

Many VEC Member-Owners Enjoy the Choices Provided Through Pre-paid Billing Option



About 530 VEC member-owners are enjoying the flexibility and lack of deposits that are features of the PayMyWay pre-paid billing option.

VEC launched the program a little more than a year ago in order to help member-owners avoid security deposits, credit checks, late fees, and reconnection fees. Under the program member-owners can schedule payments that meet the needs of their household budgets.

Once customers establish a PayMyWay account with a credit balance, his or her home's energy use is recorded and charged daily to the account. The credit balance is reduced by the amount charged until either the balance is exhausted or additional payments are made to the account.

PayMyWay customers schedule payments that are convenient for them. It's that flexibility and convenience that John M. says he enjoys.

"I'm self employed and I don't always get paid on a routine schedule," John said. "Now I can pay my electric bill on my own schedule."

John said being able to pay when his customers pay him has taken a lot of the stress out of running his own small business. "It's very easy for me to check my balance by phone whenever I need to and schedule my payments when it is convenient for me. I think it has also helped me to be a wiser consumer. If I know I'm going to have to make my last payment stretch a little longer, I can adjust my electric use accordingly."

Jacob and Leslie M. agreed that scheduling payments according to their budget and not VEC's billing cycle has proven helpful, but the main reason they opted for PayMyWay was to avoid paying a big deposit to get their electric service started.

"When you are just starting out and just getting started in a new home, there are so many expenses," Leslie said. "We could have paid the deposit, but that would have meant doing without other things. We were able to use that money to get some things we really needed for our new home."

Julie J., a single mother, said PayMyWay helped her break out of a cycle of late fees and reconnection fees that were keeping her in a constant uphill battle to keep her electric account current.

"While I was working so hard to pay the past due charges and the late fees and the reconnection fees, I was still running up new charges. It was a never-ending cycle," Julie said. "This really helped me get a new, clean start. I can pay a little bit extra and get those past due amounts paid off without worrying about getting my service shut off."

The PayMyWay billing option isn't for everyone. But for some member-owners, PayMyWay is a great tool for managing their household budgets.

Payments may be made with cash, credit cards, or checks via phone, at the VEC website, or in person at any VEC Customer Service Center. Once an initial credit balance has been established, customers can make minimum payments of \$40 at any time.

PayMyWay participants do not receive monthly statements. They can view their account balance information 24 hours a day through the VEC website (www.vec.org), by calling their local office, or by visiting any VEC Customer Service Center. When a customer's PayMyWay balance is low, they receive a courtesy notification via an automated phone call and email. If the account is disconnected, a minimum payment of \$40 or an amount necessary to re-establish a credit balance on the account is required.



Surge Sentry Helps Provide Peace of Mind

The typical American home contains many thousands of dollars worth of electronics and devices. Just in time for the approaching thunderstorm season, VEC is re-opening a surge protection program for our member-owners.

VEC's previous supplier stopped producing surge suppression equipment and VEC has been working to find a new vendor. After an extensive search VEC has opted to team up with Kenick to offer VEC's new Surge Guard program. VEC member-owners who are currently enrolled in VEC's Surge Sentry program will continue to enjoy uninterrupted protection.

Customers who expressed an interest in surge protection during the period VEC was unable to accept new applications will be the first to be contacted and given an opportunity to enroll in the new program.

Surges in electricity can happen at any time, but they are more prevalent during stormy weather. Lightning strikes and tree limbs falling on electric lines are two of the most common causes. They can cause sudden, powerful increases in voltage. They may last only a millisecond, but they can damage or destroy household appliances and electronic equipment.

The first line of defense in VEC's Surge Sentry protection system is a Meter Socket Adapter (MSA). The MSA is installed between the electric meter and the electric meter base. It protects the service line entering the home from major high-voltage spikes coming from the power line.

Plug-in suppressors supply the second line of defense. These come in a variety of sizes and configurations. They contain plugs and ports for plugging in a variety of appliances and electronic equipment. Plug-in suppressors are available with ports for power outlets, coaxial connections, and telephone connections.

The final line of defense is having your home properly grounded. When VEC technicians install Surge Guard equipment, they perform a visual inspection to make sure the home is properly grounded. The purpose of grounding the home is to prevent shocks, fires, damage to appliances and electronic equipment, and to minimize damage from lightning.

