

## Cooperatives are a Big Part of Our Lives

How did you spend your day? Chances are, cooperatives were a big part of it. Let me provide some examples of how co-ops might be impacting you every day.

Your morning orange juice might have come from Florida's Natural, a producer-owned cooperative based in – you guessed it – Florida, but distributing throughout the U.S. If your morning coffee came from Equal Exchange, you are touching a cooperative again because they source their coffee from farmer-owned co-ops in developing countries, and they are a worker-owned co-op. If you like milk in your coffee or cereal, check this out: more than 86 percent of all fluid milk flows through a co-op.

The wheat in your muffin or toast was most likely processed through a farmer-owned grain elevator in the Midwest. If you had cranberries in that muffin, they likely came from Ocean Spray, or maybe you used Land O'Lakes Butter or Welch's Concord Grape Jam – all producer-owned co-ops that make the products we love on our toast.

Perhaps this is the day to make some improvements to your home. Ace Hardware and True Value are examples of purchasing co-ops. These are small businesses that come together to form a co-op so that they can compete with big-box retailers that are not owned by people in the local community.

On your way home, you may stop at one of the 300 community-owned cooperative grocery stores in the country. Many of the meat products and vegetables are also sourced from co-ops. If you are in a hurry, maybe you swing by KFC, Taco Bell or Pizza Hut to pick up dinner. The franchise owners of these fast food restaurants are all members of a purchasing co-op, just like the hardware stores above. So are the owners of Dunkin' Donuts and many other franchises.

And when it's time for "lights out," you can flip that switch knowing you're receiving safe, reliable electricity from your local electric cooperative, your friends at Volunteer Energy Cooperative.

## Monthly Co-op Progress Report - Dec. 2018



## IN THE KNOW . . .

### Powering Up

When electricity goes out, most of us expect power will be restored within a few hours. But when a major storm causes widespread damage, longer outages may result. Co-op line crews work long, hard hours to restore service safely to the greatest number of consumers in the shortest time possible. Here's what's going on if you find yourself in the dark.

#### 1 High-Voltage Transmission Lines

Transmission towers and cables that supply power to transmission substations (and thousands of members) rarely fail. But when damaged, these facilities must be repaired before other parts of the system can operate.

#### 2 Distribution Substation

Each substation serves hundreds or thousands of consumers. When a major outage occurs, line crews inspect substations to determine if problems stem from transmission lines feeding into the substation, the substation itself, or if problems exist down the line.

