

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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From the President & CEO



The winter blues

By Rich Bauer

EVERY year, people are excited to see the first snow of the year, and many are hoping to have a picture-perfect white Christmas. Before you know it, January is in full swing, and many people are still recovering from the holidays and the start of a new year. Then February happens. People are tired of shoveling snow and plowing their driveways. They are sick of the cold weather, sick of the snow and are hoping for an early spring.


January was one of the coldest starts to a new year that I can remember. As I am writing this article, the weatherman is predicting a high of 2 degrees with a wind chill down to -30 degrees. Snow is falling on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and even down into central Florida. As I write this, 93 percent of the United States is below their expected temperature for early January and Anchorage, Alaska, is 15 degrees warmer than Charleston, S.C. Maybe the “snowbirds” should have headed north instead of south for this winter.

When the weather falls into one of these patterns where there is constant snow and cold temperatures every day, the dreaded winter blues kick in. It isn't so bad if we have a few bad days of snow and cold with a day or two mixed in that the sun comes out and the temperatures hover near 40, but constant cold is miserable.

The winter blues seem to hit every year about mid-January and continue until around the first of April when the first sights and smells of spring fill the air. The days are short, the nights

are long, and many people leave for work in the dark and arrive home in the dark. Electricity use is higher due to extra lighting and heating. Therefore, when the electric bill arrives, the higher-than-average bill causes many people to question their use. I can assure you the kilowatt-hour charge on your bill hasn't changed; the amount of electricity you used has increased. A tip that may help keep that power bill lower during cold weather is to make sure you keep your garage doors closed as much as possible. If you have an attached garage, it will suck the heat from your house every time the garage door is opened. Also, keep your blinds open during sunny winter days to allow the heat to come in; then close your blinds in the evening. Every little bit helps save on your electricity use and therefore saves on your checkbook.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that this would be a perfect time to consider having a DRU installed on your electric water heater if you don't have one already. The \$100 bill credit you receive will help offset those higher winter bills, plus you would be joining more than 5,000 members who have taken advantage of this program already. Please call into the office and talk to one of our representatives about this amazing program.

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season, and please bundle up this winter. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you and God Bless. 

System upgrades planned for 2018

By Ethan DeVore

Director of Member Services

FROM substation maintenance to the addition of a new district building for better efficiency, Valley REC is continuously focusing on ways it can better serve its members. The co-op has many ongoing work projects and system improvements planned to take place throughout the year at all its service districts — Huntingdon, Martinsburg, and Shade Gap.

System improvements are essential to ensure a supply of safe and reliable electricity. As years go by, weather, aging, and other factors cause the deterioration of system equipment. Countless hours are spent throughout the year by Valley Rural line crews and tree-trimming contractors in an effort to maintain a healthy and efficient distribution grid.

“Our primary goal is to maintain safe and reliable electricity for the members,” says Todd Ross, Valley REC’s vice president of operations.

Osmose, Valley REC’s pole inspection contractor, inspects the co-op’s poles on a 10-year cycle to check for any deterioration that may need attention. These findings are pivotal in discovering problems that could result in outages or even costly repairs. Pole maintenance is a key factor in reducing replacement



LINEMEN AT WORK: Huntingdon linemen Matt Fagan, left, Curt White, middle, and Justin Berrier, right, work with equipment operator Rich Sunderland, top, as they prepare to set a new pole on Valley REC lines.

costs. Conducting routine inspections can help add further years of durable life to service poles.

“In the 1990s, we did a lot of distribution upgrades, and because of that, our system is in good condition,” Todd says. “We use Osmose to help us keep up with maintenance of our poles to help warrant reliability of our system.”

Along with routine pole maintenance, many other work projects are

underway at the co-op. Currently in Shade Gap, conversion work is taking place in the Reed’s Gap area. This work should be completed over the next three years. The district is also in the beginning stages of possibly relocating the Metal Substation, presently located in Metal Township in Franklin County, to enhance system reliability for the service territory.

Beginning this year at the Huntingdon District, line crews are working to complete conversion work in the Cassville service territory of Huntingdon County. In doing so, part of this work will be transferred over to the Little Valley Substation. There will also be line relocation and conductor upgrades performed in Oneida and Barree townships that will cap off the work planned for the district over the course of the year.

“Transferring the load to the Little Valley Substation will increase dependability in that area,” says Todd.

At the Martinsburg District, line crews will continue to work on routine maintenance projects and substation improvements. Crews will also work on replacing primary underground lines in



NEW CONDUIT: From left, Martinsburg linemen Ryan Dodson and Trevor Eichelberger work with electrician Zach Yohn as they lay conduit for an underground service at Blue Knob Ski Resort.

PHOTOS BY ETHAN DEVORE

PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT: The land picture here shows the location of the new Martinsburg district building. Progress photos will be shown later in the year.



residential developments due to their deterioration caused aging after being in use for over 40 years.

Aside from line work, big things are in the making in Martinsburg as the co-op has plans to build a new district office and warehouse. The new building will be located east of Martinsburg on Route 164. This building will help

improve operational efficiency in the Martinsburg area moving forward. The current building and warehouse sit on a property that is limited in size. Additionally, the need for building improvements is also a necessity, resulting in a requirement for an alternative space that will allow development to continue throughout the co-op.

“Simply put, we have outgrown the building,” Todd says. “It just makes more sense for us to build a new office and warehouse that will better set us up for the future than to invest more money into the current building.”

