

Don't Forget Your VEC account information is as close as your telephone



With Volunteer Energy Cooperative's new Interactive Voice Response system you can access account information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It's as easy as one, two, three.

1. Dial your local VEC service center and select option 3 (account information).
2. Enter your VEC account number.
3. Follow the simple instructions to get your account balance, the date of your last payment, and the balance currently due.

STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

Volunteer Energy Cooperative is the recipient of Federal financial assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which provide that no person in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or disability shall be excluded from participation in, admission or access to, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organizations programs or activities.

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is William M. Buchanan, President/CEO. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint with this organization; or the Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250; or the Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, Washington, D.C. 20250. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

www.vec.org

VEC
VOLUNTEER ENERGY COOPERATIVE

vec@vec.org

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.

POWERLINES

VEC Welcomes 100,000th Customer

When electricity started flowing to Stacey Roberts' home in Harrison on October 9, she became Volunteer Energy Cooperative's 100,000th customer. VEC is just the second electric cooperative in Tennessee to reach the 100,000-customer milestone. Roberts and her husband of six years, Shawn, met with VEC President and CEO Bill Buchanan on October 31 at the cooperative's Cleveland Service Center.

"We're extremely pleased to have reached this point and congratulations are in order for not only the Roberts, but also for all the VEC employees, directors and staff who have worked extremely hard to help bring electricity to so many people in the Tennessee Valley," Buchanan said. "Since our origins in 1936, we have seen tremendous growth in our 17-county service area. It's easy to see that the growth and development of our cooperative has gone hand-in-hand with progress and a better standard of living in the region."

VEC is the seventh largest of the 158 electricity distributors who purchase power through TVA in terms of the number of customers served. VEC is the eighth largest distributor in terms of the volume of electricity distributed.

When Buchanan met with the Roberts on Halloween to commemorate the milestone, he came bearing treats. The Roberts received several gifts including an electric grill, a gift certificate worth \$50 off of their next electric bill, a weather alert radio, and several other gifts.

Stacey and Shawn are both originally from Chattanooga. Stacey attended Ooltewah High School and Chattanooga State before joining UnumProvident where she is a customer care specialist. Shawn attended Lookout Valley High School and is co-owner of Express Athletics in Cleveland.

Both are avid softball players. Shawn plays on a traveling tournament team and Stacey enjoys teaming up with her husband on a co-ed team.



Volunteer Energy Cooperative President and CEO Bill Buchanan, right, congratulates Stacey Roberts, center, on becoming VEC's 100,000th customer. Stacey's husband, Shawn Roberts, left, looks on.



Blackout - Could it Happen Here?

by Bill Buchanan, President/CEO

We recently saw the Northeastern United States and part of Canada plunged into darkness by the largest blackout in U.S. history. Hundreds of thousands of people were left without power for 2 days. Once the power was restored, there has been no shortage of theories, opinions, and finger-pointing surrounding this event. Why did it happen? Who is to blame? What could have been done to prevent it?

For residents in the Tennessee Valley, there is yet another question: Could a blackout of this magnitude happen here?

It is true that the electric power grid is aging – it has been nearly 70 years since the lights came on for the first Volunteer Energy Cooperative customers. However, VEC is a cooperative – a not-for-profit entity that has no shareholders and no pressure to pay dividends to investors. VEC returns earnings back to the system in the form of maintenance and improvements. Unlike the consumers of for-profit energy companies, VEC customers retain all the benefit of the energy dollars they spend.

Millions of VEC dollars are expended each year for substation improvements and construction, new electrical services, right of way clearing, replacement of old or outdated lines and equipment, and other enhancements. With more than 8,000 pole line miles on our system – and areas we serve experiencing phenomenal growth – the job is continuous. Advances in technology have assisted us in recent years, helping us to work smarter.

For the calendar year 2002, VEC reinvested more than \$15 million in distribution, transmission, and substation facilities. In addition, nearly \$6 million was spent on maintenance to the existing system. In other words, during 2002, VEC invested about \$21 million in keeping power flowing and maintaining capacity at adequate levels.

VEC's power is also delivered to its substations through the Tennessee Valley Authority transmission grid which has proven itself as one of the most reliable systems in operation.