#### 3 Main Distribution Lines

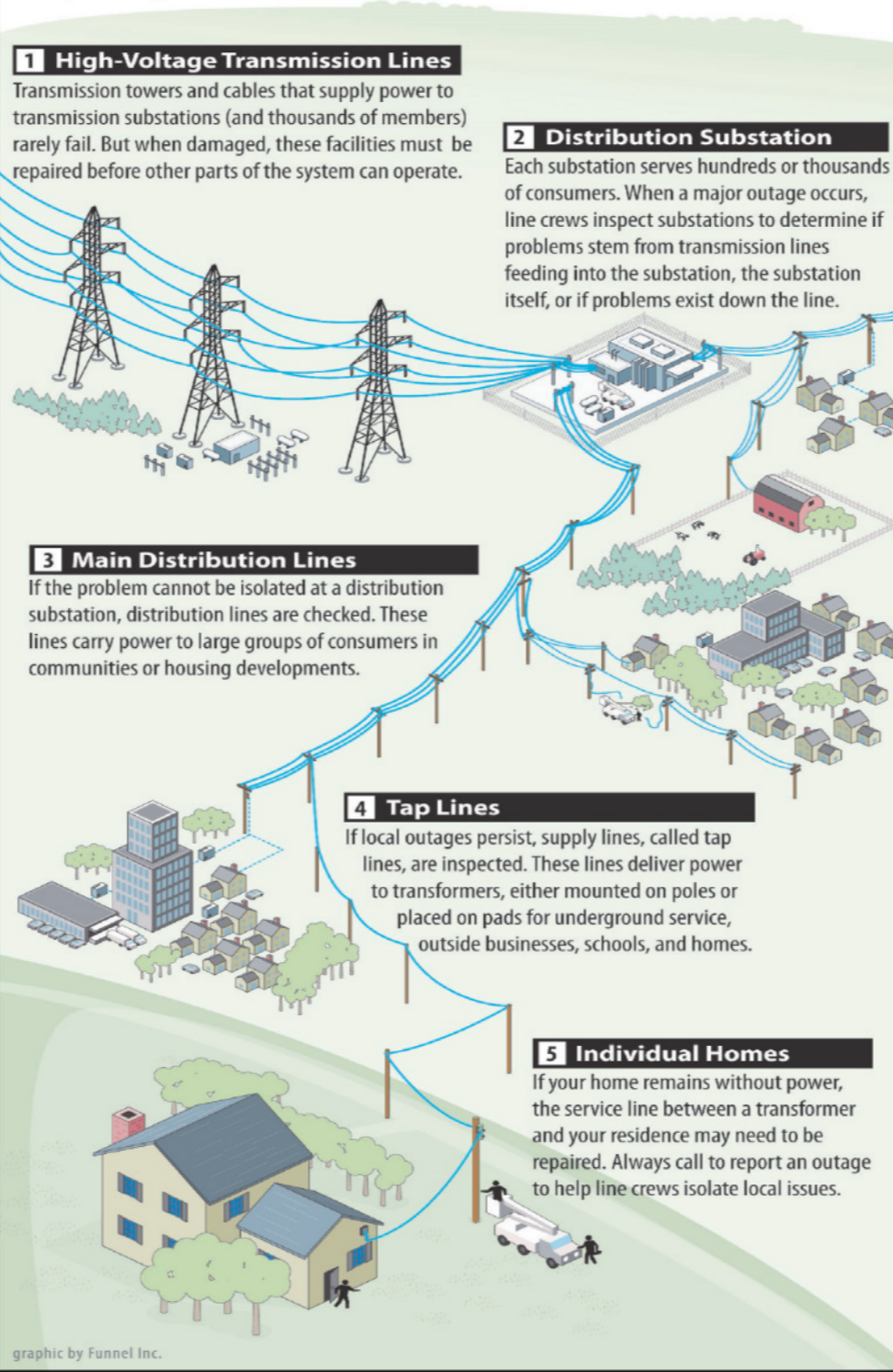
If the problem cannot be isolated at a distribution substation, distribution lines are checked. These lines carry power to large groups of consumers in communities or housing developments.

#### 4 Tap Lines

If local outages persist, supply lines, called tap lines, are inspected. These lines deliver power to transformers, either mounted on poles or placed on pads for underground service, outside businesses, schools, and homes.

#### 5 Individual Homes

If your home remains without power, the service line between a transformer and your residence may need to be repaired. Always call to report an outage to help line crews isolate local issues.



graphic by Funnel Inc.

## Changes at TVA

With a new CEO coming to the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) we are hoping to see positive changes in the Tennessee Valley Authority's financial planning. The past CEO, Bill Johnson, and the TVA board made some positive moves while with the TVA. Most notably the decision not to finish Bellefonte Nuclear Plant in North Alabama. That would have been extremely costly to the Tennessee Valley ratepayers. Also positive was the decision to close some coal-fired power plants and replace them with natural gas plants. This should help the air quality of the Tennessee Valley and provide more economical power generation going forward.

The one point we have disagreed with TVA management over, is with their current financial plan which called for 10 years of unnecessary rate increases. This plan was promoted with the idea of paying down some of TVA's debt, with which we agreed. They reached the funding level to meet that goal two years ago. The last two years of rate increases were unnecessary, and the planned increase for this coming October is also not needed.

We have had meetings with the TVA board members over the last year and they were productive. The TVA board is made up of very smart individuals who want to help the people of the Valley. We are trying to help them understand the impact of rate increases and how TVA's rates compare regionally and nationally. With all the rate increases by TVA, the company is now among the highest cost wholesale power in the Southeast United States.

