

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



Electric tools and appliances continue to amaze

By Doug Roles, *Vice President of Member Services*

FANS OF the early episodes of *Saturday Night Live* will remember actor and comedian Dan Akroyd in his recurring role as a huckster of far-fetched electric appliances on the television comedy. In perhaps his most memorable bit, Akroyd, decked out in a garish mid-1970s plaid suit, pitched the “Bass-o-matic” so successful anglers could “use the whole bass.”

If you’re not familiar with the skit, the product Akroyd was hawking looked an awful lot like a regular blender, the comedic spin being that you dropped a whole fish into it to chop crappies or puree perch and save time in the kitchen.

Fish in a food processor, thankfully, never caught on. But the idea was good for a laugh, particularly when the infomercial featured a “satisfied customer” slurping some slurry and exclaiming, “That’s good bass!” As offbeat as it was, the skit foretold something about electric appliances and tools: New and exciting ones would keep coming on the market.

Keith Dennis, an energy industry expert and president of the Beneficial Electrification League, says that just a few years ago new electric products making their way to market were limited to scooters, push lawn mowers, leaf blowers and vehicles. Today, the number of electric products is exploding.

“There are electric bikes, school buses, pressure washers, utility terrain vehicles, backhoes — even airplanes

and boats,” he says. “With the expansion of batteries and advancements in technology, we are seeing almost anything that burns gasoline or diesel as having an electric replacement available on the market.”

Hand-held tools with plug-in batteries can now hold a charge longer and offer the user the same versatility and similar functionality as gas-powered tools. National brands, such as Makita, Ryobi and Milwaukee, offer powerful and dependable cordless versions of their most popular products like drills, saws, sanders and other tools. And consumers can now purchase a wider array of specialty tools that plug in, such as power inverters, air inflaters and battery chargers.

The environmental performance of electric devices will improve over time since electricity is becoming even cleaner. And electric equipment also requires less maintenance — just keep it charged. Electric equipment is quieter, too, so if you want to listen to music or your favorite podcast while performing outdoor work, you can. That’s not possible with gas-powered equipment.

Something exciting on the horizon is the small autonomous electric lawn mower, which is similar to the robotic vacuum cleaner. They’re quiet and have an 8-inch cutting width. Dan Akroyd might say they “slice, dice and chop” your grass while you relax. I wonder if they’d double as a salad shooter or maybe a cabbage shredder? 🌱

We're hunting high and low to return capital credits to these former co-op members



Late last year, more than \$2.7 million in capital credits refunds were distributed to eligible members and former members of the co-op.

Since that time, more than 100 of those checks have been returned by the post office because of incorrect address information.

We are making every effort to return this money to its rightful owners.

Listed on the following pages are the names of consumers whose checks were undeliverable.

If you recognize a name and can provide an up-to-date address (or information about the executor of the estate or nearest relative, if the member is deceased), please call us at 814-643-2650 or toll-free 800-432-0680.

You can also write to the Capital Credits Department, Valley REC, P.O. Box 477, Huntingdon, PA 16652-0477. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

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SmartHub now provides DRU control period alerts

By Doug Roles
Vice President of Member Services

VALLEY Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) members who participate in the co-op's load-shedding demand response program now have another way to know when their demand response unit (DRU) is shutting off power to water heaters or HVAC equipment. This spring, Valley REC began offering control period alerts through SmartHub, the electronic account management platform many members use to pay bills and receive outage notifications.

"Very often, members signing up for the demand response program ask how they can know when their demand response unit is controlling," says Travis Kuhstos, manager of Valley's demand response program. "It used to be that members had to check their DRUs to see if the yellow control light was on or follow us on Facebook for our alerts on social media. Now, members can automatically receive that information, if it is something they want to know."

Program participants who opt in to the alerts through SmartHub (see directions at right) will receive an email or text message at the start of control periods. The alerts state the timeframe of the control period and remind members to use hot water accordingly.

Participating in the demand response program is the No. 1 thing members can do to help stabilize the co-op's future wholesale power costs. Coordinated by Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., in Harrisburg, Valley's generation and transmission co-op, the demand response program reduces load at times of peak demand, when electricity is most expensive.

Valley's participants receive a one-time \$100 bill credit and qualify for rebates on the purchase of water heaters. Nearly 6,000 Valley members are on the program.

"Many of our program participants don't pay attention to control periods because the program largely does not inconvenience members," Kuhstos adds. "But if they want the information, it is now available to them in another way, through email, text or SMS instant messages on their phone or mobile device."

For more information, call 800-432-0680 or email memberservices@valleyrec.com. ☼



Download the SmartHub app to your mobile device or go to valleyrec.com

In the app, go to "Settings," click on "Manage Notifications" and select "On Demand."

On valleyrec.com, click on "View & Pay Bill," log into SmartHub and then select "Notifications." Under the "Manage Notifications" tab, select "On Demand."

Valley REC improves system reliability in Fulton County

VALLEY REC completed improvement work in Fulton County in April that will improve system reliability for members served by the co-op's Harrisonville, Route 30 and Clear Ridge substations. During an outage, the co-op now has a greater ability to reroute power between substations in that portion of the distribution system.

The project necessitated two planned outages. Offsetting that inconvenience, though, is the decreased likelihood members will experience long-duration outages in the future.

"It's definitely going to increase reliability," says Brandon Clemens, Shade Gap district manager. "We can backfeed both directions now."

The three substations are situated roughly in a north-south line along Routes 475 and 655. While Penelec provides power to the Clear Ridge substation, West Penn Power serves the Route 30 substation, which in turn supplies the Harrisonville facility.

Valley's crews placed breakers near the Clear Ridge substation and installed poles and regulators just north of the Route 30 substation. Crews then energized a 13,200-volt line between the Clear Ridge and Route 30 facilities.

The co-op's system already had backfeed capability from its Three Springs substation in southern Huntingdon County to the Clear Ridge substation. Now, the system boasts the ability to reroute power from Harrisonville/Route 30 back to Clear Ridge.

Valley REC's project preceded a planned day-long loss of West Penn Power service to the Route 30 substation in late April. Prior to Valley's system improvement, loss of West Penn service to the substation would have left co-op members without power for the duration of the maintenance.

"Previously, we would have been dead in the water," Clemens says.

"Now, what would have been an all-day substation outage for Valley members should be very minimal." ☼



PHOTO BY TODD ROSS

IMPROVING RELIABILITY: Valley REC lineworkers make improvements to the Clear Ridge substation in Fulton County.