

Lateral Cut Techniques Help Protect Trees



Vegetation Control Specialist and certified arborist Jim Runyan said VEC uses trimming methods that promote tree wound healing.

VEC crews use lateral trimming techniques to cut down on unnecessary harm to trees. That involves cutting tree limbs at the intersection of the nearest large limb, rather than at mid stem. The techniques are also designed to direct tree growth away from power lines.

Some homeowners seem to prefer the looks of the old rounding trimming techniques, but 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 leads to excessive sprouting, as well as cracks and rot.

Cracks and rot are major causes of trunk failure.

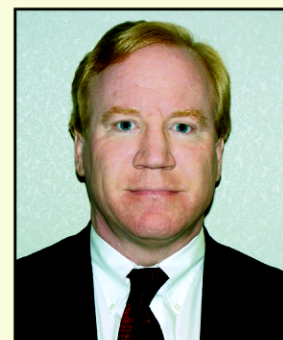
VEC to Use Survey to Gauge Customer Satisfaction

Please help us insure that your electric cooperative is serving your needs.

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) customers will soon be asked to participate in a survey that will help us improve products and services. Telephone surveys will be used to collect information from customers regarding recent service provided by the cooperative.

General customer satisfaction questions will be included in the survey. A random sample of customers will be selected and surveys will be conducted quarterly throughout the year. Survey questions will be kept to a minimum to encourage participation by customers. Results will be tabulated, analyzed, and used to improve your electric cooperative.

If you are selected for the survey, please take a few minutes to answer the questions. Your input is important.



Barking up the Right Tree

Vegetation Control Pays Big Dividends for our Customers

By Rody Blevins President/CEO

We understand many of our member/owners would prefer that Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) never trim their trees or spray to control vegetation growth. But our vegetation control policies and techniques translate into a higher degree of safety, more reliable service, and lower costs for our member/owners. Our environmentally-

friendly procedures also help protect the health of trees in our service area. In this issue, we are going to look at all aspects of VEC's vegetation control policies and procedures.

Perhaps the most important reason to trim trees that are encroaching on power lines is to eliminate the safety threat. A tree or a limb that is touching a power line creates a serious safety hazard. Any tree or tree limb that touches a power line can become energized and produce a serious shock to anyone who comes into contact with it. We have a responsibility to prevent these potential threats when we can.

A well-executed vegetation management program also enhances service reliability. Trees that touch power lines drain electricity from the power system, cause voltage fluctuations, and can trigger safety devices to stop the flow of electricity along a power line.

The final report of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission concluded that more extensive tree trimming could have prevented the massive 2003 blackout in the Northeast and upper Midwest.

Besides safety and service reliability issues, VEC has a financial responsibility to our member/owners to weigh the financial impact of our vegetation management program. The return on the money we spend to control vegetation is significant. Our trimming and spraying programs help control out line-loss and outage management expenses. These savings translate into lower rates for our member/owners.

Another important consideration in VEC's vegetation control program is protecting the environment. With more than 8,000 miles of line strung from the Georgia to Kentucky borders we must plan well and implement an efficient and environmentally sound vegetation management program.

VEC and our contract crews employ several methods and products to protect the environment. Our tree trimmers use lateral cut techniques which is the preferred method recommended by major universities, professional arborists, and the National Arbor Day Foundation.

When our crews use herbicide spray to control vegetation they use the most environmentally-friendly product available. It has been tested and deemed harmless to humans and animals.

More details on VEC's vegetation control program are included in this edition of Powerlines.

VEC is committed to safety, reliable and affordable service, and to helping protect the environment in our 17-county service area. We feel our vegetation control program reflects this commitment.