Will a widespread blackout ever happen in the Tennessee Valley? Nothing is impossible, but VEC is working every day to ensure that outages are minimized and the system is safe and reliable for years to come.

VECcustomers *Share*

Your Change Changes Things

From cemetery upkeep to youth leadership programs and from helping prevent child abuse to medical services for the needy, Volunteer Energy Cooperative customers pooled their pennies for a variety of worthwhile community projects in September. The VECcustomers Share board of directors funded grants totaling \$31,200 in September 2003. During the current fiscal year the board has awarded \$349,303.25 in grants, and since the inception of the program in October of 2001, a total of \$755,545.25 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 September include:

Pine Grove Fire District Association	\$ 250.00
Cleveland Barbershop Chorus	300.00
Cumberland County Community Band	300.00
Ladies Fellowship	320.00
Beaty and Mt. Airy cemeteries	320.00
CHS Girls Basketball Booster Club	375.00
Spring City Elementary/Middle School Music Booster Club	410.00
Boots N' Roses Dance Club	500.00
Meigs High School Choir Boosters	660.00
Kiwanis Club of Spring City	660.00
AARP Tax-Aide Program	660.00
Birchwood Elementary PTA	660.00
Rural Cumberland Resources	660.00
Good Faith Clinic	660.00
McMinn Volley Boosters Organization	660.00
Chilhowee Youth Softball	705.00
Chilhowee Middle School PTO	705.00
Chilhowee Middle Softball Boosters	705.00
Polk County High Softball Club	705.00
Valley View Storehouse	750.00
Riceville Elementary School PTO	940.00
Adult and Family Education of McMinn County	940.00
Centennial School Advisory Council	940.00
Muddy Pond Volunteer Fire Department	1,000.00
Pickett County Journalism Club	1,000.00
Audrey Pack Memorial Library	1,000.00
Traditional Music Resource Center, Inc.	1,000.00
Juvenile Community Intervention Services	1,055.00
Fentress County Food Bank	1,500.00
Monterey Lions Club	1,500.00
American Legion & Ladies Auxiliary Post #9	1,500.00
Child Advocacy Center	1,500.00
IMPACT Christian Academy	1,500.00
Leadership Cumberland Youth Academy	1,500.00



VECcustomers Share Board members Bill Sparkman, left, presents a grant award to Jerry Venable, right, and of Traditional Music Resource Center, Inc.

