VEC VOLUNTEER ENERGY COOPERATIVE
VEC POWERLINES FEB 2018
Volunteer Energy Cooperative Newsletter

Safety Checklist: Check the Items on This List Created By the National Electrical Safety Foundation

Outlets: Check for outlets that have loose-fitting plugs, which can overheat and lead to fire. Replace any broken or missing wall plates. Make sure there are safety covers on all unused outlets that are accessible to children.

Cords: Make sure cords are in good conditions- not frayed or cracked. Make sure they are placed out of traffic areas. Cords should never be nailed or stapled to the wall, baseboard, or to another object. Do not place cords under carpets or rugs or rest any furniture on them.

Extension Cords: Check to see that cords are not overloaded. Additionally, extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis; they are not intended as permanent household wiring. Make sure extension cords have safety closures to help prevent young children from shock hazards and mouth burn injuries.

Plugs: Make sure your plugs fit your outlets. Never remove the ground pin (the third prong) to make a three-prong fit a two-conductor outlet; this could lead to an electrical shock. NEVER FORCE A PLUG INTO AN OUTLET IF IT DOESN'T FIT. Plugs should fit securely into outlets. Avoid overloading outlets with too many appliances.

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs): GFCIs can help prevent electrocution. They should be used in any area where water and electricity may come into contact. When a GFCI senses current leakage in an electrical circuit, it assumes a ground fault has occurred. It then interrupts power fast enough to help prevent serious injury from electrical shock. Test GFCIs regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions to make sure they are working properly.

Light Bulbs: Check the wattage of all bulbs in light fixtures to make sure they are the correct wattage for the size of the fixture. Replace bulbs that have higher wattage than recommended; if you don't know the correct wattage, check with the manufacturer of the fixture. Make sure bulbs are screwed in securely; loose bulbs may overheat.

Circuit Breakers/Fuses: Circuit Breakers and fuses should be the correct size current rating for their circuit. If you do not know the correct size, have an electrician identify and label the size to be used. Always replace a fuse with the same size fuse.

Lightning: During an electrical storm, do not use appliances (i.e., hairdryers, toasters and radios) or landline telephones (except in an emergency); do not take a bath or shower; keep batteries on hand for flashlights and radios in case of a power outage; and use surge protectors on electronic devices and appliances.

Space Heaters: Space heaters are meant to supply supplemental heat. Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from any combustible materials such as bedding, clothing, draperies, furniture and rugs. Don't use in rooms where children are unsupervised and remember to turn off and unplug when not in use.

What Does Safety Mean to You?

by Julie Jones

Safety is important. No really, SAFETY is important to VEC. Last year I had the opportunity to interview linemen from almost all of our service areas. I asked each man four questions: what does working safe mean to you, is safety a team effort, what is the one thing you would tell our members, and finally is safety contagious. While there were various responses on most of the questions, the first question, what does safety mean to you, was answered unanimously the same. "Safety means going home at night." It is that simple. Work safe, protect each other, and everyone goes home.

> "Safety means going home at night."

According to numbers from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, electrical line workers are among the top ten most dangerous jobs in the United States. At any given moment, linemen must deal with one or more occupational hazards. OSHA reports these hazards include high-voltage contact, working at height, working in confined spaces, challenging weather conditions, and work zone safety. Ironically a lineman's job is ranked as more dangerous than being a fireman or in law enforcement.

Safety Superintendent Ty Ratcliff knows these statistics well. He has been a volunteer firefighter for 29 years, and he has worked for VEC for 20 of those years. Prior to becoming Safety Superintendent Ty worked as a lineman in the Cleveland Service Center 18 1/2 years.

Ty recently completed the TVPPA Certified Safety Coordinator training. He along with six other Safety personnel from three states completed their OSHA 30 in November. In addition to teaching and promoting safety at VEC, Ty also works within the community helping with Safety Demonstrations at local schools and community events. Safety isn't just a VEC thing for Ty, but an everyday for everyone responsibility.

