



Inspect Outdoor Tools Before Starting Yard Work

Can't wait to get outdoors to start sprucing up your yard for spring? Take a few minutes before you power up your lawn tools to make sure they're in good shape for the season ahead.

Here are some tips for spring cleaning your power tools.

- *Dust them off.* Even if you store your tools in a cabinet over the winter, they could get dusty. And even if you cleaned them before you put them away for the season, you might find some residual grime and dirt on blades and filters. Use a damp cloth to wipe down all moving parts.
- *Inspect for rust.* Older tools are especially prone to rusting. Use steel wool to gently rub rust from metal parts. For tough spots, use a degreaser, and then spray the moving parts with a corrosion protector/lubricant.
- *Do a test run.* Before you start trimming hedges or mowing your lawn, turn your tool on to learn if it's operating properly. Odd noises, dull blades, loose bolts and frayed wires are warning signs that your tool needs repairing or replacing.

Working with damaged or malfunctioning tools can cause injuries. Keep yourself and your family safe by inspecting, repairing, and replacing tools that could turn a beautiful spring into a disaster.

Leave Electrical Jobs to Professionals

There's a little bit of a do-it-yourselfer in almost everyone. But some projects are best left to professionals.

Leave complicated jobs—especially those involving electricity—to the pros. Even the most seasoned fixer-uppers stay away from jobs that could put them in danger or start a fire.

- If you do work with electricity, your tools need insulated grips.
- Switch off the circuit breaker that corresponds to the project you'll be working on.
- If you're repairing a lamp, appliance, or other plugged-in device, unplug it before you start your work.
- Plug power tools into ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). That will prevent you from getting shocked.
- If you need an extension cord for your power tool, choose one with a cord that measures less than 100 feet.
- Water and electricity don't mix, so don't use power tools in wet areas.
- If you're drilling into a wall, check that you will not come into contact with electrical wires or water pipes.
- Shield your eyes and ears and suit up with heavy-duty gloves and other protective gear when you power up your tools.
- Wear sturdy, protective shoes and long pants when using power tools—even your lawn mower.



Rody Blevins
President/CEO
Volunteer Energy
Cooperative

Thank a Lineworker on April 18

April 18, 2022 is National Lineworker Appreciation Day. Lineworkers serve on the frontlines of our nation's energy needs, and deserve respect and honor for working hard to keep the lights on.

Line crews work around the clock, sometimes in difficult and dangerous conditions, to keep power flowing to our local communities. Whether they're restoring power after a major storm or maintaining critical infrastructure to our electric system, lineworkers are at the heart of our co-ops.

When a storm hits, they set aside their personal priorities including holidays, vacations, and birthdays. A service-oriented mentality is one of the many admirable characteristics of an electric lineworker.

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) is proud to honor the lineworkers who maintain hundreds of miles of power lines in our service territory.

I invite all co-op members to take a moment and thank a lineworker for the important work they do. On April 18, you can use #ThankALineworker on social media to show your support for the brave men and women who power our lives.





VEC Customers Share Awards \$26,000 in Grants

VEC Customers Share is a grant program funded through the rounding up of member's 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 \$26,000.

Grant recipients included the Clarkrange High School Art Club. The grant money they received (\$1,500) will help them purchase new equipment like digital technology.

"This grant will help get digital technology for the art room and will help young artists become familiar with these technologies to better their futures," said Will LaRue, Art teacher at Clarkrange High School. "This grant will also help show the importance of the Arts and our young artists. Thank you all so much!"

Since the inception of the program in October 2001, VECustomers Share members have awarded over \$7.4 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 <https://www.vec.org/community-programs/vecustomers-share/>.



VEC Customers Share Board member Kelli Crouch presents a check to Will LaRue, Clarkrange High School Art teacher.

(continued on page 3)

Volunteer Energy Cooperative Planting Guidelines

by Brad Rhea, VEC Right-of-Way Superintendent



One of the many benefits of living in our part of the country is the abundance and variety of vegetation, but as many know, trees and power lines do not mix. Vegetation growing into uninsulated power lines can become energized and may pose a hazard to the public. Along with the public, vegetation

can also cause problems for power utilities. Trees can grow into power lines or break and fall onto them. Also, vines can climb electrical poles and wrap around transformers and lines. Any of these events can cause power interruptions.

