

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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Guest Column



Back to school a good time for safety basics

By Doug Roles, Vice President, Member Services

WHETHER you're in the "school-should-start-after-Labor-Day camp" or prefer today's August start dates, the return of classes brings with it several discussions for parents and their children. Of course, bus schedules and after-school pick-ups have to be worked out. And parents need to talk to their kids about books, backpacks, clothes and lunch plans. But don't forget to talk about safety as you get settled into the back-to-school routine.

The start of each school year is a great time to have another chat with your kids about safety at bus stops and crosswalks, or safe driving if they drive to school. And it's a good time to talk to children about good hygiene (Wash your hands!), bullying prevention and to encourage them to take school safety drills seriously. Making time to talk about electrical safety at school and at home is important, too.

Start with a check of the various electronic devices your kids will use in and out of the classroom. Are charging cords frayed? Have mobile devices become warm to the touch when in use or are screens cracked? Your child's mobile devices can be subject to a lot of wear and tear over the course of the school year, so check them periodically as the year progresses.


At home, outlets and extension cords

pose one of the biggest risks of shock or electrical fire. Teach your children not to plug a lot of things into one outlet or extension cord. Be sure to keep electrical cords out of door jambs to prevent pinching and don't cover them with rugs because they could overheat.

After-school snacks and studying go hand-in-hand. If homework includes electronics, keep drinks back far enough that spills don't land on keyboards.

When the homework is done and kids head outside, they encounter a whole other world of electrical hazards. Fall means flying kites. It's great outdoor fun, but remind kids to keep them far from power lines or substations. Kites and strings may conduct electricity, which means the person holding the kite could get electrocuted.

Encourage your kids to look up and look out for wires before climbing trees. The electricity can travel right through the tree branches and into climbers.

And please remind your kids never to climb the fence around or go into an electrical substation. If a ball or pet gets inside the fence, don't try to retrieve it. Call us instead. We can be reached at 800-432-0680, day or night. Best wishes for a safe and productive school year. 

Valley Rural Energy Services offers peace of mind with Generac generators

By Doug Roles
Vice President, Member Services

AS MUCH as Valley Rural Electric's team prides itself on providing reliable service, there are times when outages happen. Severe storms can send tree limbs crashing onto power lines, and motor-vehicle accidents can topple poles. It's times like these when a standby generator earns its keep. And it's why the co-op is proud to announce the addition of Generac standby generators to its line of products, programs and services.

The sale and installation of Generac whole-house generators is the latest offering by Valley Rural Energy Services (VRES). The electrical services arm of the co-op was launched in April. Since then, its staff of electricians has been busy installing Bosch heat pumps and Marathon water heaters while also performing residential and farm-related electrical work.

"There was definitely a need in our service territory for electricians who can do smaller jobs on short notice," says Valley REC President & CEO Rich Bauer. "Now, our VRES team is offering the Generac units in addition to the



PHOTO BY DOUG ROLES

STANDBY GENERATORS: Valley Rural Energy Services (VRES) now offers sales and installation of Generac standby generators. The units automatically provide electricity to homes during power outages. Shown here finishing a recent installation in Huntingdon County are VRES electricians, from left, Zach Yohn, Tji McCartney and Eric Yingling.

sales and installation of heat pumps and water heaters."

"Generac offers a safe source of backup power when we do have an outage," Rich adds.

VRES offers a liquid propane-powered 22-kilowatt (kW) Generac unit

with a 200-amp transfer switch. VRES electrician Zach Yohn is familiar with the units from installing them on his own and with a previous employer. He says they're a good value.

"Of the installations I've done, I've never had to go back," Zach says. "I've never heard anything bad about them. I believe they're the most efficient unit out there."

Installation includes a whole-house transfer switch to ensure that the generator does not backfeed co-op lines, a situation that endangers lineworkers and equipment. Zach says a typical setup is to have a 200-pound propane tank supply the generator. Normally, installation can be done in less than a day. Then the homeowner can enjoy peace of mind at home or on the go.

"Once it's installed, you don't have to do anything," Zach says. "You can run it from your cellphone if you want. And if your power goes out in your house, it calls you."

Zach says Generac's Mobile Link™ technology gets better all the time. It

Peace of Mind



Guardian 22 kW Home Backup Generator

Automatically delivers power during an outage

A backup for your entire home or small business

Powered by liquid propane

Alerts homeowner via PC or mobile device when in use

Installation includes 200-amp switch

allows owners to monitor the status of their units using a personal computer (PC) or mobile device.

Generac generators feature removable front and side panels for quick maintenance access. The units feature a RhinoCoat™ powder-coated finish and corrosion-resistant aluminum, so they withstand the weather.

Generac's Evolution™ Controller features a multilingual LCD display that allows consumers to monitor battery status and track maintenance intervals to ensure their generators are in top operating condition. The company says its G-Force™ Engines are purpose-built and pressure-lubricated. Not only are they up to the rigors of

generator use, but the result is power that's more reliable and requires less routine maintenance.

The company also boasts that its True Power™ Technology delivers best-in-class power quality, with less than 5 percent total harmonic distortion for clean, smooth operation of sensitive electronics and appliances. The units come with a limited five-year warranty.

