

## Bill Processing Comes Back to Decatur

Beginning in mid-November, customer payments mailed in the envelope provided in the VEC bills are being processed by VEC employees at the corporate office in Decatur. These bills were previously mailed to Birmingham and processed by a third-party vendor.

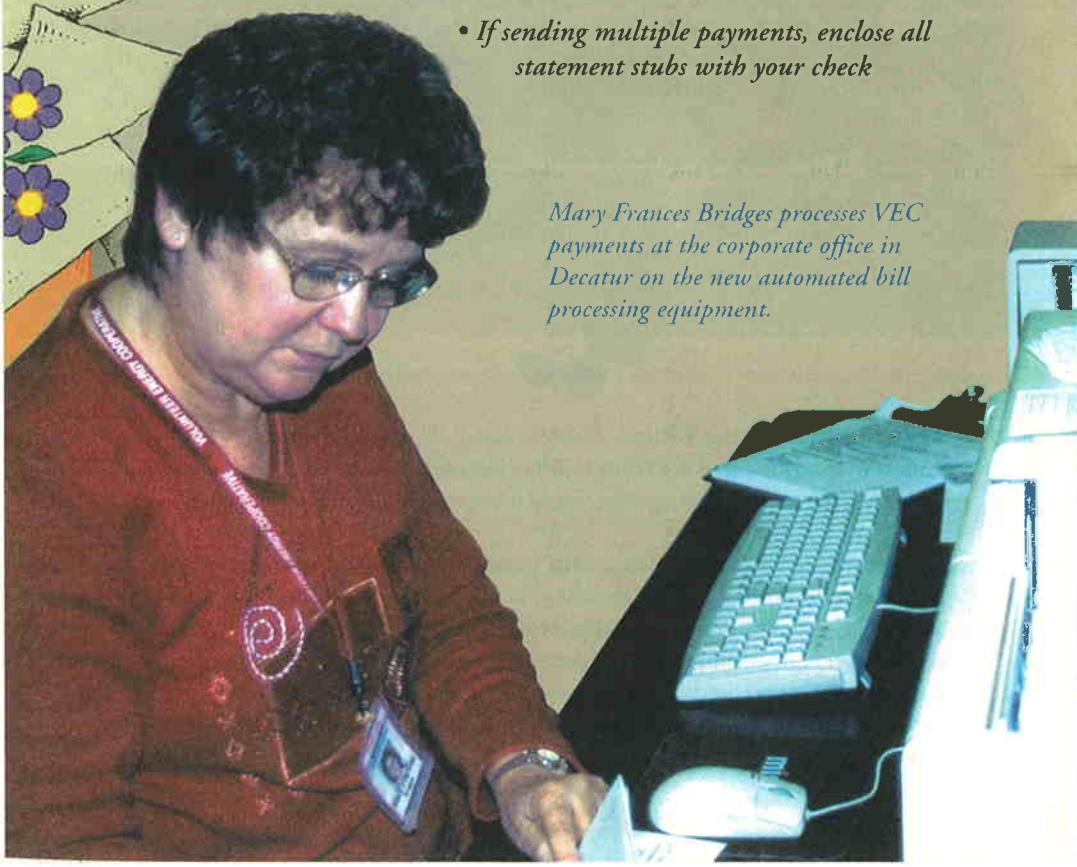
Operations are running smoothly in the bill processing department, according to Duel Grubb, interim manager of VEC's management information services. Automated equipment helps speed up the job of processing up to 4,000 payments a day. The greatest benefit of the new system, says Grubb, is that payments are posted on the day they are received from the post office. Problems can be resolved quickly and customer questions answered more efficiently.

Officials hope that VEC customers will now feel more comfortable when making payments by mail.

