



## Prepare Now for Spring Storms

Spring officially begins on Sunday, March 20. Along with warmer weather and longer days, spring often brings strong storms to Tennessee. Here are some tips from the American Red Cross to help your family be better prepared for spring weather.

### Make a Plan

Develop a plan to help your family respond to disasters. Discuss how to prepare and respond to emergencies that are most likely to happen where you live, learn, work and play. Identify responsibilities for each member of your household and plan to work together as a team. Know where you and your family will shelter during severe weather. Identify a basement, storm shelter, or an inner hallway or closet that can provide protection during storms.

### Get Educated

Know the difference between storm watches and warnings. A watch means that bad weather is possible. A warning means that bad weather is occurring, and you should seek shelter. Conditions following a storm can be hazardous. Stay away from downed power lines and call VEC or 911.

### Have a Kit

Take time now to organize the basic supplies you will need during a disaster. Basic kits should include food, water, medicine, a flashlight, battery powered radio and extra batteries, first aid kit, medicine, cell phone, and charger. A full list of items to include in your kit can be found at [redcross.org](http://redcross.org).

### Prepare for Power Outages

Despite our best efforts, strong storms can create extended power outages. Battery-operated flashlights and lanterns can provide light and are safer than candles. Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. If you plan to use a generator, have an electrician properly install it to keep you, your family, and first responders safe.

## Save Energy with Your Thermostat

Space heating and cooling account for a large portion of the average home's energy use. In fact, the heating and cooling of your home could be responsible for more than half of your monthly electric bill.

Making small adjustments to your home's temperature can have a significant impact on your monthly electric bill, and it all begins at your thermostat.

Set your thermostat to 68 degrees in the winter while you are home and awake, and set it even lower while you are sleeping or away. Lowering your thermostat 10-15 degrees for eight hours can reduce your heating bill by 10 percent or more.

You may have heard that lowering your thermostat while you are away will make it work harder once you return, and that is a reasonable argument. However, studies have found that you will use less energy by turning your system down when you are away and returning it to the original temperature when home versus leaving it at the original temperature the entire time. Don't waste energy heating your furniture.

If all of these changes sound stressful, consider investing in a programmable or smart thermostat. Such a device can be programmed to run specific schedules or adjust the temperature when it senses you are away from home.

The location of your thermostat can also impact its performance and your energy bill. Be sure your thermostat is away from air vents, doors and windows, and it is best for it not to be located in kitchens, hallways or in direct sunlight. All of these factors can trick the thermostat into thinking your home is hotter or colder than it actually is.

Most of us spend very little time thinking about our thermostats, but they can have a significant impact on your comfort and your energy bill.



Rody Blevins  
President/CEO  
Volunteer Energy  
Cooperative

## A Fresh Start for the New Year

Exercising more, quitting smoking, or the favorite – losing weight. A brand new year offers a fresh opportunity for doing that thing we've put off despite knowing how much better off we'd be if we finally did it.

For some folks reading this column, that New Year's resolution may include going back to school. It's a worthy goal, but the cost of obtaining a college degree may have meant that the dream of accessing higher education was out of reach.

I am so pleased to announce that VEC members are eligible for \$50,000 in scholarships through an exciting new partnership with WGU Tennessee, an affiliate of Western Governors University. This nonprofit, fully online and accredited university is offering \$3,000 Power Your Future scholarships (renewable for up to four terms and applied at \$750 per six-month term) to new students — many of whom are busy, working adults — interested in pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree while taking advantage of the flexibility offered by online education.

You can start classes at any time, joining more than 4,000 Tennesseans who are currently enrolled at WGU. In order to turn those good intentions into reality, you'll need to be officially admitted to WGU and enrolled in one of the university's more than 60 accredited bachelor's and master's programs. Degrees are available in areas like business, information technology, K-12 teacher education and health professions. You'll also need to complete a Power Your Future scholarship application (available online at [wgu.edu/power](http://wgu.edu/power)) and be interviewed by a WGU scholarship counselor.

It's a big step, without question. After many years in the workforce, there are those who might have doubted if they'd ever be in a position to get that wished-for college degree. That's why I'm so excited about this scholarship opportunity for VEC members. You see, just like co-ops all across our state, we are focused on investing in the future of rural communities. It's what we mean when we say we're committed to "building a brighter Tennessee."

