

South River EMC Communicator

December 2025

Westarea's Expansion Helps Community

Within the last year, the Westarea Fire Department has added onto their station, and in doing so, became one of a few local fire stations to have their own training facility on site.

"We recently added more space to the station, including a larger training and meeting room. It's designed to handle bigger groups and includes the Smart Board as a main focus point and teaching tool," said deputy chief, Jason Haluski. "The space gives us more flexibility for department training, meetings, and community events — it's made a huge improvement in how we operate day to day."

The department wrote an Operation Round Up grant around this time to update their equipment, which included the purchase of a Smartboard.

"The Smart Board has completely changed how we teach. It lets us run interactive lessons with videos, diagrams, and real-time drawing right on the screen," said Haluski. "We can review incidents, show fire ground layouts, or demonstrate tactics without needing a projector or printed materials. Overall, it's improved communication, increased engagement, and made training more efficient across the board."

It has allowed for a wide variety of classes, CPR and first aid, continuing education for fire fighters, driver-operator training, EMS continuing education, and public education programs. It has also been very helpful to have the space and equipment for the local community as well.

continued on page C



Reminder:

South River EMC offices will be closed Dec. 24 & 25 in celebration of Christmas.



South River EMC earns this award based on data modeled by the ACSI® in 2024. Award criteria are determined by the ACSI based on customers rating their satisfaction with South River EMC in a survey independent of the syndicated ACSI Energy Utility Study. For more about the ACSI, visit theacsi.org/ badges. ACSI and its logo are registered trademarks of the American Customer Satisfaction Index LLC.

Celebrating 390 Years of Service

(l-r): James Seabolt, 15 years; Maverick Smith, 15 years; Wilson Holder, 10 years; Steve Holmes, 25 years; Timmy Parker, 35 years.



Back row (l-r): Aaron Jackson, 20 years; Tori Flowers, 10 years; Christal Wood, 20 years; Andy Hardy, 15 years; Eric Gainey, 15 years.
Front row (l-r): Scott Tripp, 30 years; Dana Tew, 15 years; Kathryn McDaniel, 15 years; Maria Ramos, 20 years.



Milagros Santiago, 25 years



Director Jeffrey Martin, 10 years



(l-r): Tim Chisolm, 40 years; Keith Bowden, 20 years; Jimmy Fisher, 35 years.

"Along with our own department, we've hosted training and meetings for neighboring fire departments, EMS agencies and Cumberland County Emergency Management," he said. "Cape Fear Valley LifeLink AirCare has used it for a helicopter landing zone training classroom session, the Goodyear Emergency Response Team uses it for their planning and training sessions,

and local civic groups have used the space for safety meetings and community events. It's become a shared resource for multiple organizations."

And when the station has visitors, particularly students, they have a walk-through of the trucks and equipment, meeting the firefighters, and learning about fire safety and prevention, The Smart Board has made a difference as it allows showings of short videos, and interactive demonstrations.

Haluski says it has been a great addition for the Westarea Fire Department because it shows that the community and South River EMC believe in what Westarea is doing. It gave the department the push they needed to get the project moving, and it felt good knowing the community wanted to invest in firefighter education and safety.

That's your Operation Round Up proceeds in action.

There are several items that go into our energy costs, and like all things, we continue to see fluctuation in the markets.

The image at right gives you a snapshot of some of those changes we are seeing and experiencing.

South River EMC works to budget for these changes to provide you with reliable and affordable electric service.

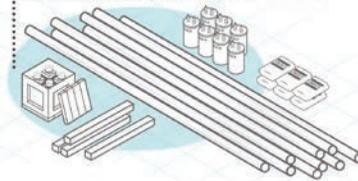
We are always looking out for you.

Cost Increases

The past five years have been a period of exploding costs for the electric utility industry and for broadband providers, pushed by soaring demand, supply chain challenges, raw materials shortages, increased labor costs and tariffs. The impact has been rapid increases in the cost of producing power, longer and more unpredictable project timelines and the need for more financing, all of which have driven electric rates up for residences, businesses and other end-users. Here's a look at what's contributing to the trend. **Percent increase since 2020:**

