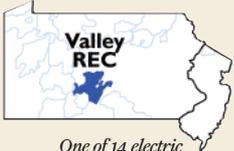


**Valley
Rural Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Co-op consumers will avoid the sting of rate cap removal



by Edward A. Dezich
President & CEO

CONSUMERS of private power companies may be looking at 30-60 percent rate hikes after Dec. 31, 2010, when rate caps on electricity are lifted in Pennsylvania.

The caps were put in place after the state passed the Energy Competition and Customer Choice Act in 1996. As part of the transition to competitive

power generation, also known as deregulation, legislators and private utilities reached an agreement by which consumers would pay billions of dollars to utilities for their power plant investments and for the cost of purchasing power from other generators. In exchange, private utilities promised to cap rates for generation, transmission and distribution during the transition period.

At the time, many of these companies decided to sell a large percentage of their ownership in generation facilities in the hope that they would profit by purchasing power on the open market. Unfortunately, electricity — like other market commodities, such as oil, coal and natural gas — is getting pricey. This means when the caps are lifted, utilities will have to try and recoup some of their wholesale power costs, which could translate into hefty bills for their customers.

Co-op difference

Because rural electric cooperatives aren't governed by the Public Utilities Commission, we have never been in a position where our consumers needed rate caps to protect them from paying too much for electric service. We operate at cost, which means as long as we can provide dependable service at our current rate — that is, our growth and consumer load can keep up with expenses and inflation — we have no need for an increase. And we have maintained a great track record of stable rates, which can be attributed to sound business decisions that have reduced our risk on the open market.

Co-op decisions

Pennsylvania's rural electric cooperatives have invested in ownership of various electric generation facilities, including a nuclear plant in Berwick, Pa., and the Raystown hydroelectric plant. Because we get about 70 percent of our energy from facilities that we partly or wholly own, we reduce our vulnerability to market prices.

Although we can't always avoid rate increases — due to the rising costs associated with producing and distributing your energy — we will continue to stay ahead of the power curve when it comes to making educated, well-informed decisions about where your electricity comes from and how much it will cost to get it to you. 



A place to belong

*Retirement community
offers comforts of home,
highest level of care*

BY SUSAN R. PENNING

*Communications Specialist,
Member Services Department*

WOODLAND RETIREMENT COMMUNITY, located just outside Orbisonia, Huntingdon County, is one of Valley Rural Electric Cooperative's largest accounts. Built between 1985 and 1986, the facility now houses about 125 residents, offering them the highest level of care.

Woodland's staff assists residents with the activities of daily living — eating, bathing, dressing, hygiene and mobility. Programs such as physical and speech therapy, along with activities like bingo, trivia games and shopping trips, help folks at the center achieve their highest level of functioning and remain as independent as possible.

"We have about 160 employees who work in a variety of areas including nursing, therapy, housekeeping, maintenance, activities, education and staff development," says Lisa Cirignano, director of marketing and admissions at Woodland.

"Our rural, small-town connection makes us unique," she adds. "We take a lot of pride in caring for the citizens of our local community. The comfort level here is very high."



ABOVE: A large glass terrarium near the lobby allows residents to observe wildlife even on dreary days.

LEFT: Located along Rt. 522 near Orbisonia, Huntingdon County, Woodland Retirement Community is a not-for-profit health care facility that offers short- and long-term stays.



JAZZING IT UP: Staff members prepare the dining room for a Roaring '20s luncheon.

Because of that comfort level, Lisa had no qualms about encouraging her own grandmother to stay there.

“Going through (the admission process) with my grandmother allowed me to see exactly what our staff does to make the transition easier,” she points out.

In addition to helping residents feel at home, Woodland employees pursue new ideas, programs and community awareness projects that will, in turn, enhance the quality of life at the center. One of the plans for this year includes a “going green” project.

“We are looking at making changes that will focus on energy conservation,” Lisa explains. “We want it to be a joint effort between both staff and residents.”

