

SEMCO NEWS

Official Member Newsletter

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 
The power of human connections®

December 2022

Small change can change lives

The holiday season is finally here. Some call it the most wonderful season of all. That's because we associate it with family traditions and gathering with friends and loved ones. It's a time of giving and spreading joy.

But giving back reminds us of the many good things we have right here in our community and why it's so important to spread the good as far as we can, especially to the most vulnerable in our local area. We're also reminded of how wonderful our community is and what a big impact we can have when we work together.

When you are a Member of Sumter EMC, you help us spread the good throughout the year. Through our Operation Round Up program, your donations help local families and individuals in need by providing financial assistance to organizations and agencies that provide support for education, health and safety, emergency needs, charities, and economic development.

Each month, Sumter EMC rounds up participating Members' electric bills to the next whole dollar. Monthly contributions range from 1 cent to

99 cents, with most contributions averaging 50 cents.

When you round up your monthly bill from Sumter EMC and donate to this fund, you're making a big difference in someone's life. You are helping meet an immediate, critical need, but just as importantly, you are telling this person the community cares.

Over the years, our community-focused programs and other giving projects have supported local schools and young people, fed hungry families, enabled schools in need to have the technology upgrades they need for student success, and so much more.

Sumter EMC also participates in the Washington Youth Tour, in which we take our community's brightest young people to Washington, D.C., for a weeklong immersion to experience democracy in action. Ultimately, the larger community benefits from these programs because of you and your neighbors.

You've likely heard us say that the cooperative principle Concern for Community is part of Sumter EMC's DNA. It defines who we are as an

organization. When we first brought electricity to this community in 1937, the quality of life improved. But other things also needed to be addressed and, through the years, this co-op has been at the forefront of bringing improvements to the quality of life in this community. It's why we created Operation Round Up.

To date, and with your help, we've given millions of dollars back to local organizations and agencies through this program. Across the country, more than 350 electric co-ops have an Operation Round Up program, and together, we've raised millions for local communities. This shows that small donations from electric co-ops like ours, over time, can collectively make a big impact.

As a local cooperative, we have a stake in this community. We hope you will think of Sumter EMC as more than your energy provider, but also as a catalyst for good in our community.

We hope all our Members have a joyous holiday season. May it be merry and bright!

To learn more about Operation Round Up, visit www.sumteremc.com.



**MAKE
OPERATION ROUND UP
YOUR NEW YEAR'S
RESOLUTION!**

 **Sumter EMC**
Your Member-Owned Electric Cooperative



Utility scammers:

How to identify, avoid, and report them

By Tara Woodin

Scamming people is a thriving business and many fraudsters are experts at manipulation. In fact, while older adults are depicted as typical scam victims, the Better Business Bureau has found that nearly 70% of those scammed are under the age of 45.

People who have worked in an office setting might be familiar with email phishing. And many people are now aware of scam calls from the IRS asking for a Social Security number, or scam emails from a Nigerian prince who promises riches in exchange for money. These scams often take advantage of consumers when they let down their guard.

However, many wouldn't think twice if their utility company called to ask for payment. Here are a few of the most common utility scams Co-op Members have encountered:

Calls demanding immediate payment

Often, scammers will disguise their phone number to match a local utility company, so the caller ID will appear that a representative with a utility company is calling. The scammer will then demand an immediate payment over the phone. Remember, a scammer will not be able to verify your account number, but the real utility company will.

Sumter EMC suggests that, when in doubt, you hang up and call the Co-op directly. We will never be upset or offended by this.

Requesting alternative forms of payment

Scammers may tell Members that their utility payments have not been posted for several months and ask them to purchase gift cards in order to make payments. One tactic is to request payments through prepaid cards or unusual methods, such as cryptocurrency. Using cryptocurrency is an untraceable way to take money, and it

would be nearly impossible to get this money back once the scammer has stolen it.

Another common trick is a scammer will say you've overpaid, so they need your bank account number to credit your account. This is to get your personal information. If anyone is trying to pressure you to take immediate action or give out personal information, hang up and call your utility company directly.

Door-to-door scammers

Another common scam involves a friendly person in an official-looking uniform knocking on your door and pretending to be from Sumter EMC. These scammers particularly have been known to do this after a power outage. He or she says they will restore power for a fee, which must be paid immediately in cash. They then take your money and do not restore your power.

Sumter EMC personnel do not go door to door collecting money for your power bill. Representatives working with Sumter EMC will also have the Cooperative logo visible on their uniform and vehicle.

