

New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

3596 Brumbaugh Road
P.O. Box 75
New Enterprise, PA 16664-0075
814/766-3221 • 1-800-270-3177
FAX 814/766-3319
Web site:
www.newenterpriserec.com

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OFFICE HOURS

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

EMERGENCY OUTAGE NUMBER

814/766-3221
1-800-270-3177

FROM THE MANAGER/CEO

Benefits of new billing system



Rick L. Eichelberger
General Manager & CEO

AS I HAVE mentioned a few times this year, the office staff has been preparing for a computer software conversion. As of Oct. 29, all your records and information have been converted from the old software to the new.

As in any software conversion, many benefits come along with all the hard work. Although the data has been transferred and all the

software is installed, this doesn't mean all the work is done. The office employees have been through training a number of times this year plus have done self training. But there is still a lot to learn. We know that over the next few months we may have some problems. This is common with a computer conversion. We will do our best to not let these problems become your problems. If you don't understand something on your monthly statement, please call our office.

Your billing statement will be completely different than what you are accustomed to.


An explanation of the new billing statement will be included with your December bill. The new statement will give you more information than the previous bill. It has been designed to be easier to read. Many examples of other cooperatives' bills have been looked at. Different ideas have been taken from these bills to give our statement a "new" look. One feature of the new bill is a bar graph displaying your past 12 months' kilowatt-hour (kWh) use history. It will show you what you used the previous year up through the current month.

Hopefully this will help with high use questions. You will be able to see if your use is staying about the same all year round or if it is increasing or decreasing each month. It will also allow you to see the kWh amount last year for the same month. It is easy to forget how many kilowatt-hours you used a full year ago.

Starting in January 2008 the co-op will start to accept MasterCard and Visa credit cards and bank cards. One way to use the credit card would be to have your electric bill charged to your credit card monthly. This can be done by simply completing a form giving us permission to do so. If you don't want to use the credit card on a monthly basis, that is fine too. You can choose when you use it by simply calling or coming into our office.

For those of you who like to use the internet, an e-bill will also be available. The e-bill can be used in many different ways. You can look at your charges, make your payment with a credit or debit card, or submit your meter reading. You can do just one of these things or all three. If you choose, you can stop the paper copy of your bill from coming to your house each month. You will have the choice to have the bill emailed to you.

Another change you will see is your account number. One zero has been added to accounts. This was done to provide more space in between numbers. With more and more new construction being done yearly, we need to make this adjustment to the account numbers.

These are just a few of the benefits that the new software will provide. Please feel free to contact us with any question you may have. 

Jim and the Giant Pumpkin

BY BRAUNA L. SELL

THERE'S an old saying: To be a successful gardener, grow pumpkins. Aiming for big success, New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) consumer-member, James (Jim) Hale has been growing giant pumpkins for the past number of years. Gardening has always been a favorite pastime of Jim's.

What started out as more of a competition with his cousin, Brent Snider, also a New Enterprise REC consumer-member, has now become a serious hobby. Brent started to grow giant pumpkins one year before Jim. The next year they wanted to see who could grow the largest pumpkin.

Although growing these monster pumpkins is fun, a lot of hard work and time is devoted to getting the perfect pumpkin. It isn't as simple as just throwing a handful of seeds into the ground and waiting to see the large orange fruits appear.

For a membership fee of \$15 Jim became a member of the Pennsylvania Giant Pumpkin Growers Association (PGPGA). Through this association he got free seeds, plus learned the proper



way to grow these giant pumpkins. A few things PGPGA has to offer are a newsletter, growing seminars and a Patch Tour.

Before planting seeds, the soil must be tested. The plants need rich soil to ensure proper growth. Preparing the soil for planting begins in the fall. Fall

leaves are mixed in the ground to enrich it. Plants do better with more calcium and less salt in the soil. The fertilizers used are mostly organic. Jim uses Biomin Calcium and Soluble Fish Powder for fertilizing the soil. In the spring a weak molasses is sprayed on the patch. The molasses helps bring the earth worms to the surface. These lowly creatures are

HUGE HARVEST: Jim shows just how large this pumpkin is.

important in improving the soil structure by mixing and tilting the soil and increasing the plant nutrients.

In Pennsylvania seeds need to be started indoors the last week of April. Sandpaper is used to grind away the edge of the seed. With the edge filed away, the seed will sprout quicker and shuck the seed coat easier. To properly germinate they must be placed in a warm area. Jim made heat boxes to get his seeds started. If the seeds are kept in a warm area and don't sprout within five days, they most likely won't sprout.

As soon as the sprouts shoot, the plant should be placed in 100 percent sunlight. In mid-May plants are moved outside. At this point, the plants need to be watched carefully. There is still a possibility of frost. To protect his plants from frost, Jim made mini greenhouses to cover the plants.

Once the plants are in the ground, the work doesn't stop. It is a continual process of caring for these special plants. Teresa, Jim's wife, got him a backpack sprayer for Father's Day. Jim walks many



HEAVYWEIGHT: It is time to see what the pumpkin weighs.



LARGE GATHERING:
Giant fruits and vegetables fill the Sam's Club parking lot.

hours in his garden spraying the plants and ensuring they are healthy. From the last week of April until the first part of October, the pumpkins are fed, sprayed and watched carefully.

All this work leads up to the PGP-GA's Weigh Off at the Altoona Sam's Club, held on Oct. 6 this year.

