

Stay in the Know

At VEC, 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 to 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.

Keeping the co-op updated with your information also helps us when there's a question about energy use or billing. Emails and text messages are also used to notify registered members of any changes in co-op event details. In addition, discrepancies on your account can be taken care of promptly if VEC has accurate account information.



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. Please take a moment to confirm or update your contact information by logging into your account at www.vec.org or by calling your local service center. By doing so, you will be helping us improve service and efficiency so we can better serve you and all members of the co-op.



VEC Statement of Non-Discrimination

Volunteer Energy Cooperative is the recipient of federal financial assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, disability, or age. Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
- (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442
- (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

VEC is an equal opportunity provider.

Looking to the Future

This year we celebrated 85 years as a co-op. Another year of operation has been successfully completed, and we are looking to VEC's future once again. Over the past several years, you have heard us talk about our Vision 2020 plan. Vision 2020 was a company-wide effort to upgrade our operational infrastructure. It is with great satisfaction I can now say the Vision 2020 upgrades are complete. The upgrades included the replacement or rebuilding of all VEC electric substations, the enhancement of our electric grid components and controls, the reconfiguring of our computer network and website, and the upgrading of our communication and fiber systems. With the completion of the Vision 2020 plan, VEC now has one of the most advanced digital platforms of any electric company operating in the United States.

With Vision 2020 behind us, VEC must now focus attention on the tasks that remain. First on the list, we must tackle the challenge of providing broadband access within the VEC service territory. The leadership of VEC feels compelled to address the lack of access encountered by our members. In 2017, the VEC board of directors initiated a pilot program in Bradley County to determine the feasibility of providing broadband service. Since then, we have received six broadband grants, totaling more than \$10 million. Construction of fiber optic infrastructure is ongoing in Birchwood, Spring Creek, Ten Mile / South Roane County, Cumberland Cove, and on Ooltewah-Georgetown Road in Hamilton County. VEC was also recently awarded a USDA ReConnect grant. This grant will provide service to most of southern Meigs County. With every grant the cooperative receives, we are one-step closer to providing universal access for VEC members, which is our ultimate goal.

Another concern that the cooperative must deal with is the rising costs of wholesale power from the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). From 2012 through 2018, TVA increased base wholesale power rates by 2.5% each year. While the rate increases helped TVA lower their corporate debt by over \$5 billion, the increases also elevated the wholesale rates to a point where TVA is now among the highest cost options of power suppliers in the Southeastern United States. This brings VEC to a place where critical decisions on the future direction of the cooperative need to be made.

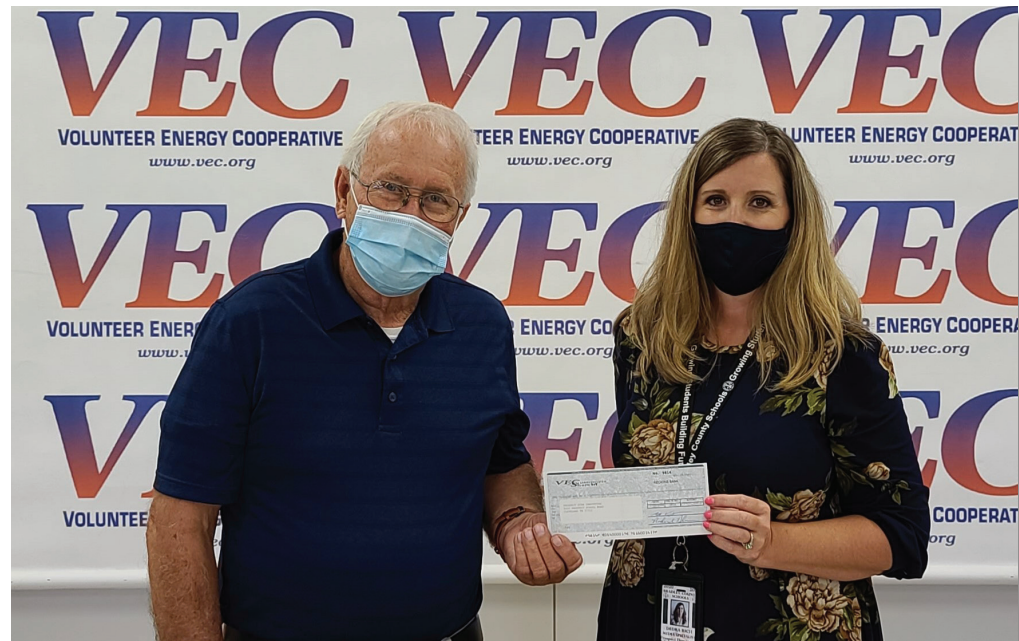
The new TVA financial plan and the TVA 20-year power contract proposal lured 142 of the local power companies into signing the 20-year contract with the promise of a 1.7% bill credit. VEC decided to forgo signing the contract altogether. With TVA among the highest cost providers in the Southeast, it became apparent to us that searching for a new power supply option would be much more beneficial than signing the 20-year agreement with TVA.



