

Monthly Co-op Progress Report - December 2019



Stay In The Know

At Volunteer Energy Cooperative, we are constantly striving to improve our operational efficiency so we can provide the most reliable electric service possible for our consumer-members (that's you!).

We rely on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, which is why we need your help. By making sure we have your most accurate and complete contact information, we can continue to provide the high level of service that you expect and deserve. Accurate information enables us to improve customer service and enhance communications for reporting and repairing outages. It also allows co-op members to receive information about other important programs, events and activities.

Up-to-date contact information can potentially speed up the power restoration process during an outage. For example, the phone number you provide is linked to your service address in our outage management system. This means when you call to report an outage, our system recognizes your phone number and matches it with your account location. Accurate information helps our outage management system predict the location and possible cause of an outage, making it easier for our crews to correct the problem.

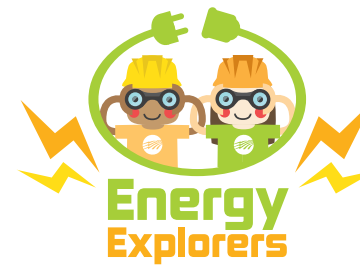
While we always do our best to maintain service, we occasionally plan outages to update, repair or replace equipment. In these instances, we can provide advance notification to affected members through automated phone messages, text messages or email, if we have your updated contact information and communication preferences.

Many of you have been members of the co-op for years, and it's likely that your account information hasn't been updated for some time. We recognize that many members now use a cell phone as their primary phone service, and we might not have that number in our system.

I want to emphasize that in providing your contact information to the co-op, we will never share this information with any third parties. It is only used by VEC to send important information to you.

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT WORD SCRAMBLE

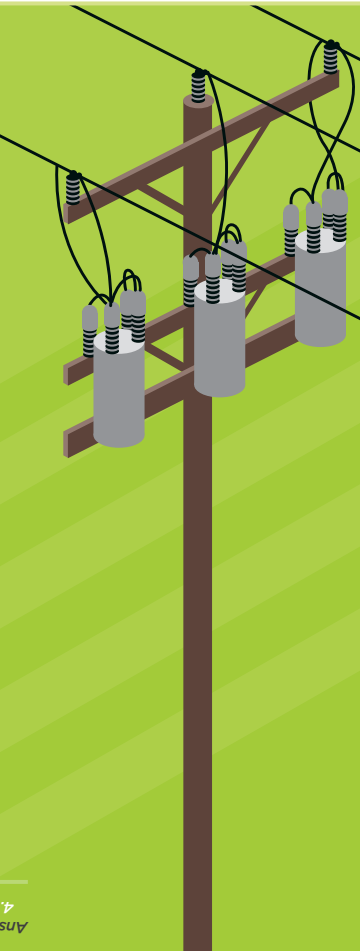
Electric co-ops use a variety of equipment to make sure you and your family receive reliable electricity. Can you unscramble the equipment terms below?



Use the provided clues for help, and double check your work in the answer key below.

- ORNSTAMREFR**
These can look like large metal cans on top of utility poles or big green boxes on the ground. They are used to reduce the voltage of electricity, making it safe for use in your home.
- OERPW NSLIE**
These can hang overhead or be placed underground. They carry electricity from where it's generated to homes and businesses in your community.
- OUTASBSNTI**
This is an electrical facility that contains equipment for controlling the flow of electricity.
- RCTLECIE ERMTE**
These devices are typically found outside the home and measure the amount of electricity you use.
- CBUTKE KTRUC**
Lineworkers use these types of vehicles to reach power lines and poles when making repairs and updates to the electrical system.

Answer Key: 1. TRANSFORMER 2. POWER LINES 3. SUBSTATION
4. ELECTRIC METER 5. BUCKET TRUCK



UPDATE YOUR PHONE NUMBER TODAY

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. You can also use the form on the back of your bill.



Tennessee Valley Authority

Residential & Outdoor Lighting

Fuel Cost Adjustment
Effective **February 1, 2020**

1.774¢

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

Volunteer Energy Cooperative is an Equal Opportunity provider and employer.

