

Smart solutions for our energy future

The dust has settled from the fall election, and this month we turn our eyes to Washington, D.C., as Barack Obama takes office as the 44th president of the United States. The economic crisis will remain a major focus for elected officials over coming years, and the Obama administration also promises an increased focus on energy policy. As all of us paying electric bills every month can attest, the two go hand-in-hand. It is crucial that any energy policy discussed in Washington comes with a price tag that won't leave consumers in the dark.

Through the nationwide grassroots awareness campaign called Our Energy, Our Future, co-op consumers have contacted their elected officials with three critical energy policy questions focused on capacity, technology and affordability. With a new president and a new Congress taking office, electric cooperatives will need to continue pressing for answers.

These answers won't be clear-cut. Day to day, Sequachee Valley Electric Cooperative works hard to provide you with safe, affordable and reliable electricity. When you come home at night, you can count on a well-lit house, and, should outages occur, we're on the job to restore power quickly.

Although electricity use across the United States is steadily climbing, relatively high costs for construction materials and uncertainty about climate change goals, which could place strict limits on carbon dioxide emitted by power plants, have stalled development of new baseload generation: the large, efficient stations that provide dependable and affordable electric power year-round.



Bob Matheny
SVEC President/CEO

So here's the important question: How can we keep power flowing and electric bills affordable? There's simply no single answer, and electric co-ops know from experience that it will take a variety of new generation resources and technologies to ensure reliable and affordable electricity in the coming years. We must invest in renewable energy, clean-coal technology, nuclear power, an updated transmission grid and improvements in energy efficiency across the board.

Of course, implementing all of this on a large scale will require a massive investment of government resources and leadership — similar to what was needed to put a man on the moon. As consumer advocates and industry leaders, electric co-ops can provide lawmakers with expertise on what programs are affordable, sustainable and technologically feasible.

All of this must be grounded in goals and public policy that put consumers first. This is no time for policy-makers to ignore our needs with a wink and a nod to special-interest groups. Now, more than ever, Main Street must come before Wall Street.

You can help in this effort and make a real impact by telling members of Congress your story — why affordable electricity is important to you and your family. Tens of thousands of electric co-op members have done so already, and, as a result, we've sent more than 1.5 million messages to Congress, calling attention to our nation's impending electricity crisis.

Please visit www.ourenergy.coop today. Make your voice heard and help guide policy-makers toward a smart, affordable energy future.

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Sequachee Valley Electric Cooperative

Serving all or portions of
Bledsoe, Grundy, Marion,
Sequatchie, Coffee, Hamilton,
Rhea and Van Buren counties.

Service Centers:

512 S. Cedar Ave.; P.O. Box 31,
South Pittsburg, TN 37380
Telephone — 423-837-8605
Toll-free — 800-923-2203

97 Resource Road; P.O. Box 518,
Dunlap, TN 37327
Telephone — 423-949-2198

3396 Main St.; P.O. Box 441,
Pikeville, TN 37367
Telephone — 423-447-2131

14002 Highway 41; P.O. Box 100,
Tracy City, TN 37387
Telephone — 931-592-2511

14087 Highway 28,
Whitwell, TN 37397
Monday/Wednesday/Friday
Telephone — 423-658-7832

After hours: 888-421-7832



Our Energy, Our Future
A Dialogue With America

www.ourenergy.coop



SVEC board members receive certification

SVEC directors Richard Barnes of Kimball and Johnny Nale and Bobby Collier of Pikeville were recognized during the recent Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association annual meeting for completion of the Credentialed Cooperative Directors Program offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

“It is important to understand what it means to be a director,” said SVEC President/CEO Bob Matheny. “The NRECA training helps directors understand the fundamentals of the electric cooperative business and the duties and responsibilities of being a director who represents the cooperative and all of its members.”

To complete the training, the directors took five one- or two-day courses and passed testing on the courses.

“Director training is not just a one-time thing,” said Matheny. “With the rising cost of energy and the importance of keeping it available and affordable for our rural members, it is essential that directors, as representatives of the members and trustees of the cooperative, understand the big picture and keep updated on the changing electric industry business. This requires continual training.”

Board members Judy Fults of Altamont and Michael Jordan of Tracy City were recognized during the same meeting for completing the additional training required for Board Leadership Certification.

NRECA’s Board Leadership Certificate consists of issue- and skill-based courses for co-op directors. Directors must first obtain the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate and then complete a total of 10 additional training credits for the advanced Board Leadership Certification.



Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association General Manager Tom Purkey, at right in both photos above, recognizes SVEC director Richard Barnes, left, and Bobby Collier, right, for completion of the Credentialed Cooperative Director Program during TECA’s recent annual meeting in Nashville. Director Johnny Nale (not pictured) was also recognized.