When all three of these lines of defense are in place, one more line of defense is automatically installed. That defense is the warranties that will repair or replace your appliances and/or electronic equipment. The warranties vary depending on which Surge Guard products are in place, so check with a customer service representative at your local VEC customer service center for all the details or visit www.vec.org.

The Future is Dim for Incandescent Bulbs

As we said goodbye to 2012, we also said goodbye to the 75-watt incandescent light bulb.

As of January 1, 75-watt incandescent bulbs can no longer be produced or imported but retailers can still clear their remaining stock. Incandescent 60 and 40 watt bulbs are scheduled to be phased out in 2014.

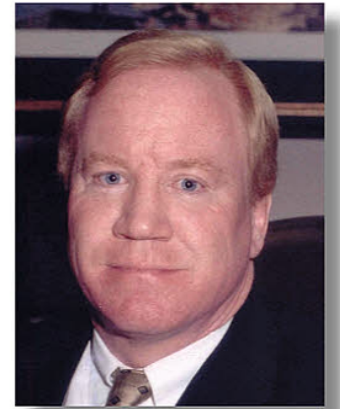
Most people will fill the void with Compact Florescent Light (CFL) bulbs. In terms of energy savings CFLs certainly pay off. With incandescent bulbs up to 90% of the energy the bulb uses is wasted through heat. Switching 15 of the older incandescent bulbs with CFLs can save you about \$50 per year. Current CFLs are also brighter and give a better quality of light than the first generation CFLs that were available a few years ago. CFLs also typically last longer than incandescent bulbs.

CFL bulbs do contain a small amount of mercury and should be recycled at the end of their lifespan. Many retailers recycle CFLs at no charge. For more information on how to safely dispose of a broken or used CFL, check the EPA's information at <http://www.epa.gov/cfl/>.

Another option that is emerging is Light-Emitting Diode (LED) bulbs. Current LED bulbs that are available are more expensive and some consumers have reported that they are not pleased with the light quality. But just like CFLs, LED bulbs are improving quickly and becoming more economical. LED lights are one of today's most energy-efficient and rapidly-developing technologies. They use about 20% of the energy and last up to 25 times longer than incandescent bulbs.

When replacing your light bulbs, always choose a new one that is the same size or smaller to make sure it will fit your lighting fixture. If you are replacing a dimmable bulb or an outdoor bulb, read the bulb package carefully to make sure your new bulb is designed for the use you have in mind.

Change is always a little scary, but this change will ultimately help you keep some extra change in your pocket.



Rody Blevins
President/CEO
Volunteer Energy
Cooperative



VEC Customers Share Neighbors Helping Neighbors



The VEC Customers Share program funded \$30,000 in community service grants in December. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, more than \$4.3 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.



VEC Customers Share Board Member Bobby Scott, right, presents a grant check to Joel Denton of the Ooltewah High School Band Boosters.

Organizations receiving grants in December

Cumberland County Imagination Library	\$2,500	Family Promise of Bradley County	\$1,000
Calvary Mission Team, Pikeville	\$2,500	Midway High School PTO, Young Leaders Club	\$1,000
United Way of Meigs & McMinn counties	\$2,500	Senior Citizens of Cumberland County	\$1,000
Junior High Cheer Boosters, Byrdstown	\$2,132	Banner Roslin Community Center, Jamestown	\$1,000
Monterey Lions Club	\$2,000	Midway High School PTO, Hall of Fame	\$618
Ooltewah High School Band Boosters	\$1,750	Midway High School PTO, Golf Boosters	\$600
Fentress County Senior Citizens Center	\$1,500	Candlelighters Family Support Group, Hamilton County	\$585
West Polk Fire and Rescue	\$1,250	Cherokee Removal Park, Birchwood	\$500
Polk County Education Foundation	\$1,250	United Fund of Cumberland County	\$500
Meigs County Health Council	\$1,000	Bradley County High School Wrestling Boosters Club	\$500
National Center for Youth Issues, Hamilton County	\$1,000	Toys for Children, Monterey	\$500
Meigs County High School Future Business Leaders of America	\$1,000	Brown Middle School PTO, Harrison	\$415
Cumberland County Drug Alliance, TAD Center	\$1,000	Midway High School PTO, Youth Leadership	\$400

Automatic Drafts Can Draw from Checking Accounts, Credit Cards and Debit Cards

How much easier would your life be if you opened your next electric bill and seeing that it has already been marked "PAID"?

