



# South River EMC Communicator

## TAKING TO THE SKIES



Drones help crews find rotting poles that need to be replaced.

Drones are popular with everyone—the government, commercial entities, individuals and yes, your electric cooperative.

While drones are used for different purposes such as entertainment, photography and security, there are other areas you might never have considered.

Each member of South River EMC’s drone team, consisting of Meter Technician Bill Fultz and Second Class Lineman Rolling Sesoms, are FAA-107 approved. That means that they have earned a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) license to fly a drone within eyesight range.

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## Taking To the Skies, continued from page A

The FAA drone exam covers a wide range of topics including: applicable regulations relating to small unmanned aircraft systems, aeronautical decision making and judgment, aviation weather sources, and more.

With FAA-107 certification, the operator can use an unmanned aircraft within eye-sight, during daylight hours.

Now, what does that mean for the Cooperative?

The drone, which is currently outfitted with a two-camera system, can do multiple jobs to keep electric service reliable.

"We're able to see broken poles or problems with insulators," said Sessoms. "You can check the tops of electric poles to see if they're rotting."

General maintenance is an ongoing use of the drone; the standard camera gives you the visuals such as the compromised equipment, but there is also an infrared camera.

"The infrared camera helps find hot spots on the line," said Fultz.



Woodpecker damage.



"It can also help find problems in the substation equipment."

Another use is storm repair. During large-scale outages, like with Hurricane Florence, there are areas you can't reach, no matter how high your truck sits.

After a storm, scouts, or "bird dogs," head out in front of crews to assess damage, reporting back to the crew foreman with a situation analysis and potential equipment or materials needed, such as poles.

Following Hurricane Florence, trucks were limited where they could travel due to flooding, and when equipment is scarce, there can be a slowdown on progress. Work doesn't stop, but it might not move as quickly as it could.

"The camera on this drone can see out about half a mile," said Fultz. "It's great for use during storms, as well as for normal maintenance."

Once reaching the most accessible point by vehicle, the drone can go out as far as the operator and visual observer's line-of-sight goes, and from there the drone sees even farther.

Drone operation is a two-person endeavor: the operator

steers the drone, the other is a visual observer. While a drone can sense impediments in front of it, the tunnel vision an operator might experience while watching the screen is offset by the visual observer.

"I got involved with the drone program because I was interested," said Sessoms. "I like the thought of being able to find a small problem, before it becomes a large one."

Although Fultz has a personal drone, the experience operating the two drones is much different.

"The unit carries two batteries," said Fultz. "It has about a 40-minute flight of battery time."

The drone is a sophisticated piece of equipment that takes some time to prepare for use with two capable and licensed professionals.

"It's an easy to operate unit," said Sessoms. "Especially if you've worked with some of the cheaper units."

With the drone performing the duties it does, it opens up the ability to use drones even more in providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity.

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## REFUND ALLOCATED FOR MEMBERS

As a not-for-profit utility, we give money back! We don't have stockholders. We aren't a sole proprietorship. What we are is a Cooperative, which means that we are owned by each person who has an electric account with our company. That's you, and you are part of something special—you're a member.



So, at the end of each year, after all bills are paid, any remaining amount, called margins, is allocated to be refunded to the members as capital credits. Once we completed our audit for 2018, the allocation of the margins was made. Our end-of-year margins totaled \$7,832,243.07 or 0.0811611978 percent of revenues.

What does this mean to you? If your electric bills in 2018 totaled \$1,000, then you would be earmarked to receive a refund of \$81.16. The refund will be returned as \$20.29 in November and the remaining \$60.87 in 19 years. The amount that is retained for 19 years is used as operating capital by the Cooperative.

Capital credits are typically retired in November. Members whose refund is less than \$100 will receive a bill credit. Members whose refund is \$100 or greater will receive a check.

If you think you, or a family member, might have an unclaimed capital credit refund, visit [sremc.com/content/capital-credits](http://sremc.com/content/capital-credits) and see if your name appears on the list. If so, download the claim form and submit it to our office.

You can trust that we are always looking out for you, whether it's in our daily work or refunding your money. We are all in this together.

# SUMMER HAPPENINGS

We Sent...



L to R: Jordan Wallum, Jordan Burns and Lizzie Phipps



Skylar Beal

Landan Todd

Grayson Stewart

- 12 students to SwampDogs Baseball Camp.
- Three high school juniors on the Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.
- Two middle schoolers to Touchstone Energy basketball camp



Mallory Edwards with Coach Wes Moore



Brooks Moore with Coach Roy Williams

## IT'S THE PERFECT TIME FOR A BRIGHT IDEA

As the end of summer draws near, educators begin the serious business of preparing for a new school year.