SVEC Board Chairman Mike Jordan, left, receives his NRECA Board Leadership Certification from Purkey. Director Judy Fults (not pictured) also earned the certification.



All SVEC offices will be closed
Thursday, Jan. 1, for New Year’s Day.
In case of an outage or emergency, call
1-888-421-7832



If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!

We have all heard that old saying before: If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. But now is the time to pay special attention to that sage advice. With the economy in a downturn, there are plenty of people out there who would like to separate you from your money! Scam artists know all the tricks and all the buttons to push to lure you into their fraudulent traps.

Sequachee Valley Electric Cooperative has recently been alerted to suspicious stories of people claiming to be energy consultants who could lower your utility bills. Many of our members received notices in the mail inviting them to a free dinner with promises of being shown how to cut their utility bills by up to 55 percent. SVEC was not a sponsor of the meeting, which more than likely ended up in a pitch to sell products or services to the participants.

In the past, we have heard of individuals offering to come in and take measurements and offer advice on saving energy.

While these could have been legitimate businesses, it is always best to be cautious when dealing with companies with which you are not familiar, especially when they make claims that seem too good to be true. It seems that scams of some sort surface nearly every year with unscrupulous people preying on innocent, trusting citizens, often older people.

We want to remind all of our members that legitimate utility services offered by the co-op will be clearly advertised as sponsored by Sequachee Valley Electric Cooperative and that employees will be wearing or carrying proper identification.

Do not hesitate to ask for ID if the person is someone you do not know. If it is a business with which you are not familiar, ask for more information about the company — where the office is located, a phone number to verify the information given, how long it has been in business — and ask for local references with phone numbers to allow you to verify the information given. If it is a legitimate business, solicitors should be willing and able to share this information with you.

SVEC employees will be wearing clothing with our logo on it and will usually be driving a vehicle with our logo. The energy services technicians who work with us on the *energy right*[®] program and other energy efficiency-related issues are contractors hired by SVEC and will be carrying an ID badge. If someone claiming to work for SVEC has identification and you are still unsure that they are who they claim to be, call your local SVEC office and verify his/her identity.

We do employ some right-of-way contractors and line-construction crews that do not wear the SVEC logo and drive vehicles with other logos on them, but, again, they will have identification with them. If you still have reason to doubt a contractor's word, please call your local SVEC office. Even



SVEC field personnel wear logoed clothing and have photo IDs to verify their identity as co-op employees. Do not hesitate to ask for identification — your safety is our first priority!

after business hours, the Cooperative Response Center, our after-hours call center, will take your call and contact our “on-call” employee to verify the identity of anyone claiming to be a co-op employee or contractor.

Telephone and Internet scams are also prevalent these days. Remember that an SVEC employee will not call you and ask for personal or credit card information.

If **you** have called the co-op to pay a bill or to apply for service, you may be asked for this information. But if you have not called us, do not give this information out. Hang up and call the co-op yourself to verify the need for this information.

The same goes for any public utility or financial institution: Do NOT give out your personal information to someone who calls or e-mails you. If you do business with that organization, you should have its phone number or e-mail address on your bill or statement. Hang up and call it back to verify the request for information.

The safety and confidence of our members are high priorities with SVEC. We try to do everything possible to make it easy for you to identify our employees and services so that you don't have to worry about the electric utility workers who may be around your home or those with whom you speak on the phone.

Frizzell awarded \$3,000 scholarship

Will Frizzell, a senior at Sequatchie County High School, was recently awarded a \$3,000 college scholarship as the first-place winner in the annual Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest. The presentation was made during TECA's 2008 Annual Meeting in Nashville in November.

Frizzell is the son of Christy Vandergriff of Dunlap. His winning story follows below.

High school juniors who would like the opportunity to win a trip to Washington, D.C., and the chance at a college scholarship should contact their high school English teacher. Presentations on the contest were made during the first school block and will be repeated in the next couple of months for those juniors taking English during the second block.



Scholarship winner Will Frizzell, above center, attends the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association annual meeting with mother, Christy Vandergriff. From left are SVEC President/CEO Bob Matheny, SVEC Board Chairman Mike Jordan, Frizzell, Vandergriff and TECA General Manager Tom Purkey.

Electric Cooperatives — Energizing our Communities

By Will Frizzell, Sequatchie County High School

It was late November and the temperature was dropping fast. Coach Watts walked into the locker room. A banner hung over the door with the words, "Go! Fight! Energize!"

"All right boys, listen up," said Coach Watts. "Tennessee is expecting a major Arctic blast, and that means we will need each one of you working your hardest. This will be our first big game of the year."

As the coach walked around the room, he stared deeply into the eyes of his players. "Gentlemen, you are trained. You bring energy to the field."

Coach Watts paused momentarily and looked off into the distance.

