel and the meter base also requires an inspection from a qualified electrical inspector.

Also note Claverack policy allows only authorized cooperative personnel

to break a meter seal or remove an electric meter. If a meter seal is broken by anyone other than an authorized Claverack employee, the cooperative will advise the the meter's owner of the hazards associated with exposure to electrical energy. The member may also be subject to a \$500 tampering fee.

If you or a contractor needs to pull a meter from its base, please call Claverack to schedule an appointment for temporary disconnection of service.

For more information about emergency generators, contact Claverack's member services department at 800-326-9799 or 570-265-2167. ❁

Call 8-1-1 before digging into spring projects

With the return of warm weather, many members are gearing up for outdoor construction projects. If you are planning excavation work, get your



project off to a safe start by calling 8-1-1 before you dig.

8-1-1 is the abbreviated national telephone number homeowners and professional excavators can call to contact their state's One Call center.

State law requires that anyone moving earth with power equipment is required to notify the Pennsylvania One Call System three days before digging begins.

The purpose of the PA One Call System is to prevent damage to underground facilities, such as electric, cable, telephone, gas, water and sewer lines, during excavation projects.

Digging by an uninformed homeowner or contractor not only has the potential to damage utility lines, it can also be extremely dangerous when underground electric or gas lines are involved.

By calling 8-1-1 at least three working days before you plan to begin your project, you or your contractor will know exactly what lies beneath the surface — safeguarding everyone involved. ❁

**Claverack REC
will be closed
Monday, July 4,
in observance of
Independence
Day.**

Members may be subject to \$500 fee if any contractor temporarily disconnects their service

If you or the contractor you choose to install a generator, perform electrical work, or put siding on your house cuts the seal on your Claverack electric meter or pulls the meter from its base, YOU, the member, may be responsible for paying a \$500 tampering fee.

Removing electric meters can expose you or your contractor to a dangerous electrical arc flash. Because of Claverack's commitment to safety, our policy permits only trained, authorized cooperative employees with the proper personal protective equipment to cut meter seals and remove and install meters.

We've had several incidents recently in which contractors who were installing generators or performing other work for members failed to contact Claverack to request the meter be temporarily disconnected. Instead, these contractors cut the meter seals and pulled the meters themselves, in violation of cooperative policy. As a result, the Claverack members — not the contractors performing the work — were subject to a \$500 meter tampering fee.

When hiring a contractor to perform work at your property that requires disconnection of your electric service, insist that your contractor call Claverack to schedule a no-cost appointment for a temporary disconnection. This ensures the work can be performed safely and that you will not be held personally and financially responsible for any unsafe conditions created. ❁



AUTHORIZED: Only authorized Claverack personnel are permitted to cut meter seals and remove and install electric meters at properties served by the cooperative. Members may be subject to a \$500 tampering fee if they or their contractor temporarily disconnects service to their home, farm or business to install a generator, perform electrical work or put up siding. Members should always insist any contractor they hire contact Claverack to schedule a no-cost appointment when a temporary service disconnection is required to perform work.

All About Eve

Thanks for joining us on the ride

By Brian Zeidner
 Director, Member Services

FOR THE past 12 months we have shared our experience with our Tesla Model 3 with you — right here in Penn Lines. As you know, we purchased the electric vehicle (EV) so we could learn about this emerging technology and engage with you, doing our best to answer the many questions members have about battery-powered vehicles.

We’ve covered why we bought the EV, battery range, charging, the driving experience, technologies of EVs, cold-weather impacts, driving habits and impacts, tires and maintenance, the service experience, charger locations, and battery issues.

As we close this year-long series of articles, I would like to thank members for all of the positive engagement and invite any member who owns a hybrid or fully electric vehicle to visit claverack.com/electric-vehicles to answer a few questions about your experiences as an EV owner.

As much as I like our Tesla, which

is a fully electric plug-in vehicle, there are also other options that make sense in our area. One member, Joe, wrote to me about this. He is currently using an electric-gas hybrid vehicle. The batteries power the car for short drives — meeting the majority of Joe’s transportation needs — but the gas engine takes over when the car is used on longer trips, eliminating any worries about battery range and finding charging stations. Joe tells me this option works great for him.

Another member, Kay, asked about installing a charger in her garage and wanted us to stop by. We took Eve and showed her the car, explaining how the home-charging options — both 120- and 240-volt — work.

Dan, another member, brought up a great point about fuel taxes. If roads are repaired with taxes on gasoline — and Pennsylvania has some of the highest gas taxes in the nation — and drivers stop buying gas, where will legislators and regulators make up the funding losses? Dan predicted “the political issues may be more complicated than the technology

issues.”

As we wrap up learning all about Eve, many members want to know if I would consider purchasing an EV for personal use. I am frugal in many areas. I would absolutely buy an electric vehicle simply for the sake of operational and maintenance cost savings.

In my situation, however, I really need a truck. As of this writing, electric pickup trucks remain unavailable. Once electric pickups become an option, I think EV sales will skyrocket. And there are many manufacturers racing to bring an electric pickup truck to market.

Some analysts predict that in eight years 30% of the vehicles on the road will be EVs. Looking to the future, here at Claverack, we are considering how home charging might impact our system, and we are preparing for that possibility.

Rest assured, as we work to provide you with safe, affordable and reliable power, we will continue to engage with you, our members. Thanks for coming along on the ride. 🌻

Keep in touch with us on Facebook

Looking to keep up with the latest news involving your local electric cooperative? Join us on Facebook.

By “liking” Claverack REC on Facebook, you will receive updates about major power outages, current events and activities involving the cooperative, as well as information about system projects, photos and other items of interest.

To find us on Facebook, simply click on the Facebook icon on our home page at claverack.com. You can also view our most recent Facebook posts by checking out the Facebook feed on the right side of our home page.

Co-op offers scholarship to MU students

Applications are being accepted for a \$1,000 scholarship that is available for the 2022-2023 academic year to a Mansfield University student who is a Claverack member or dependent of a member.

To be eligible for consideration, students must:

- ▶ be enrolled full-time at Mansfield University
- ▶ demonstrate financial need
- ▶ be a member or dependent of a member of Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative
- ▶ demonstrate the highest traits of leadership, citizenship and character

Students can also apply online by visiting our homepage, claverack.com, and clicking on “Scholarships” under the “Your Community” drop-down menu at the top of the screen.

Claverack endowed the scholarship fund at Mansfield University in 2000, with a goal of providing financial assistance to any Claverack member or dependent of a member pursuing a degree at the university.

A member of the State System of Higher Education, Mansfield University attracts many students from throughout the cooperative’s service territory.