Suspicious emails

EMC Members have also received suspicious emails from scammers. One, in particular, was an email about a meter change, but it wasn't from Sumter EMC. No one should be removing their meters other than a Sumter EMC employee or one of our authorized contractors.

If you receive an email demanding action, call Sumter EMC directly to confirm before taking any action.

Emails may also be intended to trick Sumter EMC Members into sharing their personal information. These scam emails will sometimes contain embedded links to impostor websites or attachments containing a computer



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virus that will be installed onto your computer to steal valuable information.

These are several tactics that scammers use to convey a sense of urgency in hopes to get you to respond quickly without thinking through your actions.

What actions to take?

If someone shows up claiming to be a utility worker from Sumter EMC, ask to check their ID. If he or she is a Sumter EMC employee, they will always have one. And if the situation feels unsafe, shut and lock your door.

If the scammer asks to see a bill or requests other personal information, do not give it out. A real Sumter EMC worker will already have the information he or she needs.

If you have a weird feeling about the request, listen to that. And check with Sumter EMC.

"We don't want our Members to fall victim to scams, and we definitely don't want them to pay these people who are trying to scam them," says Andrea Walker, Vice President of Marketing and Administration. "If you suspect a phone call, text, email, or in-person visitor is a scammer, do not hesitate to contact a Sumter EMC Member representative to report it and check on the situation. Member representatives are available at (229) 924-8041."

If something seems fishy, chances are it is. Always check with Sumter EMC to see if what you're being told is legitimate. And if you fall victim to a scam, call law enforcement to file a report. Also, contact your credit card company or bank to stop the payment and report fraudulent charges.

Sumter EMC to sponsor local students for 2023 Washington Youth Tour

Deadline to apply: January 20, 2023

Each year, Sumter EMC sponsors an educational, fun-filled trip to our nation's capital for two students from the high schools in our service territory. Electric co-ops support the trip to help students develop leadership skills, get a firsthand look at our government at work and learn the history of rural electrification.

Sumter EMC awards the spon-

sorship among the high schools in our service territory. This year, the application process is getting revamped, and we are excited to bring this opportunity to a larger pool of students. The deadline for application packets is **January 20, 2023**. To read more about this incredible experience, visit our website www.sumteremc.com.



Sumter EMC issued capital credits to Members

The Sumter EMC Board of Directors authorized the distribution of more than \$750,000 in capital credits to the Cooperative Members who were connected on Sumter EMC's lines in 1985 and/or 2021. With this authorization, these margins will be issued in the form of bill credits on your December 2022 statement or checks delivered during the month of December.

The Sumter EMC Board of Directors and employees are pleased to be your electric service provider. We are honored to serve our Members and the rural communities you live in.



Renew your GATE sales tax exemption certificates before January 1, 2023

Does your GATE sales tax-exemption certificate expire December 31, 2022? Farmers, **you must renew your GATE certification before January 1, 2023, to continue receiving your sales tax exemption.** Letters were mailed to those members affected by this expiration date. For details on how to renew your GATE certificate, visit our website at www.sumteremc.com/sales-tax-exemption.



2023 Walter Harrison Scholarship

Deadline to apply: January 13, 2023

Sumter EMC is now accepting applications for the prestigious Walter Harrison Scholarship, sponsored by Georgia's EMCs, and created to pay tribute to the late Walter Harrison. Harrison was a pioneer in the rural electricity movement and a leader in the electric cooperative program.

Fifteen \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded statewide in 2023. The scholarship is based on need and merit, and can be used to pay academic expenses at any accredited two- or four-year university, college, or vocational-techni-

cal institute in Georgia.

A scholarship committee of directors and managers of Georgia's EMCs will consider grade-point average, SAT scores, academic standing, scholastic honors, and financial circumstances when determining a student's eligibility.

Students who apply for the scholarship must be accepted or enrolled in an accredited undergraduate degree program, complete a two-page auto-



biographical sketch that includes future plans, and write a short statement about why the scholarship would be helpful. The scholarship is available to any college-level student.

Scholarship applications are available at our website at sumteremc.com. Applications must be submitted no later than **January 13, 2023**.



2023 Walter Harrison Scholarship

Deadline to apply is January 13, 2023.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

The offices of Sumter EMC will be closed Friday, December 23, and Monday, December 26, in observance of Christmas, as well as Monday, January 2, 2023, in observance of New Year's Day.

Dispatcher on duty 24/7.

Let's make this season bright!

From our Co-op family to yours, wishing you a happy holiday season and a joyous new year!