

Don't Let Your Fireplace Burn Your Budget

Your fireplace may be great to warm up by on a cold winter night, but be careful that it doesn't burn a hole in your wallet. Whether you use it or not, your fireplace can be a pipeline of energy waste.

When in use, your fireplace may actually have a reverse effect on your home heating. Older fireplaces are generally quite inefficient and only heat the immediate area. The convection of the fire can also suck conditioned air out of the rest of your home and cause your furnace to work harder.

When a fire is not burning there is usually only a thin metal damper to keep warm air from flowing out the chimney. The damper is 100-year-old technology and does little to insulate your home.

Fortunately there are steps you can take to keep from getting burned by your fireplace:

- **Install a top-sealing damper.** These dampers are installed on the top of your chimney and act as a storm door, keeping conditioned air in regardless of the season.
- **If your fireplace is never used, consider sealing it** with insulation or an insulating inflatable damper. Be sure to remove all insulation if you plan on using the fireplace again.
- **Consider installing a fireplace heater.** These units draw fresh air from the room, circulate it through a heating chamber and blow it back into the room. They are a sealed system, so no smoke ever enters the room. Fireplace heaters will dramatically increase the efficiency of your fireplace.
- **Install glass fireplace doors.** This improvement will help the efficiency, safety and aesthetics of your fireplace. Glass doors allow for better sealing of the fireplace so less air is lost to convection and to simple drafts. The doors will also protect children from flames, and can prevent embers from escaping into the room. Consider installing doors in conjunction with

a fireplace heater for maximum efficiency.

There are a wide variety of products on the market to help improve the efficiency of your fireplace or simply seal off an unused chimney. Shop around or ask an expert to determine what is best to keep your energy dollars from going up in smoke.

VEC College Scholarship Deadline is March 8th

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) wants to reward students who have used their time and talents to benefit their local communities. VEC's Lillard-Shadow scholarship program rewards academic and community service achievements by awarding four \$2,000 scholarships to students who will graduate from high schools in VEC's service area in the spring of 2019.



The scholarships honor J.W. Lillard and Willis A Shadow, two community leaders who spearheaded efforts to bring electric power to Decatur and Meigs County in the 1930s, forming the organization that would become Volunteer Energy Cooperative. Mr. Shadow and Mr. Lillard were instrumental in improving the lives and livelihoods of thousands of residents through electric power.

Four awards of \$500 per semester each (renewable for up to four semesters) will be presented to spring 2019 high school graduates whose parents or guardians are VEC electric customers. Applications will be judged by an independent panel based on each student's community service activities and citizenship - 40%; written communication skills - 20 %; financial need - 25%; and academic achievement - 15%.

Scholarship applications are available at any VEC Customer Service Center or from high school counselors in the VEC service area. Applications are also available online at www.vec.org.

All application materials must be completed and delivered to VEC's Corporate Office in Decatur no later than 5 p.m. Eastern Time on March 8, 2019.

Innovation, Upgrades and Transparency

As we move into 2019, the Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) board of directors and I would like to share some exciting news with you about changes that are coming in the near future. In addition to continuing our work on the Vision 2020 plan, we will also be expanding our Right of Way program, upgrading our phone system, and changing the format of our bill for increased transparency.

In 2019, the funding for the Right of Way program will increase from \$5 million annually to \$6 million, which will shorten the vegetation control cycle from a 6-year term to a 5-year term. This should translate into fewer outages as the cycle shortens. We will also be upgrading the cooperative's phone system. The existing system was installed in 2002, so it utilizes dated technology that requires ongoing maintenance for proper operation. The new system will result in improved call quality and increased phone system flexibility. The expansion of the Right of Way program and the upgrades to the phone system should both result

in better service and improved reliability. In addition to these improvements, you will also notice a change in the layout and appearance of your VEC bill in the upcoming weeks. These modifications will allow us to continue providing the most transparent bill possible. We will provide details covering all of the different aspects that make up your total amount due, including the charges per kilowatt-hour that are paid to



Rody Blevins
President/CEO
Volunteer Energy Cooperative



Take a quick and easy online energy audit at www.2eScore.com to see how energy efficient your home is. You will receive recommendations to help you save money right away and a free energy savings kit that includes a \$10 Home Depot gift card! Find out how to improve your comfort and save money today!