The project is still in the planning stages, but they have already discussed some ways to reduce energy consumption.

“In addition to the savings, we’re excited about this (project) because it will help keep people informed about what’s going on in our community and world,” Lisa says.

She believes the residents will really embrace this project because they are from a generation where saving and conserving were paramount.

Other changes on the horizon at Woodland include dining room enhancements that will allow the kitchen staff to offer more food choices.

The retirement community expects to continue to offer a much-needed community service to families in rural Pennsylvania. In addition to employing many local residents, the facility welcomes volunteers. No amount of time is

too little and any skill can be used.

For more information about Woodland Retirement Community, call 814/447-0300 or visit www.woodlandretirement.org. Folks interested in volunteering should call the number above and request the activities director. ☀



HOME SWEET HOME: Woodland Retirement Community has five independent living apartments that are connected to the nursing center.

No power? Not an option

WHEN IT COMES TO delivering the highest level of health care, electricity is vital. Many residents at Woodland rely on medical equipment that requires electricity 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In the event of an outage, the facility has two back-up generators ready to offer auxiliary power. The generators are checked daily and are professionally serviced two times a year.





Lessons on lint

Keep your dryer maintained and your family safe

An estimated 15,500 fires, 10 injuries and 10 deaths are caused each year by dryer fires. Many of these could be prevented with proper dryer safety precautions.

Reduced air flow and lint accumulation are typically the primary causes of dryer fires. The following tips offer ways to maximize air flow and minimize lint buildup:

- ▶ Make sure the dryer duct is made of solid metallic material. Both vinyl and foil are combustible and spiral-wound surfaces tend to catch more lint.
- ▶ The dryer duct should vent to the exterior of the home, not to an attic or crawlspace. Don't kink or crush the dryer duct to make up for installation in tight quarters; this

could further restrict air flow.

- ▶ Minimize the length of the exhaust duct if possible, or install a dryer duct booster.
- ▶ Disconnect, clean and inspect the dryer duct run on a regular basis, or hire a professional company to clean the dryer duct.
- ▶ Use a lint brush or vacuum attachment periodically to remove accumulated lint from under the lint trap and other accessible places.
- ▶ Clean the lint trap after each load.
- ▶ Never let your clothes dryer run while you are out of the house or when you are asleep. Thoroughly read manufacturers' instructions regarding the safe use of dryers.

If all else fails, you could always use an old-fashioned clothesline. You'll save energy ... and there have never been any reported clothesline fires.

Information courtesy of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Don't build near power lines!

BEFORE ELECTRIC SERVICE can be provided to any Valley REC member, he or she must sign an *Electric Transmission and Distribution System Easement and Right-of-Way Agreement*. Within this document, some very important issues are addressed.

The first is the co-op's right of passage on private property for the purpose of inspecting, repairing, modifying, improving or adding to the electrical transmission and/or distribution facilities. This includes the right to trim trees and eliminate brush that may interfere with equipment.

Typically, co-op personnel don't run into too many problems with rights of passage because local folks want to

receive the most dependable electric service possible at their locations.

Problems often stem from another issue outlined in the agreement.

The document states that "grantors do hereby covenant and agree that they will not erect or permit the erection of any building or obstruction on said right-of-way ..."

The term "right-of-way" refers to a tract of land which lies 20 feet on either side of an electrical distribution line.

Unfortunately, there have been several occasions where consumers have overlooked the agreement and constructed buildings within right-of-way boundaries, posing a safety risk.

Dealing with right-of-way encroachment is not easy or cheap. The structure must either be moved outside right-of-way boundaries, or the electric lines and equipment must be redirected. This is



ENCROACHMENT ISSUE: A minimum of 20 feet of clearance on each side is required around power lines and equipment.

an expense that could easily be avoided if all guidelines were followed in the easement and right-of-way document.

To obtain a copy of your signed agreement, call the office services department at 814/643-2650 or toll-free 800/432-0680. ☀