Because of this, Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) manages vegetation along power line right-of-ways. The goal of vegetation management is to prevent as many of power interruptions as possible. Vegetation management includes pruning trees, cutting down dead or hazardous trees, clearing around power poles and other electrical equipment, mowing undergrowth, and making herbicide applications.

VEC maintains a 40 feet right-of-way along our overhead primary power lines, that's 20 feet on either side of the power lines. We ask that nothing be planted inside the right-of-way area. Even if vegetation

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 2)

Organizations receiving grants in November

Pickett County Food Bank	\$2,000	Table Graces	\$800
Spring City Friends of the Library	\$1,500	Monterey Jr. High School Cheerleaders	\$750
Clarkrange High School Art Club	\$1,500	Cumberland County High School Track Team	\$700
Hamilton County STARS	\$1,500	Stone Memorial High School Class of 2024	\$700
Partnership for Families, Children and Adults - Deaf Services	\$1,400	Fairfield Glade Fire Department	\$700
Happy Hearts Seniors	\$1,350	Junior Achievement of the Ocoee Regions Inc	\$500
Monterey Lions Club Inc.	\$1,250	Cumberland County High School Cheer Team	\$500
Midway Youth Cheerleading Organization	\$1,250	STARTS (Support The Arts)	\$500
Midway Quarterback Club	\$1,250	Meigs Crush 10U Baseball	\$500
Clearwater Volunteer Fire Department	\$1,200	Meigs Fury 14U Softball	\$500
New Hope Pregnancy Care Center	\$1,100	Meigs County Ministries	\$500
CSTHEA Patriots Basketball	\$1,000	Grithouse Wrestling Club (GHWC)	\$400
MARA Medical Ministry	\$900	Cleveland Elite Baseball	\$400
Polk County Ramp Festival	\$850	Fentress County Bulldogs Football	\$250
		Fentress County Bulldog Cheerleaders	\$250

Tennessee Valley Authority

Residential & Outdoor Lighting Fuel Cost Adjustment Effective

March 1, 2022

2.196¢

For the most current FCA information, visit www.vec.org

Volunteer Energy Cooperative is an Equal Opportunity provider and employer.



(continued from page 3)

is planted on the edge of the right-of-way, plants don't only grow up but also grow out. That means even vegetation planted outside the right-of-way can still grow into it and may need to be pruned back in order to maintain our recommended clearance.

Here are some guidelines to consider when planting near power lines:

- Trees less than 25 feet in height and spread at maturity can be planted in the "small tree zone," which is 25-40 feet from the line.
- Trees less than 40 feet in height and spread at maturity can be planted in the "medium tree zone," which is 40-60 feet from the line.
- Trees with over 40 feet height and spread at maturity need to be planted in the "large tree zone," which is at least 60 feet from the line.

These guidelines are in effect to not only keep vegetation from growing into or falling onto power lines, but to also allow linemen safe access to right-of-ways.

Following these guidelines can also help speed up the restoration of power when an outage *does* occur. Access is critical when restoring power. Even though shrubs and hedges planted in the right-of-way areas may not be tall enough to grow into the power lines, they may be an obstacle for crews trying to perform maintenance or make repairs.

Overhead primary lines are not the only concern when it comes to vegetation management. We also have to be able to access our underground equipment. Therefore, we ask that nothing be planted within 10 feet of our underground transformers.

With a little planning and foresight, we hope the need for vegetation management along our right-of-ways can be reduced and trees and power lines can coexist. VEC also strongly encourages members who want trees inside the 40 feet right-of-way removed to contact us to discuss the possibility. For the Crossville and Jamestown service areas, contact Right-of-Way Superintendent Brad Rhea at 931-484-3527 extension 7234. For the Decatur and Cleveland service areas, contact Right-of-Way Coordinator Allen Ratledge at 423-334-1020 extension 7034.