

# South River EMC Communicator

March 2024

## Clearing the Path to Reliability

*Trees are majestic, beautiful and good for the soul. But we know that our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses.*

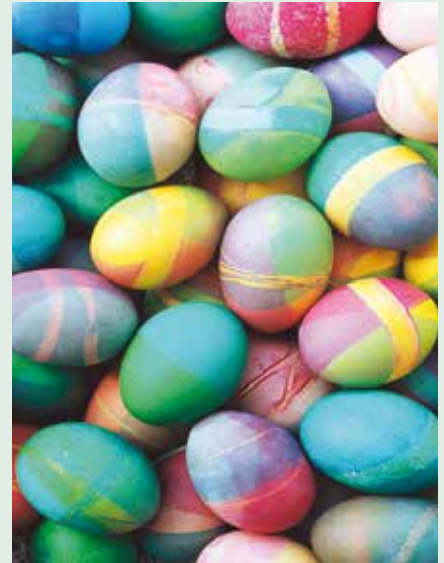
That's why South River EMC strives to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming, which include:

### Reliability

Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we've seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation. This is why you sometimes see South River EMC crews or contractors out in the community trimming trees near power lines. Our trimming crews have been trained and certified based on the latest industry standards.

In fact, all U.S. electric utilities are required to trim trees that grow too close to power lines. Scheduled trimming throughout the year keeps lines clear from overgrown or dead limbs that are likely to fall, and we are better able to prepare for severe weather events.

*Continued on page B*



### Reminder:

South River EMC offices will be closed Friday, March 29, in observance of the Easter holiday.

## 3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them. Here's how you can help:

**1. Plant trees in the right place.** Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



**2. Don't block pad-mounted transformers.** Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.



**3. Report dangerous branches.** If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.



**Trimming improves safety for all.  
Let's work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.**

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# Students Are Making The Grades!

You've been busy this year making the grades and we are happy to recognize that hard work so far this school year.

The following 15 students received at least one A on his or her most recent report card and submitted it for the "Give Us An A" drawing. Each student selected will receive a \$25 gift card:

**Josiah McPhaul**

Northwood Temple Academy

**Julia Williams**

Plain View Elementary

**Maurice Bates III**

Gray's Creek Elementary

**Grayson Greer**

Fayetteville Christian School

**Sarah Bullard**

Mac Williams Middle

**Gabrielle Kochel**

Overhills Middle

**Jonah Butts**

Erwin Elementary

**Tara Feimster**

North Carolina Virtual Academy

**Samuel Rister**

Northwood Temple Academy

**Levi Autry**

Midway Elementary

**Miranda Napier**

Gray's Creek Middle

**Phillip Young**

Cumberland Road Elementary



**Kennede Kirk**

Pine Forest Middle

**Rebecca Slade**

Gray's Creek High

**Francisco Hamilton**

Trinity Christian School

Congratulations to our lucky students! Keep up the good work! The next "Give Us An A" drawing will be in July.

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## *CLEARING continued from page A*

Plus, we all know it's more cost effective to undertake preventative maintenance than it is to make repairs after the fact. Drone inspections of power lines and vegetation allow us to reduce labor and equipment costs while bolstering reliability. Through the use of small drones, we can accurately monitor the health and growth of trees and identify potential problems.

### **Safety**

Working near power lines can be dangerous, and we care about your safety and that of our lineworkers. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose a grave danger to families. If children can reach those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone. Electricity can arc,

or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor such as a tree.

Any tree or branch that falls across a power line creates a potentially dangerous situation. A proactive approach lessens the chances of fallen trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for lineworkers to restore power.

### **Affordability**

As a co-op, South River EMC strives to keep costs down for our members. If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can become overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

When it comes to vegetation management, there are ways you can help too. When planting new trees, make sure they're planted a

safe distance from overhead power lines. Medium-height trees (40 feet or smaller) should be planted at least 25 feet from power lines. Taller trees (over 40 feet) should be planted at least 50 feet from power lines. You can also practice safe planting near pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 feet from the transformer door and 4 feet from the sides. If your neighborhood has underground lines, remember to contact 811 before you dig.

Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch that's dangerously close to overhead lines, please let us know by calling 910.892.8071.

It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program is a crucial tool in ensuring service reliability.

# Change Is Coming

*In April, you will see a difference in your electric bill. As costs are rising around us, it has become necessary for South River EMC to implement a change of rates.*

There are several factors driving the change to include:

- ▶ Increases in all aspects of business, including materials.
- ▶ Growing need for more facilities at a higher cost.
- ▶ Tightening government regulations.
- ▶ Increased interest rates.

