

"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 exactly 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.

With 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, microwave 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, VEC is working hard to minimize the number and the impact of the interruptions.

SCAM ALERT: Volunteer Energy Imposter Makes Calls Trying to Collect Money

Someone claiming to be a representative of Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) telephoned at least two VEC customers recently attempting to get money for "delinquent" electric bills.

In one instance the caller asked for a banking account number and a social security number before instructing the customer to purchase a pre-paid credit card and pay the bill with that card.

The caller claimed that if payment was not received, the customer's power would be shut off within the hour.

Law enforcement authorities have been notified.

VEC President/CEO Rody Blevins urged customers to call VEC if they receive a similar call.

He said VEC's procedures for collecting past-due accounts sometimes do include an automated call, but only after a past-due reminder has been mailed. The automated calls encourage customers to come into a VEC office, phone VEC to make a payment, or make a payment through VEC's secure website at www.vec.org.

"We don't initiate calls to customers to ask for a bank account number, a

social security number, or to purchase a pre-paid credit card," Blevins said. "If you have any doubt at all about the identity of a caller, do not share any personal information. Hang up and call your local VEC Customer Service Center and law enforcement."

Blevins said this scam reappears from time to time.

"They always seem to ask the customer to make an immediate payment by an unusual method," Blevins said. "That should be an immediate red flag."

Gibson Electric Membership Cooperative, which serves eight counties in Northwest Tennessee, has reported their customers have been receiving similar calls as well. GEMC reports that the scammers appear to be targeting customers with Hispanic last names.

Blevins said customers should be the one to initiate contact when a payment is being made. That way the customer can be confident that they are communicating with a legitimate VEC contact.

October is Cooperative Month

Virtually every American's life is touched in some way by cooperatives. About 45,000 separate cooperatives, with more than 90 million members, currently operate in the United States. If you received this copy of Powerlines with your VEC electric bill, then you are a member-owner of at least one cooperative – Volunteer Energy Cooperative.

Being a member-owner of a cooperative is very different than being a customer.

One of the biggest differences is that a cooperative member is in control of the company. VEC members elect a board of directors that sets policy and oversees the operation of the cooperative. This means that the final word in how VEC is operated rests with the members.

But our obligation to our member-owners doesn't stop there. In order to help our member-owners make informed decisions about the operation of the cooperative, we are committed to providing educational opportunities and information to them.

This monthly newsletter you are reading now is just one small part of the effort. We also maintain an extensive website with a wealth of information about the cooperative. We also host an annual meeting, produce an annual report, sponsor educational and informative seminars, and enlist the aid of local media outlets to provide information to members.

Another big difference is that VEC and other cooperatives operate at cost to the benefit of their members. Cooperatives exist to meet the needs of members as economically as possible – not to make a profit.

In 78 years of operations, VEC has never made a penny in profit. VEC sets electric rates and collects only enough to cover the cost of operating the cooperative. About 78% of the money that VEC collects goes directly to TVA to purchase electricity. The remaining 22% is what VEC uses to build and maintain the electricity distribution system and to operate the programs and services we offer our member-owners.

Some of those programs are even designed to help our member-owners use less electricity and spend less money on our product. Imagine that. In this day and age when we are constantly bombarded with advertising from companies who are trying to get us to spend more and more money on their products and services, your electric cooperative actually funds programs to help you spend less on our product.

We operate in this manner because that is what a cooperative does. And we continue to operate VEC in the manner dictated by the 55 Meigs County residents who gathered together in 1935 in order to form an organization that would bring electricity to an area that for-profit companies could not.

The management and staff of Volunteer Energy Cooperative understand that VEC was here before they came along and they are confident that VEC will still be around after they are gone. In that respect they have accepted stewardship of your electric cooperative.

That is what it means to work for a cooperative.

Cooperative Month is a good opportunity to note the differences between being a member-owner of an electric cooperative and being a customer of a for-profit utility.

