

## Pole Inspection Program Completed

For the past several years, Volunteer Energy has conducted pole inspections throughout the system to pinpoint potential problem spots and fix issues before they cause problems. Poles are inspected for damage and replaced if needed. Our experience during recent storms have shown the value of this program, as outages due to broken poles have been kept to a minimum.

The pole inspectors have completed the 2017 pole inspections. They inspected over 14,000 poles this year and reported 546 rejected poles. An additional 504 poles were reported as check poles that VEC Engineering will determine whether work is needed or if they need to be changed as well.

### **MONEY SAVING TIP: Don't Pay Processing Fees!**

Bill payments made on the Volunteer Energy Cooperative web site NEVER charge a fee to process your payment. Some bill payment vendors (i.e. Doxo, etc.) charge a fee for this service. Be sure that you are directly logged on to the VEC web site ([www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org)) and submit your payment with no processing fee. Better yet – sign up for bank draft and have your payment submitted automatically each month.

## Notice of Election

In compliance with the bylaws of Volunteer Energy Cooperative, Article IV, Directors; Section 4.05, Notice of Directors to be Elected, I hereby give written notice that the following Directors' terms will expire this year:

District No. 3 – Hamilton County  
District No. 4 – McMinn County  
District No. 7 – Roane and Loudon

As set forth in Article IV, Section 4.06, in order for a member to become a qualified candidate for Director, he/she shall file with the Secretary of the Cooperative or with his/her duly appointed candidate, signed by him/her and not less than fifty other members in good standing whose premises served by the Cooperative are located in the directorate district of the candidate.

Qualifying petitions and other information pertaining to the elections can be obtained on or after May 27, 2017, by contacting David Murphy, Vice President of Marketing and Economic Development, P.O. Box 277, Decatur, TN 37322, or by calling 423-334-7050.

Qualifying petitions must be filed with the Secretary of the Cooperative or his designee at the VEC Corporate Office in Decatur, Tennessee by 5 p.m. EDT, June 2, 2017.

Sammy Norton  
Secretary-Treasurer

## Who Do You Call? by Julie Jones

It is 8 p.m., you are settled into your favorite chair to watch your favorite television show and your lights blink. Then they blink again. They blink a third time and the power goes off. Five minutes pass and you're not too concerned, 15 minutes pass and you decide you need to call someone. Who do you call?

Volunteer Energy's Central Dispatch Control Center is staffed 24 hours a day. Whether it is 8 p.m. or 3 a.m., a dispatcher is monitoring real-time service on our power grid. Each of our Central Dispatch staff work hand in hand with service area managers to monitor and diagnose problems. The dispatchers utilize state of the art monitoring systems which include the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) and Outage Management System (OMS). In addition to the Dispatch Control Center, our Integrated Voice Response System (IVR) can confirm outages and give updated information 24 hours each day.

Along with the IVR and Central Dispatch, our Contact Center is open for extended business hours: Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 7 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. – noon. "Volunteer Energy, how may I help you?" is a phrase repeated often in the Contact Center as representatives answer calls from the 17 counties served by Volunteer Energy. In 2016 Contact Center Representatives answered 166,548 calls. Each representative can take payments, review billing questions, create service repair orders, answer outage questions and discuss bill payment options. Contact Center Representatives work closely with our nine area offices to resolve customer concerns with just one call. In 2016 the Contact Center provided one-call resolution for 85% of all calls received.



Any time you have a question or concern you can reach Volunteer Energy. Just call your local service center number and choose:

- 1 - to report an outage
- 2 - to check the status of an existing outage
- 3 - to inquire about your bill or make a payment
- 4 - to update your phone number
- 5 - to access the company directory
- 6 - for office hours
- 8 - to speak to a representative

Central Dispatch Control Center, Contact Center Representatives, and our Interactive Voice Response System all work together to support the mission of Volunteer Energy.

### **Volunteer Energy Service Center Phone Numbers:**

Benton 423-338-2569, Byrdstown 931-864-3685, Cleveland 423-476-6571, Crossville 931-484-3527, Corporate 423-334-1020, Decatur 423-334-5721, Georgetown 423-344-8382, Jamestown 931-879-5853, Monterey 931-839-2217, Spring City 423-365-5220



## Working Together To Keep Everyone's Rates Low

As the manager of an Electric Cooperative, I sometimes hear our membership voicing concern about the cost of electric service. One of the primary issues I face on a daily basis is how to keep our electric rates low. Electric Cooperatives often face challenges that municipal electric systems do not. Chief among them is the rising cost to supply electricity. Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) maintains over 9,000 miles of electric line, while only averaging around 10 members per mile of line. A typical municipality averages almost 50 customers per mile of line, while having to maintain a significantly smaller system.