This is no small feat, there's classroom set up, lesson plans, preparation for students with different learning styles.

But, what if you have a new idea to reach these students, and lack the resources to place them in your school?

The Bright Ideas grant program, which offers grants to educators for innovative, classroom-based ideas in public K-12 schools, might just be a good fit.

Grants can be written for any amount up to \$2,500 for any subject. Grant applications will not be accepted for professional development.

South River EMC typically funds over \$50,000 a year in grants.

Since 1994, educators statewide have received \$12.2 million to fund 11,699 projects, affecting 2.2 million students.

Applications are being accepted and if your application is in by August 15, you are eligible to win a \$100 Visa gift card. The final deadline for applications is September 23.



South River EMC only accepts applications online at [ncbrightideas.com](http://ncbrightideas.com).

Interested in learning more? Visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) or e-mail [sremc@sremc.com](mailto:sremc@sremc.com).

# LEARNING IS NOT JUST FOR STUDENTS

A new school year is coming and kids are getting ready for a fresh year of learning! From kindergarten through college, students attend school to gain knowledge about a broad variety of subjects and learn new skills that will prepare them for the future.

In a similar vein, South River EMC is continually learning in order to advance technology that improves electric service, reliability, safety and, in turn, enhances quality of life for the members we serve.

Your Cooperative keeps abreast of industry trends because the energy sector is rapidly changing. Innovations in technology and energy types are fueling demand for more options. On the consumer front, people are looking for more ways to manage their energy use with smart technologies. Consumers expect more convenient payment methods—whether through automatic bill pay, pre-pay, online, or through the phone system, among others.

We sift through the options for our members in ways that benefit the greater community. At the same time, we never lose sight of the top priority—providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity.

## **Technology improves operational efficiency.**

Similar to automated meter reading (AMR), there is advanced metering infrastructure (AMI). This is an integrated system of smart meters, communications networks and data management systems that enables two-way



communication between utilities and consumers. In the event of an outage, AMI helps to distinguish between events that impact a single home or multiple outages. This is critical because resolving either issue is a very different process. The two-way communication is integral to AMI because it provides a means to verify that power has been restored after an outage.

However, one of the biggest benefits from improved technologies, especially for outages caused by extreme weather is pinpointing the outage location, which helps to reduce risk for crews out on the road during severe weather events.

In addition to providing essential information during major outages, South River EMC analyzes AMI data for anomalies including faults, damaged meters or energy theft. Detecting these problems early helps our cooperative save money and improve reliability for the whole community.

## **Energy for the future.**

Consumer interest in green energy sources and renewables

is at an all-time high. Nationally, the increasing use of solar energy is paving the way for new methods of generating and using electricity.

South River EMC is interconnected with 100 residential/commercial small renewable generators equaling 1122 kw of capacity. Additionally, South River EMC is interconnected with four solar farms, with nearly 7 mw of capacity.

South River EMC continues to research how best to adjust our energy mix. Such as working with local enterprise, Butler Farms, on a self sustaining microgrid.

Whether it's examining green energy options or exploring how emerging technologies can better serve our members, for South River EMC, our "school year" is never over. We continue to learn from our members about their priorities for the future, and we continue to study and research issues so that we can better serve you, now and in the future.



Purchasing Energy Star certified appliances can help you cut costs.

## Don't Panic, Replace With Energy Star

Do you panic when your washing machine starts making a funny noise? Be prepared.

As appliances age they have problems, eventually needing to be replaced. Consider Energy

Star, although carrying a higher price tag, certified appliances are more efficient, making up for the added cost in savings. Not only that, but South River EMC offers rebates on Energy Star certified

refrigerators, clothes washers, dryers and dehumidifiers.

For details on the rebate visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) or call 910.892.8071 x 2152.

## Ways To Save With A Pool Pump

If you have a pool and your pool has a pump, is there a way to save? Of course!

Replace a single-speed pump with a variable, or two-speed, pump, both of which use less energy and water than a

single-speed unit.

The next step is pump use. Cut your pump run time in half. If the water is cloudy, try running it another hour until it's clear, cutting run time helps savings.

Making changes can help you save energy and money as we close out pool season.

For details on pump rebates visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) or call 910.892.8071 x 2152.

## Set That Smart Thermostat

If you purchase a smart thermostat, install it and set it. By setting it, you can learn more about savings.

Your thermostat can give you feedback on certain energy decisions you've made and what

could save you even more.

If on vacation, you might get a usage alert from South River EMC. If you've got Wi-Fi, you can fix heating and cooling settings, smart thermostats are Wi-Fi compatible and many also

have apps for your phone.

