Working to Improve Reliability

As we have discussed in previous articles, power system reliability is always a main concern of VEC staff. Providing reliable service to our members will always be a priority for VEC.

Some of our biggest challenges to providing reliable power have centered on problems with the aging Tennessee Valley Authority transmission system and the major outages it has caused our members. Eighteen months ago, we embarked on a major capital project in the south end of the VEC system. This was a multimillion-dollar project to upgrade a large area of our distribution system and construct several miles of a 161 kV transmission line to get the 105-year-old Tennessee Valley Authority transmission facilities in Bradley and Polk counties. We are nearing the completion of this project so we can have the new facilities in service by June.

This should improve reliability and reduce outages for this part of the VEC system.

In the southern end of the VEC system, we are also undertaking significant upgrades in the Cumberland, Putnam and Fentress county areas. These are also multimillion-dollar-dollar projects to upgrade our system. In the process of rebuilding the VEC transmission lines from Crossville to the Mayland area. We will be able to reduce the major outages in the Cumberland and Mayland area.

Upgrades are expected to come from our Cumberland Junction Substation to our Grimsley Substation north of Clarkrange.

Some of the largest capital projects to date are expected to come from the addition of new substations between our substations in Cleveland, Richmond, and Athens. We hope to take these steps in the future.

VEC is committed to meeting its obligations to keep power reliable to our members for decades to come. Reliable service is something that our customers can count on for decades to come. Reliable service is something that our customers can count on for decades to come. Reliable service is something that our customers can count on for decades to come. Reliable service is something that our customers can count on for decades to come.

New Transmission pipe installation in Polk County

Upgrades to the Ocoee Substation

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The VEC Customers Share program funded community service grants totaling $34,100 in April. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, over $7.2 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.

Organizations receiving grants in April

- Byrdstown Grief Support Group $2,450
- CS Christian Counseling Center of Cumberland $2,250
- Bradley Central High School Softball $2,000
- CSTHEA Patriots Basketball $1,800
- Boy Scout Troop 374 $1,750
- Bedloe County Community Food Bank $1,750
- Crab Orchard Care Center Inc. $1,426
- Project Lifesave $1,200
- Polk County Retired Teachers Association $1,000
- Meigs County Historical Society $1,000
- Meigs Decatur Public Library $1,000
- Clear View Ministries $1,000
- Polk County High School Baseball $1,000
- Booster Club $1,000
- York Elementary First Grade Classes $800
- Midway Elementary School $800
- Monterey Sports Network $750
- Willsonthropic Inc. $750
- E.K. Baker PTO $750
- McMinn County Education Foundation $750
- Wilson Elementary School 8th Grade $750
- Class Trip $750
- Friends of Harrison Bay State Park $700
- Cumberland County Emergency of Cumberland & Rescue Squad $574
- Pickett County 7th Grade Math Club $550
- Grace & Mercy Ministries $500
- Occoo Theatre Guild $500
- Tennessee Prime 12 $500
- Roane County Youth Leadership Project $500
- Cide Mines $500
- Bedloe County Honor Guard $500
- BonDeCroft PTO $500
- Pal Mall Fire Department $500
- Covenant Youth $500
- Muddy Pond Volunteer Fire Dept $500
- Braves Little League $350
- Friends of Festness Co. Imagination Library $350
- PBS Tech Club $350
- McMinn County Rescue Squad $250
- Meigs County Tennis Boosters Club $250
- Meigs County HS Baseball Booster Club $250
- Monterey Unfinished Youth Group $250
- F.O.R. State Trooper Lodge #44 $250

In addition to planning and managing the ROW program, Brad Rhea works to educate our members on the ‘right tree in the right place.’ The best prevention is to plant the right tree far enough to prevent it from becoming a problem or safety hazard for the power lines. The University of Tennessee Agriculture Extension office prepared the following guidelines for power line-friendly tree planting:

- Small trees – 30 feet or less – should be planted at least 10 feet from buildings and 20 to 25 feet away from power lines.
- Medium trees – 30 to 70 feet in height – should be planted at least 15 feet from buildings and 30 to 35 feet from power lines.
- Large trees – those reaching 70 feet or more in height – should be planted at least 25 feet from buildings and 40 to 45 feet from power lines.

Reliable energy is essential to the co-op and to the homes and businesses we serve. Keeping trees and other vegetation safely away from power lines is crucial for our ongoing system maintenance. While some power outages are out of our control – things such as car accidents or lightning – many outages can be prevented by making sure trees and other vegetation are kept well away from the lines.

Each year the co-op and our tree-trimming contractors clear limbs and brush and in some cases remove entire trees that are too close to the lines or near other electrical equipment. They carefully follow guidelines and best practices provided by the International Society of Arboriculture.

“ ‘It’s pretty simple,’ says Brad Rhea, Right-of-Way Superintendent. ‘When trees and other vegetation get too close to the lines, it will result in a power outage. One tree could knock out the power for a hundred homes. Keeping them away from the lines is necessary to keep the lights on.’

Proper right-of-way maintenance is a good investment that keeps the lights on for our consumer-members. ‘To keep everyone in our community safe, our distribution system is designed to cut the power when it detects a contact with the power line,’ says Rhea. ‘We can’t tell if the contact is from a child flying a kite, a car accident or a limb brushing against the line. This means that trees and limbs can knock out the power even if they don’t break the lines. If they do break the lines, the outage can last even longer. That’s why it is so important to keep vegetation away from the lines.’

Volunteer Energy Cooperative is an Equal Opportunity provider and employer.

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