To make it to the Weigh Off, Jim had to load his monster pumpkin (and one watermelon) onto the truck for the trip to Altoona. To do so, the pumpkin is gently lifted onto a skid by a skid loader. Once the pumpkin is on the skid, it is tightly secured and taken to the awaiting truck. It's not a one-person job. This year Jim's son, Ryan, father-in-law Bob Gable, and brother-in-law, Kevin Gable, both consumer-members, helped get the pumpkin into the truck safely.

Sam's Club provides their parking lot and two employees to help throughout the day of the Weigh Off. Growers from all over Pennsylvania bring their giant pumpkins, green squash, long gourds, tomatoes, cantaloupes and field pumpkins to Altoona to compete in the Weigh Off. The fruits and vegetables are lined up in categories. Twelve pump-

kins are kept to weigh last, and a guess is made for which of the pumpkins is the largest.

During the weighing, buyers walk around checking out the pumpkins. They purchase these giant pumpkins for businesses such as car dealerships and grocery stores. Some of the pumpkins are used for decorations while others have designs carved into them. The price this year was 50 cents per pound for pumpkins weighing under 1,000 pounds. Pumpkins over 1,000 pounds went for 70 cents per pound. Buyers look for pumpkins that are round in shape and orange in color.

After all the pumpkins, green squash, long gourds, tomatoes, cantaloupes and field pumpkins are weighed in, it is time to announce the winning entries. This year's largest giant pumpkin was grown by Nicole Hilstolsky from Wyoming, Pa. Her pumpkin weighed in at 1,272.5 pounds. Jim's pumpkin weighed in at 706.5 pounds, placing 31st. The winners of this competition receive a cash award for their efforts.

Though he didn't win, Jim's 2007 pumpkin was his largest yet. Each year he improves his growing tactics and

learns more about growing these huge pumpkins. To grow giant pumpkins, it takes patience, dedication and an eagerness to learn. He is always excited to talk about this special gardening technique and share the knowledge he has learned so far.

To find out more about growing giant pumpkins, go to www.pgpga.com. 🌱

Co-op News

- ▶ The co-op will be closed on Nov. 12 to observe Veterans Day and Nov. 22 to celebrate Thanksgiving.
- ▶ The billing and meter reading due date is Nov. 28, 2007.
- ▶ With the computer conversion completed, new billing statements will be received in December.

KIDZCORNER

Thomas Edison

With the days growing shorter and shorter, the lightbulb is becoming more important in each of our homes. Most people think that Thomas Edison invented the lightbulb. Actually, Edison made improvements to the common household lightbulb in 1879.

A lightbulb is a glass ball with a filament (a really thin wire) inside. When electricity was sent through the wire in the first bulbs, it became very hot and gave off light. But there was a problem. Because the filament got so hot, it burnt out quickly and caused a safety hazard. These first lightbulbs couldn't be used indoors.

Edison experimented with thousands of materials before he found the right filament. He tried coconut fiber, fishing line and even hairs from a friend's beard before he found the one that could withstand the most amount of heat for the longest time. The material he used was bamboo from Kyoto, Japan.

The lights we use today are different from the one that Edison improved. A wire made of metal called tungsten is used for the filament. It is folded over twice and wrapped around like a coil inside the glass bulb. Oxygen is also taken out of the glass bulb and replaced with another gas so the filament won't burn out quickly. The lightbulbs we use in our homes do get hot, so always be careful with electric lights.

Energy assistance

The Pennsylvania Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) opened on Nov. 5, 2007. This program is designed to help low income people pay their heating bills. You don't have to be behind in your bills or receive welfare money to receive this assistance.

Under the program, people can be eligible for two different grants. The crisis grants are for emergency situations such as:

- ▶ Broken heating equipment or leaking lines that must be fixed or replaced
- ▶ Lack of heating fuel
- ▶ Disconnection of electric service
- ▶ Danger of being without heating fuel or of having the electric service disconnected

If you get a Service Load Limiter Notice, you will not be eligible for crisis money. Crisis money is meant to be used for heating. With a Service Load Limiter, you will have heat.

The cash grants can be used by people who are past due on the heat-

ing bills or those who aren't. To apply for either or both of these grants, you will need the following:

- ▶ Names, birth dates, Social Security numbers and proof of income for all people in the household
- ▶ A copy of a recent heating bill
- ▶ A copy of a disconnection notice

Below is a chart showing the gross annual income limits for households to qualify for this year's Energy Assistance programs.

Household Size	Maximum Income (before taxes)
1	\$15,315
2	\$20,535
3	\$25,755
4	\$30,975
5	\$36,195
6	\$41,415
7	\$46,635
8	\$51,855

For each additional household member add \$5,200.

If you are having trouble paying your heating or electric bills, you may want to contact your county assistance office at:

Bedford Co. Energy Assistance 814/623-6127 or 800-542-8584

Fulton Co. Energy Assistance 717/485-3151 or 800-222-8563

Huntingdon Co. Energy Assistance 814/643-1170 or 800-237-7674

New Enterprise REC's gift certificates make a great gift anytime during the year

Gift Certificate

Receipt's Name: _____

Amount of Gift: _____

Purchaser's Name: _____

Phone #: _____

Purchaser's Address: _____

(Please circle one)

I wish to remain anonymous

Mail letter to recipient

Mail letter to purchaser