TVPPA Certified Safety Coordinator (CSC) participants completed the OSHA 30 Hour General Industry Course on November 9th 2017. From left to right are: Ardo Ba, Oak Ridge Electric Dept., Brian Thomasson, Paducah Power System, Casey Patterson, Huntsville Utilities, Brian Sharp, Murfreesboro Electric Dept., Ty Ratcliff, Volunteer Energy Cooperative, Ricky Lafollette, Sevier County Electric System. Instructor: Steve Powell & Paul Brasfield.

Take Control of Energy Consumption

Rody Blevins
President/CEO
Volunteer Energy Cooperative

They say there are only two things that are certain: death and taxes. But I've been in the energy business long enough to know that there is a third certainty – when temperatures plunge or soar, energy bills go up.

In the VEC service area temperatures typically start dropping dramatically in December and January. This prompts many of our members to call and ask why their December bill is so much higher than their November bill.

If the customer heats their home using electricity, the answer is pretty straightforward – the lower the outdoor temperature goes the more electricity a home's heating system must use to raise the indoor temperature to a comfortable level.

For example, if the outdoor temperature is 55 degrees and a home's thermostat is set to 68 degrees, the heating system must use enough energy to raise the indoor temperature by 13 degrees.

But if the outdoor temperature drops to 30 degrees, the home's heating system will have to use enough energy to raise the indoor temperature 38 degrees to maintain the same 68 degrees indoor temperature - that's almost three times as much energy.

Even if the homeowner lowers the thermostat to 60 degrees (way too cool for most people) during the cold snap, the heating system still must use enough energy to raise the indoor temperature by 30 degrees. That's still a lot more energy used than was used on the 55 degree day.

So when an energy consumer compares their fall bills to their winter bills, many times they are not comparing apples to apples. A more instructive comparison is to compare a January energy bill to another January energy bill – or to a month in which outdoor temperatures were more similar.

The link between weather patterns and energy use patterns is something we are well accustomed to working with at VEC and we are eager to help our member-owners take advantage of this knowledge to use less energy and lower their energy costs.

When an energy consumer can see the correlation between weather and energy use that consumer is empowered to take control and better plan their energy use and their energy costs.

At VEC we are here to help. It's as easy as visiting www.vec.org, signing into your account or using the links at the bottom of the page and downloading the SmartHub app from Google Play or the App Store for your phone.

VECustomers Share

Your Change Changes Things

The VECustomers Share program funded $29,000 in community service grants in December. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, more than $6.1 million in grants has been awarded. The deadline for grant applications is the last working 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.

VECustomers Share Board Member Lynn Crawford presented a grant check to Band Director Joel Denton for the Ooltewah High School Band Boosters.

Organizations receiving grants in December

Cumberland County Rescue Squad	$2,650
Fentress County Bulldogs	$2,000
Ronald McDonald House Charities of Greater Chattanooga	$2,000
Charleston-Calhoun-Hiwassee Historical Society	$1,700
Panther Pages Turners	$1,500
Polk County Alumni Association	$1,500
Roane County Robotics Team	$1,250
Clearwater Volunteer Fire Department	$1,250
Lake Tansi Security Police Department	$1,100
Meigs High School Tennis Boosters	$1,050
Benton Food Fund Booster Club	$1,000
Claxton Community Volunteer Emergency Services Inc.	$1,000
Decatur Civitan Club	$900
Spring City Middle School Science Boosters	$850
Spring City Chamber of Commerce	$750
Eagle Dugout Club	$750
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6277	$750
Kids on the Rise	$600
National Center for Youth Issues	$500
Midway High Bass Club	$500
Pleasant Hill Elementary School PTO (Band)	$500
Midway High School Baseball Boosters	$500
Stone Memorial High School - Food Pantry	$500
NAACP - Dream Achievers Program	$500
Wilson Elementary 8th Grade Class Trip	$500
Friends of Fentress Co. Imagination Library	$500
Midway High School Band Boosters	$500
Spring City Elementary 4th & 5th Lego Robotics Team	$400
Meigs County Crush Baseball (5&6 yr old)	$400
Meigs Fury Softball (Girls 10 U)	$400
SMHS OASIS: 2nd Chances Club	$400
Bradley Cleveland Public Education Foundation	$300

Shielding Your Home from the Elements

Weatherization offers added comfort and savings

To ensure that your home stays cozy all winter long without paying an arm and a leg, consider weatherizing your home.

