

# THE ENERGY LINE



*Energy information for the customers of Wellsboro Electric*



**Barney Farnsworth**  
*President & CEO*

## Talking reliability and rising energy costs

With 2022 winding down, let's reflect on the progress Wellsboro Electric has made over the past year and the many positive projects we've been working on to strengthen our electric system and improve reliability.

We'll touch on many of the positive things taking place at Wellsboro Electric later in this column. Since you've probably been hearing a lot

lately about rising energy costs and may be wondering what's behind the higher prices and how it could impact your electric bills this winter, we'll cover that first.

With inflation running at 40-year highs, we have all been paying more for just about everything we buy — from groceries to gasoline — over the past 18 months. Wellsboro Electric has been similarly impacted. We've seen significant increases in the cost of transformers, wire, meters, and, of course, the energy we purchase.

As a result, Wellsboro Electric customers saw an increase to the energy component of their electric bills in June and will see another increase take effect Dec. 1, when our new generation supply service rates (GSSR) receive approval from the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) and are released.

We adjust the GSSR charge that you pay on your electric bill every six months to reflect our actual cost to purchase generation for our customers. The GSSR is a direct pass-through charge; we do not profit from it or keep any portion of the charge.

Wellsboro Electric has not owned any sources of electric generation for decades; so it must acquire energy for its customers through the wholesale energy market under a state PUC-approved plan.

Over the past 15 or so years, natural gas has replaced coal as the primary fuel source for power generation plants. Historically used as a heating fuel, natural gas is placed into storage during the spring, summer and fall in order to be drawn out during the winter to meet the demand for heating. The transition from coal to natural gas as the nation's primary generating fuel now puts summer storage injections in competition with generators producing electricity.

The uncertain impacts on natural gas supply to Europe due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war has put added pressure on the U.S. natural gas supply, as it is increasingly being converted into liquefied natural gas (LNG) and shipped overseas. These factors have caused the amount of natural gas in storage to fall to roughly 8% less than the 5-year average storage value going into winter.

All of these factors have placed significant upward pressure on wholesale electric prices in 2022 that will continue in 2023 and possibly longer. WECO has been watching these factors and determining good opportunities to trigger our supply purchases. Know that we are watching generation pricing and hedging power purchases to minimize price movements as best as we can.

There will be information posted to our Facebook page, website and in The Wellsboro Gazette during November to provide additional details about the December GSSR rate adjustment, as well as resources for customers regarding energy conservation measures and available assistance for those having difficulties keeping up with their energy bills.

As a reminder, please contact our office at (570) 724-3516 if you need help finding assistance to help pay your electric bill.

### Strengthening the system

We continued making steady progress to harden the Wellsboro Electric system to withstand the major storms that have been impacting our area in recent years.

*(continues on back page)*

### Wellsboro Electric

33 Austin Street  
Wellsboro, PA 16901  
(570) 724-3516  
[www.wellsboroelectric.com](http://www.wellsboroelectric.com)

### Board of Directors

Thomas L. Rudy, *Chairman*  
Alfred Calkins, *Vice Chairman*  
Charles Bullock, *Secretary*  
Dr. James Davis, *Director at Large*

Erick J. Coolidge  
Lowell Geiser  
Ronald Gilbert  
Robert Fearnley  
Charles McNamara

### Senior Staff

Barney Farnsworth  
*President & CEO*  
Jill Campbell  
*V.P. of Finance & Administration*  
Tyler Mead  
*Director of Operations*

## Need help paying your heating bill?

If you need help paying your heating bill or have a heating emergency, help may be available to you through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

The program provides energy-assistance grants to help low-income households pay their heating bills through the winter. Crisis grants are also available to help those who have emergency situations in which they are in danger of being without heat.

If you have a heating emergency, or for more information about LIHEAP, call the Tioga County Assistance Office at 570-724-4051 or the toll-free LIHEAP hotline at 1-866-857-7095. You can also apply for energy assistance online at: [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us).

## Consider helping a neighbor in need

You can help those less fortunate



by participating in Wellsboro Electric's Dollar Energy Fund. By adding one dollar or more to your electric bill each month, you can help your neighbors in the Wellsboro area.

Your tax-deductible contribution to the Dollar Energy Fund is matched by Wellsboro Electric, and 100 percent of the contributions are used to provide energy assistance grants to families in WECO's territory.

To participate, please check the Dollar Energy Fund box on your electric bill, enter your contribution amount, and return it to Wellsboro Electric.

### Continued from front page...

We have been rebuilding essential circuits and ramping up our right-of-way tree-clearing and pole-replacement efforts to protect against the ever-increasing intensity of winter and summer storms.

Our system continues to be vulnerable to outages due to severe storms packing westerly winds, especially when coupled with the widespread die-off of ash trees in the region caused by the emerald ash borer. To combat this, we have been working diligently to return our tree-trimming program to a 5-year maintenance cycle and expect to reach that milestone by the end of 2023.

Over the first 10 months of 2022, we completed more than 70 miles of right-of-way tree trimming, covering roughly 20% of our system.

An increased focus on tree-trimming over the past three years has significantly reduced the number of power interruptions caused by trees growing within our rights of way. Unfortunately, we are seeing a considerable uptick in outages caused by trees growing outside of our maintained rights of way in recent years, largely due to the ash tree issue.

These off right-of-way danger trees present a challenge due to the high cost of individual tree removal, location of some of the trees and landowner property rights. As we identify trees growing along the edges of our right-of-way corridors that are at risk of crashing onto our electric lines, we prioritize them for removal and work with property owners to secure permission to have them cut down.

Animals — primarily squirrels and birds — coming into contact with energized lines has always been a major contributor to power interruptions and blinks, and that held true in 2022. However, the introduction of automatic reclosers to the WECO grid over the past two years has helped reduce animal and tree contact outages and confined outages to smaller blocks of customers when they do occur.

Reclosers, when operating properly, will cause a momentary power interruption, also known as a blink, by interrupting service for under one second before automatically reclosing. If the fault (typically caused by a tree or animal) clears, the recloser closes the circuit and restores power. If the fault does not clear after three attempts (three blinks), the recloser remains open and results in a prolonged power outage that requires a line crew to find and correct the issue.

As part of our efforts to improve reliability for our customers outside of Wellsboro Borough, we have been replacing 250 to 300 deficient poles annually. Our pole-replacement work this year has targeted the Middlebury area. In 2023, we will be replacing poles in the Stony Fork area.

Other system improvement projects this year included rebuilding lines and building backup feeds in the areas just north of Wellsboro along State Route 287 and U.S. Route 6. These projects will enhance reliability through pole replacements and the replacement of old copper wire with larger conductor. In 2023, we will continue to replace the electric lines along Route 287 north toward Middlebury Center. When this project is completed late next year or in 2024, the upgraded circuit will provide a much-needed backup feed to the Middlebury Center area.

In early 2023, we will be replacing conductor on the Stony Fork circuit, which begins in Wellsboro Borough and continues through an off road right-of-way to Kelsey Street. The Stony Fork project is intended to storm harden the feed and will conclude in 2024.

*Wishing all of our customers a happy and safe holiday season.*