Rody Blevins
President/CEO
Volunteer Energy
Cooperative



The VECustomers Share program began in 2001, has surpassed \$7.1 million in grants to community organizations. Each month the VECustomers Share board of directors meet and review grant requests received the previous month. Each director allots their service area's portion of the monthly grant amount. In October, the board awarded \$27,350.00 in total.



Dana Burgner, VEC Customers Share Board Bradley County Representative presents a grant check to Dedra Rich, Media Specialist, Prospect STEM Innovators. The funding will be used to begin the STEM Innovation program at Prospect Elementary School. The funding will allow purchase of technology for students to explore STEM and STEM related career fields.

Organizations receiving grants in October

Benton Lions Club	\$2,000	Jones Chapel UMC Food Pantry	\$600
Meigs County FFA Alumni	\$1,645	Monterey Food Bank	\$500
New Life Community Kitchen	\$1,500	American Cancer Society-Polk County	\$500
CSTHEA Patriots Basketball	\$1,250	Midway High School Baseball Boosters	\$500
Town of Byrdstown 5K/3K Run/Walk	\$1,200	York Elementary Accelerated Reader Program	\$500
Calhoun Public Library	\$1,100	CC Tad Center	\$500
American Cancer Society-Bradley County	\$1,000	Rhea Richland Senior Neighbors Inc.	\$500
Clarkrange High School Track	\$1,000	True Hope Helping Hands	\$500
Toys for Children	\$1,000	Monterey Jr. High Boys Basketball	\$500
Midway Quarterback Club	\$1,000	Central High School Ruriteen Club	\$500
Midway Youth Cheerleading Organization	\$1,000	American Cancer Society-McMinn County	\$400
Spring City Lion's Club	\$1,000	Rogers Creek PTO	\$400
Mended Hearts Chapter 127	\$1,000	STARTS (Support The ARTS)	\$400
Meigs High Football Booster	\$855	Mrs. Rena's Math & Science Club	\$375
The Church of God-Food Missions	\$825	Stone Memorial High School Cheer	\$350
MARA Medical Ministry	\$750	Martin Elementary Boys Basketball	\$350
Hwy 58 Volunteer Fire Dept. Inc.	\$750	Attendance Perks-Phoenix High School	\$200
Homestead Elementary Coordinated School Health Program	\$700	All in FC TN Soccer Club (05/06 Boys Team)	\$200

Four Ways to Save Energy in the Kitchen

by Abby Berry

Ah, the kitchen. It's undeniably one of the most-loved rooms in our homes. It's where we gather with family and friends for our favorite meals and memories. But like most of us, you probably aren't thinking about saving energy when you're planning that perfect dish. Here are four ways you can save energy in the kitchen with minimal effort.

When possible, cook with smaller appliances. Using smaller kitchen appliances, like slow cookers, toaster ovens, and convection ovens is more energy-efficient than using your large stove or oven. According to the Department of Energy, a toaster or convection oven uses one-third to one-half as much energy as a full-sized oven.

Unplug appliances that draw phantom energy load. Halloween may be over, but you may have energy vampires in your kitchen – these are the appliances that draw energy even when they're not in use, like coffee makers, microwaves and toaster ovens. The Department of Energy has estimated that one home's energy vampires left plugged in year-round can add up to \$100-\$200 in wasted energy costs. Unplug them when they're not in use, or better yet, use a power strip for convenient control.

Help large appliances work less. There are small ways you can help your larger kitchen appliances run more efficiently. For example, keep range-top burners clean from spills and fallen foods so they'll reflect heat better. When it's time to put leftovers in the refrigerator, make sure the food is covered and allow it to cool down first. That way, the fridge doesn't have to work harder to cool warm food.

Use your dishwasher efficiently. Only run full loads, and avoid using the "rinse hold" function on your machine for just a few dirty dishes; it uses 3-7 gallons of hot water each use. You can also save energy by letting your dishes air dry. If your dishwasher doesn't have an automatic air-dry switch, turn it off after the final rinse and prop the door open so the dishes will dry faster.

Bonus tip: The best way to save energy is not to use it. Try a tasty, no-bake dessert recipe. Your sweet tooth (and energy bill!) will thank you.

By slightly adjusting a few of your habits in the kitchen, you'll be well on your way to energy savings. Contact us to learn about additional ways you can save energy and money at home.



Use smaller kitchen appliances, like slow cookers, toaster ovens and convection ovens when possible. These smaller appliances use less energy than a full-size oven.



When it's time to do the dishes, remember to run full loads. You can also save energy by allowing your dishes to air dry.



HOLIDAY LIGHTING SAFETY TIPS



Consider purchasing LED holiday lights

LEDs are cool to the touch and more energy efficient than incandescent bulbs.

Tennessee Valley Authority

Residential & Outdoor Lighting Fuel Cost Adjustment
Effective **November 1, 2020**

1.673¢

For the most current FCA information, visit www.vec.org
Volunteer Energy Cooperative is an Equal Opportunity provider and employer.

