

# Trimming Trees

## Helps Prevent Power Outages

Doing It Right Helps Prevent Unnecessary Damage to Trees

In 1997, a tree fell on a power line in Idaho starting a chain of events that resulted in the loss of electricity to more than 300,000 homes in California and Nevada.

Admittedly, the 1997 incident in Idaho affecting power supplies across the Western United States was a worst case scenario come true. But trees and tree limbs falling across and into power lines is one of the leading causes of power outages for Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) and electricity distributors around the nation. Pruning trees and spraying to prevent excess growth around power lines is a top priority according to VEC certified arborist Jim Runyan.

Runyan, VEC vegetation specialist, is in charge of the cooperative's efforts to clear trees and tree limbs from areas within utility rights-of-way where they interfere with power lines. With more than 8,000 miles of VEC power lines in service, it's easy to see why Runyan's job is a never-ending one.

"About 80 percent of our outages are tree-related," Runyan said. "Usually it's rain or wind causing the limbs and trees to fall into power lines. And since these harsh weather patterns usually spread across a wide area, outages can come in bunches." So you might say Runyan's job centers on the old adage, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

VEC rights-of-way typically extend for 20 feet on each side of power lines (40 feet total). And VEC trimming is confined to these rights of way. If trees threaten an individual customer's service line (the line that runs to the customer's home) VEC will take the line down allowing the homeowner to safely trim or cut down the tree and then put the line back up at no charge.

Since trimming trees around power lines is a potentially dangerous job, Runyan stresses that homeowners should not try to trim without contacting VEC first. VEC crews and contractors have received extensive training not only on safety techniques but also on proper pruning methods to help keep trees healthy.

For the last four years, Runyan says VEC crews have been using lateral trimming techniques to cut down on unnecessary harm to trees. He says some homeowners seem to prefer the looks of the old "rounding" trimming techniques, but he says lateral cutting is far better for the trees.

"With the lateral cuts, we are able to decrease the stress on the tree and maintain a much healthier tree. Lateral cuts help maintain the tree's natural defenses against disease." Runyan said. "Rounding led to excessive sprouting, as well as cracks and rot."

Cracks and rot are major causes of trunk failure.

Spraying to inhibit excessive growth and pruning trees around power lines are temporary solutions that must be repeated. Runyan says a more permanent solution is for homeowners to consider "vertical landscaping."

"When people are considering their landscaping options, they should look up," Runyan said. "Fast growing and tall growing trees aren't a good choice for locations around power lines. Planting low-growing, compact trees and shrubs such as dogwoods, redbuds and other low-growing ornamentals will help prevent future problems for homeowners and their neighbors."



About 80% of Volunteer Energy Cooperative's power outages are tree-related.

Powerlines is produced by the Volunteer Energy Cooperative's Member Services Department as a service to customers. Comments and suggestions can be e-mailed to vec@vec.org or mailed to VEC Member Services Department, P.O. Box 277, Decatur, TN 37322.

## Example of the Effect of the TVA Rate Increase on a Volunteer Energy Cooperative Ratepayer

The TVA rate increase includes...

### Reduction in Hydro Credits

- ACTION: The new TVA rates include a reduced hydro allocation credit (the credit that has historically been applied to Valley residents due to the lower cost of hydroelectric power generation).
- RESULT: The customer charge for residential users will increase from \$8.50 to \$9.27. This charge is not itemized on most VEC statements – it is incorporated into the total charges.

### Energy Charge Increase

- ACTION: The new rates reflect an increase in the energy charge per kilowatt hour from \$.0598 to \$.06286 for residential and small commercial/industrial ratepayers.
- RESULT: Ratepayers will see an increase of \$.0306 per kilowatt hour for the amount of power they consume. (To calculate the total energy cost, multiply the kilowatt hours used by the energy charge.)

The graphic below illustrates an example of changes that the rate increase will have on a residential customer's electric bill at different usage levels. Keep in mind, however, that every bill is different and the illustration is only meant as an example.