"Smart Grid" Debate Heating Up Again

Over the past several years there has been a sporadic, but ongoing debate conducted across the nation over the pros and cons of "smart grid" technology. The new technology has the potential to save about 9% of our country's energy use. That represents a tremendous savings in terms of natural resources, environmental impact, and in the amount consumers ultimately pay on their electric bill each month.

But many Americans are also understandably concerned about health and privacy issues surrounding the new technology.

This is an important debate for our nation to engage in, but in three important areas, Volunteer Energy Cooperative and our member-owners are not affected by the debate.

VEC recently completed a multi-year project of converting our residential electricity metering to an Automated Meter Reading (AMR) system. But the technology we chose to use does not operate in the same way many other "smart" meters do.

Many smart meters use RF transmissions to transmit data. These emissions are relatively small – you would have to stand next to your meter for about 300 years to be exposed to the same amount of RF emissions as you would be exposed to by using your cell phone for 15 minutes a day for a year.

But VEC's electricity meters don't use RF transmissions. VEC's electric meters transmit data back to the substation using the electric lines themselves.

The second way VEC's metering differ from what is typically referred to as a smart meter is that VEC only records a single reading each day. Some consumers have raised privacy concerns that arise from utilities taking many readings during the day. They worry that the data could be analyzed to determine when residents are engaged in specific activities.

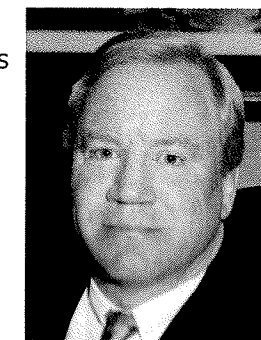
VEC's single daily reading doesn't provide the data necessary to make such determinations. Personally, I can't imagine why anyone would care enough to go to all that time, trouble, and expense to determine when someone is using their stove, or their shower, or watching television, but VEC's meters renders the point moot. No one can gather that kind of data from our metering.

The third concern that some have expressed over smart metering that does not apply to VEC's metering is the ability to remotely control a consumers' individual appliances in order to reduce the demand for electricity.

Some of VEC's meters are equipped with remote disconnect devices that allows VEC to completely stop power to the home, but they are not capable of manipulating individual appliances within the home without additional equipment that must be requested by the consumer.

Only about 3,000 of VEC's 112,000 meters are equipped with these remote disconnect switches. We use them at locations where power is frequently stopped and started – like rental properties. It saves our member-owners the expense of sending a crew to perform this function.

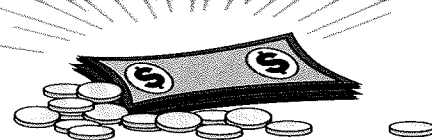
So while the debate over the potential benefit and drawbacks of smart grid technology is an important one for our nation to engage in, many of the issues do not apply to VEC member-owners.



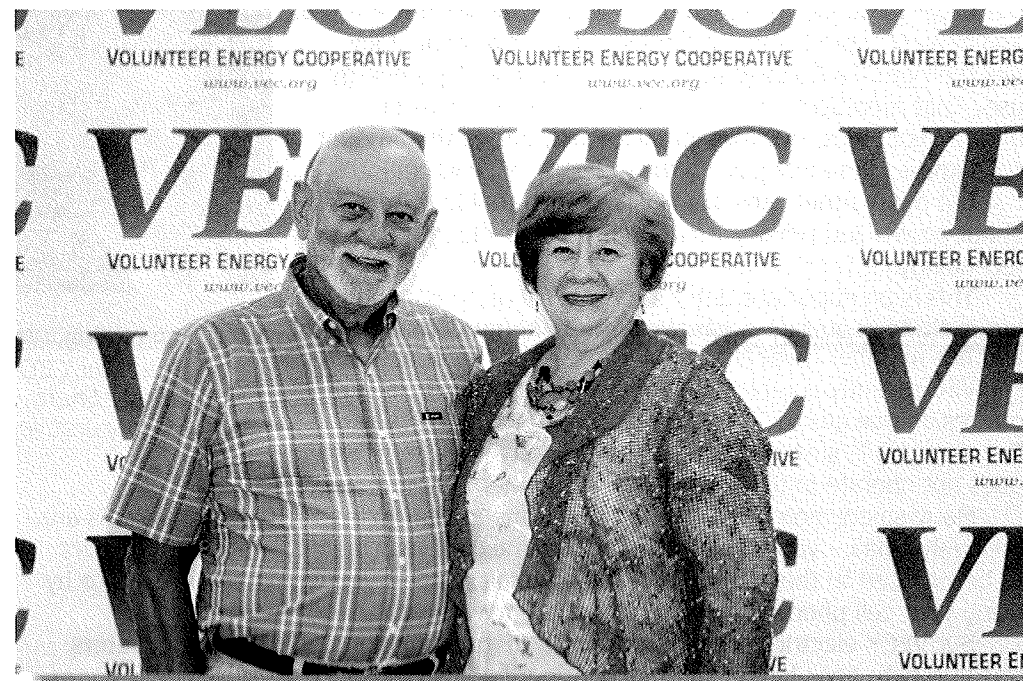
Rody Blevins
President/CEO
Volunteer Energy
Cooperative