Recently the power system for the City of Memphis (MLGW) conducted a study on options for power supply other than TVA. The study showed that Memphis could reduce their annual power costs by more than \$400 million each year, or by 40 percent by getting their wholesale power from sources other than TVA. When the TVA's wholesale power costs are this much higher than the market it will cause other Local Power Companies, including VEC, to consider what is in the best interest of our membership.

We are hopeful the new management at TVA will recognize how high their wholesale power rates have gotten and make a better financial plan going forward to address this serious issue. We will continue to communicate with the TVA board on these important issues on behalf of our members.



Rody Blevins  
President/CEO  
Volunteer Energy  
Cooperative



The VECustomers Share program funded \$27,700 in community service grants in February. Since October 2001, VECustomers Share members have awarded over \$6.5 Million in grants. 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](http://www.vec.org).



VECustomers Share Board Member Pauline Scherrer presented a grant check to Chief Anthony Brown (left) and Patrolman Quinn Freitag of the Lake Tansi Security Police Department. The grant will be used to purchase a digital camera for crime scene evidence recording.

### Organizations receiving grants in February

Calhoun Alumni Association	\$1,500	Cleveland Composite Squadron Civil Air Patrol	\$500
Pickett County Soil Conservation Club	\$1,400	Crossville Lions Club	\$500
Fentress County Fair Association	\$1,320.01	Hiwassee Long Beards	\$500
Cumberland County Community Band STARTS Program	\$1,210	McDonald Blackfox Ruritan Club	\$400
Pickett County Veterans Service Office	\$1,100	Midway Hall of Fame - Midway HS	\$400
Polk County High School Baseball	\$1,000	American Red Cross of Southeast TN - Bradley	\$350
Freedom Park Fund	\$1,000	American Red Cross of Southeast TN - Meigs	\$350
Cumberland United Middle School		Quarterback Club of Meigs County	\$300
Boys Soccer Team	\$1,000	Meigs County Heat Softball 12U	\$300
Spring City Middle School Baseball Boosters	\$1,000	Meigs County Heat Softball 8U	\$300
Alvin C. York Theater Arts	\$1,000	Toys for Children	\$300
Midway Youth Development Organization	\$900	64 Butterflies	\$250
American Red Cross of Southeast TN - Polk	\$750	American Red Cross of Southeast TN	\$250
American Cancer Society Relay for Life of Meigs County	\$750	Midway High School Baseball Boosters	\$250
Polk County Alumni Association	\$750	Midway Youth Cheerleading Organization	\$250
Wilson Elementary 8th Grade Class Trip	\$750	Monterey High Project Graduation	\$250
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6277	\$750	Mended Hearts, Chapter 127	\$250
Hunter Middle School PTSA	\$600	Class of 2020 - Midway High School	\$250
Ooltewah High School Band Boosters	\$600	Tennessee Valley Theatre	\$250
Peakland Missions Food Pantry	\$500	Midway Quarterback Club	\$240
Highway 58 Volunteer Fire Department	\$500	The Kidney Foundation of the Greater Chattanooga Area	\$200
Brown Middle School PTO	\$500	Mount Zion Church Historical Restoration Committee	\$200
Rhea County Imagination Library	\$500	Cookeville Housing Services Corporation	\$200
American Red Cross of Southeast TN - Rhea	\$500	York Institute Mens/Womens Track Team	\$179.99
American Red Cross of Southeast TN - McMinn	\$500	American Red Cross of Southeast TN - Hamilton	\$100

## Reporting an Outage

by Julie Jones

It is 8 p.m., you are settled into your favorite chair to watch your favorite television show and your lights blink. Then they blink again. They blink a third time and the power goes off. Five minutes pass and you're not too concerned, 15 minutes pass and you decide to tell someone. How do you report your outage?

