

Heat Pump Can Be Cornerstone of Energy Efficient Home

In a typical home heating and cooling accounts for about 50% of the total amount of energy used. Today's high-efficiency heat pumps provide economical, year-round comfort and financing one through VEC and TVA's EnergyRight Solutions® program is affordable and simple.

Under the EnergyRight Solutions® program customers enjoy interest rates as low as 7% for qualifying heat pumps, convenient payment arrangements, and a streamlined application process.

VEC works closely with heat pump contractors throughout the region to make the process quick and easy. And a new high-efficiency electric heat pump will pay dividends in lower electric bills. In fact, some customers report that their savings on energy costs more than offset their heat pump payment.

Kristy Kelly-Sewell coordinates the heat pump financing program at VEC.

"Purchasing a new heat pump can be a big expense for many homeowners," Kelly-Sewell said. "We try to make our financing program very accessible so as many people as possible can start saving money on their heating and cooling costs right away."

Kelly-Sewell said VEC doesn't sell or install heat pumps – VEC finances the heat pump much in the same way a bank might finance the purchase of a new car.

"Customers select a contractor they are comfortable with from the QCN (Quality Contractor Network) list and the contractor sells, installs, and services the heat pump. We pay the contractor and then add the payments to our customers' VEC electric bill," she said.



Buy an electric heat pump, and everyone will be happy.

The heat pump loans are set up for a 10-year payoff, but customers who wish to pay the loan off sooner than that can do so without penalty. Kelly-Sewell added that the application process is fast. "We can take a heat pump loan application over the phone in about five minutes," Kelly-Sewell said. "And we typically can receive results of the bank credit check within three or four hours."

A good credit score and a good VEC pay history are required.

If you are interested in taking advantage of this program, you can contact Kristy Kelly-Sewell at 423-334-7055 (or you can call your local VEC Customer Service Center and enter extension 7055 when prompted) or by email at kkelly@vec.org.

Additional information, forms, and a list of contractors who participate in the program are available at www.vec.org.

Energy Efficiency Tips: Attic Insulation

Why is attic insulation important?

Heating and cooling account for approximately 45 percent of your home's energy usage. Inadequate insulation and air leakage are the leading cause of energy waste in most homes. Attics are often the easiest and most cost-effective place to insulate because most attics provide easy access for improvements. Attic insulation helps keep the home warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

What does attic insulation improve?

1. Conserves energy by slowing down heat loss and heat gain
2. Enhances comfort inside the home
3. Reduces the size of heating and cooling equipment needed
4. Prevents condensation from occurring
5. Reduces electric and gas bills

How much attic insulation should I add?

Insulation levels are specified by R-values that measure the insulation's ability to resist heat flow. The higher the R-value, the better the thermal performance of the insulation. The recommended level for most attics is to insulate to approximately R-38 or about 10 inches to 14 inches, depending on insulation type.

How much money could I save?

Properly insulating your home can save up to 20 percent on your energy bills.

Information provided by TVA's energyright Solutions for the Home program



Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

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

2.038¢

For the most current FCA information, visit www.vec.org
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Advocating in Washington, DC



Each year I along with Volunteer Energy Cooperative board members travel to Washington, D.C. to meet with members of the Tennessee congressional delegation. VEC Directors Mikel Frazier, Tim Handler, Jerry Henley, Scott Humberd, Sammy Norton, Keith Phillips, Aubie Smith, Larry Storie along with

Bobby Randolph, Crossville Service Area Manager and myself met with Sens. Alexander and Corker and Rep. Diane Black.

We have an important story to tell. Visits like this provide us with a valuable opportunity to educate lawmakers about co-ops and our communities. We have a responsibility to our consumers to be sure law- and policymakers fully understand how their decisions impact the people back home.

While we were there, we encouraged lawmakers to support the Farm Bill and rural development programs, reject the administration's proposal to sell Tennessee Valley Authority's transmission assets and dedicate funding for rural broadband and other infrastructure projects. We also invited our lawmakers to visit VEC, to meet our employees, attend annual meetings or tour co-op facilities.

The visits were made during the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual legislative conference. More than 60 co-op leaders from across Tennessee also attended the event.

"This trip is about building relationships," said David Callis, executive vice president and general manager of the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association. "When lawmakers evaluate legislation that impacts electric co-ops or rural Tennessee, we want them to think of us. It is important to discuss the issues, but it is equally important for them to know who we are and how the policy will affect our consumers and us."

When we visited with Diane Black, she stated, "I'm a big supporter of rural areas, and I thank you for coming up to give a voice to the people you serve. A lot of people never make it to visit legislators in Nashville, and certainly not to Washington, D.C. It's important for their issues to be heard, and I appreciate what you do."

(continued on page 3)



The VECustomers Share program funded \$28,100 in community service grants in May. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, more than \$6.3 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 Jerry Mayo presents a grant check to the Senior Citizens of Cumberland County Janice Neitzke, President and Anna Cox, Treasurer.