Account Balance Summary

Previous Balance	123.05
Payment	-123.05
Balance Prior to this Billing	0.00
Current Charges	132.95
Total Amount Due	\$132.95

Usage History

Month	Usage
Current Month	805
Previous Month	800
12 Months Average	780

Current Service Detail

VEC CUSTOMER CHARGE	11.71
VEC ENERGY CHARGE	11.97
TVA ENERGY CHARGE	28.81
TVA FUEL COST	28.55
TOTAL ENERGY CHARGE	81.04
OUTDOOR LIGHTING SURTOL	7.34
VECCUSTOMER SHARE	6.05
TOTAL CURRENT CHARGES	123.95
PROJECT DEFERRE	1.00
SURGE SERVICE	5.00
COUNTY SOLID WASTE FEE	5.00
Current Charges	\$132.95

New Bill Layout

(continued on page 4)



The VECustomers Share program funded \$25,000 in community service grants in December. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, more than \$6.5 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 presents a grant check to Chief Clay Ingle and Captain Chris Downey of the Hamilton County Stars Organization. The grant will pay for new diving equipment for the first responders including the items shown.

Organizations receiving grants in December

Cumberland County Rescue Squad	\$1,750	Salem Baptist Church - Food Pantry	\$500
YAI Baseball Booster Club	\$1,500	Don't Fret Guitar Class	\$500
Friends of Pickett County Library		Community Foundation of Cleveland	
Christmas Market	\$1,399.65	and Bradley County	\$500
Peavine Care Center	\$1,250	Rinnie Family Community Education	\$450
Sixth Grade Stream Club	\$1,200	Meigs South Elementary PTO	\$400
Calhoun Charleston Food Pantry	\$1,000	Meigs North Elementary PTO	\$400
Miracle Lake	\$1,000	Meigs County Quest for Success	\$400
West Polk County Baptist Food Bank	\$1,000	Meigs Fury Softball - Girls 10 U	\$400
Happy Hearts Seniors	\$1,000	Meigs County Crush - 8 U Baseball	\$400
Rhea Middle Track and Field	\$1,000	Midway High School Baseball Booster	\$300
Rhea County Community Center- Rc3	\$1,000	Midway Youth Cheerleading Organization	\$300
Art Circle Public Library Foundation	\$750	Midway Quarterback Club	\$300
Hamilton County STARS	\$700	Bryan Symphony Orchestra Association	\$300
Ms. Pauletta Dowdy's 8th Grade ELA Club	\$600.35	Monterey Jr. High Softball	\$283.69
Central High School Ruri-Teen Club	\$600	Bradley County Master Gardeners	\$250
Midway Music Club	\$600	Walker Valley High School	
CC Tad Center	\$550	Theater Association	\$250
McDonald Community Center	\$500	Cumberland County High Track Team	\$250
Rip City Basketball	\$500	Monterey Senior Citizens Center	\$216.31
The American Legion Post 257	\$500	National Center for Youth Issues	\$200

Cold Weather and Energy Consumption

They say there are only two things that are certain: death and taxes. However, there is a third certainty – when temperatures plunge or soar, energy usage and electric bills go up.

In the VEC service area temperatures typically start dropping dramatically in December and January. The temperature change prompts many to call and ask why the December bill is so much higher than the November bill.

If our members heat their home using electricity, the answer is pretty straightforward – the lower the outdoor temperature goes, the more power a home's heating system must apply to raise the indoor temperature to a comfortable level.

