

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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COOPERATIVE CONNECTION

Guest Column

Happy National Cybersecurity Awareness Month



DOUG ROLES

IN THE 1990 science fiction film “Total Recall,” Arnold Schwarzenegger’s character, Douglas Quaid, outwits the bad guys by using a wristwatch-sized holographic projector. The henchmen for an evil mastermind think Quaid is in one spot while he’s escaping to another.

After the henchmen fall for the ruse several times, Arnold — OK, Quaid — confronts the bad guys for real. But they think it’s another trick, and they let down their guard, giving Quaid, in typical Schwarzenegger style, the chance to get the drop on them again.

When the posse encounters what they think is the projection, Arnold famously quips, “Do you think this is the real Quaid? It is!” Then he takes down his foes and saves the day.

If you’re into sci-fi films, that moment more than 35 years ago was a bit of movie magic. Sadly, today, it’s the bad guys who are using all-too-real, high-tech fakery.

Don’t believe it

Scammers are becoming more sophisticated as they use artificial intelligence (AI) to create convincing emails, text messages, websites and even voice messages that look and sound legitimate. The FBI has warned that generative AI can make fraudulent schemes more believable by eliminating many of the errors, such as misspellings, that once helped us identify a scam.

Because October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, now is a good time to think about protecting your personal and financial information. For Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), cybersecurity is a critical part of providing safe, reliable electric service. While much of our focus is on protecting the physical systems that operate the electric grid, we also work to protect the systems and information that help us serve you — including online accounts, payment systems, member portals and outage communications.

When it comes to utilities such as ours, a scammer may impersonate a co-op employee and claim your account is past due, your service is about to be disconnected, or you need to make an immediate payment. The message might even include our logo, use professional-looking language or direct you to a website that appears legitimate. With AI helping scammers create more convincing communications, simply looking for obvious warning signs may no longer be enough.

So, what should you do if you receive an unexpected message claiming to be from the co-op? If a message creates a sense of urgency or threatens immediate disconnection, take a moment to verify it. Don’t click the link or call the phone number provided in the message.

Instead, contact Valley REC directly using our trusted methods. You can reach us by phone, 800-432-0680, through our website, valleyrec.com, or by email, memberservices@valleyrec.com.

Add layers of protection

You can also take steps to protect your online accounts before a scam occurs. Start with your password. Choose a long, unique password that is difficult for others to guess, and don’t reuse the same password across multiple accounts.

If you have accounts online, such as a bank account, that offer multifactor authentication (MFA), consider using it. MFA adds an extra layer of protection by requiring an additional way to verify your identity, such as a code sent to your phone, email or authentication app.

The Federal Trade Commission reports consumers lost \$3.5 billion to imposter scams in

Continued on page 16E

Valley REC Linemen Practice Energized Line Work During Training

DOUG ROLES, VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

A **TWO-DAY ON-THE-JOB TRAINING (OJT)** event in late July helped Valley Rural Electric Cooperative's (REC) apprentice linemen learn about working with energized lines.

The co-op's younger lineworkers completed two pole replacement jobs in Huntingdon County July 28 and 29 under the supervision of the district's journeyman linemen, district managers and a Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) safety instructor.

For the second year in a row, the co-op consolidated its annual OJT event, bringing lineworkers from all three districts — Huntingdon, Martinsburg and Shade Gap — to one site.

"Previously, it was a day each at our Martinsburg, Shade Gap and Huntingdon districts," Huntingdon District Manager Justin Berrier says. "This is good, hands-on experience for the apprentice linemen coming up through. It's a controlled, instructional environment."

A lesson in line work

Crews conducted pole replacements in Cass Township near the co-op's Dell substation and Union Township near Mapleton. Both jobs required the replacement of poles on three-phase, 7,200-volt lines that a previous inspection determined were deteriorating. Lines remained energized the entire time. There was no service interruption to co-op consumers in the area.

The training provided the opportunity for younger linemen to use fiberglass hot sticks and protective gear, including rubber gloves and sleeves, to work around



LIVE WIRES: PREA Job Training & Safety Program Instructor Ken Musick, center (in white shirt), and Valley Rural Electric Cooperative lineworkers review a pole-replacement job conducted in July in Union Township. During the project, the lines remained energized.

energized lines.

"I think this is a great idea," PREA Job Training & Safety Program Instructor Ken Musick says. "You get all your apprentice linemen on one site. A lot of these younger guys have just been through our sticking school."

Crews moved two of the three three-phase lines on the first morning before thunderstorms forced the end of the on-site training for the day. After the pole replacement in Union Township on the second day, the crews returned to the Dell substation area to move the final phase onto the new pole there.