The changes will be primarily in the Grid Access charge. The Grid Access charge is a monthly fee that helps cover the cost of maintaining our electric utility system so we can deliver power to you whenever you need it. This includes the cost of transformers, power lines, poles, substations, loans, insurance, buildings, trucks, preparing and mailing bills, etc. The cost to operate and maintain our system exists even if no electricity is used – we must keep our system updated and energy available whenever it’s needed.

South River EMC engages the service of a third-party firm to perform a cost-of-service study. It encompasses all facets of our business and identifies the cost of providing service to each member, by rate category. This information is used as a guide to ensure each category is covering the cost of providing electric service to that group of member accounts sufficiently. It is a useful tool to determine

if rates are in line with the cost of service, or how much of a change is needed. Rates are carefully crafted to ensure we recover our costs and maintain the financial stability of the co-op.

## Grid Access Changes

### Residential

(standard)	\$25	to	\$31
w/Solar	\$25	to	\$36
w/Solar & battery	\$25	to	\$36

### Small General Service (SG)

Single Phase (1Ph)	\$30	to	\$37.20
w/Solar (1PH)	\$30	to	\$42.20
Three phase (3Ph)	\$54	to	\$66.96
Time of Use (1Ph)	\$33.75	to	\$41.85
Time of Use (3Ph)	\$60.75	to	\$75.33

### Medium General Service

Single phase	\$95	to	\$99.75
Three phase	\$165	to	\$173.25

### Large General Service

No change to Grid Access			
Demand	\$9/kw	to	\$9.25/kw

### Time of Use Changes

Grid Access (1PH)	\$27.50	to	\$34.10
Grid Access (3PH)	\$49.50	to	\$61.38
On-peak kwh (sum)	43.88¢	to	18.62¢
On-peak kwh (win)	33.79¢	to	18.62¢
Off-peak kwh	4.77¢	to	7.45¢
Super off peak kwh	3.97¢	to	3.73¢

To help combat rising electricity costs, we have several ways for you to learn how to live more energy efficiently. Our Advise Guys are available to discuss energy improvements or to perform a home-energy analysis to determine where you might be able to save. Contact them at [AdviseGuys@sremc.com](mailto:AdviseGuys@sremc.com). Also, you can visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) for a myriad of ideas for saving energy in your home. If you would like to discuss your options with someone, please feel free to contact us at 910.892.8071. We are looking out for you.





# The Annual Meeting Is Coming



Members can begin registering with South River EMC member service reps, or via an online form beginning April 22 at 8 a.m. Complete details will be available in the April Communicator.

**Thursday, April 25**

## Make The Most Of Improvements And Upgrades

*The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 gave us energy efficiency and renewable tax credits, and they can be combined with South River EMC rebates for even greater savings.*

If you've been considering making an improvement, this might be the time. Tax credits are available for purchases made between Jan. 1, 2023, and Dec. 31, 2032.

### Let's look at the energy efficiency tax credits available:

- ▶ **Air source/mini-split heat pumps:** 16 SEER2 or greater units are eligible for up to \$2,000 in credit (30% of the purchase and installation).
- ▶ **Central air conditioning:** a 16 SEER2 or greater unit is eligible for a tax credit up to \$600 (30% of the purchase and installation).
- ▶ **Gas furnaces:** the unit must have a 97% annual fuel utilization efficiency or greater and is eligible for a tax credit for up to \$600 (30% of the purchase and installation).
- ▶ **Insulation, to include weather stripping, spray foam, air-sealing caulk and house wrap (batts, rolls, blow-in fibers, rigid board, expanding spray or pour in place):** elements are available for tax credit up to \$1,200 (30% of the purchase and installation).

- ▶ **Windows and skylights:** Energy Star-certified models are eligible for a tax credit up to \$600 (30% of the purchase and installation).
- ▶ **Exterior doors:** Energy Star-certified doors are eligible for tax credits up to \$500, approximately \$250 per door (30% of the purchase and installation).

### There are also options for clean energy tax credits:

- ▶ **Geothermal heat pumps:** units must be Energy Star certified and are eligible for tax credits up to \$3,200 (30% of purchase and installation cost.)
- ▶ **Residential solar:** Unit must be located at either primary or secondary home, no rentals, and the system must be net metered for a tax credit of 30% the purchase and installation cost.
- ▶ **Battery storage:** unit must be three kilowatts or greater on non rental property and is eligible for a tax credit of 30% of the cost of purchase and installation.
- ▶ **Fuel cells:** units of a half-kilowatt (0.5) or greater with an electricity-only generation efficiency of greater than 30% on principal homes only. Units are eligible for tax credits of 30% of the cost of purchase and installation.