Keeping VEC's Grid Safe

Although the electrification of America is a relatively recent occurrence, today we have become reliant on electric power to perform even the smallest tasks. And we miss it when it's gone. We are reminded of how important electricity is to us when power is interrupted, even for a short period of time.

The electric utility industry is no stranger to being prepared in the event of a crisis. Threats to the power grid can come from a variety of sources. By far, the largest and most menacing threat to any power grid comes from weather. The good news is that the power industry as a whole is very familiar with protecting itself from the unseen and unpredictable dangers of Mother Nature, and mounting a Herculean effort of recovery when the inevitable happens.

Volunteer Energy Cooperative, along with other distributors of Tennessee Valley Authority power, has an Emergency Response Plan in place that details steps to be taken in various types of emergencies. This provides a step by step, systematic approach to both isolated and more widespread events. The plan is updated periodically as part of our normal business operations.

Our Dispatch Control Center was designed and built to withstand tornadic winds, in case a natural weather event occurs that disrupts the VEC power grid. Back up communications systems are in place to provide a means to connect with crews in the field if the fiber network or telephone system is damaged.



Rody Blevins
President/CEO
Volunteer Energy Cooperative

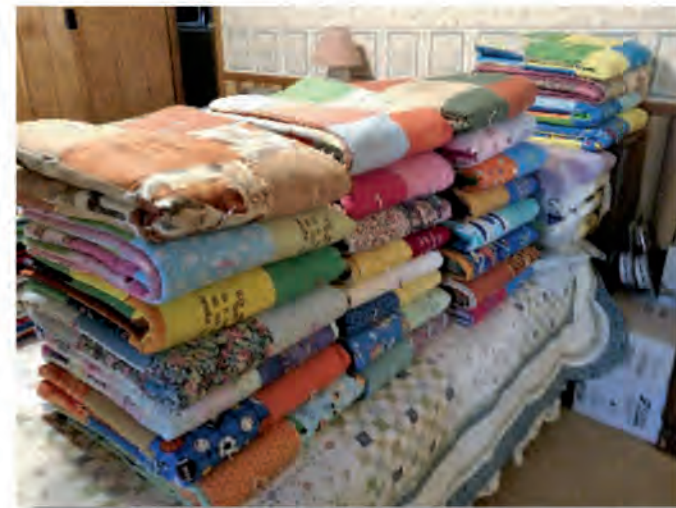
(continued on page 3)





VECcustomers Shares is a grant program that is funded through the rounding up of member's bills to the nearest dollar. The most an individual member would pay within a year is \$11.88 and our members usually average \$5.50 each for a year.

In return for the rounded up change from our members, we contribute to organizations across our 17 county service area. Each month the VECcustomers Share Board meets and distributes the funds collected in the previous month. Every service area is represented by a board member and the funding is split according to the numbers of members in that area.



One of the programs receiving a grant from VECcustomers Share is *For the Children Quilting Ministry*. Founded by Marilyn Christenson in 2006, this program provides colorful handmade quilts to children who have been removed from their

homes due to abuse. Many of the children come from situations where methamphetamine was present so they are not allowed to take anything with them. Denise Melton Director of House of Hope Cumberland County stated, "The children love the quilts. They love picking out something that is their very own. They do not have anything when they are removed and the quilts are theirs." House of Hope is one of three different organizations that receive the quilts to distribute.



In January, VECcustomers Share Grants totaled \$26,600. Since 2001 more than 6.7 million has been granted. The following organizations received grants in January:

(continued on page 3)

(continued from page 1)

Cybersecurity is another area of concern for the electric industry. This topic has been discussed at industry conferences for several years. VEC has two main software platforms: one for our billing and accounting system and another for our substation system control and monitoring. While no system can guarantee absolute security, we have gone to great lengths to minimize the chance of our systems being compromised. We recently installed new firewall devices for our systems and are constantly upgrading our system software protection. Regular upgrades are performed that meet the newest requirements for security. Our substations are designed with manual override capabilities that can be utilized if needed.

No system is guaranteed to be failsafe, but VEC has a number of strong safeguards in place to ensure a constant supply of power is available to our member-owners.

