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SANTEE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE NEWS

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COVID-19—there is a silver lining



THESE ARE UNSETTLING TIMES, and the last thing we need is one more reason to worry. For this reason, I thought I would use this month's column to point out some silver linings in our current dark cloud.

What are some positive things that we can focus on

right now?

For one, I think we have a newfound appreciation for things we have taken for granted.

Putting a boat in the water or heading to the beach was a nice way to spend a day before, but when we lose that ability for a little while, it really makes you realize what a wonderful luxury that is. If you are like me, when you got a chance to enjoy the newly reopened boat ramps and beach accesses, you took a moment to just soak in the environment and say, "Thank you!"

What about the grocery stores? As I'm writing this, you still must get to the store pretty early if you want to pick up some essentials (like toilet paper!). It's inconvenient, sure, but the fact that we take for granted that those essentials should always be readily available should make us all realize what a wonderful country we live in.

These temporary shortages we have dealt with over the last few months are normal life for citizens in many other countries.

How about a hug? Humans are social creatures. Most of us like to shake hands, pat someone on the back, and hug. When everyone needs to start remaining six feet away from everyone who is not

part of your household, it makes you appreciate a hug from a loved one a whole lot more.

I don't know about you, but I appreciate fresh air a lot more than I did before this virus. From everything we see, being outside—in the sun, where you can spread out—is the best thing for you. Never have your mother's words, "Go outside and get some fresh air!" meant so much.

One real bright point for me is the time I have been able to spend with my wife and kids.

All my normal business travel has come to a halt. My children—teenagers who are normally each playing two sports a year—now have no games, no practices, and no evening homework (since they did all of their work during the day). My wife and

I am cooking a lot more at the house. We all play cards together, we play volleyball together, and, at least once every weekend, we cook over a little fire pit and listen to music most of the night in our yard together. We take turns controlling the music, and we talk a lot.

In a few short years, my wife and I will be empty-nesters, and I know we will look back on this time with fondness.

Whatever your situation, let's all try to focus on the bright spots. I hope you have a wonderful month.

ROBERT G. ARDIS III
 President and Chief Executive Officer

I think we have a newfound appreciation for things we have taken for granted.

Generating power? Let us know

THE FIRST PRIORITY for Santee Electric Cooperative is to safely deliver power to its members.

Safety should also be a priority for members who are generating their own power and sending it over Santee Electric's distribution lines. Ryan Cooper, the cooperative's manager of system engineering says the risks lineworkers face during storm restoration are compounded by the energy being back fed onto lines by home generators and solar panels.

Cooper says line crews take necessary precautions before they work on downed power lines. They verify a circuit has been de-energized, isolate the circuit from the system and make sure the line cannot be energized while work is being done. That, along with other safety measures like wearing personal protection equipment, helps prevent injuries.

But it's the member who can provide the most important protection to the line crews by informing the cooperative that solar panels or a generator are operating at their home.

Cooper says if you have a generator, never connect it directly to your home's circuits unless it is wired for generator use and done by a licensed electrician. Always plug appliances directly into properly grounded portable generators, but never overload them.

If a Santee Electric member has solar panels and intends to send their excess generation back to the cooperative's grid, they are required to enter into an interconnection agreement with the cooperative. Their panels must be installed by a licensed installer and pass

the county's inspection.

One of the primary concerns for the cooperative is the risks posed by unestablished solar installers who come from other states to sell their photovoltaic (PV) systems and leave just as quickly. Many times, they don't acquire the proper permits or go through the proper channels, locally. That often leads to systems not being installed correctly.

"We have an excellent variety of rates, riders, and programs available for members who want to get involved in distributed generation," says the cooperative's CEO, Rob Ardis. "However, we do not have a chance to share all of this unless you reach out to us early in your decision-making process."

Similar risks exist when PV systems—often ordered in a kit—or home generators are self-installed without the expertise of a licensed electrician and without informing the cooperative.

Santee Electric employees are not the only ones in danger when a generator or PV system is installed improperly. Homeowners themselves may be at risk of electrocution, fire injury, property damage, or carbon monoxide poisoning if they do not follow the necessary safety rules.

"Should you have any questions about generator or solar installations please don't hesitate to give us a call. The part of my job that I absolutely enjoy the most is speaking with and meeting the members of Santee Electric Cooperative. I would love the opportunity to speak with you on either of these subjects," says Cooper.



MICHAEL DUKE

Thinking of installing solar panels or a generator? Need some questions answered? Contact Ryan Cooper at (843) 355-0556 for the information you need, as well as the information your cooperative needs.