VECcustomers Share Your Change Changes Things



The VECcustomers Share program funded \$31,000 in community service grants in July. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, more than \$4.6 million in grants has been awarded. The deadline for grant applications is the last 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.



VECcustomers Share Board Member Jim Taylor, left, presents a grant check to Sandy York of Manna House Ministries.

Organizations receiving grants in July

American Red Cross of Hamilton County	\$2,250	Midway Middle School Cheerleading Boosters	\$750
Midway High School PTO	\$2,000	Cumberland County School Supply	\$500
"Give-A-Kid-A-Chance" Back to School Outreach, Decatur	\$2,000	Cleveland/Bradley Keep America Beautiful	\$500
Monterey Lions Club	\$2,000	American Red Cross of Polk County	\$500
Calhoun Elementary School PTO	\$2,000	American Red Cross of McMinn County	\$500
Rhea County Imagination Library	\$1,500	American Red Cross of Meigs County	\$500
Fentress County Food Bank	\$1,500	Order of the Eastern Star, Byrdstown Chapter 404	\$500
Pickett County Relay for Life	\$1,500	Byrdstown Masonic Lodge 496	\$500
American Red Cross of Bradley County	\$1,050	Cumberland County High School Fellowship of Christian Athletes	\$500
Cumberland County Imagination Library	\$1,000	National Center for Youth Issues, Hamilton County	\$500
Manna House Ministries, Jamestown	\$1,000	Cumberland County Community Chorus	\$250
American Red Cross of Rhea County	\$1,000	Martin Elementary School Varsity Cheerleading Boosters, Crossville	\$250
Fairfield Glade Fire Department	\$1,000	Mrs. Pendergrass' 3rd Grade Reading/ Language Arts Club, Byrdstown	\$250
Youth Achievement Foundation, Crossville	\$1,000	Cleveland/Bradley Chamber Foundation	\$250
Avalon Center, Crossville	\$1,000		
Happy Hearts Seniors, Benton	\$1,000		
Benton Lions Club	\$1,000		
Cleveland Composite Squadron of Civil Air Patrol, Cleveland	\$1,000		

Bear Trace at Harrison Bay Golf Course Switches to Electric Maintenance Equipment

It's been five months since Course Superintendent Paul Carter and his staff at the Bear Trace at Harrison Bay made the switch from gasoline powered golf course maintenance equipment to battery powered equipment.

Carter says the switch has been a huge hit with his staff, the golfers, and the environment.

"Except for the fuel used in our backpack blowers, all golf course maintenance activities are carried out using battery powered electric equipment which produce zero point-source carbon emissions, use zero drops of gasoline, produce zero gallons of used motor or hydraulic oil, and produce nearly zero noise pollution," Carter said.

Carter says switching to electricity has saved more than 700 gallons of gas, more than 14,000 point source pounds of CO2 emissions, and more than \$1,000 in net fuel cost savings.

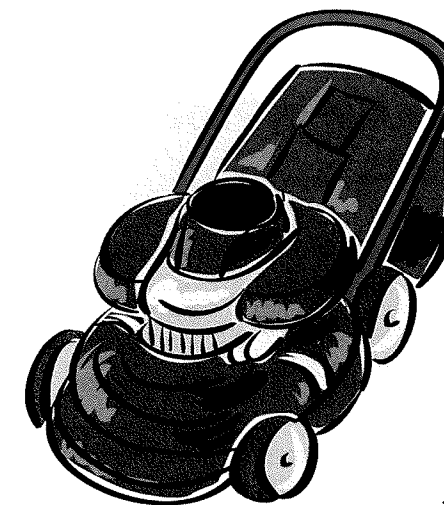
The equipment was purchased using funds provided by TVA through the Clean Tennessee Energy Grant program. The program was established through a 2011 Clean Air Act settlement which provides \$26.4 million over five years to fund clean air programs in Tennessee.

"This initiative is the first of its kind at a Tennessee State Parks golf course and we are thrilled to support the electric equipment initiative with funds from the Clean Tennessee Energy Grant program," said Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) Commissioner Bob Martineau at an event unveiling the new equipment in May. "The project exemplifies the environmental protection, fiscal soundness, and community benefits that are at the heart of sustainability."

According to TDEC's Office of Sustainable Practices, the project has similar benefits as those touted for electric vehicles, further multiplied in the fact that lawn mowers and other small engines do not have the same pollution control measures required of larger pieces of equipment with internal combustion engines. The first EPA requirements for lawnmowers began in 1997 and much of the replaced equipment at Harrison Bay predated those pollution reduction measures. Although limited data is available, a 2005 study by the University of Florida reports that "gasoline-powered mowers result



Harrison Bay: Bear Trace at Harrison Bay Golf Course Superintendent Paul L. Carter, CGCS, shows off one of the new battery powered mowers during an event at the course in May.



in as much as 1,500 times more carbon monoxide, 31 times more hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides and 18 times more carbon dioxide than the electric varieties."

"The Bear Trace at Harrison Bay has already set the bar high for exceptional performance, receiving numerous awards, accolades, and certifications for their hard work," said TDEC Deputy Commissioner Brock Hill.

"Their recognized efforts include a number of improvements on the environmental front, such as water quality and conservation, wildlife and habitat management, and reduction in chemical usage."

The Bear Trace at Harrison Bay has been recognized twice as a Governor's Environmental Stewardship Award winner for their continued progress. They were also recognized with the Environmental Leaders in Golf Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America for the past four consecutive years (2009-2012) and won the prestigious national TurfNet Superintendent of the Year award in 2011, the first and only time this honor was bestowed in the state of Tennessee.

Hill added the course has installed 45 nesting houses, created a large plant bed comprised of 218 plants native to Tennessee, and renovated the golf course's chemical storage facility. With all of these improvements, Bear Trace at Harrison Bay ranks one out of 765 golf courses certified by Audubon International and one of only ten in the state of Tennessee.

In addition to the environmental and financial benefits, Carter says the noise reduction around the course is a big advantage.

"The quietness of the equipment allows us to carry out our maintenance practices without disturbing the golfers as much as we have in the past with our loud gasoline engine powered units," Carter said. He added that the golfers and the maintenance staff aren't the only ones who seem to be enjoying the switch.

"The ones who really benefit from the elimination of carbon emissions, the reduction in noise pollution, and the elimination of a possible fuel or oil spill are the one who call the golf course home. We don't disturb the wildlife as we travel around the golf course anymore," Carter said. "At Harrison Bay we know that the golf course is their home and we are only visiting, so if they are happy, then I am happy."

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

Residential & Outdoor Lighting Fuel Cost Adjustment
Effective September 1, 2013

2.133¢

For the most current FCA information, visit www.vec.org