# Big Plans For Summer Break

*This summer, South River EMC is offering an opportunity to current high school freshmen, sophomores or juniors.*

Join other students for Cooperative Leadership Camp in Laurel Hill.

The weeklong camp offers high school students an opportunity to discover more about the cooperative business model, develop leadership and team-building skills, meet students from across the state and have fun.

The objectives are to educate, connect and promote the cooperative way of doing business and provide a fun learning experience for the students that are selected to attend. Workshops include:

- A Day in the Life of a Line Worker
- Coastal's Reality Series
- Farming & Sustainability: Cabot Co-op
- Build Worker/Owner T-shirt Cooperative
- The Food Co-op's Living Wage

In addition to hands-on learning about the big world of cooperatives, students get a fun overnight camp experience, including swimming, lake activities, canoeing, hiking trails, archery, bonfires and more.

All meals are included, and lodging is in air-conditioned bunk houses. Students

are responsible for providing their own transportation to and from camp.

For more information or to apply, visit [sremc.com/cooperative-leadership-camp](https://sremc.com/cooperative-leadership-camp).

Students attending are eligible to apply for the \$1,000 Jim Graham college scholarship during their senior year of high school.



# Take It To The Hoop This Summer

*South River EMC will send two current fifth or sixth graders to the Touchstone Energy Basketball camps offered at NC State and UNC-Chapel Hill.*

This opportunity gives boys and girls a unique experience to attend basketball camp on one of two of the state's largest college campuses.

Students statewide are encouraged to apply for one of 50 all-expenses-paid scholarships to attend the Carolina Basketball Camp at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (June 22-26) and the Wolfpack Women's Basketball Academy at North Carolina State University in Raleigh (June 16-19).

At the overnight camps, campers work closely with coaches and players to develop fundamental skills, helping them perform and excel both on and off the court.

The Cooperative funds one scholarship to each camp and in 2023, we were able to send Taylor Thornton and Lathan Middleton.

### Campers must:

- ▶ Be a rising sixth or seventh grader. This means currently in fifth or sixth grade.
- ▶ Attend a school in the Cooperative service area.
- ▶ Have a parent or guardian's

permission to attend. An information sheet must be signed.

- ▶ Provide their own transportation to and from camp.

Winners will attend the camps courtesy of South River EMC.

Applications will be scored on academics, extracurricular activities and an essay that must accompany the application.

The application period closes March 31.

Eligible students interested in the scholarships can get more information and access the applications through [sremc.com/basketball-camps](https://sremc.com/basketball-camps).





## HERO, A Home With Savings

The high efficiency residential option, or HERO, home is something South River EMC offers a rebate on.

A HERO home is 30% more efficient than a home built to code, due in large part, to improvements in the thermal envelope.

This includes having slightly better insulation, fenestration, air sealing, equipment, and lighting packages to deliver even greater savings.

Now, there are two ways to achieve the 30% savings:

- The **performance path** is a somewhat flexible option requiring an energy cost analysis as proof that the home being built will have energy costs less than or equal to that same home built to the HERO Code's prescriptive requirements (as referenced below).
- The **prescriptive path** is straightforward but inflexible

option complying fully with a list of specific requirements for things like insulation, high-efficiency lighting, window U-factors, whole house tightness and duct leakage testing, among other things.

If you are interested in HERO details visit [energycodes.gov](https://energycodes.gov). For information on the rebates offered by South River EMC, visit [sremc.com/hero-program](https://sremc.com/hero-program).

## Considering Ways To Start Saving This Summer?

The most common reasons for not initially installing a variable speed pump include: cost, lack of energy savings, pool cleanliness, and interaction with pool devices.

However, while a pool pump offering more speeds costs more, it is made up for in savings from pump use.

Most pools come with a single speed pump, which is an induction motor run at one speed. the fastest. Meanwhile, a two-speed

pool pump is an induction motor with two speeds. The high speed on one does not save any energy compared to a single speed pump of the same rating. However, the low speed of a two-speed pump can result in savings.

Variable speed pumps save energy in two ways. The first is that the pump motor is inherently more efficient. A variable speed pump will use about 30% less energy because of a more efficient

motor. Where they really shine is when you reduce the flow rate and motor speed. Running your pump for a longer time at a lower flow rate will result in the same overall water turnover, but reduce the energy required.