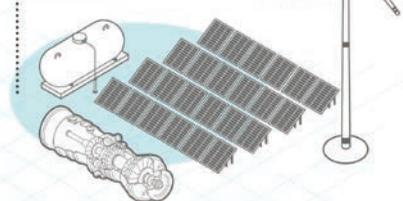
● Infrastructure

Utility poles (wood, steel, composite)	+25-40%
Crossarms & braces (steel/wood)	+20-35%
Conductor wire (aluminum/copper)	+30-50%
Transformers	+70-100%
Grain-oriented electrical steel	+80-100%
Oil/dielectric fluids	+25-40%
Copper wiring	+50%
Concrete	+25-35%
Smart meters	+20-35%
Pad-mounted switchgear	+25-40%
Circuit breakers/reclosers	+20-35%



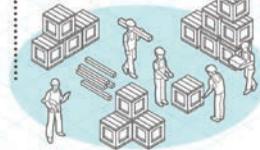
● Generation

Diesel gensets	+20-40%
Gas turbines	+20-30%
Solar PV systems	+25-35%
Wind turbines	+25-35%
Hydropower components	+20-30%
Battery storage	+25-40%
SCADA/EMS systems	+20-30%
Inverters	+20-30%
Relays & switchgear	+25-40%
Natural Gas	+20-120%
Coal	+30-60%
Diesel/fuel oil	+40-70%



● Build-outs

Utility construction labor	+20-40%
Freight/logistics	+30-60%



● Fleets

Light trucks	+25-40%
Bucket trucks, digger derricks	+20-50%
Fuel costs (especially diesel)	+20-30%
Maintenance	+15-25%
Insurance premiums	+20%

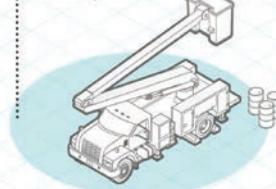


Image: Kevin Koppale

Refunds Distributed

This year, South River EMC refunded \$3,322,733 to current and past members.

As a not-for-profit cooperative, we don't technically earn profits.

Instead, any money remaining at the end of the year, called margins, is returned to the members who purchased energy from the Cooperative during that year.

Following is a breakdown of the numbers:

- 7,612 members received refund checks.
- 36,559 current members had their refund

applied to their electric account.

- The remaining refunds for inactive members have been applied to outstanding balances or have been moved to a "hold"

status because we do not have a valid current address or the amount is less than \$50.

This year, the Cooperative is returning 25% of the amount allocated to members for 2024, as well as the remainder of the 2009 year; and 43% of the 2010 year.

The remaining 2024 amount will be refunded in 19 years, unless a member leaves South River EMC and chooses the early retirement option. That's all part of being a member.



Scholarships

Apply for several college scholarships.

Legislators

Interact with our state's federal officials. Get an up-close look at our government in action.

Visit

See the Capitol, Smithsonian museums, memorials and historic sites like Arlington National Cemetery.

Connect

Meet hundreds of other smart young leaders from around the country. Build your network, and make friends for life.

Leadership

Strengthen your leadership and networking skills.

College applications

Build your résumé. Youth Tour looks great on college applications.

Visit sremc.com/electric-cooperative-youth-tour before Dec. 30.

Beneficial Electrification For Agriculture Program

The North Carolina Beneficial Electrification for Agriculture Program (BEA) is helping farmers replace diesel engines on irrigation systems with cleaner and more efficient electric motors.

The program offers a no-cost energy assessment to evaluate your farm's potential benefit by replacing your diesel engine and three-phase generator with single or three-phase electrification.

Your participation in BEA can improve your irrigation systems, will help you lower energy costs,

and increase your bottom line.

Benefits of switching from diesel to electric:

- **Cost Savings:** Electric motors offer a more cost-effective alternative to diesel engines, thanks to significantly lower fuel costs and reduced maintenance needs.

- **Ease of Operation:** Electric motors are easier to start and control than diesel engines, requiring less maintenance and providing more consistent performance.

Improved Site Quality and Lower Impact on Your Land:

Diesel-to-electric conversion eliminates ground contamination at your site and reduces air emissions.

- **Reduced Noise Pollution:** Electric motors operate more quietly than diesel engines, minimizing noise pollution in the surrounding area.

To get started email ncbea@ensave.com to request an enrollment form or call 800.732.1399 for assistance.

1. What does this program offer?

a. This program provides an energy assessment to evaluate the costs and potential savings of replacing your diesel-powered irrigation pump with an electric system.

2. What is the cost to participate?

a. Nothing! The energy assessment is provided at no cost to you through a USDA Rural Development grant.