### Call Your Service Center

Volunteer Energy's Central Dispatch Control Center is staffed 24 hours a day. Whether it is 8 p.m. or 3 a.m., a dispatcher is monitoring real-time service on our power grid. Each of our Central Dispatch staff works hand in hand with service area managers to monitor and diagnose problems. The dispatchers utilize state of the art monitoring systems which include the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) and Outage Management System (OMS). In addition to the Dispatch Control Center, our Integrated Voice Response System (IVR) can confirm outages and give updated information 24 hours each day.



Along with the IVR and Central Dispatch, our Contact Center is open for extended business hours: Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 7 p.m. EST and Saturday 8 a.m.-noon EST. "Volunteer Energy, how may I help you?" is a phrase repeated often in the Contact Center as representatives answer calls from the 17 counties served by Volunteer Energy.

### Use VEC.org or the Smart Hub App

You can also report your outage by signing into your account at [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org) or using the Smart Hub app. Both the app and the website are connected to the OMS system and updates the dispatch center in real time.



### Do Not Report Using Social Media

Do not report outages using social media. Our social media pages are not monitored 24/7 and are not connected to OMS. Your outage will not be recorded if you report using social media. During large or extended outages, social media will be used to provide progress updates.

### Update Your Phone Number

Whether you report your outage via SmartHub, on the website, or by phone remember to update your phone number. Without a current phone number, VEC personnel cannot reach you to verify or provide outage-duration information.

### Volunteer Energy Service Center Phone Numbers

Benton 423-338-2569, Byrdstown 931-864-3685, Cleveland 423-476-6571, Crossville 931-484-3527, Corporate 423-334-1020, Decatur 423-334-5721, Georgetown 423-344-8382, Jamestown 931-879-5853, Monterey 931-839-2217, Spring City 423-365-5220

## Energy Efficiency Moment

by Paige Finnell, Energy Services Specialist



The weather is warming. Wildflowers are blooming. Trees are sprouting new leaves, and people are swapping coats and furry boots for shorts and flip-flops. There's no doubt about it – spring is in the air and with a new season comes an opportunity to re-evaluate home-energy usage and prepare for warmer months. To help kick off your eco-friendly home makeover, take advantage of the mild weather and curb your energy use with improvements needed to transition into the summer months. Improvements which will save you money on your electric bill. There are the obvious – have your A/C tuned-up, set your thermostat to 78° and water heater to 120°, change air filters monthly, caulk windows and doors. There are also some things you may not think of:

**Clean out your FRIDGE:** It's one of the biggest energy hogs in your home, with the average fridge using nearly 14 percent of a household's energy. Start by rolling your refrigerator away from the wall and using a duster or vacuum hose to clear the dirt and dust from the coils. Remove unneeded and old food from your fridge to allow air to circulate and increase efficiency.

**Seal CRACKS:** and just not the ones that are visible but look under your sinks, washer/dryer pipes and hoses, floor vents to make sure where the metal meets the wood subflooring is sealed, and your return vent as well to make sure everywhere you can see a crack has caulk on it.

**Save in the LAUNDRY ROOM:** The dryer is one of the larger appliances in a home. Make sure your dryer is operating at full efficiency by inspecting the dryer vent and cleaning the lint trap every use. You will also benefit from the nice breezy air by using a good old fashion clothes line which will help limit your laundry cost too.

**Embrace NATURAL ventilation:** Speaking of a gentle breeze, take advantage of this springtime air and open some windows to create a natural cooling effect that flows throughout your home. Open your windows in the evenings and then close them in the mornings before the day warms up to capture the coolness. You might also consider installing insulated, thermal-back window coverings to keep heat from coming through the windows.

### Tennessee Valley Authority

Residential & Outdoor Lighting  
**Fuel Cost Adjustment**  
Effective **March 1, 2019**

**1.941¢**

For the most current FCA information, visit [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org)

Volunteer Energy Cooperative is an Equal Opportunity provider and employer.

### UPDATE YOUR PHONE NUMBER TODAY

Starting in March, when you update your phone number(s) you will become eligible for a prize drawing.

You can update your information by calling your service center, using SmartHub, or by logging into your account at [vec.org](http://vec.org). You can also use the form on the back of your bill.