A first for the co-op was the use of a double bucket, an



TRUCK TRIO: The simultaneous use of several aerial lifts is a hallmark of the annual on-the-job training at Valley Rural Electric Cooperative. Lineworkers can complete a pole replacement or other work while lines remain energized.

aerial lift bucket large enough for two linemen to work from simultaneously. The co-op purchased the truck in December 2024 for use in the Shade Gap District. Ken says the double buckets are “turning up everywhere.” He’s also seeing many younger lineworkers at job sites around the state as older crew members retire. Double buckets are a good fit for OJT, he says.

“I think the double bucket is great,” Ken says. “You can get two guys in there — a veteran and a young guy.” 🧑🏫



COVERING UP: Valley Rural Electric Cooperative Apprentice Lineman Carter Zerbe places protective plastic covers on a live line in Union Township, Huntingdon County.

OUTDOOR PURSUITS FILL LINEMAN'S RETIREMENT — IF THE WEATHER IS GOOD

Patrick Lightner remembers plenty of crisp fall mornings commuting to work and thinking that he was missing some primetime deer hunting. Now the retired journeyman lineman and staking engineer enjoys the luxury of picking the best weather days for hunting, golfing and other pursuits.

Known to most by his lifelong nickname “Turtle,” he retired from Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) at the end of 2025 with 23 years of service.

“I had 40 years with power line work. It’s what I loved to do,” Turtle says. “I always enjoyed line work.”

A 1985 graduate of Southern Huntingdon County High School, Turtle worked for Valley REC the summer after graduating, clearing brush in co-op rights of way. He then went to work for Hustontown-based line construction company Everhart & Hoover. Turtle worked there 17 years before rejoining Valley REC as a lineman in the Shade Gap District.

Making a comeback

An unforgettable date for Turtle is July 4, 2003. Valley’s crews were using the holiday to perform maintenance work at the Riverview substation to lessen downtime for what was then the Berg Electronics plant near Mount Union. Turtle was with a crew at another substation for power rerouting. Even though he followed safe work rules, he was shocked by an arc from opening an overhead air-break switch. The contact incident led to the amputation of his lower left leg.

“I didn’t know anything for the first few days; I was so drugged up,” he says of his stay at a Pittsburgh burn unit.

He does remember thinking he would spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair.

“It was devastating,” he says. “I was feeling sorry for myself, but then I saw patients worse off than me.”

Through hard work and dedication, Turtle returned to the co-op — and even line work. Before being allowed to climb again, he had to demonstrate under the scrutiny of a safety trainer that he could perform pole-top rescue, a safety task that linemen train on annually that involves lowering an “injured” dummy from the top of a pole.

“I wasn’t sure I could do it with a prosthetic leg,” Turtle recalls of the spring morning that brought sleet and freezing rain.

Safety trainers offered to reschedule because of the weather, but Turtle preferred to get going. He made the climb, set up the rope rigging, and lowered the mannequin to the ground — in a better time than some of his peers.

In late 2012, Turtle became the Shade Gap District’s staking engineer, taking over for the retiring Tim Cisney. One of the changes Turtle remembers most at the co-op is the increasing use of technology.



ADVENTURE AWAITS: Patrick Lightner is enjoying a well-earned retirement after 23 years with Valley Rural Electric Cooperative and 40 years total in utility work.

“I got into staking work just as everything was going to tablet computers,” he says. “It took me a while to get onto building work orders on the computer. Everything had been done on paper.”

‘Retirement is great’

Turtle enjoyed the camaraderie developed over the years at the co-op. He says there was an adjustment period to retirement, particularly because he had a lot of free time during a spell of cold, dreary weather.

“I had a lot of good friends over the years at the co-op,” Turtle reminisces. “You make friends. It’s not just a place to work. I liked meeting members, too.”

Turtle bought himself a new set of golf clubs for retirement and now plays regularly with a group of co-op retirees.

“I probably golfed more this year than I did in the last 10 years,” he says. “We don’t really get any better, but we enjoy getting out.”

Turtle and his wife, Sherry, live in the Shade Gap area. Together, they have three daughters and four grandchildren. Turtle is grateful to have more time to spend with family and frequently visits his mother to mow grass and do other needed tasks. He encourages younger folks to be diligent about retirement planning.

“Retirement is great,” Turtle quips. “You keep getting paid, but you don’t go to work.”

Co-op Connections: Your Link to Savings

AS A VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE (REC) member, you can use the free Co-op Connections app or your free Co-op Connections Card to receive valuable discounts at the local, participating businesses listed on these pages, as well as at numerous national retailers.

Keep this directory handy to identify local participants. Also, look for Co-op Connections Card decals on doors or cash registers where you shop.

