

## Don't Let Thunderstorms Come as a Shock to You

's temperatures start rising, so do the chances of thunderstorms. And when thunderstorms hit, lightning can be a serious threat to personal safety. It can also cause power outages and create serious problems for your electronic equipment and electric appliances.

The best atmospheric scientists in the world cannot determine exactly when or where lightning will strike, but there is one thing we can be certain of – it will strike. And when it comes to thunderstorms and lightning, the best defense is to be prepared.

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) offers Midland weather radios at customer service centers. You can even use the coupon below to get \$15 off on the weather radios. Normally they cost \$74.95 plus tax, but by using the coupon, you can get yours for just \$59.95 plus tax. The Midland weather radios offered by VEC can be set to monitor several different counties and provide an alert when threatening weather is approaching. They have a battery backup and also operate on your regular household current.

Lightning, high winds and heavy rains can also cause electrical spikes. You can also protect your home's appliances and your sensitive electronic equipment by signing up for VEC's Surge Sentry program. With Surge Sentry's warranty-backed protection, you will have one less thing to worry about during threatening weather.

For more information on the Surge Sentry program you can contact

your local VEC Customer Service Center or visit [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org).

Lightning has been known to strike more than 10 miles from the storm in an area of clear sky above. So just looking up at the sky may not provide a true indication of whether or not a threat exists.

It's also important to prepare a thunderstorm/power outage kit that includes:

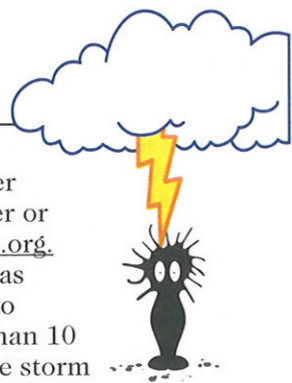
- Canned/packaged food
- A manual can opener
- Fresh water (bottled)
- Blankets
- Battery-operated radio
- Flashlight with fresh batteries
- Extra batteries

During a thunderstorm:

Do not take a shower or bath. Water and copper tubing are excellent conductors of electricity. Stay away from windows. A central location in the house in an area away from doors and windows is the safest.

If your power goes out, immediately report it to VEC and then avoid using the phone. (Phone lines may also conduct electricity.)

Never touch downed power lines. Dial 911 or VEC immediately to ensure that the line is turned off so repairs can be made.



[www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org)

**VEC**  
VOLUNTEER ENERGY COOPERATIVE

[vec@vec.org](mailto:vec@vec.org)

May 2010  
**POWERLINES**  
Newsletter of Volunteer Energy Cooperative

## VEC Carries Your Concerns to Nashville

*Rody Blevins is President/CEO of  
Volunteer Energy Cooperative*



VEC is among 22 electric cooperatives that serve more than 1 million homes, farms, schools, churches, hospitals, and other important facilities across Tennessee. About one-third of the state's entire population receives electric service through an electric cooperative.

Numbers like those carry political weight – and protecting the interests of electric cooperative members

requires that we use that weight from time to time. Electric cooperatives exist today because federal and state legislation made them possible.

If we do not stay involved in the political process our rights and benefits as electric cooperative members/owners are at risk.

Members of the Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) Board of Directors, management and staff recently participated in the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association (TECA) Legislative Rally in Nashville.

This is an annual event when we take the message of cooperative member/owners to our state lawmakers. On March 2, we met individually with legislators who serve the districts served by VEC and talked with them about issues of concern. These meetings are very helpful in fostering strong relationships between VEC and the people who govern our members.

For more details on the rally, see the story in this issue of Powerlines.

We were very encouraged by the response of our lawmakers and are grateful that several will be sponsoring a resolution to recognize Volunteer

Energy Cooperative on the 75th anniversary of our founding. The proposed resolution recognizes the efforts VEC has made over three quarters of a century to stimulate economic development and help our members achieve a higher standard of living throughout our service area.

We also had very frank and productive conversations with lawmakers about proposed changes in

the rates electric cooperatives are allowed to charge cable TV companies to attach their lines to the

poles we install and maintain. The accompanying article contains more details on the issue but simply put, we are opposing efforts by the cable TV industry to force members of not-for-profit electric cooperatives to pay higher rates so that for-profit cable TV companies can increase their profit margins.