<i>Before TVA Rate Change</i>		<i>After TVA Rate Change (Oct. 1, 2003)</i>	
<b>Example #1 – Monthly Usage 750 kWh</b>			
Energy Charge:	\$ .05980	Energy Charge:	\$ .06286 (up \$.00306)
Total Charge for Energy:	\$44.85	Total Charge for Energy:	\$47.15 (up \$2.30)
	(750 kWh x \$.05980)		(750 kWh x \$.06286)
plus...	+	plus...	+
Customer Charge:	\$8.50	Customer Charge:	\$9.27 (up \$.77)
<b>Total bill:</b>	<b>\$53.35</b>	<b>Total bill:</b>	<b>\$56.42 (up \$3.07 or 5.8%)</b>
<b>Example #2 – Monthly Usage 1,000 kWh</b>			
Energy Charge:	\$ .05980	Energy Charge:	\$ .06286 (up \$.00306)
Total Charge for Energy:	\$59.80	Total Charge for Energy:	\$62.86 (up \$3.06)
	(1,000 kWh x \$.05980)		(1,000 kWh x \$.06286)
plus...	+	plus...	+
Customer Charge:	\$8.50	Customer Charge:	\$9.27 (up \$.77)
<b>Total bill:</b>	<b>\$68.30</b>	<b>Total bill:</b>	<b>\$72.13 (up \$3.83 or 5.6%)</b>
<b>Example #3 – Monthly Usage 1,250 kWh</b>			
Energy Charge:	\$ .05980	Energy Charge:	\$ .06286 (up \$.00306)
Total Charge for Energy:	\$74.75	Total Charge for Energy:	\$78.58 (up \$3.83)
	(1,250 kWh x \$.05980)		(1,250 kWh x \$.06286)
plus...	+	plus...	+
Customer Charge:	\$8.50	Customer Charge:	\$9.27 (up \$.77)
<b>Total bill:</b>	<b>\$83.25</b>	<b>Total bill:</b>	<b>\$87.85 (up \$4.60 or 5.5%)</b>
<b>Example #4 – Monthly Usage 1,500 kWh</b>			
Energy Charge:	\$ .05980	Energy Charge:	\$ .06286 (up \$.00306)
Total Charge for Energy:	\$89.70	Total Charge for Energy:	\$94.29 (up \$4.59)
	(1,500 kWh x \$.05980)		(1,500 kWh x \$.06286)
plus...	+	plus...	+
Customer Charge:	\$8.50	Customer Charge:	\$9.27 (up \$.77)
<b>Total bill:</b>	<b>\$98.20</b>	<b>Total bill:</b>	<b>\$103.56 (up \$5.36 or 5.5%)</b>



## TVA Rate Change to Affect VEC Customers

by Bill Buchanan, President/CEO

On August 27<sup>th</sup>, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) officially approved a rate change for its customers. I, along with many of my colleagues in leadership roles at TVA distributors across the Tennessee Valley, am disturbed that TVA failed to enter into real, meaningful negotiations with distributors and their representatives on the rate change. Normally, before a public announcement of anticipated rate actions is made, numerous preliminary discussions have already been held with distributors and their representatives. TVA's recent actions have been a major deviation from the established process. Distributors asked TVA to delay the rate change so that discussions could be undertaken. TVA rejected this request.

Granted, TVA has every right to change or adjust its rates, but rate changes must undergo a structured process and, in this case, the process was circumvented. While we understand TVA's need for additional funding to comply with the Clean Air Act, we disagree with the fact that all classes of customers do not share equally in the cost.

The once arm-in-arm partnership between the distributors and TVA has been severely damaged. TVA has been heavy-handed in implementing this increase – and the ratepayers suffer. The Volunteer Energy Cooperative Board of Directors demonstrated its displeasure with the increase at its August meeting by refusing to sign the new TVA contract that included the higher rates. VEC is not the only utility to have done so.

Despite all our best efforts, the rate increase will go into effect for VEC customers in October even without a signed TVA contract. Bills with meter readings on or after October 1, 2003 for VEC residential, commercial, and small industrial customers will reflect the increase from TVA. TVA tells us that the average increase will be 7.4%, although each customer will realize a varying percentage, based on total usage because of the way the increase is calculated. Less than 10 of VEC's nearly 100,000 customers will experience a very slight reduction in their bills, a result of TVA's effort to boost economic development by lowering power costs for a specific class of customer.

There are many different faces to this TVA action, but what is of immediate importance to our ratepayers is what effect the rate increase has on their own personal power bill. Everyone's situation is different. On the back panel of this issue are short explanations as to what the change means and an example of how the change might affect the average residential ratepayer.

