



## Low-Income Weatherization

As a result of the stimulus package, DOE's Weatherization Assistance Program is expanding with a goal of weatherizing one million homes per year. In the past, only households that earned up to 150 percent of the national poverty level were eligible to participate. The stimulus bill extends eligibility to those with incomes below 200 percent of the national poverty level. For a family of four, that's an income limit of \$44,100.

Program participants receive a professional energy consultation with an analysis of energy bills, a blower-door test to locate air leaks and advice on how to be more efficient. Workers then arrive to make energy upgrades like insulating walls and roofs, sealing air leaks, and installing more efficient heating and cooling systems. The process to weatherize a home through the program usually takes two days with an average cost of \$2,500. Since some homes have different needs, the stimulus bill allows up to \$6,500 to be spent on each home.

More information about the weatherization program is available from:

The Department of Human Services Citizens Plaza Building, 14th Floor  
400 Deaderick Street • Nashville, TN 37248-9500 • Phone: 615-313-4700  
Fax: 615-741-4165

## Tax Credits for Homeowners

For members not eligible for federally funded programs, the stimulus plan provides a homeowner efficiency tax credit of up to \$1,500, or 30 percent, of the cost for new energy upgrades, including weatherization activities as well as installation of efficient heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. Efficiency tax credits were already available for 2009, but carried a \$500 limit (with additional caps for certain types of upgrades) and only covered up to 10 percent of a member's investment.

For a complete listing of eligible upgrades, visit the ENERGY STAR website [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov).



Radio personality and energy efficiency expert Doug Rye was the featured speaker at an April 14 seminar on energy efficiency construction techniques in Cleveland. The event was co-sponsored by Volunteer Energy Cooperative, Cleveland Utilities, and Tennessee Valley Authority.

## Beware of Too-Good-To-Be-True Energy Claims

Folks in the Tennessee Valley, as well as folks from around the country, are experiencing tough economic times and rising energy costs. That makes all of us more interested in exploring money-saving options. It also means that shady operators who are more interested in separating you from your money than they are in your safety or your energy use are coming out of the woodwork.

The old saying "If it is too good to be true, it probably is" is particularly true on the energy-savings front. Most everyone has heard of the tried and true methods: caulking, insulation, energy efficient appliances, managing your thermostat well, and unplugging devices that aren't in use. But the desire to get quicker, more dramatic, results may give shady operators just the opportunity they are looking for.

If someone attempts to sell you a product that requires you to remove your meter to install it, alarm bells should start sounding. There are some illegal and very dangerous products being sold with installation instructions that require removing the meter. Anytime a meter is compromised it can cause an electrical catastrophe. Not to mention the fact that, meter tampering is against the law.

There are plenty of other devices on the market that are not that dangerous or illegal, but are not likely to produce the results promised. Residential power factor correction devices usually fall into this category. The device won't harm anything, but the vast majority of homes, will only see about a 0.06% reduction in electric use, not the 25 to 30% reduction that some vendors are claiming. Many are sold through a multi-level marketing scheme so the person attempting to sell you the device may or may not know that these energy-savings claims are unrealistic.

The bottom line is that there is no silver bullet. Saving energy is not a simple as plugging in a device into an outlet or meter. Looking for a quick fix will just lead to disappointment and wasted money.

Volunteer Energy Cooperative is like other electric cooperatives around the nation – we will actually try to help you spend less money on our product. Not many businesses do that. But we are a cooperative – owned and operated by the people we serve. So if you're serious about lowering your electric bill, we want to help. A good place to start is at [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org). You can also find money-saving tips in this issue of *Powerlines*.



Rody Blevins is Volunteer Energy Cooperative's President/CEO

## Temperatures Are Rising – But Your Electric Bill Doesn't Have To

The following tips will save you energy and help your budget during warmer weather.