It happens every month to customers who have signed up for VEC's Automatic Draft payment plan using their checking account, or their Visa or MasterCard credit or debit card. These customers don't have to worry about checks, stamps, or extra trips to the VEC Customer Service Center. If they are on vacation or traveling for any reason, they don't have to worry about whether or not their electric bill has been paid on time.

Sounds easy, doesn't it?

If you're interested in taking the stress and hassle out of paying your electric bill, signing up for VEC's Automatic Draft is quick and easy.

Customers with accounts in good standing are eligible. Each month you will continue to receive your bill, but it will be marked "Paid By Bank Draft" or "Paid by Credit Card Draft." When you see one of these messages you can rest assured that your bill will be taken care of automatically.

The amount due will be drafted approximately two days before the actual due date.

Checking Account Draft

To have your electric bill automatically drafted from your checking account you'll need to fill out and sign a Draft Authorization Card and supply VEC with a voided check. You can do this at your local VEC office, or you can have the form sent to you so you can return the form and voided check by mail. You can also download the form from the VEC website at www.vec.org, fill it out and sign it and mail it back to VEC along with your voided check.

Credit or Debit Card Draft

VEC accepts Visa or MasterCard credit and debit cards for the Automatic Draft program. To have your bill automatically drafted from your credit or debit card, you'll also need to fill out a Draft Authorization Card and VEC will need to get a copy of the front of your card. You can accomplish this by going into your local VEC Customer Service Center or you can phone to have the authorization card mailed to you. You can also download the authorization card at www.vec.org. If you have the form mailed or download it from the website, you'll need to fill it out, sign it, and mail a photo copy of the front of your card back to VEC.

The mailing address to use is:

Volunteer Energy Cooperative
Attention: Accounting Department
P.O. Box 277
Decatur, TN 37322

The Fine Print

Electronic deductions will continue automatically from the time you sign up until you request that the deductions discontinue, you discontinue your electricity account, your credit/debit card expires, or your checking account changes.

Due to federal "Red Flag" rules to prevent identity theft VEC can no longer sign up customers for automatic draft payments over the telephone. However, customers who can answer security questions can change the

details of their draft payment plan over the telephone.

Upon the expiration of the credit/debit card, customers will need to re-submit a Draft Authorization Card and photocopy of the front of their new credit/debit card. VEC will make every effort to notify customers whose credit/debit cards are about to expire.

Customers who discontinue their Automatic Draft Payments for any length of time must re-submit the Draft Authorization Card and voided check or credit/debit card photocopy to re-enroll in the program.

VEC Contract Crews Inspecting Poles

Crews from Southeast Woodland are conducting power pole inspections for Volunteer Energy Cooperative. The crews, which typically consist of four to five members in pick-up trucks and sometimes on ATV four wheelers, carry VEC Contractor identification. Pick-up trucks also display VEC contractor identification.

These inspections allow VEC to identify poles that may need replacement and to identify problems before they result in power outages.

Nine years ago VEC began an aggressive pole inspection program in an effort to spot deteriorating poles and older equipment. Since beginning this project VEC has replaced about 12,000 older utility poles and the cooperative is working toward a goal of inspecting 100% of the poles every 15 years.

Inspections began on January 21 and are being conducted in the following order:

Benton 324 – Hwy 411N, Reliance
Ocoee 334 – Hwy 411S, Old Fort
McDonald 234 – Bancroft, Brymer Creek Rd, Owl Hollow Rd
Hopewell 334 – Hwy 60W, Mt Zion Rd
Crossville 234 – South Loop, Bottom Circuit, Hospital, Lantana Rd, Myrtle Ave
Crossville 254 – South Loop, Top Circuit, Hwy 70E, Webb Ave
Monterey 214 – Perdue Farms
Jamestown 364 – Picket Park

It is not necessary for customers to be home during the inspections and power will not be affected.

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

Residential & Outdoor Lighting Fuel Cost Adjustment
Effective February 1, 2013

2.364¢

For the most current FCA information,
visit www.vec.org