

Quick Restoration of Power Requires Accurate Phone Numbers

When a power outage strikes the first thing most people want to know is, "How long will it be before the electricity comes back on?"

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) is using interactive voice recognition (IVR) technology, caller ID equipment, and an outage management system to make sure power is restored more quickly and more efficiently than ever before.

The system in place links all these new technologies to quickly identify outages and ensure repair crews are at the right place in the shortest time possible. When a customer calls VEC to report an outage, the interactive voice system answers the call. The caller confirms that they are calling to report an outage with one key touch and confirms the phone number on the account with just one more key touch. Caller ID functions link the incoming phone call to the address where electricity is being delivered. The outage management system records the address of the outage and reports it to repair crews.

It's fast, it's efficient, and it helps get power restored very quickly. And VEC is still working to upgrade the system even more. In the future when this technology is linked with Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) technology and the extensive mapping project currently under way, the system will be able to predict and report outages before a customer even calls.

It all sounds very cutting edge and complicated, but in the end, the vital link that holds the system together is simple and almost as old as Alexander Graham Bell himself.

It's a phone number.

Clyde Jolley, VEC's operations manager, said it's important for all customers to make sure VEC has an accurate phone number linked to their account.

Jolley said if VEC does not have an accurate phone number on the account or if one phone number is listed on several accounts, the customer will need to key in their VEC account number.

If the phone number cannot be linked to an account and a customer is unable to key in their VEC account number, the call will be answered by a customer service representative. In situations where outages are extensive and many people are calling at the same time to report the outages, this can take a while.

"When the phone number can be linked to the account or when the account number can be entered by the customer, our system can handle 24 calls at a time," Jolley said. "That's quite a bit faster than we can handle calls with our customer service representatives."

Jolley urged all VEC customers to call their local VEC service center to update the phone number on their account and to keep their VEC account number written down somewhere convenient to their phone.

Standby Generators Can Be Serious Safety Hazards

The threat of severe winter storms and the extensive power outages they sometimes create may have Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) customers considering the purchase of standby generators. A standby generator can provide insurance against prolonged power outages and help avoid any loss or inconvenience resulting from an extensive power outage. But unless the generator is installed and operated safely, it can cause serious injury, even death, to power line workers and to the customers who use them.

When you install a standby generator that is large enough to power the entire house, a double-throw disconnect is needed to insulate your new temporary power source from the main power lines feeding your home.

The reason this double-throw switch is needed is because when you use electricity from VEC's lines, the transformer at your location steps the voltage down from 7,200 volts to the 120 and 240 volts needed to power 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 that voltage up to 7,200. A worker may have stopped the voltage that VEC is feeding into the line, but he or she may not know that a customer is inadvertently feeding that same line. That can result in a serious shock and even death when that worker attempts to work on the line.

The lack of a double-throw switch may also cause damage to the generator when the power is restored.

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 to comply with electrical codes, please contact a qualified, licensed electrician. If you install a standby generator, please notify your local VEC customer service center so VEC workers can apply proper safety measures when working on your lines.

TVA/VEC energy right® new program in detail...

Changes have been made to the *energy right*® program and an overview of these changes appears below. Call your local VEC service center for details!

New Home Construction

VEC Provides:

- \$50 VEC electric bill credit to homes' decision maker

- Requirements:
- Home must be all-electric (electric heating and cooling, water heating, dryer, etc.)
 - Home must have a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) rating of 83 or better, typically including...
 - R-30 insulation in the attic*
 - R-19 insulation in a cathedral ceiling*
 - R-13 insulation in outside walls*
 - R-19 floor insulation*
 - Windows with a U-value of .5 or lower (prefer low e glass)*
 - Heat pump with a SEER rating of 12 or higher*
 - Not more than 12.5% glass*
 - TVA inspection

- How to Apply:
- After permanent power is connected to the dwelling and the heating and cooling system is operational, contact your local VEC customer service center. VEC will submit an inspection request and TVA will contact you to arrange an inspection.

Program applies to homes completed after March 15, 2004

*HERS ratings can vary widely depending on design and location. Including the items listed here during construction will typically increase a home's HERS rating; however, the actual HERS rating of any house can only be determined after construction is complete.

Heat Pump Upgrades

VEC Provides:

- Financing for a heat pump installation in a single family home

- Requirements:
- Must be installed by VEC/TVA-qualified contractor (lists available in VEC offices)
 - Must agree to TVA inspection of the work
 - Subject to credit approval
 - Unit must be 13 SEER or above (split system) or 12 SEER and above (package)

- How to Apply:
- Contact your local VEC customer service center for a loan application.