Plans are to have the new Martinsburg District building completed within the year. ☀

Co-op scholarship applications available now

VALLEY Rural Electric Cooperative will award up to 15 \$1,000 scholarships this year to eligible students who qualify. The money to fund this scholarship program comes from unclaimed capital credits refunds that previously had to be turned over to the state. Thanks to the efforts of our political advocates, we can now keep those funds in our local communities.

Eligibility requirements

The applicant must be:

- ▶ An active Valley REC member or dependent of an active member. (Valley REC directors and employees and their dependents are not eligible.)
- ▶ Attending or planning to attend an accredited post-secondary institution.
- ▶ Enrolled or planning to enroll full time for the 2018-2019 academic year.

Previous Brighter Future Scholarship recipients are not eligible.

How to apply

Applications are available at the co-op's website. Visit www.valleyrec.com and follow the “Programs and Services” link to the “Scholarships” section.

There are two versions of the application: one for high school students and one for high school graduates.

Applications are also available at all Valley REC offices and in the guidance offices of the following public high schools:

Altoona Area High School
Central High School
Claysburg-Kimmel High School
Fannett-Metal High School
Forbes Road Junior/Senior High School
Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School
Huntingdon Area High School
Juniata High School
Juniata Valley High School
McConnellsburg High School
Mifflin County High School
Mount Union Area High School

Northern Bedford County High School
Southern Fulton Junior/Senior High School
Southern Huntingdon County High School
Tussey Mountain High School
Tyrone Area High School
Williamsburg High School

Application deadline

Applications and all required information must be mailed to Valley Rural Electric Cooperative and postmarked by April 15.

Scholarship selections will be made in May. Award recipients will be notified by the end of June.

Please direct questions to member-services@valleyrec.com or call 1-800-432-0680. ☀

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.
brighter future
Scholarship Program

Is your home energy efficient?

By Ethan DeVore

Director of Member Services

BY THE time you are reading this, there very well might be negative temperatures and Frosty the Snowman camping out in the yard. Living in the heart of Pennsylvania, we've all grown accustomed to the radical changes we see in the weather depending on which season we are in. Although we may have grown acclimated to these weather extremes, that doesn't mean we should automatically assume that is the reason why our electric use may spike. Valley REC offers energy audits that may better help you make decisions for energy efficiency, but how do you know when it's time to get one?

Factors such as a home's insulation, heating/cooling systems, electric-powered devices and appliances all add up to determine electric consumption. Between the freezing winter months and the blistering summer days, you may notice your electric use dramatically increase. Often times, this can be a result of having to blast the air conditioning to try and keep nice and cool or having to crank up the electric heat to stay warm. If your house is losing ener-



PHOTO BY DOUG ROLES

ENERGY AUDIT: Valley REC Energy Specialist Travis Kuhstos uses a thermal camera to see areas where air movement is flowing in and out of Carol and Jeff Sipes' home in McVeyton, Pa.

gy during these weather extremes, you may be falling victim to an increased electric bill. That's one of several reasons why Valley Rural offers energy audits through our energy specialist, Travis Kuhstos.

"An energy audit is important because it gives the members an opportunity to have their electric use broken down in detail, as well as give them an opportunity to ask questions that can help them make more energy-efficient decisions," says Travis.


So how do you know if it's time for you to get an energy audit? There are several instances, according to Valley REC's energy specialist.

"Members who are financial planning/budgeting, upgrading their heating/cooling systems, or planning to start renovation projects are perfect candidates for an audit," Travis says. "Valley members looking to make energy-efficient decisions are the types of members who would benefit most from an audit."

The energy audit process is simple. Travis will come to your house with a comprehensive bill analysis. He will go through the report and show in detail your electric use patterns that make up the majority of your monthly bill. Afterwards, he is willing to do a walk-

through in your home and give you recommendations on things you can do to help lower your consumption. This walk-through will also give you the ability to ask questions such as which type of lighting to use, CFLs or LEDs? For renovation projects, which type of insulations should you go with?

"People tend to be more receptive when they can see visuals that show them exactly how their use breaks down as opposed to just telling them," Travis explains.

For the members who seek an in-depth, technical report on their home's energy efficiency, Travis has the right tools for the job. Using a thermal camera, he can determine the air movement from in and out of the house. He also uses a borescope, which is a camera he uses to check for ductwork issues and to see if there is insulation in the walls. It can also be used to check cavities within a home's construction that people can't see. Another tool in his arsenal is a combustion analyzer that can check the efficiency of a heating system. For more information, please contact Travis at 800-432-0680, extension 1652, and let him assess if an energy audit is right for you. And remember, the cleanest kilowatt hour is the one that is never used. 

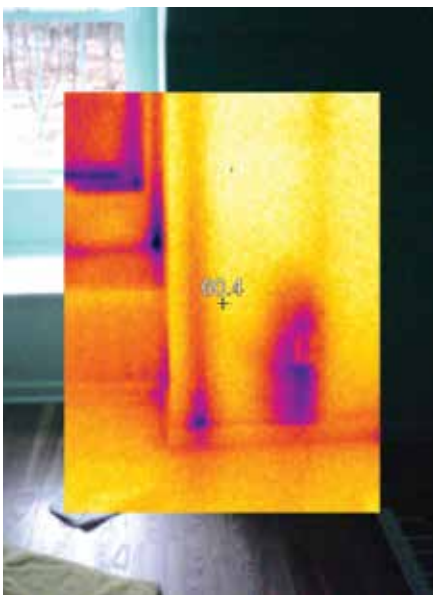


PHOTO BY TRAVIS KUHSTOS

ENERGY AUDIT TOOL: This image shows temperature differentials that indicate where air may be infiltrating or exfiltrating.