The VEC management and Board of Directors will not "piggyback" our own rate increase on this latest one by TVA. We believe that the October rate increase will place enough of a burden on the largest segments of our customer base without the additional strain of VEC's separate increase. *The increase you see as a result of this rate change includes NO additional revenue for VEC.*

My pledge to you is that VEC will continue to work hard as an advocate for ratepayers in this and other TVA action. In the meantime, watch *Powerlines* for more updates and information.

See back page for examples.

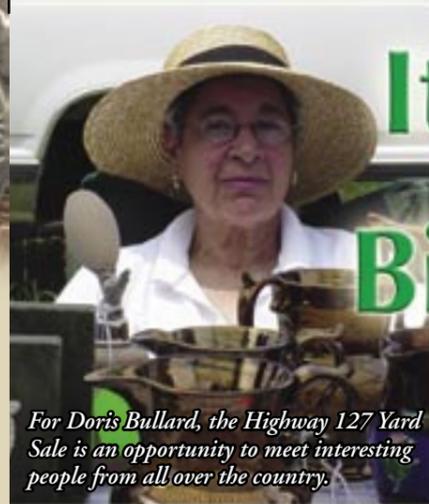
# VECcustomers Share

Grants totaling \$30,250 were awarded by the VECcustomers Share board of directors in July 2003. During the current fiscal year the board has awarded \$318,103.25 in grants. Since the inception of the program in October of 2001, a total of \$724,345.25 in grants has been awarded. VECcustomers Share is a non-profit, tax exempt charitable organization covering VEC's 17-county service area. The foundation's funds are derived from Volunteer Energy Cooperative members who allow their electric bills to be rounded up to the nearest \$1. The additional amount goes into the VECcustomers Share fund, which is administered by the foundation's board of directors whose 12 members serve as volunteers.

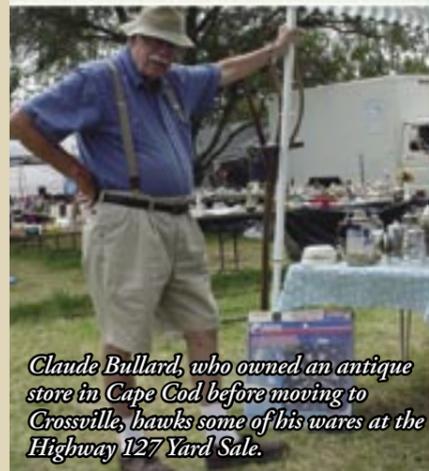
VECcustomers Share contributions average 50 cents per month or \$6 per year for each participating residential customer. Approximately 80 percent of VEC's customers are donating to the program. The deadline for grant applications is the last day of each month. For additional information, contact Patty Hurley, manager of member services, at 423-334-7050.

## Organizations receiving grants in July include:

Beta Cemetery	\$1,800
Meigs County Historical Society	550
Calhoun Community Kitchen and Food Pantry	550
Morning Star Ministries	1,800
Nocautula Civitan Club	550
Luminary-Frostbite Volunteer Fire Department	550
Senior Lighthouse Center	550
First United Methodist Church Child Development Center	1,800
Walker Valley High Girls' Basketball	550
Walker Valley High School JV Cheerleaders	550
Boy Scouts of America - Cherokee Area Council	1,800
Cleveland State Cougar Club	1,800
Tennessee Liberty Basketball Team	550
Child Advocacy Center	350
Luminary United Methodist Church Food Pantry	400
MAC Club	900
Midway Youth League	900
Roane County Rescue Squad	350
CCHS Volleyball Booster Club	550
Cumberland County Literacy Council	1,800
Disabled American Veterans #32	1,800
HES Boys B-Team Basketball Boosters	550
Miss Cumberland County Pageant	550
South Cumberland PTO	550
Fentress County Chamber of Commerce	1,750
Spurs AAU Basketball	600
Burks Middle School PTSO	1,000
Monterey Senior Citizens Center	1,000
Mountain First Responders	500
The Exchange Club / The Stephens Center	400
Hull York DAV, Chapter 5	600
Jr. High Girls Basketball Boosters	900
Pickett County Genealogical Historical Society	600
Wolf River United Baptist Church Women's Club	800



For Doris Bullard, the Highway 127 Yard Sale is an opportunity to meet interesting people from all over the country.



