

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

10700 Fairgrounds Road
P.O. Box 477
Huntingdon, PA 16652-0477
814-643-2650
1-800-432-0680
www.valleyrec.com

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Guest Column



'Tis the season

By Ethan DeVore, *Director of Member Services*

WHILE most of us are probably gearing up for the holiday festivities and racing around buying gifts for loved ones, Valley REC is also preparing for the season of giving. The co-op's gift comes in the form of a weeklong trip to Washington, D.C., for high school juniors heading into their senior year. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for students to receive an in-depth tour of the nation's capital.

The Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour was created to educate rural youth of America about the nation's history and the role rural electric cooperatives play in developing strong rural communities. Each year, as many as 1,800 students spend the week experiencing all that D.C. has to offer. They will get to meet with congressional representatives from their state, tour national monuments and memorials, and visit the National Zoo as well as the Smithsonian museums. There is also an All-States Dinner Dance where students meet others from across the country.

Participating in Youth Tour is a great way to build leadership skills while also forming new friendships that will last a lifetime. The best part of it all is that Youth Tour is brought to participants FREE OF COST! Thanks to the es-cheats program, money that is returned to the co-op as a result of unclaimed capital credits is used to fund the trip.

Valley is now in the process of recruiting students for next year's Youth Tour, which will take place June 16-21.

The co-op can send up to 18 students and is currently accepting applications until the deadline, which is Jan. 4, 2019. Applications have been sent out to all public schools within Valley's service territory, so if you know of any junior who would benefit from this opportunity, tell them to retrieve an application from their high school's guidance office. You can visit our website, valleyrec.com/content/youthtour, for more information. After the deadline, the selection committee will review the applicants and set up interviews to take place in mid-February. Selections will be made later that month and students will have a few months to prepare for the trip.

Last year, Valley REC sent 15 students from nine public schools within the co-op's service territory — Huntingdon, Southern Huntingdon, Forbes Road, Juniata, Hollidaysburg, Williamsburg, Tussey Mountain, Mount Union and Central. To see highlights from last year's Youth Tour, watch the video provided in the link mentioned above. The co-op hopes to continue participation success this upcoming year, so don't miss this chance-of-a-lifetime opportunity to learn more about the nation's capital. If you have additional questions about Youth Tour, please contact our member services department at memberservices@valleyrec.com. Lastly, on behalf of everyone from Valley REC, we wish you a Happy Holiday season. Be safe and God bless. ☀

Valley fires up the hot line trailer for PennDOT employees



DEMONSTRATION: Valley REC Vice President of Operations Todd Ross, left; Shade Gap Linemen Jason Wilson, center, and Logan Booher, right, present to Bedford County PennDOT workers, educating them on power line safety using the newly built hot line trailer demo.

By Ethan DeVore
Director of Member Services

A FEW Valley REC employees recently had the opportunity to educate Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) workers on electrical safety using a brand-new hot line trailer. The demonstration shows real-life examples of how electricity functions, which helps listeners gain a better understanding of how to deal with different types of scenarios that may occur when traveling near and around power lines.

“The presentation Valley offered for our employees was great,” says Todd Homan, Bedford PennDOT’s assistant county manager. “It gives them an opportunity to learn more about power line safety, which is very important for their jobs.”

The awareness trainings were presented on Oct. 24-25 for PennDOT employees in Bedford and Fulton counties. Each presentation was held at the respective county’s American Legion during their Safety Stand Down Day, which is a day set aside by PennDOT to focus on learning about job safety.

Before the hot line trailer was available, Valley REC provided an

employee speaker who would present a PowerPoint slideshow on electric information and safety. The slides briefly discussed different types of electrical hazards and standards that people who are not utility personnel should follow. Now, thanks to the efforts of employees from the Shade Gap District who constructed the trailer, Valley has an

even better way to educate people on electric safety.

“Being able to show people live scenarios with energized lines really helps bring home the point,” says Todd Ross, Valley’s vice president of operations. “You can’t tell if a wire is energized or not just by looking at it, and we want to make sure people under-



SHOWING EQUIPMENT: Valley REC Lineman Jason Wilson speaks with a group of PennDOT workers from Fulton County about equipment used when dealing with energized lines.



PRESENTATION: Todd Ross speaks to PennDOT employees about electrical safety and hazards that exist when dealing with power lines.

stand these types of things to prevent the possibility of electrocution.”