These are the types of issues that we cannot afford to watch from the sidelines. When legislative action can affect electric cooperative members and the rates we pay, VEC must continue to join with other cooperatives to make sure all our voices are heard.

Volunteer Energy Cooperative is celebrating our 75th anniversary this year. In honor of this milestone we are looking for your stories about how electricity or how VEC has had a positive impact on your life and/or your community. If you have a story you would like to share, please contact Robert McCarty at 423-334-7052 or by email at [rmccarty@vec.org](mailto:rmccarty@vec.org).

*If we do not stay involved  
in the political process our  
rights...are at risk.*

## VEC Partnering with TVA to Help Students, Teachers Save Money for their Schools and Learn about Energy Efficiency

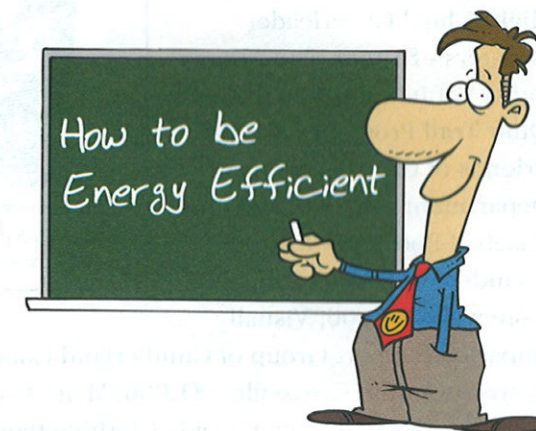
Volunteer Energy Cooperative is among several TVA distributors participating in a program designed to save energy and money for schools while enhancing students' understanding of energy efficiency.

Starting with the 2010-2011 school year VEC and Cleveland Utilities are partnering to offer the Green Schools program to some Bradley County schools in a pilot project designed to gauge the effectiveness of the program in local schools. TVA began offering the Green Schools program to a handful of schools in August 2009 and participating schools saved a combined 500,000 kilowatt-hours, or nearly \$52,000, on their electric bills. Participants ranged from elementary to high schools.

"Students are really excited about this real-world experience where they can apply math and science skills to actually create energy audits for their schools, see where power is being wasted in the schools as well as at home and where they can conserve energy," said Jolyn Newton, program manager for TVA Energy Efficiency Education and Outreach.

Newton said students are learning how much money and energy can be saved by adjusting thermostats by just one or two degrees. Some have even formed energy patrols to remind teachers and classmates to turn off lights, power strips, computers and other equipment when not being used.

"They are turning off banks of lights in classrooms on sunny days and turning all lights off for short periods of time as part of the energy-saving measures," Newton said. "They are learning behavioral changes that will carry into their adult lives at home and at work. It's amazing to see the enthusiasm the students are expressing for this hands-on learning project."



Participating distributors agree the Green Schools program helps students understand the importance of energy efficiency and how simple actions on their part make a difference. They also say that the program helps students and teachers become more aware of the link between energy efficiency and the environment. Green Schools is offered by the national Alliance to Save Energy, based in Washington, D.C. TVA chose the Green Schools Program after researching other national programs.

**This Spring Be Safe Be Aware**

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

**Midland WR 300 Weather Radio**

**VEC Special Price \$59.95 plus tax**

**\$15 OFF**



Offer good for weather radios purchased in any Volunteer Energy Cooperative office. Limit one per customer while supplies last. Offer ends June 30, 2010.

# VEC Customers Share

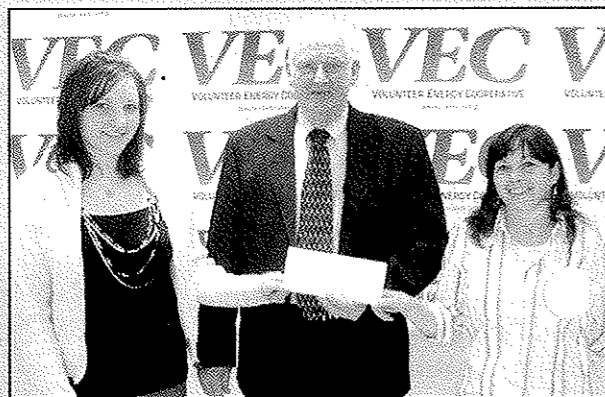
## Your Spare Change Makes a Difference

The VECustomers Share program funded \$33,200 in community service grants in February. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, more than \$3.3 million 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](http://www.vec.org).