- Replacing your old central air conditioner with a new *energy right*® qualified heat pump can reduce your cooling costs by 20 percent. VEC and TVA are offering 6% financing on units with a 14 or greater SEER rating through September 30.
- If possible, keep your room air conditioner out of the sun. Room air conditioners work best when kept cool. Installing one in a north-facing wall is usually ideal. If you have central air conditioning, you can save approximately an additional six to seven percent off your cooling costs for each degree you set it above 78 degrees.
- If your air conditioner does not have a thermostat adjust it to a lower setting or use it with a window or ceiling fan to cool things down.
- Consider installing a ceiling fan. During hot weather a ceiling fan will create a cool breeze and keep the air circulating in your home.
- Get rid of hot air. Use an exhaust fan to blow hot air out of your kitchen while you're cooking. The savings on your cooling costs far outweigh the electricity used by the fan. Also, take lukewarm showers and baths to avoid humid air, which holds more heat.
- A dehumidifier can add substantially to your electric bill. Make sure you have the appropriate-sized dehumidifier for your home.
- Close blinds, drapes and shades during the hottest part of the day. This keeps the strong sunlight from heating your home.
- Use your microwave or countertop appliances for cooking instead of the oven or stove.
- What says "summer" better than burgers and hot dogs? Instead of using your oven or stove which can generate heat on an already hot day, fire up the outdoor grill for cooking.
- Turn your water heater down to 120 degrees Fahrenheit to save money on your electricity bill. If you have children in the house, this is also a safety measure.
- Install compact fluorescent light bulbs in your most-used fixtures and lamps. Fluorescent bulbs put out less heat, plus you'll save \$30 to \$40 in energy costs over the life of each bulb.
- Check your heating and cooling system to make sure it is operating at peak efficiency.
- Postpone laundry and dishwashing until nighttime to avoid generating extra heat in your home. Also, consider taking advantage of the warmer air and dry your laundry outside.
- Don't forget about your own energy. Wearing lighter clothing can help cool you down without turning on the air conditioner. Also, remember to stay hydrated during extreme temperatures.
- If you have a pool, turn off your filter overnight when the pool is not in use.

# VEC Customers *Share*

## Your Spare Change Makes a Difference

Through the generosity of Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) customers who allowed their electric bills to be rounded up to the next whole dollar, the VECustomers Share program funded \$32,800 in community service grants in March. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, more than \$2.9 million in grants have 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](http://www.vec.org).

Organizations receiving grants in March include: Friends of the Fentress County Library - \$2,000; Rhea County Imagination Library - \$1,800; Midway Music Club - \$1,500; Pickett County Jr. High Science Club - \$1,400; Polk County Youth Soccer Organization - \$1,250; Midway Youth League - \$1,200; The Samaritan Center, Ooltewah - \$1,000; Meigs County High School Baseball Boosters - \$1,000; Fentress County Public Library - \$1,000; Royal

Rangers, Heritage Fellowship COG, McDonald - \$1,000; Athens Civitan Club - \$1,000; Snow Hill Tornadoes, Harrison - \$1,000; Martin Elementary School PTA, Crossville - \$1,000; Monterey High School Choral Booster Club - \$1,000; Ocoee Outreach, Cleveland - \$1,000; Blue Heat Softball, Benton - \$750; Mayland Senior Citizens Club, Crossville - \$750; Spring City Elementary School PTO - \$700; Clearwater Volunteer Fire Department, Athens - \$700; Highway 58 Volunteer Fire Department, Harrison - \$600; Health Occupations Students of America, Decatur - \$600; Meigs County Health Council - \$600; Riceville Youth Baseball Program - \$500; Monterey High School Virtual Enterprise - \$500; Wilson Elementary School Archery Club, Crawford - \$500; Boys and Girls Club, Benton - \$500; Burks Middle School Baseball Booster Club - \$500; Bradley/Polk Foster Adoptive Care Association, Cleveland - \$500; Monterey Lady Wildcats Softball - \$500; Dimpled Globe Award Committee of the United Fund of Cumberland County - \$500; The Trousdale School, Cleveland - \$500; Meigs County FFA Chapter - \$500; Monterey Senior Citizens Center - \$440; Chattanooga Area Food Bank - \$400; Meigs County Historical Society - \$300; Loudon # 497 Order of the Eastern Star - \$300; Crossville Arts Council - \$250; Pickett County High School Football Booster Club - \$200; Pickett County Jr. High Football Booster Club - \$200; Pickett County K-8 Softball Boosters - \$200; and Pickett County High School Baseball Booster Club - \$200.