The issue that every cooperative faces is this: the cost of the system is high while the number of members is low, making the cost to member ratio difficult to manage.

Fortunately, a cooperative is meant to keep costs low by design. A cooperative is member-owned, with each member working together to bear the cost of maintaining the electric system. Unlike independently owned utilities (IOU) and municipalities, we are a nonprofit organization. We do not have investors or owners trying to generate profit. All of the money a cooperative collects is used for the operation and maintenance of the electric system which helps keep costs down. Still, we face other factors that influence the cost of the electricity we use.

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was set up by Congress in the 1930s to act as a power generator and regulator for the electric service industry inside of the Tennessee Valley. TVA makes use of a wholesale electric rate that is applied valley wide. This rate is charged to every local power company (such as VEC) for the cost of the electricity we buy from TVA. Unfortunately, it does not include any margin for the operation or maintenance of the local electric grid. Therefore, VEC has to augment the wholesale electric rate. The amount VEC charges, along with the wholesale rate charged by TVA, together form the cost that is applied to each member's electric bill. This is what we call the retail rate. The problem with this billing structure is that it allows TVA to increase rates (through the wholesale side) with little or no input from the cooperative.

The current TVA wholesale rate incorporates several components, including charges for energy consumed and levels of power demand set during system peaks. VEC offers several options to our members to help manage the costs of these components. For residential members we offer eScore, a free in-home energy evaluation. Anyone participating in the eScore program may also qualify to receive financial rebates to help pay for energy efficiency upgrades. For our commercial and industrial members we offer Energy Right Solutions for Business and Industry (ERSB and ERSI). Through the Energy Right Solutions program, technical assistance and financial rebates are provided to help our members implement energy efficiency upgrades. Details concerning each of these programs can be found on our website, at [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org).

In addition to the energy efficiency programs offered, VEC also developed a demand control program in 2016 to help manage costs. The VEC Load Reduction Pilot is currently available to commercial and industrial members. Through the pilot, a commercial/industrial member can elect a certain amount of interruptible load to



Rody Blevins  
President/CEO  
Volunteer Energy  
Cooperative

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The VECustomers Share program funded \$29,400 in community service grants in March. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, more than \$5.9 million in grants has been awarded. The deadline for grant applications is the last working day of each month. For additional information, contact the office of Marketing and Economic Development, at 423-334-7051. Applications are also available online, at [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org).



VECcustomers Share board member Erbin Bumgardner (center) presented checks to Olice Stone of Jones Chapel UMC Food Pantry (left) and Karen Sliger (right) for EK Baker's Reading is Fun program.

### Organizations receiving grants in March

Flint Springs Ruritan Club	\$2,000	Cherokee Removal Park - Blythe Ferry	\$500
Spring City Chamber of Commerce	\$1,750	Hallelujah Trail Christian Youth Camp	\$500
Monterey Lions Club, Inc.	\$1,500	Midway High School Band Boosters	\$500
CLA Parent Teacher Fellowship (PTF)	\$1,200	Roane County Youth Leadership	\$500
Midway Softball Club	\$1,000	The Samaritan Center	\$500
Homestead Elementary 5/6th Grade	\$1,000	Stone Elementary JR. Beta Club	\$500
Resource Class @ Rogers Creek Elementary School	\$1,000	Jamestown First Church of the Nazarene Youth Group	\$500
Polk County High School Baseball Booster Club	\$950	AYSO (American Youth Soccer Organization) Region 1615	\$500
Visually Impaired Group of Cumberland County (VIS)	\$950	Distinguished Young Woman Program of Rhea County	\$500
Polk County Youth Football	\$950	Polk County Alumni Association	\$450
Friends of the Fentress County Public Library	\$900	Ocoee Region Beekeepers Association	\$400
Summer Writing Camp - Stone Elementary School	\$750	PTO Rogers Creek Elementary School	\$300
Monterey Community Youth Group	\$750	Midway Quarterback Club	\$300
Manna House Ministries	\$750	Muddy Pond Volunteer Fire Dept	\$250
American Cancer Society Relay for Life of Meigs County	\$750	Mended Hearts Chapter 127	\$250
Ooltewah High School Band Boosters	\$750	BASIC of TN Inc.	\$250
Karis Dental Clinic	\$750	Harrison Lady Freedom 7/8 Softball	\$250
Cumberland County Senior Beta Club	\$750	Cumberland County High School Football Boosters Club	\$250
Meigs County Choir Booster Club	\$600	Midway Youth Cheerleading Organization	\$250
Meigs Middle School Archery Club	\$550	Meigs County Heat 10 U	\$200
The Art Guild at Fairfield Glade	\$550	Meigs Fury Softball (girls 8yr and up)	\$200
Maple Group Senior Adults	\$500	Meigs County Crush (5 & 6 yr. old baseball team)	\$200
Glenn L. Martin Elementary School 8th Grade	\$500	Roane County Knights (Boys)	\$200