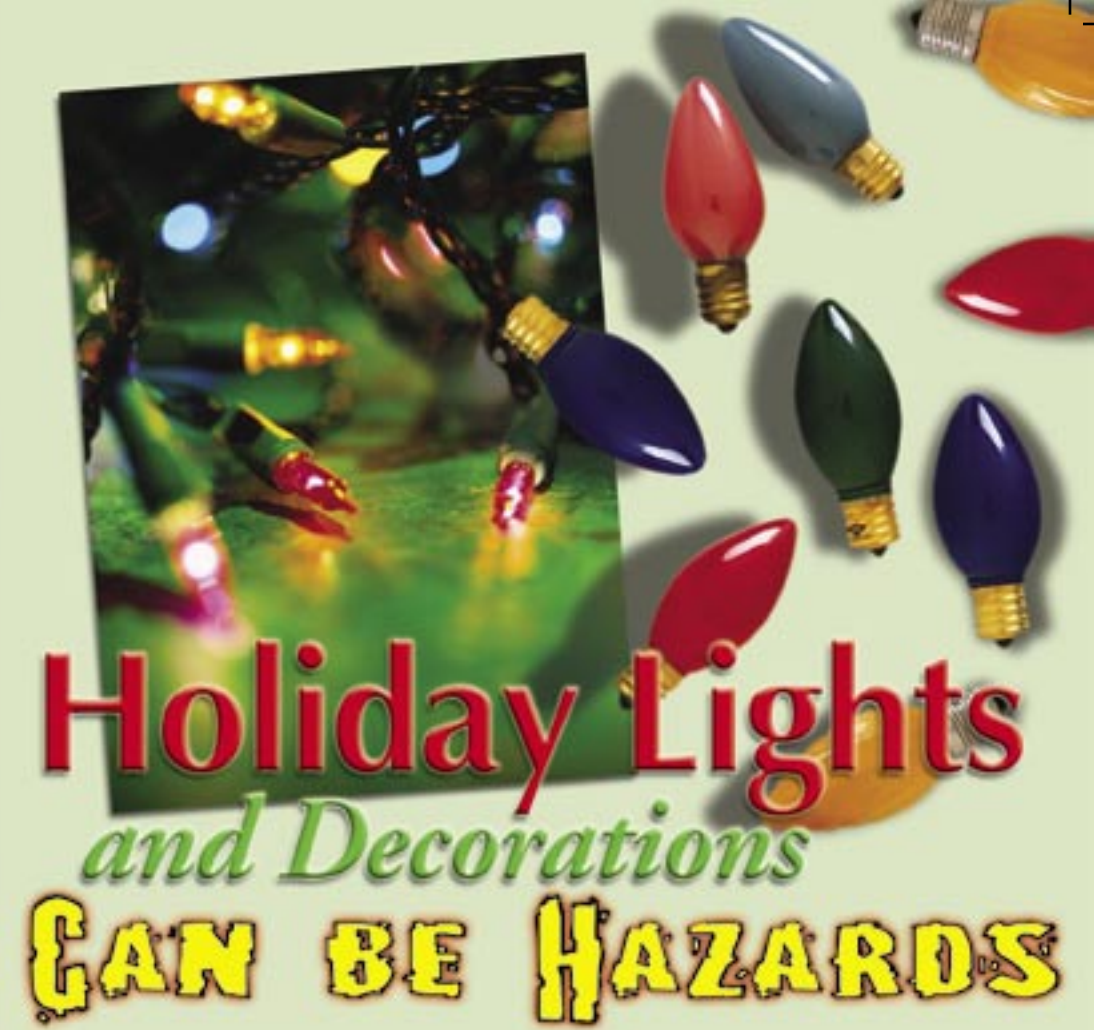


Charlie Fitch Jerry Henley Gene Carmichael Kenneth Vaden
 Larry Storie Aubie Smith Randy Bond Sammy Norton
 James Brooks Laney Colvard Marvin Stinnett Scott Humberd



Bill Buchanan

The Volunteer Energy Cooperative Board of Directors, Staff and Employees Would like to Wish You and Your Family a Happy Holiday Season and a Prosperous New Year!



- Decorating our homes for the holidays is a beautiful and festive tradition. But to make sure this holiday season is a safe one, here's our plug for decorating safety.
- Don't overload your electric circuits. Those little bulbs can really add up. Check your fuse or circuit breaker panel to see what your home can handle, and stay well within the limits.
 - Avoid putting too many strings of lights together and plugging them into a single outlet. Surge protector strips are a safe option if you need more outlets. Never force a three-pronged plug into a two-holed outlet or extension cord.
 - Unplug your lights when you're not at home and before you go to bed.
 - Use only UL-listed electric equipment and check each set of lights for broken or cracked sockets, loose connections, and frayed or bare wires. Discard all damaged cords. Make sure there is a bulb in each socket. If a bulb is burned out, leave it in the socket until you have a replacement bulb. Immediately replace any broken bulbs with exposed filaments.
 - When shopping for a natural tree, look for a fresh tree and be sure to keep it well watered. When shopping for an artificial tree, look for a tree labeled "fire resistant." Never use electric lights on a metallic tree, which can become charged with electricity. Never use lighted candles on trees.
 - Watch for flickering lights; sparks from appliances or wall outlets; warm switch plates, plugs or outlets; and dimming lights or television screens. These signal potential danger spots that could cause an electrical fire.
 - Unplug cords while stringing lights as you decorate and be sure to unplug lights when you are changing bulbs. Keep cords away from water and metal objects. Uncoil extension cords completely before using and don't run extension cords under rugs or doors or through windows.
 - Make sure outdoor lights are certified for outdoor use. Outdoor lights should have insulated electrical cords and be plugged into a Ground Fault Interrupter (GFI)-protected receptacle only. Keep all plugs and connectors off the ground, away from puddles and snow.
 - Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports using insulated staples or hooks. Do not use nails or tacks and be careful not to pinch, nick, or stress wiring. Never pull or tug lights to remove them.
 - When stringing lights outdoors be careful to keep them away from power lines. If you're using a ladder, be sure to keep the ladder away from power lines as well.
 - Now is an excellent time to check the batteries in your home smoke detectors.