3. How is this assessment beneficial to me?

a. The assessment will provide you with the information necessary to make an informed decision regarding the conversion from a diesel to an electric irrigation pumping plant. It will outline the estimated installation cost, estimated annual cost savings, as well as other savings and beneficial information.

4. What equipment can be included in these assessments?

a. These assessments will include any equipment necessary for a diesel to electric pumping plant conversion. The equipment includes, but is not limited to:

- ▶ Electric motors
- ▶ Electric pumps
- ▶ VFDs

- ▶ Phase converters
- ▶ Rotophases
- ▶ Electrical wiring and hookup
- ▶ Electrical boxes and switches
- ▶ Trenching and conduit
- ▶ Concrete pads
- ▶ and more...

5. What do I do with my assessment once I have it?

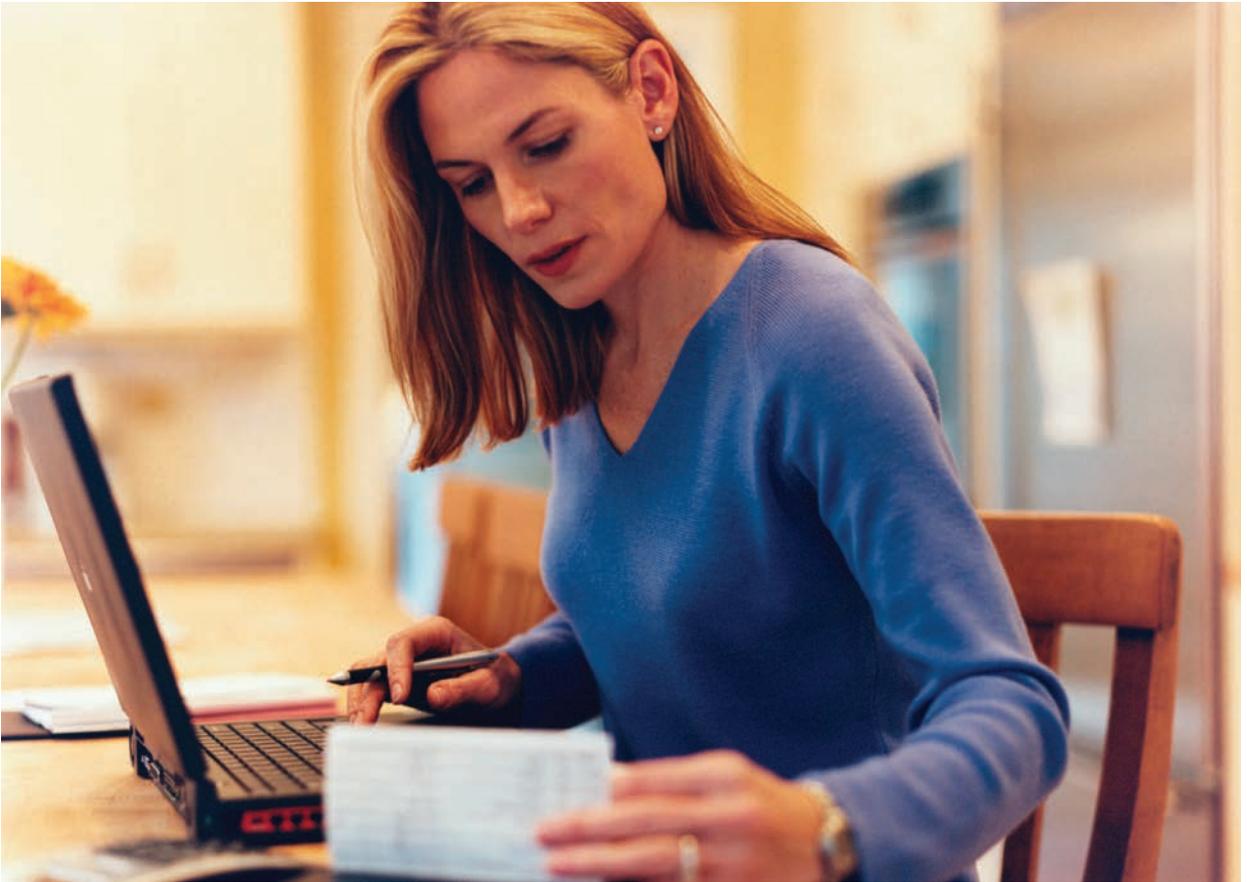
a. This assessment will meet the requirements set forth by USDA Rural Development for REAP grants. It will also meet the requirements of USDA NRCS to receive incentives through EQIP. You can bring your assessment to either of these offices and engage them about their funding opportunities.

