

Move to Automated Meter Reading is Under Way



Volunteer Energy Cooperative employees (from left) Dion Cooper, Courtney Gregory, and Morris Swafford install some of the first meters that will allow VEC to remotely monitor and read customers' electric meters.

VEC President/CEO Rody Blevins announced earlier this year that VEC is beginning a 4-year, \$9.2 million project to automate the cooperative's meter reading functions. VEC is began the first stage of that project in April at the Sanford, Ten Mile, West Crossville, and Harrison Bay substations.

VEC crews have also installed about 4,000 of the new meters and will be installing about 2,000 per month for the duration of the 4-year project.

One of the main functions of the Automated Meter Reading (AMR) system will be to efficiently and accurately gather billing information. Eliminating opportunities for errors in the meter reading and data entry aspects of billing is an important benefit of the AMR system. But the AMR system will help VEC manage load demands better, help speed up the power restoration process in the event of an outage, and detect meter tampering.

The customers' meters will be constantly feeding information to the AMR system. If information from a customer's meter stops, there is either some equipment malfunction or the customer is out of power.

With VEC's AMR system tied into the cooperative's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system, managers can quickly identify affected customers and view all the equipment on the feeder. That allows crews to quickly pinpoint the source of the trouble and restore power much more quickly.

Hurry! Limited Time Offer*

Is your all-electric home less than 12 months old? Your all-electric new home may qualify for a **\$50 credit toward your power bill** and a **rebate** toward the purchase price on selected lifetime warranty electric water heaters. Call VEC to learn more about promotions that could put money in your pocket.



Call 1-800-362-9684 ext. 7055 Today

* This offer expires 9/15/2006. Offer is good for the purchase price of one qualifying lifetime warranty water heater up to \$400.00. Home owner must sign up for a free *energy right*® new home inspection to qualify.



TVA Board Faces Challenges in Today's Energy Environment

By Rody Blevins President/CEO

I was on hand as TVA's new board of directors was sworn in on March 31. Moments after the swearing in Bill Baxter, one of two returning board members, said the electric distributors and customers should see now

more responsive leadership at TVA.

"The new governance structure is a part-time non-executive board," he commented. "I'm convinced it will allow TVA to operate more efficiently, with more internal accountability and greater external responsiveness to our customers and to the marketplace."

I am encouraged by those sentiments and hope that he is correct.

After meeting with most of the new board members in March I am optimistic that the new part-time, nine-member board will prove receptive and quick to respond to the needs and concerns of distributors and our customers.

The move from the three-member, full-time board of directors to a nine-member, part-time panel with a full-time chief executive officer is the most radical change to TVA leadership in its 73-year history. Tom Kilgore was named acting chief executive officer and Bill Baxter and Skila Harris return to the expanded board. We've worked with these people in the past and their experience will be important for TVA during this transition.

Bill Sansom of Knoxville is one of the new board members and he was elected chairman. He is joined on the board by Mike Duncan of Inez, Ky., Dennis Bottorff of Nashville, Howard Thrailkill of Huntsville, Ala., Don DePriest of Columbus, Miss., and Susan Richardson Williamson of Knoxville.

At the time this issue of *Powerlines* goes to press, one board seat remains vacant.

These board members bring in a diverse background of management expertise and strong business experience. I'm optimistic that this infusion of new energy and experience will help TVA respond quickly and efficiently to the challenges we face. Rising costs associated with delivery of fuel and purchased power are particularly tough issues this board must address relatively quickly.

Higher than normal temperatures and lower than normal rainfall this summer may also create problems.

A leaner more nimble TVA will be in a better position to meet these challenges and I'm optimistic that this new board will help lead TVA in that direction.

VEC Champions Customers' Interests in Washington

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) employees and board members met with leaders of the U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C. in May to stress the need for legislation that is friendly to electric cooperative members.

VEC President/CEO Rody Blevins, VEC Crossville Service Area Manager Bobby Randolph, and board members Gene Carmichael (McMinn County), Kenneth Vaden (White, Putnam and Overton counties), Jerry Henley (Rhea and Bledsoe counties), Laney Colvard (Cumberland County), Larry Storie (Pickett County), and Aubie Smith (Hamilton County) made the trip.



U.S. Rep. Harold Ford Jr., (far right) was one of the lawmakers VEC officials met with during their trip to Washington, D.C. VEC board members shown with Ford include Larry Storie (back right), Gene Carmichael (front left), and Laney Colvard (front center).

Blevins said the meetings with lawmakers were important because Congressional leaders say they expect to pass a new energy bill within a few months.

"Last year Congress passed an energy bill that took them almost six years to write," Blevins said. "Now they are expecting to pass a new energy bill in about six months. It's very important for us to do everything we can to make sure the new bill protects the interests of VEC customers and rural electric cooperative customers across the country."

Blevins said that after meeting with lawmakers he is cautiously optimistic about the new bill.

"Of course we'll never know for sure until we can examine the final bill, but the lawmakers we spoke with seem to understand how rural electric cooperatives serve areas that are not as densely populated and they seem to understand the challenge that creates," Blevins said. "We also stress to legislators how healthy electric cooperatives spur economic development in the communities they serve."

Blevins said VEC officials as well as their counterparts from across the nation will be monitoring the progress of the new energy bill carefully.