Pauline "Sis" Hetrick, a Valley member in Hesston, Huntingdon County, was one of the first local residents to have a Generac installed by VRES. Sis says her unit gives her peace of mind because she depends on a reliable supply of electricity for daily breathing treatments.

"I've been thinking about one for several years," Sis says.

The devastating storm that moved through Valley territory May 1-2 helped make up her mind. Without power, she was also without a way to charge

medical equipment for daily breathing treatments. She's a fan of the co-op — even taking the time to call and say "Good job" when power was restored in May — but realizes emergencies happen.

"You never know," Sis says. "It's no fault on the co-op. You respond very quickly to power outages."

Sis's family, the Filsons, operates Seven Points Marina at Raystown Lake. They're planning to have a large Generac unit installed this fall to ensure uninterrupted operation of electrical equipment (including a sewer system grinder pump) at the facility. Sis and her family like to get away for a few weeks in the winter and believe having a standby generator will lessen their worries while traveling.

"Anything could happen while you're away and it would be taken care of," Sis says. "For all the more it costs, it's a good backup. I think it's smart for people to have them." ☀



Above: Zach Yohn, right, shows co-op member Pauline "Sis" Hetrick the mobile interface for her new Generac unit. Right: Zach Yohn and Tyi McCartney conduct a final inspection after installation of Hetrick's generator. Photos by Lisa Carper



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HVAC system due for an upgrade?
Water heater going bad?

Electrical service work, Generac generators, Bosch heat pump sales & service, Marathon water heater sales & installation, Demand Response Program bill credits & rebates, home energy audits, LED light bulbs, Smart Surge Protector strips, ProTran generator switches

Give us a call: 800/432-0680

Picnic parade float



Valley REC's Shade Gap District staff display a float entered in this year's Shade Gap Picnic parade held July 31. The float reminded people of overhead and underground electrical hazards and promoted the co-op's Marathon water heater program.

Ash borer's range covers Valley REC territory, most of Pa.

Valley REC reported in a September 2010 *Penn Lines* article that the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture had begun hanging purple box traps from tree limbs in the region to trap emerald ash borers and track the spread of the invasive pest. At that time, the borer was present in 17 counties, including Bedford, Fulton, Juniata and Mifflin counties in Valley's service territory.

Seven years later, the borer has turned up in all but three of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. In its August edition of *Game News*, the Pennsylvania Game Commission's forestry division chief says the spread was hastened by the moving of infected wood, including firewood, around the Commonwealth, despite a quarantine in place since 2009. The *Game News* article cites a U.S. Forest Service estimate of 99 percent mortality of ash trees in central and western Pennsylvania.

The borer is an invasive, tree-killing species native to China and eastern Asia. It was first found in the U.S. in Michigan in 2002 and turned up in Ohio the following year. The borer was discovered in Pennsylvania, in Butler County, in 2007, but likely was present in the state before then.

Kevin Detwiler, Valley REC's forester, has seen the borer's expansion firsthand. He says a few years ago, the co-op's Carson Valley Substation area (Hollidaysburg, Blair County) appeared to have escaped the onslaught.

"Just in the last two years, the mortality has started in there," Kevin says. "I'd say in the next year, our entire service area will be completely infected."

The beetle attacks and destroys all species of ash trees. Trees typically die within three years of infestation. The beetle damage makes the upper limbs of ash trees very brittle, making tree removal hazardous.

After a tree is killed another threat arises: Electric utilities across the state have been contending with dead ash limbs and trees contacting power lines. Many Valley REC members have contacted the co-op about problem ash trees. ⚡

Have a story idea for Valley REC's *Penn Lines* pages?

We'd like to hear about it!

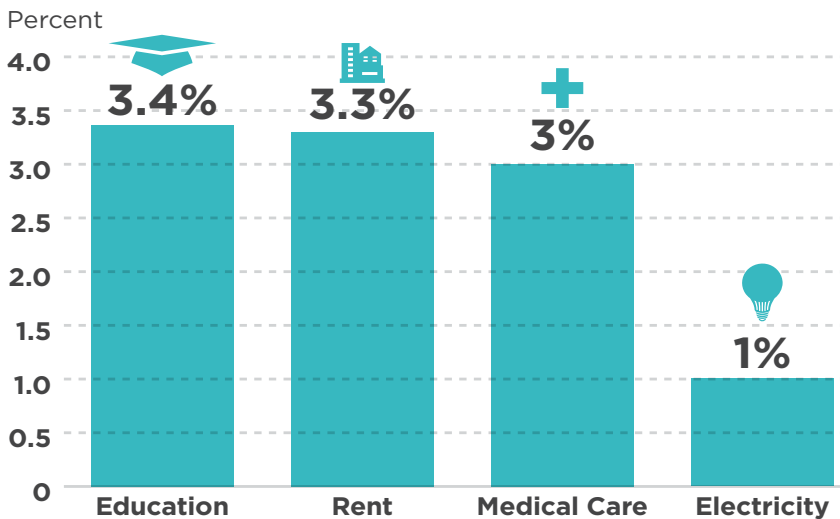
Contact our Member Services Department:

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ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

The cost of powering your home rises at a slower pace than many of your typical expenses. Compare the average price increase of these expenses each year over the last five years, and the value of electricity shines.

Average Annual Price Increase 2011-2016



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index