"I know you are ready for this challenge," he said, "because each of you comes from the Tennessee Valley Authority where you were generated by hydroelectric dams, nuclear plants, coal-fired plants and green energy sources. Each of you knows this game is not just about electricity anymore, but finding ways to use it more efficiently."

"What's the game plan, Coach?" asked a player.

"Each of you must go out to one of the 23 electric cooperatives across the state

and energize their communities by providing affordable electricity. If you play hard, the points you score will generate valuable services to their members," answered the coach.

"What's an electric cooperative?" asked one freshman player.

The coach shook his head in disbelief, "I thought you were bright. An electric cooperative is a member-owned business that is run on a nonprofit basis with each member getting a vote or say-so in how it is run. We play for them, and have been since 1933, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Tennessee Valley Authority, which began producing electricity. Once they had the electricity, they had to find a way to distribute it to rural areas. Private power companies considered it unprofitable to build power lines in small communities, so in 1935 the Rural Electrification Administration was created. That's our team!"

"What position do we play? What's our part in energizing the community?" asked one player.

The coach flipped over the chalk board and drew a series of arrows, X's and O's. He pointed to his tackles. "A line is all about providing safety for the

quarterback, so you block to the right, providing basic electricity safety programs to students through school outreach programs."

"What about us, Coach?" asked the wide receivers.

The coach fired back, "You spread left, helping members with hometown energy services like low-interest financing for electric heat pumps, rebates on electric water heaters and *energy right*® Home Programs."

The coach pointed at the quarterback. "YOU run it right up the middle, providing affordable electricity to cooperative members."

The coach looked proudly over his team. "When you take the field, don't think you're alone, boys! You'll have the support of the whole community because if it's one thing that electric cooperatives know, it's teamwork. Electric cooperatives are all about working together and supporting their members.

"Gentlemen, cooperation is the key to our success. Each of you now knows what must be done. Each of you knows the part you will play. The talking is over! Now get out there and ENERGIZE YOUR COMMUNITIES!"



Attaching signs to poles is illegal

Election time is over; however, all across the SVEC service area, you can still find political signs posted on electric and other utility poles. Add these to the yard sale signs, birthday party signs, weight loss gimmick signs, etc., and it is a wonder that you can even see the pole!

We want to remind our members that attaching signs or other objects to utility poles without the electric utility's consent is against the law and can be dangerous for our linemen.

Signs and other illegal attachments make power poles extremely hazardous — and sometimes impossible — for line workers to climb and make repairs.

Step into a lineman's shoes!

Sequachee Valley Electric Cooperative line crews climb utility poles at all hours of the day and night — in the worst of conditions. It only takes a nail partially driven into a pole to cause serious injury to one of these workers.

Although utility poles are often very convenient, highly visible locations for signs, posters, basketball rims, birdhouses, deer stands and satellite equipment, they can create serious safety hazards for

our line personnel. Sharp objects like nails, tacks, staples or barbed wire can puncture rubber gloves and other safety



Staples and nails used to attach signs to utility poles endanger the line crew members who maintain and repair the system. Signs also distract drivers and are an eyesore.

equipment, making linemen vulnerable to electrocution.

Besides endangering a lineman's life, such obstructions also violates some local ordinances.

Please be respectful of co-op equipment and property, and if you have these items attached to poles at your home or business, please remove them

and help keep our linemen safe and injury-free.

Nail holes also allow moisture to enter wooden poles, causing premature decay and the expense of early replacement.

Since you own the co-op and finance the utility with your monthly electric payments, that means that YOU and your neighbors are paying for replacement of those poles.

Attachments to poles also pose a safety hazard for drivers as they impair visibility.

Sequachee Valley Electric Cooperative asks the public to please refrain from placing signs or other items on power poles. Since it is often impractical and costly to send a lineman to remove pole attachments, SVEC asks that if you see signs and other illegal attachments, be a proactive co-op owner and remove them.

To further assist our linemen, keep landscaping and fencing several feet away from the utility poles so as not to obstruct the crew's access to the poles.

So, having a yard sale? Running for office? For the safety of our Sequachee Valley Electric Cooperative linemen, try advertising in the local paper instead of on the nearest utility pole.

Be on the lookout for your Co-op Connections Card — one of the benefits of cooperative membership

The Co-op Connection Card entitles you to a variety of discounts and special offers at local businesses and national chain stores in their retail outlets and/or online through their Web sites.

So be on the lookout in January and February for a special letter from SVEC containing your cards. While we can't control the rising costs of fuel and materials that are forcing your electric bills to rise, we can use the combined power of cooperative members all across the country to bring you this benefit that can put some of that money back in your wallet!



Look for the Co-op Connections Card in your mailbox in early 2009, and start saving!