Program applies to heat pumps submitted with completed paperwork after January 16, 2004

Water Heater Purchase

VEC Provides:

- \$30 VEC electric bill credit to purchaser

- Requirements:
- Must meet DOE minimum and TVA sizing requirements (40 gallons)

- How to Apply:
- Pick up an application at your local VEC customer service center or on the web at www.vec.org under Programs/Services.

Program applies to water heaters purchased after January 16, 2004



TVA/VEC energy right® program still a wise choice

by Bill Buchanan, President/CEO

Beginning January 16, 2004, the TVA *energy right*® program administered by Volunteer Energy Cooperative has changed. The changes are necessary because of a reduction in financing by TVA for this program due to required budget cuts.

Although incentives have been reduced under the new program, customers who follow *energy right*® guidelines continue to make wise decisions. This program offers guidelines that make your home more energy efficient and, therefore, a more cost efficient structure for years to come.

As the *energy right*® program changes, VEC is using this opportunity to promote higher efficiency energy usage in heating and cooling systems and in water heaters. We feel this is best for our customers and for the cooperative as we move into the future.

We are exploring ways to expand customer incentives for other types of home improvements, too. Watch Powerlines for more information in the coming months.

VEC will administer the TVA *energy right*® program under the guidelines below (see details on the back page of this issue).

New Home Construction

If you are a VEC customer who builds an all-electric single family structure with a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) score of 83 or above, you may qualify for a \$50 credit to your electric bill. The home must undergo a TVA inspection and certification in order to qualify for the rebate. New home construction continues to be strong in the VEC service area; the opportunity for electric bill credit and review of your new home by a TVA-certified energy advisor will help to assure that your new home is a great value today and in years to come. (Effective March 16, 2004)

Water Heater Purchase

If you purchase a new electric water heater (40 gallons or greater in size), you qualify for a \$30 credit to your VEC electric bill through the VEC/TVA *energy right*® program. Older water heaters are energy wasters. By purchasing a new model may be able to see significant reductions in your electric bill right away. (Effective January 17, 2004)

Heat Pump Upgrades

Although rebates will no longer be available, VEC customers who install new heat pumps in existing homes can still take advantage of financing offered through TVA if the package unit is rated at least a 13 on the Seasonal Energy Efficiency Rating (SEER) scale or 12 SEER on split systems. Encouraging the installation of higher efficiency units will help our customers lower their energy costs. (Effective January 17, 2004)

Let me encourage you to take advantage of the *energy right*® program to make your home more energy efficient. It is sure to pay dividends down the road. You can learn more about the *energy right*® program at your local VEC customer service center.

VECcustomers *Share*

Your Change Changes Things

Health care for the uninsured, science equipment for students, and several programs to assist senior citizens were among the causes assisted by Volunteer Energy Cooperative customers who pooled their pennies through the VECcustomers Share program in November. The VECcustomers Share board of directors funded grants totaling \$30,431 in November. Since the inception of the program two years ago in October of 2001, a total of \$848,076.25 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 November include:

Banner Roslin Community Center	\$1,650
Pickett County High School Science Club	1,600
AARP Tax Volunteers	1,600
The Fourth Dimension, Inc.	1,600
Meigs County Fair Association	1,600
Monterey Ministerial Association Board	1,600
Spring City UMY	1,500
Bradley County Committee on Aging	1,500
Child Advocacy Center (CAC)	1,300
Midway Athletic Club (MAC)	1,000
Birchwood Senior Neighbors	932
Good Faith Clinic	767
E.K. Baker Elementary School PTO	766
Rogers Creek Elementary School PTO	766
Chilhowee Basketball Booster Club	750
Benton Elementary School PTO	750
Polk County Adult and Community Education	750
Cleveland Storytelling Guild	750
Chilhowee Middle School PTO	750
Tennessee Blitz Softball	750
Veterans Affairs	700
AmVets Post 90	700
Clarkrange High School Chess Team	700
Kreative Kid Kare	650
Rhea County Adult Literacy Council	500
Cedine Ministries	500
Homestead Girls B-Team Girls Basketball Boosters	450
CCHS Advanced Choir Booster Club	450
Pleasant Hill Explorers	450
Fair Park Senior Center	450
CCHS Volleyball Booster Club	450
HES Boys B-Team Basketball Boosters	450
Tranquility Community Center	350
McMinn County Education Foundation	350
SCMS Talented and Gifted	250
Grandview Community Center	250
Crossville Streetscape	100



VECcustomers Share Board Member Barbara Rector, second from left, presents a grant check to Brandon M. Suiter, left, Lou Ann Maxwell, second from right, and Rebecca Wallin, right, of Pickett County High School's Science Club.