Spring for a smart thermostat, and begin saving, the Cooperative offers a rebate. For more information visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) or call 910.892.8071 x 2152.

## It's Not If It Needs To Be Replaced, But When

When your water heater needs to be replaced, be prepared.

Know what type of water heater you want, standard electric, solar, or a heat pump water heater.

A standard water heater easily replaces your existing water heater with little to no savings. These units heat water to a set temperature and it sits, if the water drops below the set temperature, it is reheated until use.

A heat pump water heater pulls heat from the surrounding air and dumps it, at a higher temperature, into a tank to heat water. Working like a refrigerator in reverse, the heat pump water heater is two to three times more efficient than a standard electric water heater.

A solar water heater, which uses the sun to heat water, is the most efficient. Typically located on your roof, you need to make sure you receive enough

sun exposure, as well as not violating housing covenants. However, if you use enough hot water, you'll recoup the cost in no time.

South River EMC offers rebates on alternatives to a standard electric water heater. A \$150 rebate is available for solar water heaters, while a \$200 rebate is available for heat pump water heaters. For details visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) or call 910.892.8071 x 2152.

## Air Conditioning Running Strong

The heat of summer can make you wonder if the air conditioning even works, until you see the bill. It's working, and if you have an older unit, it could be costly.

The seasonal energy efficiency ratio, or SEER rating, measures the cooling efficiency of a heating and cooling system. SEER standards have changed, and a once efficient system might have gotten old. The older unit works, it's just not cost effective.

So, if you have your thermostat set at 72 degrees, and your system is a 13 SEER, not only is the unit constantly running, but it's working harder to meet demand. This adds up.

Purchase a new, high efficiency heating and cooling system, 17 SEER or greater. Not only is it more efficient, it might encourage efficiency in your practices. Perhaps also consider setting the thermostat higher, and using

the higher setting in combination with ceiling fans.

Or, try this, lift your thermostat by a degree each day. It might not be the most cost effective, but it helps you change the thermostat in an energy-saving direction.

For details on what a high efficiency heating and cooling system can do for you cost and rebate wise, visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) or call 910.892.8071 x 2152.



Using fans with air conditioning can help you save money by adjusting the thermostat.

The hot weather that summer brings is upon us, and there's nothing better than walking into a cool air-conditioned home after being out in the southeastern NC heat. Our air conditioners work overtime during the summer season to keep our homes cool and dehumidified, which always produces an increase in electricity use. Limiting the runtime of your AC unit is the key to lower electric bills this summer. The best ways to cut your summer energy consumption are to maintain the recommended thermostat setting of 78 degrees and to ensure that your home is insulated adequately.

### Types of Insulation

There are many insulation types on the market, but the two most common are fiberglass and cellulose. Fiberglass insulation consists of fibers from melted materials like glass, rock, and slag and is usually pink or white in color. These fibers can be installed as loose-fill insulation or they can be bound together in batts using a resin. Cellulose insulation is made from ground-up newspapers or wood waste, treated with fire retardants, and is usually grey in color. This type of insulation is loose and consists of small particles that pack into crevices, which serves to air-seal as well as insulate.

### How does insulation work and where should it be found?

Insulation is hugely important when it comes to energy efficiency year round because its primary function is to slow the transfer of heat. Insulation prevents the heat you pump into the home during the winter from rising and escaping out of the attic. In summer, it slows the transmission of heat from the hot unconditioned attic area to the living space. Insulation disrupts the flow of heat by forcing it to pass through millions of microscopic air pockets that exist between the fibers or particles of the insulation material. This is why when insulation gets compacted it loses its effectiveness. Insulation should be found on your attic floor and between the floor joists in your crawl space. There should also be insulation in your walls between the studs, but that area isn't readily accessible in most homes.

### How do I know if I have enough?

First, determine what type of insulation you have. If it's in a batt or if it's loose, and pink or white in color, it's probably fiberglass. If it's grey and dense, it's more than likely cellulose. Next, get several measurements in inches at different areas around the floor of the attic, or



Advise Guy Aaron Jackson

between the floor joists in the crawl space, using a tape measure. Average out the measurements once you're done. If you have fiberglass insulation in the area you're measuring, multiply the average depth in inches by 2.9. If you have cellulose, multiply the average by 3.4. If you're in the attic and your score is less than 36, you may need to add insulation. If you're in the crawl space and your number is less than 19, you may need more insulation there as well.

If after inspecting your insulation you find that you may need to add more, call one of the Advise Guys at 910.892.8071 or send us an e-mail at [advise-guys@sremc.com](mailto:advise-guys@sremc.com) and we can help you determine best course of action.

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