"We can't forget that it was laws such as the Rural Electrification Act that paved the way for rural electric cooperatives back in the 1930s," Blevins said. "Rural communities can't afford to lose the ground they have gained through adjustments to the laws governing electric cooperatives."

VEC Customers *Share*

A Little Change Goes a Long Way

By allowing their electric bills to be rounded up to the next dollar Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) customers funded \$31,200 in community service grants in April. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, a total of \$1,800,301 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 April include:

Plateau Pregnancy Center, Crossville, - \$5,000; American Legion Post 68, Athens, - \$5,000; Valley View Storehouse, Cleveland, \$2,000; Monterey Senior Citizens Center - \$1,500; Muddy Pond Volunteer Fire Department, Monterey, - \$1,500; Chattanooga Central High School Band Boosters - \$1,215; Friends of the Pickett County Library - \$1,200; Roane County Imagination Library - \$1,000; Fentress County Ministerial Association - \$1,000; Handfuls of the Harvest, Jamestown, - \$1,000; Girls Athletics, Decatur, - \$1,000; Birchwood Senior Neighbors - \$785; Polk County Education Foundation - \$700; Hands Extended, Inc., Cleveland, - \$700; Foothills Country Fair, Cleveland, - \$700; Partners of the Cherokee National Forest, Cleveland, - \$600; Polk County High School Girls Volleyball Boosters - \$560; AmVets Post 90, Athens, - \$500; Polk County High School Band Boosters - \$500; Meigs County Retired Teachers - \$500; Spring City Chamber of Commerce - \$500; Rhea County UT Extension - - \$500; Midway Middle School Science Club - \$500; Midway Quarterback Club - - \$500; Friends of the Spring City Library - \$500; Pickett County Little League - \$400; Pickett County 7th & 8th Grade English Club - \$400; Rhea County High School Girls Tennis Team Boosters - \$300; Benton Antique Farm and Auto Show - \$240; McMinn County Foster Care Association - \$200; Riceville Youth Football League - \$100; and Riceville Wildcats Booster Club - \$100.



VEC Customers Share Board Member Don Padget, center, presents a grant check to Jim Gruber and Jim Rogers of the Fentress County Ministerial Association.

VEC Crews Learn Rescue Techniques

When there is a power outage - whether in daylight or darkness, fair or foul weather, or wherever a problem arises - Volunteer Energy Cooperative's linemen respond. Working in tough conditions around thousands of volts of electricity can be a dangerous job. That's why VEC employees are continuously learning and practicing safety techniques.

As a part of this ongoing training VEC crews recently participated in pole/bucket truck rescue training and testing. This training is required annually by OSHA.

In the past major emphasis has been placed on the pole top or climbing portion of this training. This year VEC officials decided to place more emphasis on the bucket rescue portion because lineworkers now typically spend much more time working out of a bucket truck than they spend climbing.

More electrical contacts occur while the employee is working out of the bucket.

Crews learned and practiced methods for assisting a fellow worker who has been injured. Boone Eldridge of Tennessee Job Training & Safety conducted the bucket rescue portion of the course while VEC Safety Director John Selvidge conducted the training on the pole top climbing portion.



VEC's Keelan Milligan, Monterey, climbs a pole in preparation for rescue training.

Employees Learn Substation Operation, Safety



VEC's Darrell Crisp, right, instructs students during the 2006 Tennessee Job Training & Safety Substation School at Fairfield Glade substation.

Blevins, Darrel Crisp, and John Selvidge each served as instructors in the substation. VEC superintendents Tommy Walker and Mike Cook attended the school along with dispatchers Joy Davis and Kristy Stokes.

Other instructors were Don Morrell from Holston Electric Cooperative, Danny Hayes Coordinator of Tennessee Job Training and Safety (JT&S) and JT&S instructor Boone Eldridge.

Volunteer Energy Cooperative's new Fairfield Glade substation in the Crossville area was the site of the 2006 Tennessee Job Training and Safety Substation School.

VEC facilitated the training sessions April 19 through 21.

The Fairfield Glade substation was used for the hands-on portion of this school. The training room at VEC's Crossville Customer Service Center accommodated the 25 students for the classroom portion.

VEC's Clyde Jolley, Rody

Right-of-Way Spraying Schedule

Volunteer Energy Cooperative's right-of-way (ROW) spraying program is scheduled to get under way in early July, according to Jim Runyan, VEC's vegetation control specialist.

Runyan, a certified arborist, said the spraying 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.

"We spray when growth is most active," Runyan 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.

2006 ROW Spraying Schedule

Decatur Service Area

- Sanford – County Road 50 area
- Highway 58

Cleveland Service Area

- South of Highway 64 - Brown Drive, Osmet Road, Horten Road, and McClure Road areas.
- Tasso – Cates Lane area
- No Pone-Eads Bluff area
- Harris Creek – Highway 58 & Highway 60 areas

Spring City Service Area

- Highway 27 – Roddy, Rock Springs, Stump Hollow, and Toestring areas

Benton Service Area

- All bush hogged areas

Crossville Service Area

- Vandever community
- Big Springs Gap area
- Bledsoe County – Highway 101 S
- Highway 68 – Homestead area, Grassy Cove area to Rhea County line

Jamestown Service District

- Mt. Helen area