

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your 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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

James Stauffer
Chairman

Leroy Barnes
Vice Chairman

Kevin States
Secretary

Clair McCall
Treasurer

Robert Holmes
Allegheny Director

David Wright
PREA Director

Cindy Bigelow
Mervin Brumbaugh
Earl Parsons

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

Generator safety: Our lives are on the line



by Wayne Miller
President & CEO

THE SAFETY of you, our members, and our employees is a top priority at Valley Rural Electric, especially during dangerous times. When storms hit our area, we rush to your aid as soon as weather conditions allow our line workers to travel and make repairs safely.

Our line crews take necessary precautions before they work on downed power

lines. First, they verify a circuit has been de-energized, and that proper switches are opened and tagged to isolate the circuit from the system. We place ground chains on the circuit — on both sides of workers — to make sure the line cannot be energized while work is being done.

But even after these measures are taken, our workers' lives remain in your hands. Valley is proud of its outstanding safety record, but sometimes, no matter how many steps we take to keep everyone safe, the very people we are there to help unknowingly put employees' lives — and their own — in danger.

Portable generators, widely used when power lines are down, can prove fatal to line personnel and your neighbors when used improperly.


In 2005, a lineman died in Alabama when he contacted a power line that was energized by an improperly installed generator. He was 41-year-old Ronnie Adams of Winterville, Ga., who was working to restore power after Hurricane Dennis. He was married and had two children.

Of course, no one would ever purposely cause the death of a line worker. Nevertheless, a generator connected to a home's wiring or plugged into a regular household outlet can cause back-feeding along power lines and electrocute anyone

who comes in contact with them — even if the line seems dead. And Valley employees are not the only ones in danger when a portable generator is used improperly. Generator owners themselves may be at risk of electrocution, fire injury, property damage or carbon monoxide poisoning if they do not follow the necessary safety rules.

Portable generators can be very helpful to consumers during outages. But we urge you to follow these safety guidelines when using one:

- ▶ Never connect a generator directly to your home's wiring unless your home has been wired for generator use.
- ▶ Always plug appliances directly into generators. Connecting the generator to your home's circuits must be done by a licensed electrician who will install a transfer switch to prevent back-feeding. Valley sells transfer switches at cost to members.
- ▶ Use heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords.
- ▶ Ensure your generator is properly grounded.
- ▶ Never overload a generator.
- ▶ Turn off all equipment powered by the generator before shutting it down.
- ▶ Keep the generator dry.
- ▶ Always have a fully charged fire extinguisher nearby.
- ▶ Never fuel a generator while it is operating.
- ▶ Read and adhere to the manufacturer's instructions for safe operation.

May is National Electrical Safety Month. I encourage you to protect the well-being and safety of your family during outages, and safeguard those who come to your aid during emergency situations. When we work together for the safety and the good of our communities, we all benefit. 

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting draws nearly 900 consumers

BY LUANNE H. ECKENRODE
Vice President, Consumer Services & Public Relations

NEARLY 900 electric consumers attended the 2010 Valley Rural Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting, held 7 p.m. April 16 at Mount Union Area High School, Huntingdon County.

The meeting focused on current energy industry issues and included the election of three directors to the board.

“... It is irrelevant whether you or I believe that CO₂ released into the atmosphere from burning coal, oil or natural gas is responsible for climate change,” co-op President & CEO Wayne Miller said during the meeting. “... The release of greenhouse gases will be regulated in the United States. The most important question right now is, ‘By whom?’ There is widespread bipartisan sentiment that the regulation of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases by the EPA under the Clean Air Act will be nothing less than ‘a glorious mess.’ That’s the comment from Democratic Rep. John Dingell of Michigan,



who was one of the main authors of the most recent revisions of the Clean Air Act. He has said repeatedly that the Clean Air Act was never intended to regulate CO₂ or any other greenhouse gas. Since the December 2009 EPA announcement, at least seven bills or resolutions have been introduced in Congress to prevent, or at least delay, the EPA’s regulation of greenhouse gases.”

