

**Valley
Rural Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



*One of 14 electric
cooperatives serving
Pennsylvania and
New Jersey*

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Cooperative, Inc.
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FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Co-ops No. 1 in community investment



by **Wayne Miller**
President & CEO

WHEN IT COMES to making economic and charitable contributions to their communities, the nation's more than 40,000 cooperative businesses take a back seat to no other economic sector.

That's the conclusion from a collection of case studies assembled for the annual celebration of Co-op Month in October.

The 20-plus pages of case studies put together by the National Co-op Month Planning Committee show that co-ops generate hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in income for their communities through their day-to-day activities.

Nearly 3,000 farmer cooperatives, for example, account for as many as 300,000 jobs nationwide and a total payroll of more than \$8 billion. Some 270 local, consumer-owned telecommunications cooperatives employ an average of 47 people each and generate more than \$2 billion in revenues annually.

But we do more than create jobs. We also have a strong commitment to the communities in which our members live and work.

For example: A rural electric co-op in South Dakota helped fund an ethanol plant that today adds \$50 million to the area economy.

A telecommunications co-op in Iowa launched an economic development program that created, among other things,


an assisted living facility, an apartment building, three new restaurants and an Alzheimer's care unit.

Four credit unions combined to assist low-income New Yorkers with their tax forms, triggering \$2.5 million in tax refunds that otherwise would have gone unclaimed.

An Arizona food co-op formed a recycling program that now includes 100 businesses and was cited as the best in the state.

Here at Valley, we provide thousands of dollars in education funding for area teens, we volunteer labor and materials for various community projects, and we devote countless hours to helping local folks make their homes and businesses more energy efficient. Plus, we have distributed more than \$360,000 in loan funds for energy-efficient home improvement projects.


As member-owned enterprises, co-ops are owned by the people who live and work in the communities they serve. That gives us a different perspective from businesses owned by distant investors.

To put it plainly, community is not just where we work; it's why we work. As we pause to celebrate the role and accomplishments of the nation's cooperatives this month, their economic and charitable contributions cannot be overlooked. At a time of increasing concern about the national economy, co-ops are creating jobs, income and opportunity in their communities every day. 

Fall is for planting

... the right tree in the right place

BY SUSAN R. PENNING
Director of Member Services



PROTECT THE INVESTMENTS: Property owners should avoid planting beneath and adjacent to power lines if possible. Trees that encroach on energized equipment pose a safety hazard for children who like to climb. And trees are the primary cause of blinking lights and power outages. The cop is not responsible for replacing greenery that is removed due to its proximity to power lines.

AS THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER turn into the crisp evenings of autumn, many people head out to their local garden center to make any final landscape purchases before the big freeze sets in.

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative personnel are encouraging members to carefully consider the species and planting location before breaking ground.

For example, tall-growing trees planted directly beneath or adjacent to power lines may eventually grow into the wires and will require trimming or even removal.

When planting a tree, it's prudent to consider the location carefully so that the chance for future utility service interruption is minimized.

Planting in proximity to power lines

Trees reaching more than 30 feet at maturity should be planted at least 45 feet from lines, and those reaching 30 feet or less should be planted at least 15 to 20 feet from lines (see illustration below). When planting in the proximity of power lines, choose a species that has upright branches and a



Tall Height

(75 feet or more at maturity)
Plant at least 45 feet from lines

Example:
Parchway, Norway, Maple
Thornlen, Harvey, Locust
White Pine, Shaqbark,
Hickory

Tall Trees

75 feet or more at maturity
Don't plant within 45 feet of overhead lines.

Best for:

- Shading large areas
- Park and open space settings
- Background and framing of multi-story buildings

Medium Trees

Up to 30 feet at maturity
Avoid locations under 15 to 20 feet of overhead lines

Best for:

- Shade
- Windbreak
- Streetside, park and district locations
- Background and framing of one story buildings

narrow crown. Also, avoid planting soft-wood trees, such as pines and willows, as they are more susceptible to storm damage and could fall onto power lines. Remember, even if trees are planted according to these guidelines, trimming may be necessary if branches grow into or endanger electric equipment.

Smaller trees and shrubs that will reach no more than 20 feet at maturity may be appropriate for planting directly under lines, although some trimming may still be required if branches grow too close to lines. No trees of any size should be planted in transmission easements.

Around pad-mounted transformers

Many Valley consumers have a green box, about three feet square, that supplies electricity to their property. Planting near these boxes can be dangerous, as they are connected to high voltage electric lines underground. Also, co-op crews require access to these boxes to do repairs and maintenance on equipment.

The root systems of trees can interfere

with the underground electric wires that run to and from these boxes. Shrubs may be a viable option; however the 811 Call Before You Dig center must be contacted and underground lines marked before any planting can take place.

