

Valley
Rural Electric
Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric
cooperatives serving
Pennsylvania and
New Jersey

Valley Rural Electric
Cooperative, Inc.
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www.valleyrec.com

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CORPORATE OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

HUNTINGDON/MARTINSBURG/SHADE GAP
OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Thursday
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Redefining Christmas



by Wayne Miller
President & CEO

THIS CHRISTMAS, perhaps you may evaluate the carbon footprint of your holiday tree. You may even replace the traditional, twinkling incandescent Christmas lights and their fragile bulbs with strands of plastic LEDs that turn (efficiently) from brilliant green to blue. A potted tree may find its way into your living room instead of the cut

variety (although your pets may mourn the loss of the additional water bowl). When giving gifts, you may consider offering your services, such as lawn care or cleaning, or a contribution to a charity rather than purchasing more “stuff” that nobody seems to need or even want.

This may be the year when you wonder, or are forced to find out, just how much of the material Christmas you can leave behind. It may be the one that redefines your holidays entirely.

If you look back at the photos of Christmases 50 years ago, it’s pretty obvious that everything was simpler then. What you asked for at Christmas-time was a very short list of wants, and what you actually got was usually the single most possible thing on the list, plus maybe a few items your mother thought you needed. Overall, the intent

was the same as it is now but, oh, the means were so much fewer.

Considering the current economic climate, I would bet some plum pudding that many of us will be doing things this year the way folks used to do them 50 years ago. Simpler. Whether it’s by choice or necessity, remember that this year’s unusual circumstances were once the usual kind of Christmas.

What it comes down to, perhaps, is that we must save Christmas from the idea that it will save us — that all the shopping we do this season will keep our economy afloat or give us the material buoyancy and good feelings we need for the coming year.

Of course, Christmas needs no saving. And, on its own, it cannot save us, though it contains the gestures of generosity and thankfulness that can help us become better people and a richer community.

As we barrel toward another holiday season, I hope we’ll all try not to fret over what we have to get or do or what we can’t get or do, but will rather focus on what can never be purchased from a store. In his book, *A Simple Christmas*, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee writes, “Let’s slow down and enjoy what’s truly important: family, faith, love and hope.”

May you and yours experience all of these blessings this year. ☀

Electricity theft: Not worth the risk

BY CHRISTINE SMITH
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

EVERY YEAR, electric cooperatives across the country cope with thieves — folks who steal materials, such as copper, or deliberately tamper with their electric meter to steal power. Not only are these practices extremely dangerous; they are serious crimes that can yield hefty fines and jail time.

In the past two years, Valley Rural Electric Cooperative has investigated numerous incidences of meter theft, which involves cases in which consumers interfere with the operation of a meter or jump power elsewhere to lower or avoid paying electric bills.

“We’ve seen people do some dangerous things — using knives, forks, magnets, jumper cables and any number of other objects to get around paying for the power they use,” explains Gary Atherton, operations manager at Valley. “Not only are these persons stealing from their fellow

co-op members, they’re also risking their lives and those of our workers.”

According to the Cooperative Research Network, a division of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, power surging through a compromised meter can cause an electrical catastrophe. A short circuit could produce an arc flash bright enough to cause blindness and powerful enough to launch fragments of shrapnel-like, red-hot debris. Serious injury or death from electrocution, explosion or fire often results from meter tampering. Only trained co-op personnel wearing protective clothing should work on meters.

Electricity theft is not a victimless crime. Your not-for-profit cooperative expends resources to investigate tampering. These costs are then passed on to the entire membership. National estimates vary, but *The Washington Post* cites revenue protection officials who claim



that between \$1 billion and \$10 billion worth of electricity is stolen from utilities annually. Since everyone pays for lost power, please let us know if you suspect meter tampering. Call our toll-free number at 800/432-0680 to report possible theft of service. All information can be given anonymously. ☀

Valley REC's director of member services contributed to this article.

Need a

Gift idea?

VALLEY REC GIFT CERTIFICATES make thoughtful presents for the cooperative members on your holiday shopping list.

To purchase one, simply complete the information below. If you'd like to surprise more than one person, please list the names, addresses and amounts for each on a separate sheet. Then mail the form with your check or money order for the total amount to: Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc., PO Box 477, Huntingdon, PA 16652-0477.

When we receive your payment, the co-op member's account will be credited with the amount you've specified. The certificate may be mailed directly to the recipient, or it can be sent to you for personal delivery.

Recipient's Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Amount of Gift (\$5 minimum) \$ _____

(Make check or money order payable to Valley REC)

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (including area code): _____

- Return certificate to me.
- Send certificate directly to recipient prior to _____ .
- I wish to remain anonymous. (date)

Mark your calendars

AS YOU BEGIN to transfer important dates into your 2011 planner, please be sure to keep some upcoming co-op events in mind — specifically, our district nominating meetings and annual meeting.

The district nominating meetings are held each year in three of the cooperative's nine director territories. These dinner meetings give you a chance to gather together with your co-op neighbors and friends. They also provide the opportunity for you to choose candidates for a position on the Valley REC Board of Directors. And you get the latest information on co-op programs and policies and what's happening in the energy industry.

This year, co-op districts 1, 3 and 5 have posts in the election rotation.

