

Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

BEDFORD REC

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OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Power in Your Hands



**BROOKS
SHOEMAKER**

BECAUSE WE'RE A COOPERATIVE, we operate a little differently than other utilities.

Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative's decisions are made by directors who live right here in our community. Everyone who pays to receive electricity from the co-op is a member. When you pay your electric bill each month, your money stays here — to pay for the electricity used or to make improvements to our system to strengthen service reliability.

The money you pay the co-op doesn't line the pockets of shareholders; it provides reliable, cost-effective service to you, our members.

Our success lies in your satisfaction, and because you are part of an electric cooperative, you can count on our team to maintain local jobs, at-cost electricity and first-class service, no matter what the economy or the supply chain throws at us.

We strive to keep costs as low as possible so we can keep more money in your pocket. We want to help you maximize the value you get from our services. Please know you are at the heart of everything we do. We adhere to seven guiding cooperative principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service. We exist to serve you and provide the quality, reliable, friendly service you expect and deserve. The power is in your hands.

Eight questions to consider before installing solar panels

"Free energy from the sun and lower electric bills... Where do I sign up?"

The benefits of installing solar panels may seem like a no-brainer, but in reality, not every home — and homeowner's situation — is right for solar.

There are several factors to consider before purchasing solar panels, like determining if your home will receive enough sun to achieve your goals, finding the right contractor, negotiating contracts and other important details.

A solar investment for your home is a major decision. If you're considering solar, Bedford REC can help. Here are eight questions to seriously consider before installing solar panels:

1. **What are my goals?** Saving money? Helping the economy? Living off the grid?
2. **Is my roof or property suitable for solar?** Is my yard or roof in full sun? Is my roof in good condition? How many trees must be cut? Solar panels perform best when facing south, so keep this in mind as you think about where the panels will be installed.
3. **How long will I own the home?** Is this your forever home, or are you planning to move in a few years? Not all potential buyers will want to maintain solar panels. If you are leasing the system, terms may apply if you decide to sell the property.
4. **Lease or purchase?** Purchasing rooftop solar panels outright is expensive, which is why many homeowners opt to lease them. However, federal tax credits can help cover up to 30% of the costs for a new system. Regardless of how you decide to finance, make sure you get several quotes from qualified contractors and ask what happens to the panels once the lease expires.
5. **Can the contractor provide up-to-date documentation?** Are they licensed, permitted, insured, bonded and reputable? Comb through company reviews, check the contractor's status with the Better Business Bureau, etc. In other words, do your homework on the front end before signing a contract.

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Game Warden Discusses Local Projects

JENNA REFFNER, OFFICE ASSISTANT

IF YOU'RE NEAR STATE GAME lands and notice a cloud of smoke, you may be witnessing a prescribed burn. Jon Zuck, a land management group supervisor with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, oversees prescribed burns in Bedford and surrounding counties.

A member of Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative since 2005, Jon has been a game warden for 22 years. He manages 12 game lands in Bedford and Fulton counties and surrounding areas. He enjoys telling others about how the game commission is improving game lands for wildlife and public use. One way the commission maintains the wildlife habitat is through these prescribed burns, which are more cost effective per acre than other methods of controlling habitat, Jon says.

A prescribed burn uses up thatch — dead material on the forest floor — and releases nutrients into the soil. It also eliminates fuel for wildfires and helps control ticks in the burn area.

"The fire kills the top of the plants, allowing the roots to rejuvenate," Jon says.

Weeks of planning

According to Jon, even though there is a temporary loss of habitat after a burn, the end product is a better environment for wildlife. "A lot of work and planning goes into a prescribed burn," he says. "It takes a lot of science."

Each burn takes weeks or even months of planning. The crew creates a fire break on the perimeter of the planned burn area before the date of the burn. On the day of the burn, they blow leaves and grass off the fire break to prevent the fire from spreading past the designated burn area.

Fields can be burned every couple of years and begin to regrow within a week. Forests can be burned every 30 to 40 years; regrowth starts within a couple of weeks. Recovery time depends on the season and the weather. The type of field and forest that can be burned is determined by the species present and if they meet the criteria for a prescribed burn.

The crews undergo a lot of classroom and field training, and each "boss" — burn, firing and squad — has a specific role in planning for and executing a burn. The roles are laid out in a "burn plan" that considers the intensity and duration of the fire, weather, safety, and nearby residences.

Animals are rarely injured during a prescribed burn, Jon says. The area is canvassed on the day of the fire. Crews do not burn in a circle, giving animals an avenue to escape.



GAME ON: Jon Zuck, land management group supervisor for the Pennsylvania Game Commission, manages state game lands in Bedford County.

Birds are often seen in the area after the burn, eating the dead bugs and getting grit, Jon says. Gobblers are particularly attracted to a burned area, using the area to strut.