6. What funding is available to help install my project?

a. USDA Rural Development REAP grants can fund your project up to 25% of the total project cost.

b. USDA NRCS can fund fuel-switching projects through EQIP, covering up to 75% of installation costs.

c. You should also check with your local extension and state agricultural offices to see if there are any other funding sources available.



Keep Heating And Cooling Efficient

Heating is what we're focused on this season and in case you need to make a quick replacement of a unit, you should know what you want.

An efficient system is key to having a comfortable home and looking at the seasonal energy efficiency ratio 2, or SEER 2, rating

is how to find an efficient unit.

SEER 2 measures the cooling efficiency of a system, and while that might seem odd to measure cooling efficiency now, it typically means the unit has a higher heating efficiency as well.

Look for a 16 SEER 2 or greater to have savings and heat and cool

your home more efficiently into the new year. South River EMC offers several rebates on energy-efficient heating and cooling units.

For details, scan the QR code and select "Energy-Star Heating & Cooling."

Water Heater Saving Options

Water heating isn't widely thought about until the water is no longer warm. However, it is the second highest cost associated with your electric bill each month.

By selecting a more efficient water heater you can reduce some of the cost associated with water heating. South River EMC offers rebates on solar water heaters and heat pump water

heaters, but you have to decide which option is most efficient for you and your family.

Get quotes, learn about your family's water use and the types of systems available. If you do select solar water heating or heat pump water heating, you could be eligible for a rebate from South River EMC.

For information scan the QR

code and click "Energy-Efficient Water Heating."



Weatherize To Help Cut Costs

Heating and cooling is impacted greatly by weatherization, and let's say you have some areas that are lacking.

It could be that you know very little about these projects, or are not physically able to do some of the weatherization work.

Community Action offers a weatherization program for single-family or manufactured low-income homes which 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.

If you are a member who has recently had this program completed by Community Action, you could be eligible for a rebate, just scan the QR code and select "Weatherization."

High Efficiency Homes Benefit Homeowners

The high efficiency residential option, or HERO, home is a home built 30 percent more efficient than homes built to current North Carolina building code.

This is due largely to improve-

ments in the thermal enclosure and requires slightly better insulation, fenestration, air sealing, equipment, and lighting packages to deliver these savings.

If you're interested in learning

more about the HERO home program and the rebates offered, scan the QR code and select "HERO Program."

When Windows Need Replaced

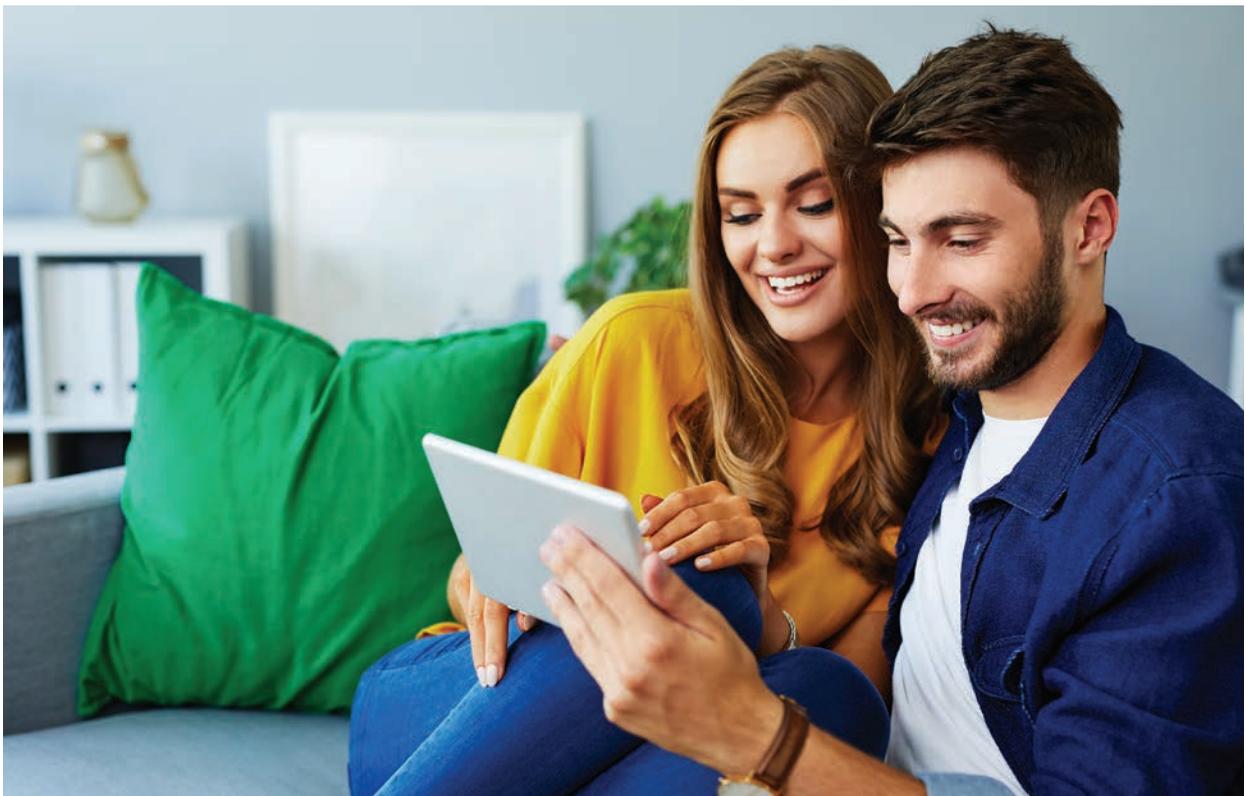
Windows need cleaned and that's most often what we think about when we look at them, however, they also provide protection from the outside and buffer noise.