Life's Simple Pleasures Were Often Sacrificed for the Benefit of the Community

*Don Bilbrey,
Volunteer Energy
Cooperative's (VEC)
Monterey Area
Superintendent,
retired recently after
35 years with VEC.
His daughter, Cher'ee
Leak, wrote this in
honor of the occasion.
It gives a different
perspective and an
inside-the-family look
at VEC's mission and
employees. We hope
you enjoy it.*



Don Bilbrey and his wife, Janet, were guests of honor at a retirement party at the VEC Monterey Service Center.

I am no expert on electricity. I cannot tell you what has to take place in the background to turn the lights on in my house. What I can tell you is a little bit about a man who has dedicated the majority of his life supporting this community and this valuable resource.

Like most children, during winter my brother and I prayed for snow. LOTS OF IT! I realize now that our father has rarely gotten to enjoy the beauty of a simple snowfall in its entirety. That beauty has been dampened by the effects that snow can have on power lines, often times resulting in massive customer outages.

Most of us cannot imagine the sacrifices these types of workers make, or are prepared to make, everyday. Thankfully, there are days when everything is simple day-to-day operations. And while day-to-day operations are important, our character as human beings and employees are typically not measured or tested on the "day-to-day" situations. And, those are certainly not what stand out in my mind.

What does stand out are the many times I have watched my father leaving home in the middle of the night or on holidays in the worst possible weather conditions imaginable. It is the many times I have awakened in the morning to find that he has been out all night working. Simply doing his job. It is the endless hours I have witnessed him working with his crew often times coming home only for brief periods to eat, sleep, change into dry clothes, and then head back out until they had taken care of every last customer. Weather alone can be unpredictable and dangerous. Lightning, rain, hail, sleet, snow, and ice make working conditions hazardous. Combine that with hot power lines and high voltage and you have some of the situations that these men face. They simply do their jobs.

There are so many qualities about my father that I love and admire. His integrity; his dedication to his job; his concern, always, for the safety of his crew; and his years of service to the community are just a few.

I wish him the very best and happiest of times in his retirement. Maybe now he can relax and enjoy the simple beauty of those snowfalls. I love you and I am so very proud of you.

- Cher'ee Leak
Daughter of Don and Janet Bilbrey

VEC Offering College Scholarships

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) will once again be offering Lillard-Shadow Scholarships to four graduating high school seniors.

The \$2,000 scholarships are awarded each year in memory of J.W. Lillard and Willis A. Shadow, two men whose commitment to the Meigs County community resulted in the formation of the organization that would evolve into VEC. Willis A. Shadow was the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Agent for Meigs County in 1933. He saw the great potential in improving the lives and livelihoods of his community by bringing electricity to this rural section of Tennessee. He spearheaded the effort to bring electricity to the area. J.W. Lillard lived and practiced law in Decatur and volunteered his time and talents to assist Shadow in the effort. Lillard served as the cooperative's first president and provided consistent leadership for the first seven years.

To honor the leadership and citizenship of these two men, the scholarships bearing their names are awarded to students who have demonstrated a commitment to their communities as well as academic achievement, written communication skills, and financial need. All graduating seniors whose parents or guardians are VEC electric customers are eligible to apply. Dependents of VEC employees, directors, or dependents of TVA employees are not eligible for this award.

Each scholarship is awarded at \$500 per semester and is renewable for up to four semesters for a \$2,000 maximum award for each student. One scholarship is awarded each year in each of VEC's four major service areas. Qualifying schools and areas are:

Jamestown Area: Pickett County High School, York Institute, Clarkrange High School.

Crossville Area: Cumberland County High School, Monterey High School.

Decatur Area: Rhea County High School, Midway High School, Meigs County High School, McMinn County High School, McMinn Central High School.

Cleveland Area: Bradley Central High School, Cleveland High School, Walker Valley High School, Chattanooga Central High School, Polk County High School, Ooltewah High School.

Qualified applicants must have a cumulative high school GPA of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale through the Fall 2003 Semester and have valid ACT/SAT scores. Applications will be ranked by an independent panel of judges based on community service activities and citizenship (30%), written communications skills (30%), academic achievement (25%), and financial need (15%).

Recipients must pursue a full-time course of study in business, education, science/math/medicine, agriculture, or technology at a regionally accredited, two- or four-year degree-granting institution in Tennessee during the Fall 2004 Semester and the Spring 2005 Semester.

Application packets are available at qualifying high schools and at all VEC service centers. **The applications and all supporting documentation must be received at VEC's corporate headquarters in Decatur no later than 5 p.m. EST on March 5, 2004.**

The Lillard-Shadow Scholarship program reflects VEC's commitment to the strength of individuals and organizations in its service area and recognizes the importance of volunteerism and community activities to a young person's growth. The scholarship program rewards students who have "given back" to their communities by assisting the students with college costs.