It's all too easy to find excuses for not fulfilling some of our New Year's resolutions. But if yours has always been to get your degree, WGU Tennessee's Power Your Future scholarship can be the catalyst for finally making it happen. And filling out that online application is bound to be a lot easier than shedding all those extra pounds from over-indulging during the holidays!



VEC Customers Shares is a grant program funded through the rounding up of members' bills to the nearest dollar. The most an individual member would pay within a year is \$11.88. Our members' yearly average is usually about \$5.50 each.

In return for the rounded up change from our members, we contribute to organizations across our 17 county service area. Each month, the VEC Customers Share Board meets and distributes the funds collected in the previous month. A board member represents each service area. In December, VEC Customers Share Grants totaled \$29,000.

Organizations receiving funds included Salem Baptist Church Food Pantry (\$1,000). Salem Baptist Food Pantry provides meals for those in need. Euphemia Clower, Salem Baptist Food Pantry Representative says: "Many will have a nice Christmas dinner that wouldn't have if [VEC Customers Share] didn't help us in such a generous way." Clowers continued, "We are able to make food baskets that will last families for weeks. Our church is so grateful [VEC Customers] make this happen."

Since the inception of the program in October 2001, VECustomers Share members have awarded over \$7.3 million in grants. 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](http://www.vec.org).



VECcustomers Share Roane County and Loudon County Board member Rodney Fowler (right) presented a check to Euphemia Clower, Salem Baptist Church Food Pantry Representative.

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## Tennessee Valley Authority

Residential & Outdoor Lighting Fuel Cost Adjustment Effective

January 1, 2022

2.641¢

For the most current FCA information, visit [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org)  
 Volunteer Energy Cooperative is an Equal Opportunity provider and employer.



## Keep Pets Warm, Too

Sure, your cat or dog was born with a thick, furry coat to help it stay warm all winter, but if you're cold, your pet probably is too. A few easy habits will make your precious pet more comfortable and safe during the coldest days, indoors and out.

For starters, keep your house comfortably humidified. Your heating system can dry out indoor air, so consider placing a portable humidifier in the rooms where your pet spends the most time. And whenever you bring your dog back inside after a walk, dry it off, from head to toes—and in between the toes.

Cats love to cozy up to an operating space heater, but the appliance can burn their skin. They also can knock it over, and if it doesn't shut itself off, this could create a fire hazard.

If you use space heaters, consider investing in one with panels and vents that are too small for animals to poke their paws through. Look for a model with mesh or a grill on front so pet hair can't get into the heater and damage the device or start a fire.

Ceramic models stay cool to the touch; those are safest for pets, according to MetLife, which sells pet insurance.

Avoid leaving a pet in a room with a space heater unless you're in there too. Even the best built-in safety features are no substitute for human supervision.



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## Organizations receiving grants in December

Midway High School Boys Basketball	\$2,250	North Cumberland Elementary Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)	\$800
Hamilton County STARS	\$2,250	Lake Tansi Exchange Club	\$750
Crossville Nazarene Church - Mountain Movers Youth Group	\$2,050	American Veterans (AMVETS) Post 90	\$750
Healing Hooves of Cumberland Plateau	\$1,500	Pickett County Coordinated School Health Fellowship	\$750
Rogers Creek Student Council	\$1,500	Valley Christian Academy Parent/Teacher	\$750
Rhea County Angel Tree Toy Drive	\$1,500	Monterey High School Boys Basketball	\$700
Meigs County Ministry	\$1,500	Rockhouse Fresh Start Program	\$500
Monterey Mission Center	\$1,400	Meigs North Elementary PTO	\$500
Pickett County High School Mathematics Club	\$1,250	The Kidney Foundation of the Greater Chattanooga Area	\$500
Cleveland Family YMCA	\$1,200	McMinn County Living Heritage Museum	\$500
Spring City Toys for Children	\$1,000	Lake Forest Baseball Club	\$400
Clarkrange High School Track & Field	\$1,000	Iglesia Cristiana Un Nuevo Comienzo Para Todos	\$400
York Institute Softball	\$1,000	Midway Youth Cheerleading	\$250
The Bread of Life Rescue Mission	\$900	Midway Quarterback Club	\$250
Monterey High School Project Graduation Class of 2022	\$900		

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**TECA** Tennessee Electric Cooperatives