For an up-to-date list of participating businesses and their discounts, along with many other offerings and savings, visit valleyrec.com and click on the Co-op Connections Card icon on the home page. Once on the Co-op Connections site, scroll down to get the app, or sign up and log in to see all the benefits available to you.



AUTOMOTIVE/MOTORCYCLE

J&P Auto Mart

1906 Pleasant Valley Blvd., Altoona

Offer: \$1,000 off purchase of any vehicle. Limit one per vehicle. Can't be combined with any other offer/sale. Not applicable for prior purchase.

Pro-Trans

2400 Commercial Blvd., State College

Offer: 5% off transmission service and repair.

CONTRACTORS/BUILDING SUPPLY

Adams Electric, Inc.

870 31st St., Altoona

Offer: 10% off electrical estimates.

Fink Brothers Supply

961 Pennsylvania Ave., Tyrone

Offer: 20% off in-stock PPG paints.

G.B. Wineland & Son, Inc.

201 S. Railroad St., Martinsburg

Offers: 5% off Polaris insulated doors and/or 5% off five or more Polaris windows.

Gary's Homes, Inc.

13270 Lincoln Highway, Everett

Offer: 10% discount on parts purchased in the parts store.

ImPressive Floors, Inc.

118 S. Richard St., Bedford

Offers: 10% off any cash-and-carry item from the store; \$20 off any ordered special materials, 144 square feet or more; \$20 off any two or more Hunter Douglas window treatments. These offers cannot be combined with any other offer.

Joseph T. Berrena Mechanicals, Inc.

279 Standing Stone Ave., Huntingdon

Offers: 20% off Hydroflow S38 chemical-free water treatment device; 10% off parts and service.

Lewistown Floor Company

518 W. Fourth St., Lewistown

Offer: 10% off any carpet purchase over 450 square feet (50 square yards).

Mount Union Lumber & Supply, Inc.

114 W. Poplar St., Mount Union

Offer: Receive a \$200 rebate on the purchase of any one of the following Fujitsu mini-split units: 9RLS3Y, 12RLS3Y, 15RLS3Y, 18RLXFZ dual-headed unit or 24RLXFZ triple-headed unit. Please notify MULS, Inc. about the card at time of purchase.

PJs Hearth & Home Heating

2447 Quaker Valley Road, New Paris

Offer: 5% off anything in the store, including installations and cleanings.

Rick Worthy Contracting, Inc.

10321 Sugar Grove Road, Huntingdon

Offer: 5% discount.

Superior Floorcoverings &

Kitchens, LLC

393 Beddington Blvd., Suite 101B, Chambersburg

Offer: 7% discount; cannot be combined with other discounts.

DINING/FOOD

Allegro Restaurant

3926 Broad Ave., Altoona

Offer: Buy one dinner entree and receive \$5 off the second dinner entree. Not applicable on alcoholic beverages, lunch menu, family-style menu and dinner-for-2 menu. Maximum value \$5. Not redeemable for cash.

Hobo's Restaurant

180 Hyndman Road, Hyndman

Offer: 10% off daily special or dinner entree (dine-in only).

J.P. Edward's Grill and Bar

203 S. Logan Blvd., Burnham

Offer: 10% off, excluding alcohol and specials.

Jethro's, LLC

417 Parkview Lane, Altoona

Offer: 10% off. Not valid after 4 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, on holidays, or with any other discount; excludes tax, alcohol, and gratuity.

Queen City Fruit & Produce

125 E. Central Way, Bedford

Offer: 50 cents off product not already discounted.

Speck's Deli & Gourmet Pizza

12144 William Penn Highway, Huntingdon

Offer: 10% off menu-priced items; value meals and promotions excluded.

Wild Annie's

300 Lowry Drive, McConnellsburg

Offer: 10% off any menu item.

ENTERTAINMENT

Holiday Bowl

11862 William Penn Highway, Huntingdon

Offer: Free shoe rental for cardholder.

Isett Heritage Museum

11941 Stone Creek Ridge Road, Huntingdon

Offer: \$1 off admission.

Lincoln Caverns & Whisper Rocks

7703 William Penn Highway, Huntingdon

Offer: \$1 off all adult tickets during regularly scheduled tours. Not valid during special events or in combination with other discounts.

Rockhill Trolley Museum

430 Meadow St., Rockhill Furnace

Offer: Buy one ticket, get one ticket free. Not valid for special events.

HEALTH, BEAUTY & FITNESS

Angelina's Spa Motion

250 First Ave., State College

Offer: \$5 off any massage service and/or product order or gift card of \$35 or more.

HMJ PATCH Program

900 Bryan St., Suite 5, Huntingdon

Offer: Free quit-tobacco program: free support, resources and nicotine patches/gum.

Huntingdon Vision Center, Ltd.