Members living in the following areas will be eligible to participate in the nomination process:

District 1 – *Bedford County*: Bloomfield Township; *Blair County*: Blair, Huston, North Woodbury, Taylor and Woodbury townships;

District 3 – *Bedford County*: Liberty Township; *Huntingdon County*: Carbon, Hopewell, Lincoln, Penn, Todd and Walker townships;

District 5 – *Centre County*: Harris Township; *Huntingdon County*: Barree, Jackson, Logan, Miller, Morris, Oneida, Porter, Spruce Creek, Warriors Mark and West townships.

District nominating meeting dinners will be held in these regions the second week of February. Invitations and postage-paid reservation cards containing additional details will be mailed in the coming weeks. You will be presented your meal ticket(s) at the door on the night of the meeting.



Of course, attendance at a district nominating meeting is just one of the many privileges of membership in the cooperative. Unlike private power companies, rural electric co-ops like Valley are owned and governed by the people they serve. That means consumers like you have a voice in how the business operates and a vote in who will represent your interests.

So if you're a member residing in districts 1, 3 or 5, plan to exercise your rights in the year ahead and come to your district nominating meeting.

After you receive your reservation card in the mail, simply return it to us, circle the date on your calendar and start looking forward to enjoying a delicious dinner as well as an interesting, informative co-op business session.

And don't forget the Valley REC Annual Meeting, scheduled for 7 p.m. April 15 at Huntingdon Area High School. It's another occasion for you to learn more about the electric utility that delivers dependable power to you all year long. ☀

Top 5 ways to boost outdoor efficiency

Could your garage, shed, barn or other outdoor building use an energy efficiency boost? Try these tips to save energy and money:



- 1** The same rules apply for outdoor buildings as houses: Add insulation, install energy-efficient windows, and seal ductwork.
- 2** Unplug power tools and battery chargers at the end of the season.
- 3** Install an insulated door and seal the sides and bottom to reduce air leaks.
- 4** Install motion sensors on outdoor lights.
- 5** Look into LED retrofit kits for outdoor security lights. They cost more upfront, but payback is five to 10 years, and LEDs can last up to 20.

Source: Cooperative Research Network

HOLIDAY HOURS: All co-op offices will be closed Dec. 23, 24 and 31 to celebrate Christmas and New Year's Day. District offices will also be closed Dec. 22 and 30, but the corporate office will remain open on those days.



IMPROVED SERVICE

View, pay electric bills online through E-Bill

CO-OP MEMBERS may now access account history and pay electric bills online using a secure bill payment interface called E-Bill.

Some key features of E-Bill include:

Consumer history

Consumers are able to view current and historical billing information, payment history and energy use history graphs.

Payment processing

A major credit card, debit card or electronic check transaction can be used for payment. Members may set up (or stop) recurring payments and even sign up for a new electric service.

Consumer email notification

Consumers have the option to receive an email notification when a new bill is generated. The email includes a link for easy navigation directly to billing information. Consumers can use E-Bill to



NEW: Pay and view electric bills anytime online.

review their information or pay a bill.

NOTE: In addition to online bill payment, the cooperative now offers payment by credit card or debit card at any Valley REC office location.

To access E-Bill, visit www.valleyrec.com and click “View & Pay Bill.”

Use less energy to keep things clean

YOUR ENERGY STAR-QUALIFIED

clothes washer or dishwasher operates very efficiently. That’s likely one of the reasons why you bought it. But there are simple ways to further reduce how much electricity each of these appliances consumes.

Selecting a lower water temperature — a



ENERGY SAVINGS AT THE PUSH OF A BUTTON: By incorporating energy-saving principles like turning off the heated dry option on your dishwasher, you can save money on your electric bills. For more ways to save, visit www.TogetherWeSave.com or call the co-op at 800/432-0680 for a helpful booklet on using energy wisely.

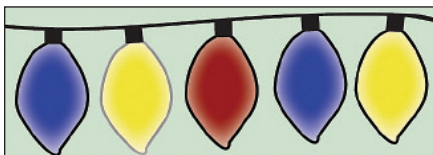
cold wash/cold rinse setting, for example — on your washing machine will save energy dollars. You can also choose a lower water level for smaller loads, trimming water use. Some Energy Star-rated clothes washers even boast extra energy-cutting features such as pre-soak and “suds saver.”

Much of the electricity used by your dishwasher — as much as 80 percent — is used to heat the water. An Energy Star-qualified dishwasher with a booster heater allows you to set the temperature on your home’s water heater at a lower 120 degrees.

In addition, many Energy Star-rated dishwashers offer efficiency settings, such as “energy-saving” and “short-wash” cycles that shave both energy and water consumption. Most models come equipped with an air dry option that helps trim electricity use.

For more tips on how to save energy and money, contact Valley’s energy specialist, Travis Kuhstos, at 814/643-2640 ext. 152. You can also find out how little changes quickly add up to big savings at www.TogetherWeSave.com.

Information from Touchstone Energy



Light up holiday savings with LEDs

Decorating with lights this holiday season? Consider light-emitting diodes (LEDs). They cost more initially but last twice as long as traditional lights, and you’ll recover the difference in three to four years.

- **Efficient.** LEDs use between 1 kWh and 3 kWh of energy, compared to between 12 kWh and 105 kWh for traditional lights, saving \$11 every holiday season.
- **Durable.** LEDs last about 4,000 hours. They’re also made of plastic and less likely to break.
- **Don’t want to use LEDs?** Consider trimming back the number of hours your traditional lights are on to six hours or less each day.

Sources:
Consumer Reports,
Alliance to Save Energy