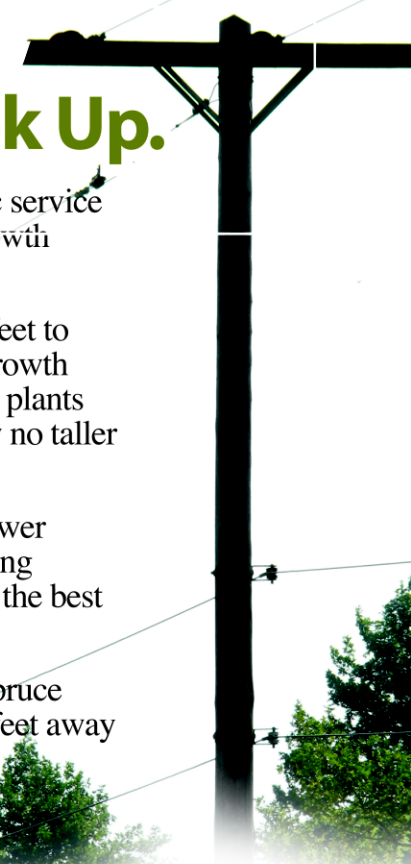
When Landscaping, Don't Forget to Look Up.

You can best protect your trees and your electric service by selecting and planting trees with size and growth characteristics appropriate for their location.

From directly beneath power lines measure 20 feet to each side of the power line. This is the Low Growth Zone." It's best not to plant trees or tall growing plants in this zone. Plants should be varieties that grow no taller than 25 feet.

From 20 feet to 50 feet from each side of the power line is the Medium Growth Zone. Low growing ornamentals such as dogwoods and redbuds are the best choice for this zone.

Limit taller growing trees such as maple, oak, spruce and pine to the Tall Zone which begins at 50 feet away from electrical lines.



Tree Trimming Notifications Not Always Possible

One of the great things about this part of Tennessee is the abundance and variety of trees that beautify the area. But when tree limbs grow to the point of threatening power lines, Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) has no choice the tree must be trimmed.

VEC's certified arborist Jim Runyan says that before VEC crews or contract crews trim a tree every effort is made to notify the property owner. But in some cases when the property owner cannot be notified, crews will still be forced to trim.

"We won't do a tree removal without notifying the property owner but sometimes, when the tree is a considerable threat to the power lines and when we've tried and failed to talk to the property owner, we will be forced to trim without the notification," Runyan said. "We would prefer to be able to speak with the property owners first, but that is just not always possible.



By allowing their electric bills to be rounded up to the next dollar Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) customers funded \$33,000.80 in community service grants in October. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, a total of \$1,602,101 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.

Organizations receiving grants in September include:

Imagination Library in Rhea County - \$5,000; Operation REACH of Kingston - \$5,000; Community Character Project of Crossville - \$2,400; Fentress County Food Bank - \$2,167; Meigs County Ambulance Service - \$2,000; Athens Travelers Car Days - \$1,667; Etowah Senior Center - \$1,300; Michigan Avenue School PTO of Cleveland - \$1,200; Hiwassee Fraternities, Inc., of Charleston - \$1,200; Polk County Retired Teachers Association - \$1,000; Monterey High School Chorus Boosters - \$1,000; Boy Scout Troop 18 of Monterey - \$1,000; Polk County K-8 D.A.R.E. Club - \$900; Pickett County Football Boosters Club - \$667; Pickett County Softball Boosters - \$667; Calhoun Elementary Booster Club - \$666; Pickett County Girls and Boys Basketball Boosters - \$666; Meigs Senior Center - \$525.80; Mayland Community Organization of Crossville - \$500; Fentress County Public Library - \$500; New Horizon Adult Daycare of Crossville - \$500; Girls Scouts of Cleveland - \$500; Mayland Volunteer Fire Department - \$500; Polk County High School Women's Fastpitch Softball Boosters - \$500; Senior Citizens of Cumberland County - \$500; and Tri-State Resource and Advocacy Corp., of Chattanooga - \$475.



VEC President/CEO Rody Blevins, left, and VECustomers Share Board Member H.B. Rankin, right, present a \$5,000 grant check to Christine Ralph, executive director of the Rhea County United Way and Aliceann B. McCabe, director of the Audrey Pack Memorial Library. The funds will be used for the county's Imagination Library program.