Shrubs should be planted at least two feet from marked lines. They must also be no closer than three feet from the back and sides of the box, and at least 10 feet from the front of the box, to allow access by utility crews.

Planting for energy efficiency

Trees serve as a source of natural shade in the summer, and can block cold winds in the winter, helping to reduce the amount of energy needed to stay comfortable by up to 20 percent.

Consider deciduous trees on the south, east or west side of your residence or business — their leaves will create a cooling shade in the summer, and their bare branches will allow warming sunlight to pass through in the winter. Evergreen trees planted on the north side will block

cold winter winds. Shrubs, planted four to five feet from a foundation wall, will also help to insulate the home in all seasons.

In order to protect not only your landscape investment but also your safety and the reliability of your electric service, it's vital to carefully ponder before you plant. ☀

Know what's below ... Call before you dig

If you are excavating, mark the specific excavation site with white. Call 811 to reach the Pennsylvania One Call System within three to 10 working days of when you plan to dig. Be ready with all important information: the county, municipality, street address, type of work, contact person and phone number. Then wait for the site to be marked. Marking could consist of paint, flags or stakes. Finally, respect the lines! For more information, visit www.paonecall.org.

Medium Height

(up to 30 feet at maturity)
Plant at least 20 feet from lines

Example:
Hedge, Maple, Sweetbay, Magnolia, Spring Snow Crabapple, American Hornbeam, Washington, Hawthorn



Low Height

(up to 25 feet at maturity)
Plant at least 15 feet from lines

Example:
Japanese Maple, Kousa Dogwood, Eastern Redbud, Kwazan Cherry



Shrub & Ornamental
(species up to 20 feet at maturity)
Can be planted beneath local distribution lines

Example:
Forsythia, Blue Hoelhes, Burning Bush, Dwarf Spruce, Rhododendron



Padmount Transformers

Call 811 to have underground lines marked, and plant shrubs at least 2 feet from marked lines. Also, plant no closer than 3 feet from back and sides of box, and no closer than 10 feet in front of box.

Padmount Electrical Transformer

DO NOT PLANT OVER UNDERGROUND UTILITIES

electricity / gas / water / communications

If there are no overhead lines on your property, your service is underground. Before you dig for any reason--to plant a tree, build a deck, set a fence, install a pool--call the Dig Safely hotline.

811

COURTESY ILLUSTRATIONS

Low Trees

Under 25 feet at maturity
May be planted 15 feet or more from lines if adequate space is allowed for future growth.

Best for:

- Visual screen
- Windbreak
- Noise abatement
- Wildlife benefits
- Streetside, park and business district locations

Shrubs & Ornamental Trees

20 feet or less at maturity
May be planted under utility lines.

Best for:

- Visual screen and privacy barriers
- Windbreak
- Noise abatement
- Wildlife benefits

Stay Clear!

A downed power line may not be a dead line. It could cause serious injury or death.



FOLLOW THESE TIPS FROM YOUR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE TO STAY SAFE:

- **Assume all power lines are energized and dangerous.** Even lines that are de-energized could become energized at any time.
- **Never touch a downed power line!** And never touch a person or object that is touching a power line.
- **If someone is injured as a result of contact with electric current, do not try to assist him or her.** You could be injured or killed. Call 911.
- **If a power line falls across your vehicle while you are in it, stay inside until help arrives.**
- **Call 911 immediately to report a downed power line.** Then call your electric cooperative.



FRAUD ALERT

Watch out for people posing as co-op personnel

THE NATIONAL Rural Electric Cooperative Association recently reported that co-op consumers in various states have been receiving phone calls from fraudsters posing as co-op personnel and asking consumers to provide credit card or other financial account information as well as personal identification information over the phone. (Co-ops have not been the only target; this is hitting utilities of all types.) There are at least two variations of this scam:

1. The fraudster tells the consumer that he/she owes money on an account and will have service disconnected unless payment information is provided immediately.

2. The caller claims the consumer can receive federal stimulus dollars to pay utility bills but he/she must first provide personal information such as a Social Security number and utility account number. (This scam appears to be aimed more specifically at seniors.)

All Valley Rural Electric Co-op personnel have been alerted of the scams and have been trained on how to comply with current “red flags” identity theft procedures.

Members with questions about Valley’s account payment, collections and service disconnection policies and procedures can visit www.valleyrec.com or call the member services department at 814/643-2650.

Help keep co-op records current

Members with updated home and cell phone numbers, addresses and email accounts are encouraged to inform the co-op by calling 814/643-2650 or toll-free 800/432-

0680. Correct information helps to expedite member outage reporting.

Note: In the future, co-op personnel may be using texts and email to notify members of power outages.