The game commission notifies the public of its planned burns by advertising in the newspaper, informing residents near the burn area and posting signs on game lands. However, those plans can change depending on the weather and other factors. A map of scheduled burns can be found at pgc.pa.gov in the "Habitat Management" section under the "Wildlife" tab.

Prescribed burns typically take place February through May or in November after the leaves have dropped, Jon says.

"We try to be careful about burning during hunting season," says the game warden, who is also an avid hunter.

Chronic wasting disease

Jon has also been dealing with the rise of chronic wasting disease (CWD) cases in Pennsylvania.

CWD affects deer and elk and is characterized by weight loss, lack of coordination, loss of fur, and decreased fear of people. Symptoms take 12 to 24 months to show. The first case of CWD in Pennsylvania was in Bedford County, and it has been spreading. From 2022 to 2023, approximately 30% of the deer submitted by hunters in Bedford County tested positive for CWD (39% of bucks and 27% of does were positive).

“CWD isn’t going anywhere,” Jon says, recalling a deer farm that had cases of CWD.

Although the deer on the farm were killed, and the area was left dormant for seven years before reintroducing deer, CWD stayed in the soil and was transmitted to the other deer, he says.

The game commission has a GPS tracking program to monitor deer. Hunters are permitted to shoot deer with a tracker; however, the commission asks them to report these kills using the contact information on the collar/tracker. The game commission has been testing deer who have been hit on the road for 10 years, which is approximately 4,000 deer per year. This data is used to compare the behavior and movement of deer with CWD to those without the disease.

“The number of CWD in deer harvested by hunters is higher than those hit on the road,” Jon says.

The game commission lists locations to have deer tested for CWD on its website. The tag must be on the ear, and the hunter will get results within a few weeks.

Jon urges everyone to obey the following rules and regulations to help manage the spread of CWD:

- ▶ Don’t feed deer — it is illegal.
- ▶ Properly dispose of the deer carcass after processing (dumpsters are provided around the county).
- ▶ Report sick deer to the game commission.

Visit pgc.pa.gov for additional information about CWD. 📄



BEFORE: A 43-acre stretch of State Game Lands 97 (Biddle Place Management Area) undergoes a prescribed burn in March.



AFTER: The Biddle Place Management Area of State Game Lands 97 four months after undergoing a prescribed burn.

**FROM THE GENERAL
MANAGER & CEO**

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6. **Does the contract seem reasonable and fair?** Before you hire a contractor to install solar panels, carefully read the fine print of the contract and consult an attorney and the cooperative. Do the system performance calculations seem realistic? Does the project timeframe sound reasonable? Negotiate the contract terms to fit your goals and needs.
7. **Who will maintain the solar panels?** That depends on who owns the system. If you lease the system from a solar installer, it may be their responsibility. Periodically, solar panels need to be cleaned as dirt and debris can impact panel productivity. Parts may also need to be replaced, so it's important to know who will take on these responsibilities.
8. **What are Bedford REC's requirements?** Contact the cooperative when you are in the planning stages *and* before you sign an agreement. The system must be connected to the electric grid. You must complete an application and it must be approved by the cooperative before you can begin construction. You will also need to sign an interconnection agreement. We can walk you through the steps, including how our solar rates and fees work.

Solar panels are a great way to help the environment and save on electric bills, but there are many factors to consider before diving in and installing a system. Once again, remember to contact us *before* you commit to the project. We're your local energy partner and can serve as a helpful resource throughout the process. ☺

BROOKS SHOEMAKER
GENERAL MANAGER & CEO

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

The holiday season is upon us, and that means we'll be using more energy in the kitchen. When possible, cook with smaller countertop appliances instead of the stovetop or oven. Smaller appliances like slow cookers, air fryers and Instant Pots consume less energy.

When using the oven or stovetop, match the size of the pot to the heating element and place a lid over the pot while cooking. The food will cook faster, and you'll use less energy.

Source: Dept. of Energy



OUTAGE REPORTING

In case of an outage...

- 1 Check your fuses or circuit breakers.
- 2 Check with your neighbors, if convenient, to see if they have been affected by the power failure.
- 3 Call the 24-hour number, 814-623-7568, OR call 800-808-2732* during office hours.

**(Please help us save money – only use this number if toll charges apply.)*

Please give the person receiving the call your name as it appears on your bill, your telephone number and your map number, if known. Any specific information about the outage will also be helpful in pinpointing the problem.

**To report an outage call:
814-623-7568**

During widespread power outages, many members are calling to report power failures. You may receive a busy signal, or in certain cases, your call may go unanswered. This occurs in after-hours outages when the office is not fully staffed. Please be patient and try again in a few minutes.