Customers can ensure that payments are posted correctly and in a timely manner by following a few simple rules:

- Mail the VEC statement stub with your check
- Write your account number on your check
- Do not staple, clip, or fold the statement or check
- If sending multiple payments, enclose all statement stubs with your check

Mary Frances Bridges processes VEC payments at the corporate office in Decatur on the new automated bill processing equipment.



www.vec.org

vec@vec.org

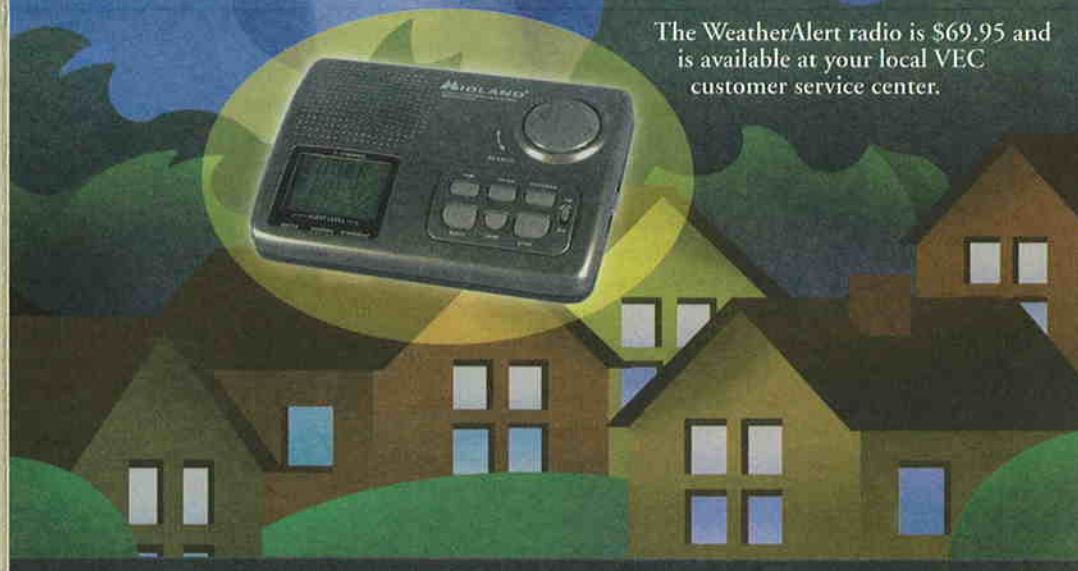
## STAY ALERT

with a WeatherAlert Radio

Severe weather can strike anytime, but is more prevalent in the spring and summer in the Tennessee Valley. Be instantly aware of severe weather or emergency conditions with a Midland WR-30 WeatherAlert radio from VEC.

The WeatherAlert radio can be set so a voice or alarm sounds when a severe weather advisory is issued. With a built-in alarm clock and battery backup, the radio advises you of weather or other emergency conditions 24 hours a day. It is programmable to advisories issued for your specific location to provide up-to-date and area-specific information.

The WeatherAlert radio is \$69.95 and is available at your local VEC customer service center.



## Big Savings for Long Distance Phone Service

If you are paying 7 cents or more for your long distance phone service, Volunteer Energy Cooperative's newest customer service can save you money. Through a partnership between VEC and the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative VEC is now offering 5.9 cents per minute on domestic long distance calls. This low rate is available on calls you make from your home or business phone anytime, day or night.

There are no special access codes to dial and no monthly add-on fees. VEC's long distance service is provided by PowerNet Global (PNG). Customers who sign up for the VEC long distance service have the option of receiving a toll-free number. Incoming calls to this toll-free number are also charged at 5.9 cents per minute.

The only extra charges that customers pay with this new plan is a one-time switch fee that the local telephone company charges to make the changes to their system.

Anyone may sign up for this service—you do not have to be a VEC customer or even live in our service area. For more information about VEC's long distance phone plan call (toll-free)

1-866-240-2158.



FEBRUARY 2003

# POWERLINES



## Improper generator installations risks injury or death

by Bill Buchanan, President/CEO

Several severe storms experienced in Tennessee last year, as well as concerns about loss of power due to snow or ice, have caused many Volunteer Energy Cooperative customers to consider buying a standby generator as insurance against long-term power outages. A generator will definitely help avoid any loss or inconvenience resulting from an extensive power outage but, *unless safely installed, a generator can cause serious injury or death to power line workers or the general public.*