Solar & generator installation checklist

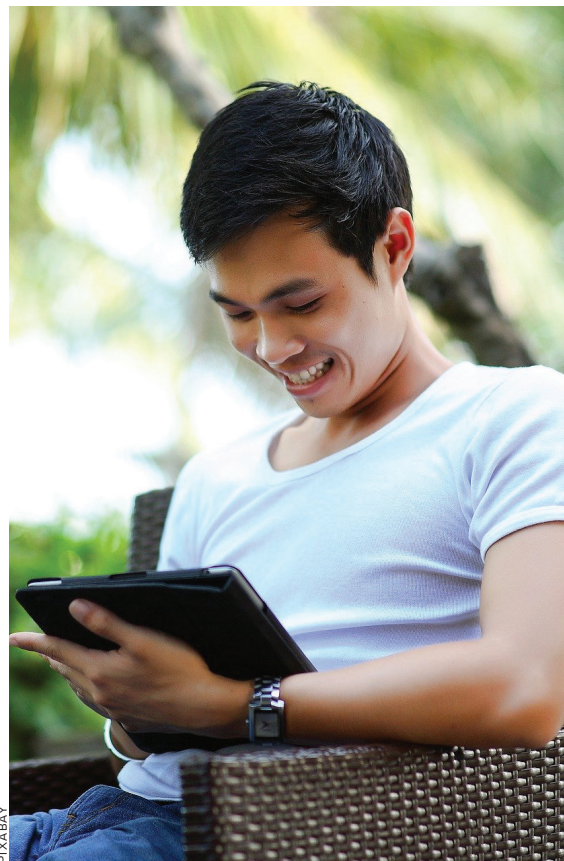
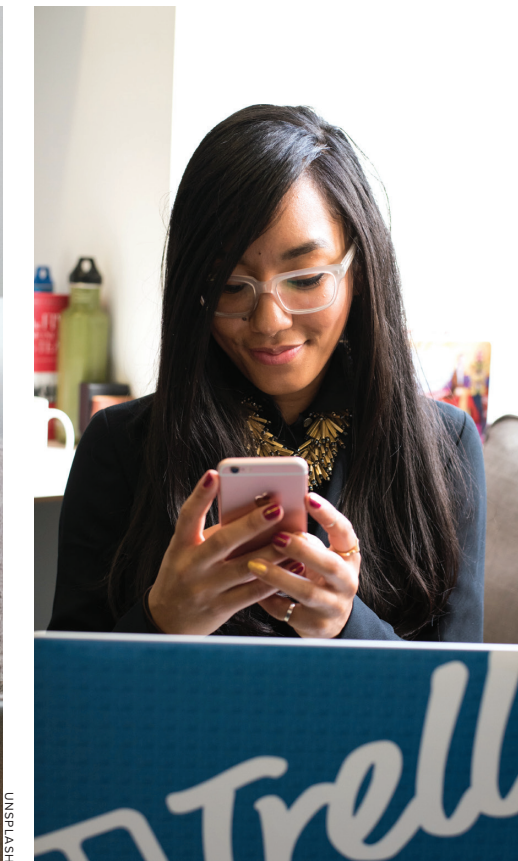
To ensure your safety and the safety of Santee Electric linemen, follow these guidelines when installing solar panels or a generator.

- ▶ Call Santee Electric first. They can answer your questions and provide guidance before you make your purchase.
- ▶ Make sure your home is properly wired for generator use.
- ▶ Involve a licensed electrician and/or a certified installer. Santee Electric can help with that, too.
- ▶ Submit all required application and fees to the cooperative before interconnecting a generator or solar system.
- ▶ Ensure the installation has been permitted, inspected and approved by county building code officials.
- ▶ Inform Santee Electric when the installation is complete.

Interested in a Generac whole house generator? Santee Electric can help! Members Jackie and Joyce Holladay recently installed this system. "Everyone worked together so nicely to install the equipment. The propane company, the Generac approved contractor, T. Mullen Electric, LLC, and the co-op service man, Roger Dale Miles, showed up together and left everything as they found it," explains Mrs. Holladay.



MARY GRACE MCGEE



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Local textile companies providing masks, gowns

JOSH P. CROTZER

THIS IS A TALE of two textile companies.

Thirty miles apart within Williamsburg County, they are drastically different in much of their production methods and corporate structures. But in this time of COVID-19, they are answering similar calls to help prevent spread of the disease. Hemingway Apparel in Hemingway and Embroidery Solutions in Kingstree, both served by Santee Electric Cooperative, have converted significant portions of their production to making masks and gowns for healthcare professionals, first responders and other essential citizens on the front lines of our society.

Hemingway Apparel's Dianne Lewis, a member of Santee Electric Cooperative, says it makes her feel proud to be helping people by making masks. The masks are now going to the national stockpile.