“The members of Congress, who ultimately answer to the people, need to be the ones to openly debate a far-reaching public policy issue like climate change, not some government agency working in the background that answers to no one,” he added. Miller also asked members in the audience to contact their elected representatives to let them know they must take a balanced approach to energy legislation.

“Hopefully you are familiar with the co-op’s national ‘Our Energy, Our Future’ campaign. To date, nearly 500,000 electric co-op members all across America have contacted their congressmen and senators urging them to craft climate and energy legislation that is fair, affordable and technologically achievable ... If you are so politically minded, I encourage you to

ENTERTAINMENT: Barbershop quartet New Found Sound performed at this year’s annual meeting. The foursome originated in 2004 in the greater Susquehanna Valley and has performed for a variety of audiences.

contact your representatives and senators to express your appreciation for their support.”

Board Chairman James Stauffer followed Miller’s speech with comments about Valley Rural Electric’s commitment to service and to cooperative principles.

“... Electric cooperatives have a long history of energy efficiency efforts and programs that do not burden fellow members with added costs and, in fact, bring down costs for all members — the coordinated load management program in particular. Through that system, the co-op has been curbing energy demand by reducing the amount of power we need to purchase during expensive peak periods,” Stauffer said.

“Valley must take a lead role in adopting smart grid technologies, promoting energy efficiency and formulating energy policies so that we can stay on top of the game and avoid unnecessary or inappropriate government control,” he added. “At



VOTING: There were 445 voting members in attendance at the meeting. The voting took place after remarks were given by the co-op’s president and CEO and the board chairman. Votes were tallied while the entertainment performed and the election results were announced at the close of the meeting.



PHOTOS BY BOB WAREHAM

INCUMBENT DIRECTORS RE-ELECTED: Valley Rural Electric Cooperative President and CEO Wayne Miller (left) and Board Chairman James Stauffer (right) offer congratulations to re-elected directors (left to right) David Wright, Earl Parsons and Cindy Bigelow at the co-op's annual meeting April 16 at Mount Union Area High School.

the same time, we must hold to the vision of the pioneers of our electric co-op program and ensure that all decisions — technology-based or otherwise — provide us with a safe, reliable and affordable energy supply.”

Following Miller's and Stauffer's remarks, the 445 voting members in attendance at the meeting elected three incumbent directors to represent the utility's nearly 22,000 consumers.

Chosen to serve on the co-op's board of directors for a three-year term were:

District 7 — David Wright of Needmore, Fulton County;

District 8 — Earl E. Parsons of Blairs Mills, Huntingdon County; and

District 9 — Cindy D. Bigelow of Williamsburg, Blair County.

Alton Hill of Warfordsburg, Fulton County, ran against Wright. The other two candidates ran unopposed on the ballot.

Other highlights of the meeting included recognition of all military veterans for their service to the country. Entertainment was provided by barbershop

quartet New Found Sound. David Wright offered the invocation.

Distinguished guests in attendance included state Reps. Mike Fleck, Dick Hess and Jerry Stern; Huntingdon County Commissioners Dean Fluke and William Hoover; Associate Editor of *Penn Lines* Magazine Kathy Hackleman and Regional Vice President of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation Craig Colantoni.

The 40 children attending the event enjoyed a big-screen viewing of Disney/Pixar's "Up," refreshments, balloons and a presentation by Huntingdon County Dairy Princess Kitty Myers of Shirleysburg, Huntingdon County.

Blair and Diane Heffner of Huntingdon and Duane and June Hertzler of Loysville each won a \$250 co-op gift certificate. Members in attendance received a \$15 credit on their electric bills, an energy-efficient showerhead and an eco-friendly reusable shopping bag.

In addition, meeting attendees who brought with them spent compact fluorescent lightbulbs had cooperative staff properly dispose of them. Plus, each family that brought a bulb received a free replacement.

For details on the importance of Valley's annual meeting, visit www.valleyrec.com and follow the link to "The Cooperative Difference." ☀



DOOR PRIZE DRAWING: Rick Poleck (left), co-op director of automated mapping, facilities management and geographical information systems, assists Colby Brechbiel in choosing winners for the two door prizes given at the meeting. Blair and Diane Heffner of Huntingdon and Duane and June Hertzler of Loysville each won a \$250 co-op gift certificate.