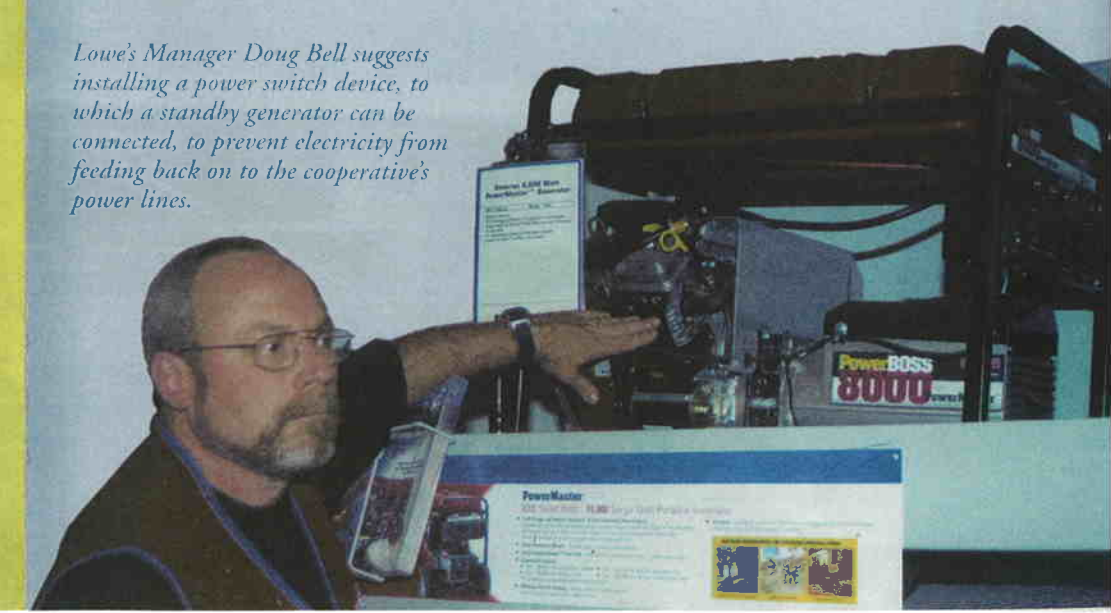
To properly install a standby generator large enough to power a whole house, a double-throw disconnect is needed to insulate your new temporary power source from the main power lines feeding your home. Improper installation also risks damage to the generator when electrical service is restored.

When you use electricity from Volunteer Energy's lines, the transformer at your location steps the voltage down from 7,200 to the 120 and 240 volts used in your home. When you run a generator without a double-throw switch installed on your system, you may feed 120-volt current back into the transformer. The transformer then steps the voltage up to 7,200, potentially giving a lethal shock to anyone who contacts a damaged power line that may be lying on the ground.

A double-throw switch must be sized according to the rating of your service entrance equipment. Automatic switches are part of a control panel when standby generation is automatic. Otherwise, manually operated switches are used.

To ensure proper installation of a standby generator and compliance with electrical codes, please contact a qualified, licensed electrician. If you install a standby generator, please notify your local Volunteer Energy Cooperative customer service center so VEC personnel can apply proper safety measures when working on your lines.

Lowe's Manager Doug Bell suggests installing a power switch device, to which a standby generator can be connected, to prevent electricity from feeding back on to the cooperative's power lines.



# Baumgardner Retires



Erbin Baumgardner, manager of VEC member services since 1972, retired on January 10, 2003. Baumgardner established the initial public relations office at VEC and expanded it over the years to include marketing the various products and services offered by the cooperative. He also instituted the monthly newsletter and other publications that provide valuable information to customers.

"VEC has benefited greatly from the years Erbin has served us," said VEC President and CEO William M. Buchanan. "I am grateful for his dedication to the cooperative and, especially, for his friendship over the years. He will be greatly missed."

Throughout the years, the responsibilities and impact of the member services department grew under Baumgardner's leadership. The department is now responsible for managing TVA energy right™ programs for the cooperative along with the Surge Sentry home surge protection program and VolFirst.net internet services. Marketing of Volunteer Energy Propane and products such as weather alert radios, grills and smokers, and toy trucks also fall under the

responsibilities of the office. Member services personnel also maintain VEC's web page, keep customer information updated, participate in legislative and economic development activities, and operate a continuing community education/school safety program.

Before joining VEC, Baumgardner worked in weekly, daily, and metropolitan newspapers for 10 years as a reporter and editor. His journalism background helped him when he came to VEC. "I wrote stories to educate the public about the cooperative and approached subjects as a reporter would," he says. His approach brought a new understanding of public power and its issues to customers.