If you are in the market for a new pool pump for the upcoming season, a variable or two-speed pump could be eligible for a rebate. For details visit [sremc.com/pool-pumps](https://sremc.com/pool-pumps).



## When Air Becomes The Problem

A little bit of air infiltration, or the movement of air in and out of a home, is normal. However, too much can impact comfort, as well as cost. Air infiltration can be fixed with weatherization and caulk work.

Heat transfer, or the movement of heat from a warm space to a cold space, means as the tem-

peratures warm, so does your home. Replacing or adding more insulation is often the fix for it.

Improvements might be needed, but you might not have the income to make them. In that case, Community Action's weatherization package might be for you. The weatherization package for single family or manufactured

low-income homes includes: air/duct sealing, improved insulation, an HVAC tune-up or replacement, and a programmable thermostat in a home with a heat pump or an electric furnace/ central AC.

Once work is completed you could be eligible for a rebate from South River EMC. For details, visit [sremc.com/weatherization](https://sremc.com/weatherization).

## A Big Job Handled Efficiently Saves

Heating and cooling makes up half your electric costs each month and for good reason, the system, or two, you have at your home are responsible for keeping you and your family comfortable year-round.

Doing so, adds up and as the system ages, it's important to be prepared to replace it. Doing research to find the appropriate unit for your home enables you to make efficiency part of the process.

HVAC efficiency is measured using the seasonal energy efficiency ratio<sup>2</sup>, or SEER<sup>2</sup>, rating. It measures the cooling efficiency, very important during those long hot summer days. The higher the SEER<sup>2</sup> rating, the more efficient the system is at cooling your home.

It doesn't mean it won't come with a cost, but the efficiency of the system does help you save, and for a little more savings you might want to set your thermostat

a little higher this summer.

As a heating and cooling system ages, and replacements are needed, the \$5,000 rule is accepted for determining whether to repair or replace a system. Multiply the age of your equipment by its estimated repair cost. If the outcome is under \$5,000, repair; if over \$5,000, replace.

High efficiency units are eligible for a rebate for details visit [sremc.com/energy-star-heating-cooling](https://sremc.com/energy-star-heating-cooling).



## Heat Your Water And Save

Water heating is the second-largest energy cost homeowners have each month.

When your water heater needs to be replaced, depending on the type of unit you select, you might take the job on yourself, or hire a plumber or someone else. Whatever the case, upgrading your water heater could make you eligible for a rebate.

Solar water heaters, which use a free resource to heat water, are typically more expensive, although they have come down in cost. They require a good solar resource and should be locat-

ed on a roof to catch the most sun. You will want to make sure your solar resource will support your family's water use and help recoup purchase and installation costs.

Heat pump water heaters meanwhile, work like a refrigerator in reverse. They pull warmer air from the surrounding space and use it to heat water. Doing this, they are two to three times more efficient than standard electric water heaters. They need to be in spaces that remain in the 40-90 degree range year round, as well as needing approximately

1000 cubic feet of space. Systems tend to be more costly than a standard electric water heater, but again, savings can help you to recoup these costs quickly.

Both of these systems have requirements, require professional installation, and are eligible for a rebate from South River EMC.

Do your research and find the best water heater for you and take advantage of available rebates.

For details on rebates offered by South River EMC, visit [sremc.com/energy-efficient-water-heating](https://sremc.com/energy-efficient-water-heating).

## Window Replacement Can Increase Comfort

Homeowners want to minimize the costs of heating and cooling their homes, and windows are part of that.

If you're considering replacing windows, do the math to find out just how cost effective that would be. One way is by completing a home energy audit.

It's essential to get a read on where air is being lost in your home before you embark on a full window replacement. You don't want to pay for a window make-over when your real problems might have been solved with a tube of caulk, or some weather-stripping.

Situations that may warrant window replacement include the following:

- Windows have single-pane glass or temperature-conductive frames and sashes.
- Windows are in poor condition. Windows in poor condition can contribute to water leaks, humidity problems in the home and even pest infestations. Cracked windowpanes, non-operational windows and rotting frames, sashes or sills on wood windows are all good reasons to consider replacement.
- Windows pose safety problems. Windows that don't open or

shut completely or that are weak or loose because of improper maintenance or damage are good candidates for replacement. If your home has upper-floor rooms with windows that don't open, consider replacing them with operable windows.

If you are in the market for new windows, South River EMC offers a rebate for window replacement. For details, visit [sremc.com/energy-star-windows](https://sremc.com/energy-star-windows).

South River EMC  
**Communicator**

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