Organizations receiving grants in May

Junior Panthers Football	\$2,400	Midway Youth Development Organization	\$500
Pickett County 4-H	\$1,751	Athens Civitan Club	\$500
Spring City Lions Club	\$1,707	Korean War Veterans Association Chapter 297	\$500
Meigs County Fair Association	\$1,000	Pickett County Jr. High Math Club	\$499
Health Council (Meigs Matters)	\$1,000	Cherokee Removal Memorial Park	
Lake Forest Middle School - National History Day Team	\$1,000	-Blythe Ferry	\$400
Toys for Children	\$1,000	BASIC of TN Inc.	\$400
Wilson Elementary Outdoor Club	\$750	Creative Story Project dba of The Santa Project	\$400
Monterey Quarterback Club	\$750	Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA)	\$400
Fentress County Senior Citizen's Center	\$600	Harrison Recreation Center	\$400
The Samaritan Center Inc.	\$600	Meigs High Golf Boosters	\$300
Jones Chapel UMC Food Pantry	\$500	Martin Elementary FCCLA	\$300
Midway Youth Cheerleading Organization	\$500	Stone Elementary FCCLA	\$300
Cleveland Amateur Radio Club Inc.	\$500	Stone Memorial High School FCCLA	\$300
McMinn County Education Foundation	\$500	Ronald McDonald House Charities	
Boys & Girls Clubs of the Ocoee Region	\$500	of Greater Chattanooga	\$300
Chilhowee Middle School Girls Basketball	\$500	Cub Scout Pack 3176	\$293
Cumberland County Read To Be Ready Summer Camp	\$500	Midway Quarterback Club	\$250
Lake Tansi Security Police Department	\$500	Hallelujah Trail Christian Youth Camp	\$250
Jamestown Rotary Club	\$500	Midway High School Baseball Boosters	\$250
Masonic Lodge #605	\$500	American Cancer Society-Loudon County	\$250
Manna House Ministries	\$500	American Cancer Society-Roane County	\$250
Skills USA, TN College of Applied Technology Athens	\$500	Meigs County Historical Society	\$200
Riceville Volunteer Fire Department	\$500	Pleasant Hill Elementary School PTO (Band)	\$200
Polk County High Softball Booster Club	\$500	American Cancer Society-Polk County	\$200
Midway High School Band Boosters	\$500	Girl Scout Troop 41528	\$150
		Girl Scout Troop 40830	\$150
		Tennessee Hemophilia & Bleeding Disorders Foundation	\$100

(continued from page 1)

In addition to visits with members of Congress, we also heard from industry and policy experts, including U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Purdue. During a speech to co-op leaders, Secretary Purdue discussed the importance of rural broadband and highlighted the successes of Tennessee’s electric co-ops. “Rural broadband is not just a luxury — it’s essential,” said Purdue. “Tennessee recently changed state law, and now seven of their electric co-ops are pursuing broadband. I don’t believe that America would ever reach the productivity we have today across our nation without the abundant flow of electricity everywhere. In the same way, we cannot make America great again without high-speed e-connectivity available to every American.”

Maintain the Safe Zone Around Pad-Mounted Transformers

By Derrill Holly

Jordan Overbee was driving to work when he saw them. The elementary school-aged youngsters were just waiting for the school bus, but they were sitting on a big green metal box. Inside was vital electrical equipment, distributing electricity to several homes on the street.

“It was a bad place for a school bus stop,” Overbee recalled. “There were five kids gathered there to wait for a bus, sitting, talking and playing for a few minutes because it was between driveways.”

As manager of operations for Wake Electric Membership Corp., Overbee knows a lot about pad-mounted transformers. They make up about half of the transformers used across the Youngsville, North Carolina-based co-op’s system.

“Transformers change voltage from higher levels to voltages people use in their homes for their electronics, appliances and lighting,” said Overbee. “Each of our transformers can be vital to providing electricity to several homes.”

After seeing the kids waiting at that same transformer several days in a row, Overbee pulled over and talked to some of the parents. He explained that high voltage electricity flowed through the transformer inside the casing, and encouraged them to move a safer distance away. “The parents hadn’t thought much about it, so once I explained the risks, they were happy to move to another driveway,” Overbee said.

While overhead power lines are mounted on utility poles and substations are protected by security fences, pad-mounted transformers, switch boxes and pedestals are at ground level.

“We have about 11,000 pad mounted transformers on our system,” said Melvin Holmes, the vice president of operations at Volunteer Energy Cooperative, headquartered in Decatur, Tennessee. This is approximately 14% of the total transformers on our system.

In many newer subdivisions and residential developments, overhead lines are no longer an option. Burying power lines also reduces potential system damage from high winds and severe storms. While

consumers seldom see technicians working on the transformers unless there are power outages, they are regularly inspected by co-op crews riding through neighborhoods.

Co-op technicians need at least 10-feet clearance at the opening side of a pad-mounted transformer. Approximately 4 feet of open space is preferable at the rear and on the sides of the metal housing.

That distance allows for tool use, including hot sticks—typically 8 feet in length, used to work with energized equipment. It also ensures that one or two technicians working on a transformer have space to maneuver should they have to back away if problems occur.

“We have had members ask about painting transformers themselves, and we always try to explain the risks, and most members are more than willing to cooperate once they understand,” said Holmes.

Pad-mounted transformers are connected to primary high voltage lines, and secondary lines can extend in several directions to distribute power to homes and businesses. That’s why it’s important to check with the local VEC service center before planting shrubs or trees, setting fence posts, installing sprinkler systems and digging where it might damage underground lines.

“Volunteer Energy recommends that you call your local VEC service center and 811 for a site assessment and marking before proceeding with projects that might disrupt utility service,” said Melvin Homes, vice president of operations.

VEC also encourages public works and transportation departments to keep their equipment, supplies and road debris at least 15 feet away from pad-mounted transformers.

Derrill Holly writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

