

Help keep an accident from ruining this Halloween by considering these safety tips:

**FOR TRICK-OR-TREATERS**

- Stay on sidewalks wherever possible. If there are no sidewalks, walk on the left side of the road – facing traffic. Obey all traffic signals.
- Stay in familiar neighborhoods. Only approach houses that are lit. Stay away from animals you don't know.
- Select costumes that are made of flame-retardant materials and that have reflective markings or tape. Carry only flexible knives, swords, or other props. Carry a flashlight. Make sure costumes don't drag the ground and that shoes fit properly.
- Make-up provides better visibility than masks. But if you select a mask, make sure you can easily breathe and see. Don't wear your mask when walking from house to house.



**FOR PARENTS**

- Young trick-or-treaters should be accompanied by an adult. Older children should know how to reach you and you should know where they are going.
- Although tampering is rare, tell children to bring their candy home to be inspected before eating any of it. Look at candy wrappers carefully and throw away anything that looks suspect.
- Make sure your yard is clear of ladders, hoses, tools, or anything that could trip young ones. Use battery powered lights for pumpkins and other decorations instead of candles.
- Pets are easily frightened on Halloween. Put them up to protect them from stress and cars and to make sure they won't bite a trick-or-treater.
- Consider giving out healthy snacks such as mini boxes of raisins, packaged fruit rolls, or single-serve packages of low-fat popcorn or cereal.

**Bring Outdoor Lights Inside During a Power Outage**



At VEC we try very hard to limit the number of power outages for our customer-members and we work very hard to make any power outages as brief as possible. But if the last two years have taught us anything, it is that sometimes Mother Nature can trump our best efforts and power outages happen.

We across this very helpful tip to help make those power outages a little less inconvenient, so we are going to pass it along.

Use your outdoor solar lights inside the house at night when the electricity goes off.

You can put them in jars and bottles and they give off plenty of light into your own home one night to test it for yourself.

There is no need to scramble around in the darkness, looking for matches, candles, and flashlights. Just look outside and see your solar lights shining brightly all around. You can also put solar light pipes into plastic drink bottles and they make the nicest, brightest, safest, lighting you could image. If you need a weight in the plastic bottle to keep them from tipping over, put in a few of the colorful flat marbles they put in aquariums and vases. You can also use sand, aquarium gravel, or whatever you have available.

Solar lights are a great light solution for power outages.

**Scammers Target Electric Customers**

A new scam is sweeping the nation by claiming that President Obama will pay your utility bills through a new federal program. Customers have reported the scam, and several other energy companies issued warnings to their customers about it.

**How the Scam Works:**

Consumers have been contacted in person and through fliers, social media and text messages with claims that President Obama is providing credits or applying payments to utility bills. To receive the money, scammers claim they need the consumers' social security and bank routing numbers. In return, customers are given a phony bank routing number that will supposedly pay their utility bills. In reality, there is no money, and customers believe they have paid their bills when in fact they have not.

**Tips to Avoid Falling for this Scam:**

- Never provide your social security number, credit card number or banking routing information to anyone requesting it over the phone or at your home unless you initiated this contact and feel confident with whom you are speaking.
- If you receive a call claiming to be your utility company and feel pressured for immediate payment or personal information, hang up the phone and call the customer service number on your VEC bill.
- Never allow anyone into your home to check electrical wiring, natural gas pipes or appliances unless you have scheduled an appointment or have reported a utility problem. Also, ask utility employees for proper identification.
- Always think safety first. Do not give in to high pressure tactics over the phone for information or in person to get into your home.



"We urge our members to guard their personal accounting and banking information and never share this information with family, friends or strangers," said Patty Hurley, VEC vice president of Marketing and Economic Development.

**VEC Customers Outsmart Scammers**

VEC's Spring City office received a call from a couple that received a call from a man claiming to be calling as a representative for VEC. He advised them they had been overcharged for the last several years and we were issuing them a refund of \$200 and a 40% discount on their electric bill. He proceeded to ask them for their bank account number and he would direct deposit their money.

The customers tried verifying some info from the caller and he said it was not important to know who and where he was. They then asked him for a phone number to call him back once they verified with VEC that this was true and he hung up on them.

**Cooperatives are a Different Kind of Business**

October of Cooperative Month in the United States. This designation helps cooperatives like Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) build awareness and educate the public about the cooperative way of doing business.

Each year, during the month of October, the nation's 48,000 cooperatives celebrate Cooperative Month by working to educate people about the qualities that make cooperatives unique. Cooperatives are based on the principle of shared ownership by those who share a common need for a product or service. VEC is one of the largest cooperatives – in terms of square miles served – in the nation and we are still owned by the customers we serve.

Those 55 people who met together in 1935 to form the cooperative set some ground rules that we steadfastly follow to this day. They determined that the cooperative was to be a not-for-profit business and in the 77 years that we've been in business, we've never made a penny of profit. That's one reason our customers enjoy the benefit of some of the lowest electricity rates available in the nation. Since we are owned by our customers – and not a group of stockholders who expect to see their share of the profits – VEC can offer lower rates than investor-owned utilities.

Our founders also pronounced that in addition to providing electricity in the safest and most economical manner possible, the cooperative was to serve the community.

In keeping with that dictate VEC works to recruit new businesses and industries into our communities; we provide college scholarships to our bright, energetic, and community-minded young people; we support programs to develop young leaders, and we collect donations to distribute to local non-profit community service organizations.

We also provide several programs to help our members save energy and save money. Not too many companies will make the effort we make to help customers use less of their product.

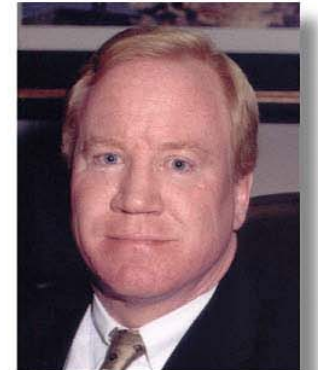
Another way VEC and other cooperatives are different types of business is the way they are governed, VEC is managed by a 12-member Board of Directors comprised just like you and elected by our customers.

During Cooperative Month we want to remind you that we are a customer-owned utility that is managed and governed by citizens who live in the areas we serve. As a cooperative, quality service is our bottom line – we work for you.

Being a member of a cooperative is different than just being the customer of an electric company. We work hard to make those differences as beneficial to our members as possible. And we hope our customers appreciate the difference.



Rody Blevins is President/CEO of Volunteer Energy Cooperative



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