Organizations receiving grants in February include: Fentress County Food Bank - \$2,155; Pickett County K-8th Grade Language Arts Club - \$1,995; Children's Advocacy Center of Hamilton County - \$1,500; Muddy Pond Volunteer Fire Department - \$1,500;

Cumberland Trinity Tabernacle's Helping Hands, Crossville - \$1,300; Friends of the Library, Spring City - \$1,000; Midway Youth Outreach - \$1,000; Midway High School Cheerleader Boosters - \$1,000; The Athens Parks Foundation-Appalachian Quilt Trail Program - \$1,000; Friends of the Allardt Music Department - \$1,000; McMinn Baseball Boosters - \$1,000; Pounder Wrestling Club, Ooltewah - \$1,000; Visually

Impaired Support Group of Cumberland County - \$1,000; Teens Against Drugs Activity Center, Crossville - \$1,000; Meigs County Volunteer Emergency Services - \$1,000; People Helping People Clothing Bank, Benton - \$1,000; Rhea County 4-H - \$1,000; Mineral Springs Hunger Relief - \$1,000; Ocoee Children's Booster Club - \$1,000; Mended Hearts Chapter 127, Cookeville - \$1,000; Welcome Valley Teen Group, Benton - \$1,000; Meigs County High School Tennis Boosters - \$1,000; Meigs County Relay for Life - \$750; Cumberland Adult Reading Council, Crossville - \$500; Meigs County High School Theatre Group - \$500; Waterville Community Elementary School PTO, Cleveland - \$500; Ocoee Region Builder's Association, Cleveland - \$500; Cumberland Artisans for Creative Expression, Pleasant Hill - \$500; Frank P. Brown Elementary School PTO, Crossville - \$500; Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Crossville - \$500; McMinn Area Cancer Relief Fund - \$500; North Lee PTO, Cleveland - \$500; Cumberland County Cardiac/Pulmonary Rehab Alumni - \$500; Young Readers Booster Club, Ten Mile - \$250; Adult and Family Education of McMinn County - \$250; For the Children Quilting Ministry, Crossville - \$250; Helping Hands Ministry on Peavine Road, Crossville - \$250; D3 Baseball, Cleveland - \$200; Bradley County High School Soccer Booster Club - \$200; Bradley County High School Broadcast Media Club - \$200; Cleveland Evening Lions Club - \$200; and the Trousdale School, Cleveland - \$200.



VECustomers Share Board Member Jerry Stephens (center) presents a grant check to Betty Wilcoxon (left) and Gail Wilcoxon of People Helping People Clothing Bank.



## Have You Found the Barn?

"Barns of Tennessee" contains 375 beautiful pictures that preserve Tennessee's disappearing agrarian tradition.

Have You Found the Barn? Web surfers are finding a wealth of money-saving information on Volunteer Energy Cooperative's new website. And they are also finding the hidden barn logo and qualifying for a chance to win a limited-edition, 8 1/2 -by-11-inch, hard-bound book, "Barns of Tennessee."

The 160-page pictorial keepsake is a tribute to Tennessee's agrarian history with 375 photographs compiled by the staff of *The Tennessee Magazine*, The Donning Company Publishers and authors Caneta Hankins and Michael Gavin. Most of the images were contributed by *Tennessee Magazine Readers*.

Four VEC customers have already won this \$45 value and you can join their ranks when you find the barn logo within the VEC website.



Find this logo on the VEC website for your chance to win "Barns of Tennessee."

Just browse through the links on the VEC website. When you spot the barn logo, click on it. You'll be linked to a form. Fill out the required fields in the form and submit it. You'll automatically be entered into a monthly drawing for a FREE copy of "Barns of Tennessee."

Drawings are held on the last business day of each month and the contest will run through the end of June, 2010. To re-enter for the following monthly drawing, you'll need to find the barn again and submit a new form. But beware, the barn logo will be moved each month.

Enter as many times as you like, but only one book can be awarded per VEC service address and you must be a VEC customer to win.

Visit the VEC website at [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org) to find tools to save money and make your life easier. And while you're there get all the details and to find the barn logo.

February's Winners: Denise Averill of Ocoee and Mary Buttram of Evensville.