Bobby Collier, president of Operation REACH, and his granddaughter Katie Collier present a plaque to VECustomers Share Board Member Glenn Wheaton of Roane County. Collier said the plaque was presented in appreciation for the support Operation REACH has received from VEC customers through the VECustomers Share program.

2006 Marks 150th Birthday for Cumberland County



Volunteer Electric Cooperative employees pose by the Crossville office in this photo from the 1940s. Pictured are: (From left) Denton Mooneyham, Clarence Chambers, Bob Steele, Leamon Hall, Carson Gore, Frank Dodd, Lyle Williams, and Fleming Huddleston.

It was 150 years ago when the Tennessee Legislature carved out bits of Bledsoe, Rhea, White, Fentress, Roane, Morgan, and Putnam counties creating Cumberland County. About midway through Cumberland County's 150-year history Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC), then called Volunteer Electric Cooperative, entered the picture and began offering electricity to county residents.

But before VEC arrived on the scene Crossville had already welcomed World War I war hero Alvin York who arrived at the Crossville Depot in 1921. The Homesteads, one of President Franklin Roosevelt's projects to boost local economies began providing homes, land, and equipment to local farmers in the 1930s. And Volunteer Energy Cooperative was serving 3,631 customer/members in June of 1940.

In 1939 VEC signed an agreement with Tennessee Valley Authority to provide electricity in Cumberland County and began expanding service in the areas in the early 1940s. In 1946 H.I. Bilbrey of Crossville served as a VEC trustee and as vice president. J.W. Lillard, who along with W.A. Shadow was instrumental in the formation of VEC, was still serving as the cooperative's president. W.A. Shadow was still serving as VEC's secretary-treasurer.



Volunteer Electric Cooperatives in this photo from the 1940s include: (from left) Denton Mooneyham, Fleming Huddleston, Leamon Hall, Frank Dodd, Bob Steele, Lyle Williams, Carson Gore, and Clarence Chambers.

Since that time VEC and Cumberland County have shared a common destiny – growth.

Today, Cumberland County is home to more than 50,000 residents. It is know as Tennessee's golf capital, a haven for retirees, and is home to one of the most successful rural professional performing arts theaters in the nation - the Cumberland County Playhouse. Volunteer



Volunteer Energy Cooperative employees at the Crossville Customer Service Center posed for this photo in the 1970s to mark 300,000 man hours without a lost time accident.

Energy Cooperative has grown to serve 104,000 member/owners in all or parts of 17 Tennessee counties that stretch from the Georgia to the Kentucky borders.

Virtually all of Cumberland County's residents receive their electricity from VEC.

If you look carefully around Cumberland County these days, you will undoubtedly spot one of Cumberland County's sesquicentennial mascots – plaster otters that have been decorated by local artists to reflect Cumberland County heritage. Volunteer Energy Cooperative's Crossville Customer Service Center is home to one of these colorful mascots. Appropriately decked out in a lineman's uniform, hardhat and gloves, it reminds us that the growth and development of VEC and Cumberland County have gone hand in hand.

VEC Uses Low Concentrations of Safest Herbicides

Volunteer Energy Cooperative's right-of-way (ROW) spraying program is necessary to help prevent extended power outages caused by falling trees and to assist with quick power restorations by improving access for service crews, according to Jim Runyan, VEC's vegetation control specialist.

"We spray in the late spring and early summer because that's when growth is most active," Runyan, a certified arborist, said "We only use EPA-approved herbicides that are rated the safest and we use them in low concentrations."

Runyan said the herbicides work on woody growth without affecting flowers and grass. The herbicides VEC will be using have been tested and deemed harmless to humans and animals. Copies of the Material Safety Data Sheets for each herbicide are available at VEC customer service centers.

Organic growers with questions in the Cleveland and Decatur service districts should contact Runyan at 423-334-7034. Organic growers in the Crossville service district should contact Tommy Walker at 931-839-2217 ext. 7434 and organic growers in the Jamestown service districts should contact Butch Smith at 931-864-3685 ext. 7651.