Claude Bullard, who owned an antique store in Cape Cod before moving to Crossville, hawks some of his wares at the Highway 127 Yard Sale.



From left, Jenell Krumpols, Heather Burns and youth pastor Keyvan Neal are counting on the proceeds from their Highway 127 Yard Sale concession stand to help refurbish the church's youth hall.



Pedestrian and vehicle traffic are major concerns associated with the Highway 127 Yard Sale.

# It's Not Just a Big Yard Sale

## Highway 127 Corridor Sale Provides Once a Year Opportunities

For Doris Bullard, the annual Highway 127 Yard Sale is an opportunity to meet folks from around the country. For her husband Claude, it's a chance to relive his years as an antique dealer in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

For Keyvan Neal, youth pastor at Trinity Tabernacle in Crossville, the yard sale is an opportunity for the youth group at his church to raise funds. For businesses along the 450-mile route, it's a potential boon. For others, not so interested in the sale, it means battling traffic and keeping a watch out for bargain-hunting pedestrians.

Whether you're shopping, selling, meeting and greeting, or just trying to get through the heavy traffic without hitting another car or a pedestrian, the Highway 127 Yard Sale, also known as the World's Largest Yard Sale, is a one-of-a-kind event.

Stretching from Covington, Kentucky to Gadsden, Alabama, the 2003 sale ran from August 2 through August 10 and brought an estimated 400,000 shoppers to the area.

This marks Doris and Claude Bullard's second year as vendors at the sale. They set up their stand not far from their Lake Ridge Estates home in Crossville. With high-end art and antiques left from Claude's years as an antique dealer in Cape Cod, Mass., Claude says most of the shoppers aren't looking to pay his prices. But he does get attention from dealers who frequent the sale.

"This year is going better than last," Claude said. "The rain hasn't hurt us too much."

Claude's wife, Doris, admits she doesn't put in the time at their stand that her husband does, but she enjoys meeting and greeting.

"You meet some of the most interesting people," she said.

Keyvan Neal, the new youth pastor at Trinity Tabernacle in Crossville, has his youth group the M.O.B. (Multitude of Believers) manning a concession stand along a well-traveled segment of the sale in front of the church.

"We're hoping to raise funds to finish remodeling our youth chapel," Neal said. "Due to a lack of funds, we've had to put the project on hold for about three months."

With a menu consisting of grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, chips, cookies, and cold drinks, Neal and his "M.O.B." were busy, but not overwhelmed. Neal said he and his youth volunteers were coping well with the heat and having a lot of fun.

# Annual Meeting:

## FUN, FOOD & FACTS



James Rogers will headline the entertainment portion of Volunteer Energy Cooperative's 67th Annual Meeting October 4 at Meigs County Middle School.

Volunteer Energy Cooperative's (VEC) 67th Annual Meeting October 4th at Meigs County Middle School promises to be an informative event with lots of fun, food, entertainment and giveaways.

Events kick-off at 8 a.m. with breakfast. The meeting is set to begin at 10 a.m. and at 11 a.m. James Rogers will take the stage. Free health screenings and flu vaccinations will be offered by Dr. Shane Roberts and Athens Regional Medical Center and every member who attends will receive a free gift.

All VEC members/customers are invited. Anyone who requires special accommodations for the event should phone the Member Services Department at VEC's Corporate Offices in Decatur at 423-334-7050. Every effort will be made to accommodate special needs.

# BEWARE: Not all Energized Electrical Equipment is on Utility Poles

Not all electrical equipment is placed on utility poles. Underground power lines and pad-mount transformers are just as dangerous as their overhead counterparts.

Keep children away from padmount transformers – their interior wiring carries 7,200 volts or more. Call before you dig near underground lines.



Please be careful when placing plants and shrubs around padmount transformers. Volunteer Energy Cooperative employees need space to reach the transformer in case of an emergency or to connect new service.

Padmount transformers are just as dangerous as their overhead counterparts.

VECcustomers Share Board Members Pauline Sherrer, far left, and Roger Thackston, far right, present grant checks to Richard Dubois, commander of DAV #32, Pam Stubbs, center, adult basic education program director for the Cumberland County Literacy Council and Lisa Phillips, president of the Cumberland County Literacy Council.