828 Washington St., Huntingdon

Offer: 5% off total bill when paid with cash or check at time of service; excludes vision plans.

Modern Family Dentistry

3195 Cold Springs Road, Huntingdon

Offer: \$75 off a new patient exam, cleaning and X-rays; must be a new patient of record.

S'Hair-Eng Styling Salon

139 Kelly Alley, State College

Offer: 10% discount on all chemical and color services.

HOME, GARDEN & FARM

Antietam Iron Works & Powder Coating, LLC

201 Lincoln Way West, Suite 100, McConnellsburg

Offers: 10% off powder-coating order for first-time customers; 10% off iron fence or railings (maximum discount \$200); or 10% off gift shop items. Must mention card when placing order.

BluAcres, LLC

12 Black St., Williamsburg

Offers: \$250 discount on pond dredging and permit plan; \$100 discount on wetland delineation.

CCI Cleaning Connection, Inc.

1107 Locust St., Chambersburg

Offers: Save 20% on initial service(s) with signed contract; save 10% on any other service. Not valid with coupon offers.

Chimney Doctor

7737 Main Road, Bedford

Offers: \$20 off chimney sweep; \$50 off chimney repair.

Envinity, Inc.

25 Decibel Road, Suite 205, State College

Offer: \$100 toward a comprehensive

home energy audit. Audit includes a blower-door test, thermal imaging, a solar-site assessment and a comprehensive report on all energy-saving opportunities in your home.

Hines Feed Store

210 S. Juniata St., Hollidaysburg

Offer: 5% off, excluding feed and fertilizer.

Mid State Chimney Sweeps, LLC

595 Calhoun Road, Everett

Offers: \$10 off any chimney cleanings; 10% off any chimney liner installed.

Mill Hill Farm Supply, Inc.

161 Mill Hill Road, Williamsburg

Offer: \$5 off any \$25 purchase.

Potted Memories Greenhouse

5118 Piney Creek Road, Williamsburg

Offer: 10% off purchase of \$50 or more.

Roberts Four Season Power

Equipment

613 N. Logan Blvd., Altoona

Offer: 5% off purchase of new mower.

OFFICE/PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Fatal Attractionz (D-Signs)

2816 U.S. Highway 522 South, McVeytown

Offer: 10% off all purchases.

Film Center (The)

3415 Pleasant Valley Blvd., Altoona

Offer: Fifty 4-by-6 photo-lab quality prints from your digital camera for just \$10; next-day pickup required.

Freedom Storage Rentals &

EZ-Pak Storage

360 Travelers Road, East Freedom

Offer: 15% discount.

Huntingdon Offset Printing Company

1515 Penn St., Huntingdon

Offer: Buy 500 full-color, one-sided business cards, get 500 free of the same card.

Julie's K-9 Kuts

14310 Croghan Pike, Mount Union

Offers: 10% off merchandise (except those sold on consignment); 5% off all grooming services.

MJH Services

126 E. Pitt St., Suite 2B, Bedford

Offer: \$10 discount on tax return preparation.

One-Stop Communications

101 E. Market St., Lewistown

Offers: \$10 off any wireless phone;

20% off standard phone accessories.

Paul Prough Photography

308 S. Wayne St., Lewistown

Offer: 15% discount on all orders.

Tiny Tots Childcare and Learning Center, LLC

22965 Croghan Pike, Shade Gap, and

55 N. Riverside Drive, Mount Union

Offers: 5% discount for families enrolled Monday-Friday; \$25 per child for date-night care or "Parents Night Out."

RECREATION/SPORTS

Bear Creek RV

17481 Raystown Road, James Creek

Offer: 10% off regular-price items

Saxton Outdoor Supply

10520 Raystown Road, Saxton

Offers: 15% off any in-stock bait; 10% off any in-stock Carhartt item. Only one item discounted per purchase.

RETAIL

Prospector Jewelers

1514 Cove Lane Road, Martinsburg

Offer: 10% discount.

Raystown Electronics, Inc.

14188 Croghan Pike, Mount Union

Offer: Discount varies with product.

Vintage Jewelry Chest

8493 Woodbury Pike, Hollidaysburg

Offer: 20% discount.

TRAVEL

Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel

215 Innovation Blvd., State College

Offer: Complimentary guestroom upgrade; based on availability. 📍

GUEST COLUMN

Continued from page 16A

2025, making these the most commonly reported types of fraud. In fact, nearly one in three fraud reports involved an imposter scam.

By slowing down when something seems urgent and contacting the cooperative directly when you're unsure, you can help protect your account. We don't have a slick catchphrase — or anyone with a thick Austrian accent in our offices — but if we all stay savvy to the ways of scammers, we can thwart their evil plans and save the day. 📍

DOUG ROLES

VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES