

Outages - Restoring Power as Quickly as Possible, to as Many as Possible, is VEC's Top Priority

When a major storm causes widespread damage to our electric system, our number one goal is to restore service to the greatest number of members in the shortest amount of time possible. In order to accomplish that, our Emergency Response Plan establishes a set of priorities for making repairs that are determined by the number of members affected.

Those priorities are:

1. **Transmission Lines:** These lines supply power to one or more substations. A problem with these lines could interrupt power to tens of thousands of members.
2. **Substations:** VEC operates 33 substations across our 17-county service area. These substations supply power to distribution lines that can serve up to several thousand members.
3. **Main Distribution Feeder Lines:** Each feeder carries power from the substation and serves a large group of members such as a town or housing development. These lines are repaired next if the problem is not isolated at the substation.
4. **Tap Lines:** The tap lines carry power to the utility poles or underground transformers outside homes or other buildings. The tap lines will remain without power until the main feeder line is repaired.
5. **Individual Transformers:** These serve one or more residences, businesses, or farms. If damage occurs here this can explain why you

are in the dark while your neighbor has power. That's why it is so important to report your outage so that your service can be repaired.

In addition, we give priority to situations that impact public health and safety. These include fallen power lines that might be a hazard, and emergency care and response facilities.

If someone in your home is dependent upon electric-powered health equipment, we will make every effort to respond as quickly as possible. But we strongly encourage you to have a back-up plan in place. The nature of electric service prevents us from being able to guarantee uninterrupted service.

We understand that it can be frustrating to have your service interrupted. We are continuously working to upgrade our system to prevent as many outages as possible and to restore power as quickly as possible when an outage does occur.



When an outage occurs, VEC crews work to restore power to as many members as possible as quickly as possible.



Rody Blevins
President/CEO
Volunteer Energy
Cooperative

VEC Offers College Scholarships

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) wants to reward students who have used their time and talents to benefit their local communities. VEC's Lillard-Shadow scholarship program rewards academic and community service achievements by awarding four \$2,000 scholarships to students who will graduate from high schools in VEC's service area in the spring of 2015.

The scholarships honor J.W. Lillard and Willis A Shadow, two community leaders who spearheaded efforts to bring electric power to Decatur and Meigs County in the 1930s, forming the organization that would become Volunteer Energy Cooperative. Mr. Shadow and Mr. Lillard were instrumental in improving the lives and livelihoods of thousands of residents through electric power.

Four awards of \$500 per semester each (renewable for up to four semesters) will be presented to spring 2015 high school graduates whose parents or guardians are VEC electric customers. Applications will be judged by an independent panel based on each student's community service activities and citizenship - 40%; written communication skills - 20%; financial need - 25%; and academic achievement - 15%.

Scholarship applications are available at any VEC Customer Service Center or from high school counselors in the VEC service area. Applications are also available online at www.vec.org.

All application materials must be completed and delivered to VEC's Corporate Office in Decatur no later than 5 p.m. Eastern Time on March 6, 2015.

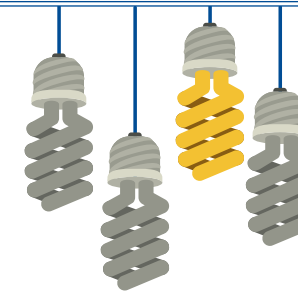
New Year New Ideas

2015

- **SmartHub[®]: Account Control & Access**
*NISC and the SmartHub Logo are trademarks of National Information Solutions Cooperative, Inc. in the U.S. and other countries.
- **Rate Your Home's Energy Efficiency with eScore**
- **By Popular Demand ... Paperless Billing**

Visit www.vec.org for details or call
Your Local VEC Customer Service Center





Make Energy Efficiency a Commitment This Year

At the beginning of every New Year, millions of Americans make New Year's resolutions. By this time, most of them have been forgotten. This year, instead of worrying

about those forgotten resolutions, make a home energy efficiency commitment.

And if you're ready to make that commitment, VEC is committed to helping.

To get you started, here's a list of the top ways to save energy and money at home to lower your energy bills no matter the time of the year or their price range. Some tips are free or low cost and can be used daily to increase your energy savings, while others require a larger investment for long-term savings.

1. Register for eScore at www.vec.org or through your participating energy efficiency contractor to get expert advice and rebates on qualifying home improvements. With eScore you receive a professional energy audit that gives you a thorough picture of where your home is losing energy and what you can do to save money. By making upgrades (especially sealing air leaks and properly insulating your home), you can expect to save 15-30 percent or more in energy costs, while also improving your home's comfort and air quality. Visit www.vec.org to learn more about this approach and to locate home performance contractors near you.

2. Use sunlight to your advantage. The sun's rays can contribute heat in the winter but force air conditioners and fans to work harder -- and use more energy -- in the summer. During winter months, you can take advantage of sunlight by opening your curtains during the day to allow the sun to naturally heat your home. During warmer months, use light-colored window shades or blinds to reflect heat back outside, keeping your home cooler and more efficient. Using natural lighting effectively will also reduce the need to use artificial light.

3. When replacing appliances or purchasing electronics, look for Energy Star[®] appliances, fans and electronics. Your home's appliances and electronics account for close to 20 percent of your energy bills. Using Energy Star certified products -- which incorporate advanced technologies that use 10-15 percent less energy and water than standard models -- throughout your home could save nearly \$750 over the lifetime of the products. For example, Energy Star clothes washers use about 40 percent less energy than conventional clothes washers while reducing water bills. Energy Star washers also require less detergent and are gentler on clothes, saving you money on clothing expenses.

4. Choose energy-saving lighting. About 10 percent of the energy your home uses goes to lighting costs. By just replacing five of your home's most frequently used lights with energy-efficient bulbs, you could save \$75 a year in energy costs. Compared to traditional incandescent bulbs, compact fluorescent bulbs can yield as much as 75 percent energy savings and last six-times longer. You can get even more energy savings, longer life span and less wasted heat by switching to LEDs.

5. Use an electronic power strip for your electronic equipment. Many electronic devices and equipment continue to consume unnecessary energy even when not in use. Often called energy vampires, these devices cost families about \$100 a year. Use a power strip for electronic devices and turn it off when not in use to eliminate energy vampires. And be sure to unplug your chargers -- they draw energy even when they aren't connected to a device.

6. Reduce energy for water heating. Water heating is a large energy expense in your home, accounting for about 14-18 percent of your utility bills. By taking low-cost steps, you can reduce your water heating bills. Make sure your water heater

(continued on page 3)

VECcustomers Share Your Change Changes Things



The VECcustomers Share program funded \$31,500 in community service grants in November. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, more than \$5.1 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 Sharon Parrott, right, presents a grant check to Sidney Melton of Mineral Springs Hunger Relief.

Organizations receiving grants in November

| | | | |
|---|---------|--|-------|
| Kiwanis Club, Spring City | \$2,100 | Columbia Hill Youth Group, Monterey | \$750 |
| Midway High School Band Boosters | \$2,000 | Gamble Road Wild Game Dinner, Birchwood | \$750 |
| Fentress County Food Bank | \$1,700 | South Roane County Volunteer Fire Department Station 5 | \$750 |
| Pickett County High School Boys Basketball Booster Club | \$1,500 | Toys for Santa, Meigs County | \$600 |
| McMinn County Foster Care Association | \$1,500 | American Cancer Society of Polk County | \$500 |
| Bradley/Polk Foster Adoptive Care Association | \$1,500 | Rogers Creek Youth Football and Cheerleading Association, Athens | \$500 |
| Meigs County Ministries | \$1,400 | Byrdstown Senior Center | \$500 |
| Cumberland County High School Bowling Boosters | \$1,250 | Love Nancy, Cleveland | \$500 |
| Mineral Springs Hunger Relief | \$1,250 | Meigs County Quest for Success | \$500 |
| Stone Elementary School Parents Council, Crossville | \$1,250 | Birchwood Senior Neighbors | \$500 |
| Christmas on the Mountain, Crossville | \$1,000 | Polk County Education Foundation | \$500 |
| CSCC DECA Business Club | \$1,000 | Waterville Lady Cherokee Basketball Booster Club, Cleveland | \$500 |
| Stone Elementary School Junior Beta Club, Crossville | \$1,000 | Benton Food Fund Booster Club | \$500 |
| Martin Elementary School Varsity Cheer Boosters, Crossville | \$1,000 | The HOPE Center, Cleveland | \$500 |
| Helping Hands Mission, Jamestown | \$800 | McMinn County Education Foundation | \$500 |
| Byrdstown Angel Tree Project | \$750 | Spring City Middle School Basketball Boosters | \$400 |
| Monterey Lions Club Disaster Response Team | \$750 | Polk County Prom Club | \$300 |
| | | Cherokee Removal Park Blythe Ferry, Birchwood | \$250 |
| | | Ooltewah Harrison Education Foundation | \$250 |
| | | Polk County High School Pep Club | \$200 |

(continued from page 1)

is set to no higher than 120 degrees. Install low-flow showerheads or temperature-sensitive shower valves. Newer water heaters have more insulation than older ones. If your water heater is more than five years old, you should wrap a water heater jacket around it to stop heat loss from the tank.

7. Hire a professional to maintain your heating and cooling system. Arrange for annual maintenance with a qualified technician. This includes checking the airflow over the coil, testing for the correct fluid (refrigerant) level, checking the combustion process and heat exchanger are operating safely, and ensuring proper air-flow to each room. In addition, you should clean the air filters in your heating and cooling system once a month, and replace them regularly.