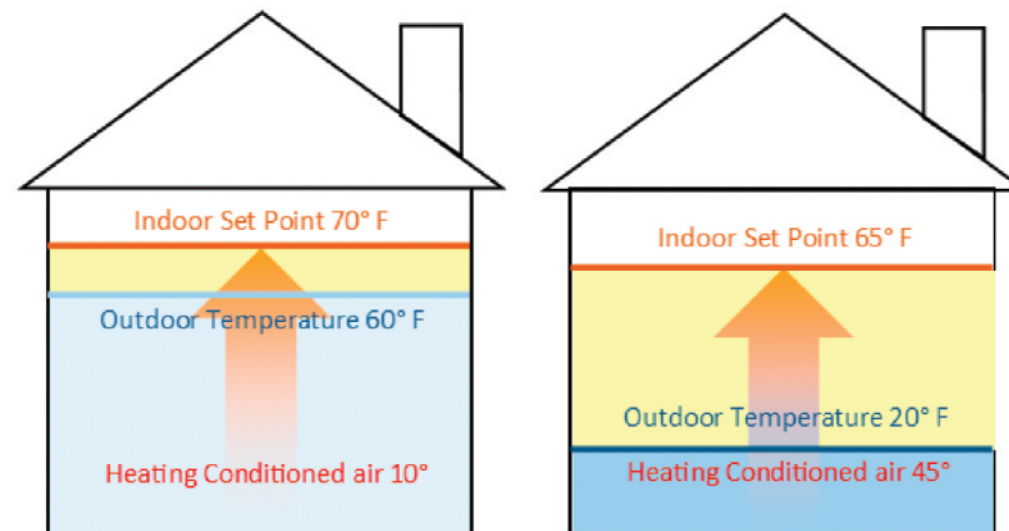
For example, if the outdoor temperature is 60 degrees and a home's thermostat is set at 70 degrees, the heating system will have to use enough energy to raise the indoor temperature by 10 degrees.

However, if the outdoor temperature drops to 20 degrees, the home's heating system will have to use enough energy to raise the indoor temperature by 50 degrees to maintain the thermostat setting of 70 degrees - that's five times as much energy.

Even if the homeowner lowers the thermostat to 65 degrees during the cold snap (which is too cool for most people), the heating system will still have to use enough energy to raise the indoor temperature by 45 degrees. That's more than four times the energy than was used on the 70-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 accurate similarity is to compare a January energy bill to another year's January energy bill.

For more specific information about your energy usage visit our website www.vec.org and sign into your account. You can get the same information on your smartphone by downloading the SmartHub app from Google Play or the App Store.



(continued from page 1)

the Tennessee Valley Authority versus the charges per kilowatt-hour that are paid to VEC. We will also be updating the bill to a full-color format. Your bill will still include all the previous information but will also have helpful tools for conserving and monitoring power usage. The new bill format will include a chart with usage history and the average temperatures. Moreover, the back of the bill will have information regarding account changes, local office contacts and hours, how to report power outages, and methods for faster payment processing.

I am looking forward to 2019 at VEC and our increased ability to serve our consumer members in an innovative timely manner.

2020 Calendar Contest

For our 2020 calendar, we are asking for photo submissions from our Co-op members.

To qualify:

- The subject matter must be found within our service area.
- The composition must be horizontal (landscape).
- Digital not printed.
- Submitted by email to jjones@vec.org or by dropping off a flash drive at your local office.
- Have a resolution of 300 dpi or higher.
- Have photographers name and contact information along with the location of the photo.
- **Photos must be submitted by March 1, 2019 for the 2020 contest.**



We will have a team review the photos submitted for the calendars. If your photo is picked for one of the months, you will receive credit on the last page of the calendar. The overall winning photo will be chosen for the cover of the calendar. If your photo wins the cover, you will also receive a \$50 bill credit certificate.

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)
Residential & Outdoor Lighting Fuel Cost Adjustment
Effective January 1, 2019
2.198¢
For the most current FCA information, visit www.vec.org
Volunteer Energy Cooperative is an Equal Opportunity provider and employer.