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contribute to the program each month. VEC will call for load curtailment once or twice each month, depending on the need. There is no cost for participation, so if a member is unable to contribute in a given month, there is no penalty. However, if a member can contribute during the curtailment call, they will be awarded a credit that fluctuates seasonally between \$2.80 and \$4.50 per kW reduced. The cost for the demand charged by TVA also fluctuates seasonally, so VEC can save around \$6 per kW reduced each month. A participating commercial member can save several thousand in a month, while the cooperative can save several tens of thousands in a month. These savings are used to help maintain the cooperatives rates as low as possible.

Anyone who has a commercial or industrial electric account and who are interested in participating in the VEC Load Reduction pilot should contact the corporate office at 423-334-1020.

## "Blinks" Mean VEC's System is Protecting Your Home and Its Contents



It's a situation that has happened to most of us. We come home to find our digital clocks flashing "12:00."

This is caused by a power blink – a brief interruption that is designed to prevent a longer power outage and to prevent damage to VEC's electric distribution system, your home, and the contents of your home.

While blinks can be annoying, they show that VEC's system is working as designed.

Blinks occur when an obstruction, like a tree limb, comes into contact with a power line or a transformer. To minimize the possibility of damage to the utility system or your home, a circuit breaker interrupts the flow of electricity to the problem site for a fraction of a second. VEC's system breakers function much like the breakers in the electrical panel of your home.

If the obstruction remains on the line, the breaker opens and tries to reclose again. If the obstruction is still on the line after the third try, the breaker opens and does not reclose automatically.

At this point a VEC employee will be dispatched to remove the obstruction and manually reset the breaker.

Without these breakers, electrical faults could result in a lengthy outage affecting everyone on that particular substation feeder. The faults could also cause serious and expensive damage to VEC's system or to your home.

Blinks can affect the time display on older electronic devices such as VCRs, microwaves, ovens, personal computers and digital clocks. Most new devices include battery backups which give the device the capability of riding out these brief power fluctuations.

An uninterruptible power supply (UPS) on your computer can help prevent information loss. The UPS incorporates surge suppression technology with a battery backup and provides you some time to save whatever you are working on and exit your computer properly.

The blinks are most often caused by tree limbs, lightning, wind, heavy snow load, small animals on power lines, or a car striking a utility pole.

VEC operates an aggressive right of way management program in an effort to reduce blinks by making sure tree limbs are clear of power lines. Even though blinks will never completely disappear from our power delivery system, we are working hard to minimize the number and the impact of the interruptions.

## 2017 Legislative Visits

This past January electric cooperative leaders from across Tennessee converged on Nashville to visit with state legislators. Sponsored by the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association (TECA), the event is an organized effort to provide legislators information about the issues that affect electric cooperative members.



Tennessee's 23 electric cooperatives listened to the Governor's State of the State address Monday, Jan. 30, with interest as he outlined the Tennessee Broadband Accessibility Act. The plan outlines efforts to expand broadband access in Tennessee, including lifting restrictions that currently prevent electric co-ops from providing retail broadband service.

Electric cooperatives are consumer-owned, not-for-profit energy companies. There are 23 electric co-ops in Tennessee that provide energy to 2.5 million Tennesseans across 71 percent of that state's landmass. Co-ops serve areas with the greatest need for expanded broadband access, but legal restrictions currently prevent co-ops from providing retail broadband service. For more information about Co-ops and the Tennessee Broadband Accessibility Act go to [takeactiontn.com](http://takeactiontn.com)



VEC Board Member meet to discuss Co-ops and their member's concerns. (Left to Right) David Murphy - VP of Marketing and Economic Development, Representative Ken Yager of the 12th District, Rody Blevins - VEC President and CEO, Sammy Norton - VEC Board Member, and Tim Handler.

## Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

Residential & Outdoor Lighting Fuel Cost Adjustment  
Effective April 1, 2017

**2.118¢**

For the most current FCA information, visit [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org)

Volunteer Energy Cooperative is an Equal Opportunity provider and employer.