8. Install and set a programmable thermostat. You could save an estimated 10 percent per year on heating and cooling costs by using a programmable thermostat, and by resetting it when you are asleep or away from home, you won't have to sacrifice comfort.

Safety Checklist: Check the Items on This List Created by the National Electrical Safety Foundation



Outlets: Check for outlets that have loose-fitting plugs, which can overheat and lead to fire. Replace any broken or missing wall plates. Make sure there are safety covers on all unused outlets that are accessible to children.

Cords: Make sure cords are in good conditions- not frayed or cracked. Make sure they are placed out of traffic areas. Cords should never be nailed or stapled to the wall, baseboard, or to another object. Do not place cords under carpets or rugs or rest any furniture on them.

Extension Cords: Check to see that cords are not overloaded. Additionally, extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis; they are not intended as permanent household wiring. Make sure extension cords have safety closures to help prevent young children from shock hazards and mouth burn injuries.

Plugs: Make sure your plugs fit your outlets. Never remove the ground pin (the third prong) to make a three-prong fit a two-conductor outlet; this could lead to an electrical shock. NEVER FORCE A PLUG INTO AN OUTLET IF IT DOESN'T FIT. Plugs should fit securely into outlets. Avoid overloading outlets with too many appliances.

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs): GFCIs can help prevent electrocution. They should be used in any area where water and electricity may come into contact. When a GFCI senses current leakage in an electrical circuit, it assumes a ground fault has occurred. It then interrupts power fast enough to help prevent serious injury from electrical shock. Test GFCIs regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions to make sure they are working properly.

Light Bulbs: Check the wattage of all bulbs in light fixtures to make sure they are the correct wattage for the size of the fixture. Replace bulbs that have higher wattage than recommended; if you don't know the correct wattage, check with the manufacturer of the fixture. Make sure bulbs are screwed in securely; loose bulbs may overheat.

Circuit Breakers/Fuses: Circuit Breakers and fuses should be the correct size current rating for their circuit. If you do not know the correct size, have an electrician identify and label the size to be used. Always replace a fuse with the same size fuse.

Appliances: If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker, or if it has given you a shock, unplug it and have it repaired or replaced.

Entertainment/Computer Equipment: Check to see that the equipment is in good condition and working properly; look for cracks or damage in wiring, plugs, and connectors. Use a surge protector bearing the seal of a nationally recognized certification agency.

Lightning: During an electrical storm, do not use appliances (i.e., hairdryers, toasters, and radios) or telephones (except in an emergency); do not take a bath or shower; keep batteries on hand for flashlights and radios in case of a power outage; and use surge protectors on electronic devices and appliances.

Space Heaters: Space heaters are meant to supply supplemental heat. Keep space heaters at least 3 ft. away from any combustible materials such as bedding, clothing, draperies, furniture, and rugs. Don't use in rooms where children are unsupervised and remember to turn off and unplug when not in use.

Halogen Floor Lamps: Halogen floor lamps operate at much higher temperatures than a standard incandescent light bulb. Never place a halogen floor lamp where it could come in contact with draperies, clothing, or other combustible materials. Be sure to turn the lamp off whenever you leave the room for an extended period of time and never use torchiere lamps in children's bedrooms or playrooms.

Your Fireplace Can Drive Up Your Energy Costs



Nothing sounds better than cozying up to the fireplace with a cup of cocoa on a cold day. But be aware that while fireplaces can be a great source of warmth during the winter, if they are not properly maintained, they can contribute to quite a bit of heat loss in your living space.

Here are a few tips to make sure you're maximizing your fireplace and chimney efficiency this winter:

Keep the fireplace damper closed unless you have a fire burning. It can be easy to forget to close it when the fire has burned out, but keeping the damper open can cause drafts and heat loss in the rest of the house.

Install tempered glass doors and a heat-air exchange system that blows warm air back into the room.

Check the seals around your fireplace flue damper—if the seals aren't tight, you could be losing home heating through the chimney.

Insulate your chimney. Exiting exhaust from chimneys can create creosote build-up and can decrease the efficiency of your fireplace. Liners provide maximum efficiency for your chimney and protect masonry from corrosive byproducts of the flue gases.

Get your chimney properly inspected by a chimney sweep certified by the Chimney Safety Institute of America each year before it gets too cold. A certified chimney sweep can offer advice to help make sure all the components of your fireplace and chimney are functioning efficiently and safely.

Lastly, and this may seem obvious, but if you don't use your fireplace, consult an expert and have the chimney flue plugged and sealed.

These tips should keep you warm in your house year round. If you'd like more tips visit www.vec.org.

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

Residential & Outdoor Lighting Fuel Cost Adjustment
Effective January 1, 2015

2.244¢



For the most current FCA information, visit www.vec.org
Volunteer Energy Cooperative is an Equal Opportunity provider and employer.