Weatherization not only helps keep warm air from escaping your home, it also lowers your monthly power bills. In fact, homeowners who weatherize their homes can expect to reduce heating consumption by an average of 32 percent, as determined by the U.S. Department of Energy's Weatherization Program.

"Studies show that about one-third of the average home heating-and-cooling energy costs are due to air leaks," says Paige Finnell of Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC). "Primary leak areas include window and door frames, fireplace chimneys, attic trapdoors, and pipes that penetrate attic walls and floors."

To test windows and doors in your home, you can make a simple "draft detector" by attaching a piece of tissue paper to the end of a hanger. On a windy day, hold the coat hanger in front of the suspected leak. If the paper moves, then you probably have an air leak.

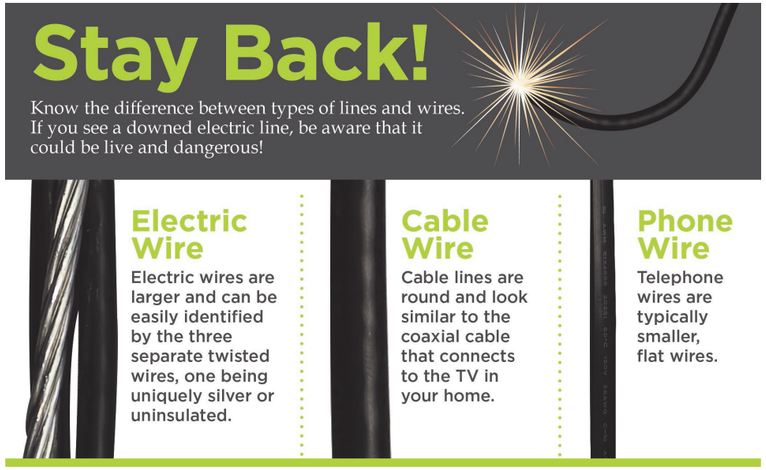
Three common and excellent ways of weatherizing your home to prevent heat loss due to air leakage are caulking, weatherstripping, and insulation.

Caulking

Caulking is beneficial for several reasons. It can reduce energy loss, control moisture damage, add soundproofing, keep a home cleaner, and help control radon gas infiltration. Caulking can be fairly labor-intensive for the average homeowner, but the benefits are well worth the effort. For large projects, you might consider hiring a contractor.

Weatherstripping

Weatherstripping should be done around windows and doors, especially those that are used frequently. Available in thin spring metal, vinyl, or foam rubber, weatherstripping can be purchased either by the roll or in a kit, and can be installed easily by the average homeowner with a minimal amount of skill and tools. Double-pane windows and doors are another option for avoiding heat loss, although some experts believe that these are less cost-effective than the simpler options of caulking and weatherstripping.



Insulation

Insulation is another highly effective weatherization method. By properly insulating key areas within your home, you can improve your homes ability to keep you comfortable. Studies from the Energy Information Administration show that insulating floors over unheated spaces, such as basements and crawl spaces, can save as much as 8 percent on heating and cooling costs.

"Insulating attics and floors can be a relatively simple task for the average homeowner, although insulating exterior walls most likely will require the services of a contractor," says Finnell. "There are several types of insulation on the market, each with a specific application, so do your homework before you buy to determine which product suits your particular situation."

Examples of insulation include:

- Batts and blanket – ideal for unfinished attic space and underneath floors
- Loose-fill – poured in or blown in, the latter requiring the skill of a contractor (both can be used to insulate an unfinished attic)
- Rigid board – designed for use on basement walls, exterior and interior walls, and foundations. When used indoors, rigid board must be fire-treated.

Some types of insulation come with a vapor barrier attached. Remember to install these with the vapor barrier side toward the living space. Do not use vapor barriers between existing and added insulation, because moisture gets trapped, reducing the insulation value and possibly causing structural damage.

For more information on using energy wisely go to the VEC website www.vec.org.

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

Residential & Outdoor Lighting Fuel Cost Adjustment
Effective January 1, 2018

1.964¢

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

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