## Lawmakers Urged to Help Keep Electric Rates Low

Volunteer Energy Cooperative and each of Tennessee's 22 electric cooperatives share deep ties to the

communities they serve. Locally owned and governed, VEC exists to better the lives of those who live in their service areas. Member-owners elect a board of directors to oversee how the cooperative is run. These directors are your neighbors and themselves member-owners of the cooperative.

On March 2, these local directors, along with key co-op staff members, traveled to Nashville for the annual Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association (TECA) Legislative Conference to meet with their state legislators.

VEC's delegation included President/CEO Rody Blevins; Vice President of Marketing & Economic Development Patty Hurley; Crossville Area Service Manager Bobby Randolph; VEC Board Chairman Gene Carmichael (McMinn

County); and VEC Board Members Larry Storie (Pickett County), Jerry Henley (Rhea and Bledsoe counties), and Keith Phillips (Putnam, White, and Overton counties).

"We maintain a presence at the state Capitol to ensure that our legislators remember that they represent some 2 million rural electric member-owners," said Tom Purkey, general manager of TECA.

When the delegations arrived on Capitol Hill for this year's visit, they concentrated on one main concern: pole-attachment fees, an issue cooperatives have been battling for years. It's a topic that has a long history of debate in the legislature as cable television companies seek to lower what cooperatives can charge them to attach lines to their electric poles.

Tennessee's electric cooperatives support a bill introduced by Rep. Craig Fitzhugh of Ripley that would create a working group to meet regularly to discuss pole-attachment rate issues and provide an appeals process, first with co-op boards and then local chancery courts. Cooperatives oppose

Continued on page 5

Continued on page 4

pole-attachment rates outlined by the Federal Communication Commission and against regulation by the Tennessee Regulatory Authority, which would increase electric rates.

"Lower attachment rates mean greater profits for cable television companies from the pockets of rural Tennesseans, many of whom do not even have access to cable television,"

said David Callis, TECA director of government relations.

"It may not be our most visible or well-known responsibility, but our legislative visits are very important to ensuring the stability of our electric cooperatives," said Purkey. "We make sure that our elected officials remember rural Tennesseans when making laws that affect the outstanding electric service provided by co-ops across the state."

## TECA Lobbying Efforts

Tennessee electric cooperatives are members of the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association (TECA), which provides support to the cooperatives in the form of education and training, communications, job safety and lobbying. The scope of the association's efforts is to ensure members continue to receive safe, reliable and low-cost electricity. Conversely, TECA opposes any legislation that would jeopardize service or increase the cost of power to cooperative members. Simply put, TECA does not lobby for funding from state coffers, but rather actively engages in legislative activities to protect the interests of cooperative members.

The association's lobbying activities fully comply with Tennessee's ethics

guidelines, which prohibit individual gifts or contributions to legislators or state government employees.

Tennessee's electric cooperatives are private, independent corporations owned by the consumers or "members" they serve. Electric cooperatives are operated on a not-for-profit basis with net margins re-invested in the cooperative. Tennessee's first electric cooperative was formed in 1935. Today, our state has 22 electric cooperatives, serving more than 2 million Tennesseans over 75 percent of the state's landmass.

## Notice of Election

In compliance with the bylaws of Volunteer Energy Cooperative, Article IV, Directors; Section 4.05, Notice of Directors to be Elected, I hereby give written notice that the following Directors' terms will expire this year:

District No. 1 - Polk County  
District No. 5 - Meigs County  
District No. 9 - Cumberland County East of Highway 127

As set for the in Article IV, Section 4.06, in order for a member to become a qualified candidate for Director, he/she shall file with the Secretary of the Cooperative or with his/her duly appointed candidate, signed by him/

her and not less than fifty other members in good standing whose premises served by the Cooperative are located in the directorate district of the candidate.

Qualifying petitions and other information pertaining to the elections can be obtained on or after May 28, 2010 by contacting Patty Hurley, Vice President of Marketing and Economic Development, P.O. Box 277, Decatur, TN 37322, or by calling 423-334-7050.

Qualifying petitions must be filed with the Secretary of the Cooperative or his designee at the VEC Corporate Office in Decatur, Tennessee by 5 p.m. EDT, June 4, 2010.

Sammy Norton  
Secretary-Treasurer

## Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

Residential Fuel Cost Adjustment  
Effective April 1, 2010  
- \$.00209

For the most current FCA information, visit [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org)