VECcustomers Share Board Member Bill Sparkman, center, presents a grant check to David Keller, Mark Pierce, Colby Gladson and Trevor Gladson of Heritage Fellowship Church of God Royal Rangers.

# VEC is Taking Steps to Secure Your Identity

When transacting business with Volunteer Energy, you may notice that we ask for more information these days. This is a conscious effort by VEC to fight against identity theft.

One of the methods that thieves use to steal identities is to attempt to establish electric service in the name of the victim. VEC has instituted steps to make your information safe.

Identity theft occurs when someone uses your personally identifying information, like your name, Social Security number, or credit card number, without your permission, to commit fraud or other crimes.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) estimates that as many as 10 million Americans have their identities stolen each year. In fact, you or someone you know may have experienced some form of identity theft.

Identity theft is serious. People whose identities have been stolen can spend hundreds of dollars and dozens of hours cleaning up the mess thieves have made of their good name and credit record.

Consumers victimized by identity theft may lose out on job opportunities, or be denied loans for education, housing, or cars because of negative information on their credit reports. They may even be arrested for crimes they did not commit. The potential for damage, loss, and stress is considerable.

What can you do to fight identity theft? Be alert to signs that require immediate attention:

- Mail or bills that do not arrive as expected
- Unexpected credit cards or account statements
- Denials of credit for no apparent reason
- Calls or letters about purchases you did not make

## ***This Spring Be Safe - Be Aware***

For a Limited Time, bring this coupon to your local Volunteer Energy Cooperative Customer Service Center and get:

# \$15 Off

## **Midland WR 300 Weather Radio**

**Special price: \$59.95 plus tax**

**VEC**  
VOLUNTEER ENERGY COOPERATIVE  
[www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org)



Offer good for weather radios purchased in any Volunteer Energy Cooperative office. Limit one per customer while supplies last. Offer ends July 1, 2009.

# Project Deserve Needs You

Volunteer Energy Cooperative's Project Deserve program allows you to help the elderly, handicapped, low income and unemployed with their electric bills in emergency situations. You can do this by pledging a specified amount of money to be added to your monthly bill.

All funds collected through Project Deserve go directly to an energy fund. No funds will be used to administer the program. Eligibility will be determined solely by human resource agencies and/or community relief groups in all or portions of the VEC's 17-county service area.

Temperatures are starting to rise, and during this time of year many families need Project Deserve for assistance with their electric bill. Your contribution to Project Deserve will help these families in their time of emergency.

You may contribute monthly or you may make a one-time contribution. One-time contributions should be mailed to Project Deserve, P.O. Box 277, Decatur, TN 37322. Or contact your local VEC Customer Service Center to sign up for a regular monthly contribution today. Should you ever wish to cancel your monthly contribution, you can do so by contacting your local VEC customer service center.

## **VEC Family Shares Their Best Recipes with Your Family**

Volunteer Energy Cooperative employees are putting together a scrumptious sampling of some of their favorite family recipes to share with your family. The recipes are available, absolutely free, at [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org). Just look for the recipe link on the home page.

*Here's a sneak peek:*

### **Crock-Pot Breakfast**

Put this in your slow cooker the night before and it will be ready when you wake up.

- 1 pound tater tots
- 1/2 pound diced ham
- 1/2 c. chopped onion
- 1/2 c. diced green or red peppers
- 3/4 c. shredded cheddar cheese
- 6 eggs
- 1/2 c. evaporated milk
- 1 t. salt



Layer half the tater tots, ham, onion, green pepper, and cheese in slow cooker (in that order). Repeat layers. Beat eggs with evaporated milk and add salt and mix. Pour over layers. Salt and pepper. Cook on low for 10-12 hours.

-Connie, Corporate Offices