Always a trusted voice for cooperatives locally and nationwide, Baumgardner has served as chairman of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's member services & marketing committee and the Tennessee Valley Public Power Association's marketing and communications section. He has also served his community as a member of the McMinn County School Board, the Riceville Water Utility District Board, and the Decatur-Meigs County Chamber of Commerce.

Baumgardner plans to spend his retirement helping wife Ruth with the operation of their business, Mouse Creek Nursery in Riceville. He is also an avid aviator and will spend a good deal of time flying his Piper Tri-Pacer airplane when not working at the nursery.



# VEC Customers Share

## December Grants

Ocoee Middle School Drama-Theater Arts Club	\$ 700
South Fentress Community Center/SAV	\$1,000
Moodyville Volunteer Fire Dept.	\$1,500
Pilot Club of Athens Needy Children Fund	\$ 438
Fentress County Ministerial Association	\$ 700
McMinn Regional Humane Society	\$ 200
Spring City Elementary Volleyball Booster Club	\$ 700
Midway Youth League	\$ 966
Bradley Initiative Credit Union	\$1,500
Bradley Central Football Booster Club	\$ 700
Crossville Fair Park Senior Center	\$1,500
Meigs County YMCA Fitness Center	\$ 700
Riceville Fire Department	\$1,500
Midway Athletic Club	\$ 966
Rhea County Volunteer Support Council	\$ 700
Athens Area Council for the Arts	\$ 700
Midway Quarterback Club	\$ 967
York Institute Concert Choir Boosters	\$ 700
Decatur Volunteer Fire Department	\$ 700
Friends of Monterey Branch Library	\$1,500
Tri-State Resource & Advocacy Corp.	\$ 350
Spring City Elementary School PTO	\$1,500
Pine Grove Fire District Association	\$ 200
Rural Cumberland Resources	\$ 500
McDonald Cemetery Association	\$1,500
Crossville AARP Tax Volunteers	\$ 700
McMinn County Education Foundation	\$ 437
Old Fort Community Club	\$ 200
Meigs 4-H Volunteer Leaders Organization	\$1,500
Children of Crossville Chamber Orchestra	\$1,500
Monterey Lions Club Eyesight Committee	\$ 700
Chilhowee Middle School PTO	\$ 700
Rogers Creek Youth Baseball	\$ 200
Putnam County Rural Health Clinics, Inc.	\$ 700
Vocational Office Education VOE Club	\$1,500
Byrdstown Junior Women's Club	\$ 700

### Hamilton school groups receive grants

The Ooltewah High School Parent-Teacher-Student Association and the Birchwood Elementary PTA were recent recipients of VEC Customers Share grants totaling \$3,000. From left, Kathy Frye, co-chairman of the Ooltewah PTSA accepts a \$1,000 check from VEC Customers Share Board Member Bobby Scott, while April Randolph of the Birchwood PTA and Principal Ronnelle Blankenship accept a \$2,000 grant.



# Hurley Accepts Member Services Position



Patty Hurley

Patty Hurley has accepted the position of manager of member services, replacing the retiring Erbin Baumgardner. Hurley has been employed at VEC for the past two years as coordinator of marketing.

Hurley holds a B.S. from Tusculum College and a M.B.A. from East Tennessee State University. She has 15 years experience in marketing, public relations, and workforce development at various higher education institutions in Virginia and Tennessee. She is the recipient of several marketing awards, including the Paragon and Communicator awards from the National Council of Marketing and Public Relations.

Hurley and her husband Charles reside just outside of Cleveland, Tennessee.

# VEC Scholarship deadline is fast approaching



March 3<sup>rd</sup> is this year's application deadline for the VEC Lillard-Shadow college scholarship program.

The scholarship honors Willis A. Shadow and J. W. Lillard, two community leaders who spearheaded the effort to bring electric power to Decatur and Meigs County in the 1930s, forming what would become Volunteer Energy Cooperative.

Four awards of \$500 per semester each (renewable for up to 4 semesters) will be presented to spring 2003 high school graduates whose parents or guardians are VEC electric customers. Criteria for the awards will be community service activities and citizenship (30%), written communication skills (30%), academic achievement (25%), and financial need (15%). Scholarship applications are available at any VEC service center or from high school counselors in the VEC service area.