Family business

Though it's been there for almost 60 years, Hemingway Apparel can be easy to miss as you drive north along Highway 51 toward Johnsonville. Hidden behind a line of white pine trees, only the subtle hint of a street sign—Apparel Drive—gives indication of the plant's location. For the past 40 years it's been a family-owned company, run by CEO Jack Marsh and his son Chris, the president. In that time, they've cut,

sewed and packaged intimate apparel, sleepwear and T-shirts for some of the world's largest clothing companies as well as the Department of Defense.

In March, at about the same time the T-shirt side of their business had "tankd," according to Chris Marsh, a new opportunity came about. Hemingway Apparel is part of a consortium of textile manufacturers commonly known as the Hanes Parkdale Initiative that responded to the growing need for masks and gowns. According to Marsh, his company's output of these articles of protection, which have gone to the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the national stockpile, represents anywhere from a third to a half of their total production—practically replacing the void left by their T-shirt business.





Hemingway Apparel celebrated their employees in May for their production of masks and gowns with t-shirts that read “COVID-19 RESPONSE TEAM.”

given anything.”

Shirley Prosser is the stitch floor manager for Hemingway Apparel and has been with the company since the early 1970s. Although most of masks and gowns go to the national stockpile, some are staying within the state—specifically to the Medical University of South Carolina and the state’s nurses—allowing her to make personal connections to what she and her colleagues are making.

“It’s a privilege to be a part of this,” says Prosser. “I have nieces that work (at MUSC) and I’m excited to know that some these masks are going to them.”

Stars of protection

Located in the Williamsburg Cooperative Commerce Centre in Kingstree since 2010, Embroidery Solutions is the nation’s largest operation of its kind. Like Hemingway Apparel, they have a history in the fashion industry, but today they are the largest producer of star fields for American flags and banners. The stars made by Embroidery Solutions end up on

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Chris Marsh says his company is making approximately 18,000 masks per week.

“It’s been amazing because we had to go into full-scale overtime to meet the demand,” says Marsh. “It’s an honor and a privilege to be able to participate in such a large effort, realizing the impact

By May, the Embroidery Solutions team of (from left) Shirley Burgess, Peggy Davis, Eileen Campbell, Ciseli Celaya, Heriberta Fuentes, Yorlenis Gomez, and Remonia Bull had made over 5,000 masks and 1,000 gowns.

that it has.”

Marsh takes the most pride from his 50 employees.

“They are fantastic,” he praises. “They all understand, in a very large aspect, that they are impacting someone’s life. They are saving someone’s life and they take it very seriously.

“I’ve talked to a couple of folks that we’ve hired that said they could have stayed home and drawn a \$900 check, but they wouldn’t have felt like they’d



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most flags, specifically those used by the Veterans Administration, the Department of Defense and all arms of the U.S. government.

According to owner and President Larry Severini, his company was heading into a strong spring season—as is typical in the flag industry—until COVID-19. The shuttering of manufacturing partners, businesses and social gatherings caused a drop in demand.

“When (COVID-19) happened, I wasn’t thinking we could make an impact,” explains Severini. “But we got a call from our county asking for help and we were more than happy to.”

About 10% of their production has shifted to PPE materials and most have been donated to local healthcare facilities and first responders in the area, including Williamsburg County Hospital, Lake City Hospital and the Kingstree Police Department. Embroidery Solutions has donated approximately 5,000 masks and 1,000 gowns.

“In the early stages of this pandemic, I think we were all very frightened of where this was headed,” says Savarini. “When you hear that the local hospital was tying napkins around their face, you know you’ve got to help.”

The material used for the masks and gowns is spunbond polypropylene,



Embroidery Solutions Celaya holds up one of the masks made from the star field material used for small American flags.

the same material used in N95 masks which provides proper filtration of liquid particles. That’s why Severini feels strongly that there is opportunity beyond the charity.

“I think an offshoot of this is that there may be a trend towards bringing manufacturing back in America,” he says. “I think this will help increase the level of interest in all sorts of standard production here.”

That’s something that both Embroidery Solutions and Hemingway Apparel have been working toward with the South Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership. The group has been trying to keep “cut and sew” operations running through the

crisis and beyond, according to Chuck Spangler, president of the organization.

“These are two great companies,” Spangler says. “They are meeting critical needs.”

That’s a sentiment echoed by many in their communities, particularly Santee Electric CEO Rob Ardis.

“Both of these industries, and the gentlemen who run them, have been tremendous assets to our community for many years already—simply by virtue of the jobs and products that they supply in normal conditions,” says Ardis. “What they are doing now, in this time of great need, really pushes them to another level. This county and its citizens are very fortunate to have them here.”



Embroidery Solutions owner Larry Savarini says the company is working with the state to meet demands for gowns, shown here by Yorlenis Gomez and Remonia Bull.