Despite all of our efforts it is impossible for us to say our systems cannot be compromised. We will continue to take this issue seriously and look for opportunities to improve our systems to minimize our risk and ensure that a constant and consistent supply of power is available to our member-owners.



(continued from page 2)

Organizations receiving grants in January

| | | | |
|---|---------|---|-------|
| American Red Cross of Southeast Tennessee-Hamilton County | \$2,500 | Meigs North Elementary PTO | \$500 |
| Rhea Middle School Junior Beta Club | \$1,500 | Wilson Elementary 8th Grade Trip | \$500 |
| New Life Community Kitchen | \$1,500 | Clarkrange Interact | \$500 |
| Fellowship of Christian Athletes | \$1,409 | Midway Youth Development Organization | \$500 |
| Fentress County Food Bank | \$1,100 | Walker Valley Softball | \$500 |
| Pickett County Soil Conservation Club | \$1,000 | Midway High School Cheerleader Booster Club | \$500 |
| Crossville First United Methodist Church After School Program | \$1,000 | Monterey Sports Network | \$500 |
| Byrdstown Middle School 7th & 8th Grade Science Club | \$1,000 | Monterey Civitan | \$500 |
| Coordinated School Health | \$1,000 | Foundation House Ministries | \$500 |
| Rhea County 4-H | \$1,000 | The Pig Preserve Association Inc. | \$500 |
| Polk County Ramp Festival | \$1,000 | Meigs County High School (MCHS) Lady Tigers Basketball Booster Club | \$425 |
| Cumberland County High School Track and Field | \$841 | American Red Cross of Southeast Tennessee-McMinn County | \$400 |
| Monterey Anglers Booster Club | \$500 | W4RGT-Fourth Regiment Communications Support Team | \$400 |
| American Veterans (AMVETS) Post 90 | \$500 | Hiwassee Long Beards | \$400 |
| Polk County Friends of the Library (FOL) | \$500 | Rogers Creek Parent Teacher Organization | \$400 |
| Midway Youth Cheerleading Organization | \$500 | My Brothers Keeper of Southeast TN Inc. | \$400 |
| Midway High School Baseball Booster | \$500 | American Red Cross of Southeast Tennessee-Meigs County | \$300 |
| Midway Quarterback Club | \$500 | Meigs County Chamber of Commerce | \$275 |
| Cumberland County High School Cheerleading | \$500 | Veterans & 1st Responders Memorial at Fairfield Glade | \$250 |

Four Tips For Winter Safety

It's no surprise that winter months bring the increased potential for fire risks and electrical safety hazards. This makes sense because during the coldest months, consumers are using additional electrical devices and appliances, like space heaters, electric blankets and portable generators.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that 47,700 home fires occur each year in the U.S. due to electrical failure or malfunction. This winter, safeguard your loved ones and your home with these electrical safety tips from the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

- 1. Don't overload outlets.** Overloaded outlets are a major cause of residential fires. Avoid using extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliance connections—they should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. If you're relying heavily on extension cords in general, you may need additional outlets to address your needs. Contact a qualified electrician to inspect your home and add new outlets.



- 2. Never leave space heaters unattended.** If you're using a space heater, turn it off before leaving the room. Make sure heaters are placed *at least* three feet away from flammable items. It should also be noted that space heaters take a toll on your energy bills. If you're using them throughout your home, it may be time to upgrade your home heating system.
- 3. Inspect heating pads and electric blankets.** These items cause nearly 500 fires every year. Electric blankets that are more than 10 years old create additional risks for a fire hazard. Inspect your electric blankets and heating pads – look for dark, charred or frayed spots, and make sure the electrical cord is not damaged. Do not place any items on top of a heating pad or electric blanket, and never fold them when in use.
- 4. Use portable generators safely.** Unfortunately, winter storms can cause prolonged power outages, which means many consumers will use portable generators to power their homes. Never connect a standby generator into your home's electrical system. For portable generators, plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator. Start the generator first, *before* you plug-in appliances. Run it in a well-ventilated area *outside* your home. The carbon monoxide it generates is deadly, so keep it away from your garage, doors, windows and vents.