Geographical information systems technology: Moving Valley toward more efficient electric distribution

BY RICK POLECK

Director of automated mapping, facilities management & geographical information systems

There is an old saying, “To know where you are going, you must remember from whence you came.” We hold to this truth as we compare the “setting” of the first few electric poles at Valley Rural Electric nearly 75 years ago to the 2,900 miles of line we now maintain that serve more than 21,000 consumers.

In the past, we kept track of our existing co-op facilities primarily by using hand-drawn and laboriously updated paper maps and hard copies of records.

Fortunately, today’s electronic technologies and specialized software programs have changed how we collect and maintain data pertinent to our physical plant and consumers. The National Information Systems Cooperative has been our resource for that interactive software, which we now employ in moving us forward with geographical information systems (GIS).

A few years ago, we had to take a hard look at how we would assemble and maintain the accuracy of all of the most up-to-date statistics representing our physical plant.

After careful consideration, we concluded that a complete system inventory would provide the best starting point. So in April 2008, we engaged Davey

Resource Group (DRG — a company specializing in collecting electric utility field data) to perform a complete system inventory of our physical plant worth more than \$75 million.

Over the past two years, DRG has progressed through data collection in 14 of 22 total substations, collecting GPS coordinates of all our poles and meters. That electronic information is downloaded daily into a collective database. Upon receipt of data (by substation) from DRG, Valley’s GIS department verifies the data, downloading it into our own mapping/GIS database. This information is then electronically accessible, providing the capability for querying information or viewing maps. Through interactivity with the consumer records database, member information as well as transformer, device and meter records can be maintained and updated.

In order to keep construction and changes in the field current while moving forward, at the same time we began the field inventory, we initiated an automated staking program, which allows our staking engineers to gather new pole and service coordinates, digitally draw proposed lines and input units and materials. Once new field work is complete, that information is electronically downloaded and incorporated into our GIS.

The GIS serves as a centralized data-

base that is kept current on a daily basis throughout all co-op departments involved. GIS personnel monitor additions to the database regularly to keep data from becoming corrupted.

The GIS will integrate with the automated metering infrastructure, initiated last year, to allow us to use information to more accurately predict and troubleshoot outage areas and even permit more efficient and timely dispatching of crews.

As with all new technologies, GIS offers its own set of installation and application challenges. But we are already realizing its benefits in cleaning up existing records and aiding in Pennsylvania One Call requests, facility locations and descriptions, conductor span lengths, map production and so on.

When fully implemented, the GIS will be a centralized resource for data accessible to all personnel for daily activities, map production, extracting files and information to produce reports, right-of-way maintenance, pole inspection, work plan development, engineering studies, outage management, operations scheduling and much more.

The energy industry is constantly changing and for us to continue to provide unsurpassed service to our more than 21,000 consumers, Valley must wisely employ efficient technologies, such as GIS, to convey us into the future. ☀

Pole inspection schedule

The co-op has scheduled pole inspections to begin this month in the following townships in Huntingdon County: Dublin, Jackson, Logan, Miller, Morris, Oneida, Porter, Shirley and West. Inspections will also be performed in the following townships in Blair County: Catharine, Huston and Woodbury; and Metal township in Franklin County. Crews from Osmose Wood Preserving Company of Buffalo, N.Y., will be responsible for the project. They inspect and treat about 3,000 of the co-op’s poles annually. At an average price of \$150 each, utility poles comprise a large portion of the co-op’s physical plant. Routine inspection and treatment help extend the useful lives of poles by years or even decades.



PHOTO BY SUSAN PENNING

Walking for PRIDE

At a recent (soggy) cooperative-sponsored walkathon, Valley employees and their family members helped raise \$1,300 to support Huntingdon County PRIDE, Inc., a non-profit organization that provides programs that enable people who are developmentally and/or physically disabled to function at their best.