Keeping windows in tip-top shape is important and in doing

so, you may see sooner if and when they start to fail. Windows, can become leaky and develop condensation between panes. If a replacement is necessary, South River EMC offers a rebate. Be sure to read the details as a win-

dow rebate can only be applied for once every 20 years per home.

For details, scan the QR code and select "Energy Star Windows."



Message from Advise Guy Eric Gainey



Why Colder Months Drive Up Energy Bills

As temperatures drop across North Carolina, many members notice their electric bills climbing — even when they haven't changed the thermostat. The reality is that colder weather affects how heating systems operate and how homes use energy in ways that aren't always obvious.

Heating Systems in Cold Weather

Homes heated with electric furnaces or central HVAC systems tend to see the biggest seasonal increase. These systems rely on electric resistance heating, which directly converts electricity into heat — an energy-intensive process that can quickly drive up costs.

Even homes with heat pumps, known for their efficiency, face similar challenges. When outdoor temperatures fall below about 35–40°F, heat pumps must work harder to extract warmth from cold air. If that's not enough to maintain comfort, the system's auxiliary or emergency heat strips automatically turn on. These electric elements act like large space heaters and can use two to three times more energy than the heat pump alone. So even if your thermostat setting stays the

same, your system may be running longer and using more power.

Shorter Days = Less Sunlight

Winter brings shorter daylight hours and longer nights, which means lights stay on more often and heating systems run longer. Homes also lose more heat through walls, floors, and windows because of the larger temperature difference between indoors and outdoors. These factors combine to increase overall electricity use and raise bills.

Solar

Members with solar panels may also see smaller credits in winter. Shorter days, lower sun angles, and more cloudy weather all reduce solar generation. Even a well-performing system can produce 25–60% less electricity in winter compared to summer. With less sunlight available, homes draw more power from the grid, so credits or bill reductions won't match what members see during the summer.

Ways to Help Offset Winter Bills

- Keep thermostats steady. Set your heat to 68–70°F when home, and lower it slightly when away or asleep. Avoid big changes, which

can trigger backup heat strips.

- Keep interior doors open. Leave all bedroom and hallway doors open so your system can move air as designed.

- Open supply vents and clear returns. Make sure vents aren't closed or blocked by furniture, rugs, or curtains. Keep return vents unobstructed for balanced airflow.

- Seal up leaks. Check that windows are fully shut, locked, and latched to reduce drafts. Inspect exterior door weatherstripping and replace any worn sections.

- Use natural heat. Open blinds or curtains on sunny days to let in warmth, then close them at night to hold heat inside.

- Replace air filters. Dirty filters reduce airflow and force systems to work harder.

Even if your thermostat setting stays the same, colder weather, longer nights, and reduced solar production all contribute to higher electric bills. By improving airflow, sealing leaks, and using your heating system efficiently, you can stay comfortable while helping keep your energy costs in check this winter.



PO Box 931
Dunn, NC 28335
910.892.8071
800.338.5530
sremc.com



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