Built earlier this year, the hot line trailer simulates live electric lines. Using a generator, the trailer can reach actual power line voltage by using a transformer to step up the power. The demonstration enables Valley employees to show different situations such as what happens when trees come in contact with overhead lines. The trained co-op linemen even fry a hot dog by hitting it with 7,200 volts to show people just how powerful utility line voltages are. Using a hot dog allows the co-op to give the audience an idea of what it would be like if a person came in contact with energized electric lines.

“Most of the time we see trees hanging on overhead lines, it’s easy to assume they are communications or telephone lines,” says Homan. “A lot of our employees didn’t know what insulated tree wire was until today and it is very useful knowledge.”

Homan goes on to explain that there are three main situations where employees out in the field need to know what to do in case of an accident involving a utility pole — what to do if they are in an accident and a downed wire is in contact with their vehicle, what to do if they come upon the scene

of an accident, and what to do if they see debris, such as trees, hanging on overhead lines.

Ross explained to PennDOT employees that if they ever find themselves a victim of an accident involving a utility pole and a power line comes in contact with their vehicle, do not get out of the car. Instead, call 911 and stay inside the car unless there is smoke or fire. In that case, jump away from the vehicle without touching any part of the car’s frame. Upon landing, take small shuffling steps until you are at least 40 feet away to avoid electrocution.

Electrical safety is an important aspect for not only the linemen and utility personnel who deal with it on a daily basis, but anyone who travels near and around utility poles. Accidents can occur at any time, and knowing what to do in various types of situations could be the difference between living and dying. For more information about electric safety, visit our website at valleyrec.com. For inquiries about setting up a presentation with Valley’s hot line trailer, contact Valley Rural Electric’s member services department at memberservices@valleyrec.com. 🌞



FROM THE LEFT: Logan Booher, Mike Williams, Mark Booher, Jason Wilson, Josh Gutshall, Kenny Sipes, Wilmer Bucher, Jonathan Shields and Tyi McCartney from the Shade Gap District are the Valley REC employees responsible for building the hot line trailer demo.

Co-op stays proactive with hearing

By Ethan DeVore

Director of Member Services

CO-OP employees had the opportunity to get hearing tests conducted on-site by Occupational Medicine of York (OMY). These tests are conducted annually as part of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations for linemen, but Valley offers the testing for all employees. Trevor Zettle of OMY facilitated the testing and had some interesting points to share with co-op participants.

“Having an employer who conducts these tests annually is great because it gives people the opportunity to see how their hearing holds up year after year,” says Zettle. “You may not notice hearing loss because of how gradual it can occur, but the testing will show if a person’s hearing worsens over the years.”

Getting regular hearing check-ups can be often overlooked by the majority of people. However, hearing loss is much more common for older adults than most people realize. In fact, one in three adults between the age 64 and 74 experience hearing loss, while nearly half of those over 75 have difficulty hearing, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD).

A variety of factors can contribute to



RESULTS IN: Valley REC employee Michelle Dreibelbis receives her hearing test results from OMY’s Trevor Zettle, who facilitated the hearing tests for the co-op.

hearing loss, with the most common being exposure to loud noises and aging. Other factors include heredity or medical conditions. Wearing safety equipment and limiting exposure to harmful noise are the main ways to avoid long-term damage that may result

in difficulty hearing or even deafness.

“I’ve had guys come in and tell me how they’ve been to hundreds of rock concerts over the course of decades and have significant loss of hearing,” Zettle says. “That type of noise, in conjunction with the noise construction workers can be exposed to, can be a huge factor in causing permanent hearing damage.”

Being aware is sometimes the hardest part for most adults experiencing hearing loss. Sometimes, people don’t like accepting the idea that getting hearing aids might be the appropriate step to take. However, hearing loss should not be taken as an ignorable impairment. Avoiding the problem can lead to irreversible damage.

Although many U.S. workers have regular hearing tests to meet regulatory requirements, those who have employers who don’t require testing should still contact a primary care physician or an audiologist to seek testing — especially if signs of hearing loss are noticeable.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Valley REC employees Adam Atherton, Justin Berrier and Brandon Clemens wait outside of the OMY bus – where the tests are hosted on-site – to have their hearing examined.