


# Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
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1-800-432-0680  
www.valleyrec.com

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**Monday - Friday**  
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

**HUNTINGDON/MARTINSBURG/SHADE GAP OFFICE HOURS**

**Monday - Thursday**  
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

**OUTAGES & EMERGENCIES**

1-800-432-0680

FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

## Ready for a safe holiday season?



by Wayne Miller  
President & CEO

**THE MOST** wonderful time of the year is right around the corner. Do you know what it takes to keep your kids and grandkids safe through all the parties, presents, travel and meals? The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) offers the following helpful tips that will keep us all mindful of protecting our little ones this holiday season.

### Electronic gifts

About 70 percent of child-related electrical accidents occur at home when adult supervision is present, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Let's make sure those new toys don't pose a danger.

- ▶ An adult should supervise the use of any electrical device. Consider both the maturity of the child and the nature of the toy when deciding how much supervision is required.
- ▶ Do not buy an electrical toy — or any toy — for a child too young to use it safely. Always check the age recommendation on the package.
- ▶ Never give any child under 10 years old a toy that must be plugged into an outlet.
- ▶ Make sure all electrical toys bear a fire safety label from an independent testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.
- ▶ Inspect all electrical toys periodically. Repair, replace or discard deteriorating toys.
- ▶ Prohibit play with electrical toys near water, and make sure kids understand that water and electricity don't mix.
- ▶ Put all electrical toys away immediately after use in a dry storage area out of the reach of younger children.

### Decorating safely

Christmas, Christmas Eve and New

Year's Day lead the year for candle fires, according to the ESFI. Be safe when handling your festive decorations.

- ▶ Keep candles, matches and lighters out of reach, and never leave children unsupervised when candles are lit.
- ▶ Instead of traditional candles, try using battery-operated candles.
- ▶ Cover any unused outlets on extension cords with plastic caps or electrical tape to prevent children from coming into contact with a live circuit.
- ▶ Place electrical cords out of the reach of small children.
- ▶ Never allow children to play with lights, electrical decorations or cords.
- ▶ Read manufacturer's instructions and warning labels for any decoration that will be used around young children, like electronic trains or animatronic dolls.

### Cooking

In 2009, ranges and ovens were involved in an estimated 17,300 thermal burn injuries seen in U.S. hospital emergency rooms. Of these, 36 percent of the victims were younger than 5. Keep little kitchen helpers in check.

- ▶ Never leave the kitchen when something is cooking.
- ▶ Keep children at least 3 feet away from all cooking appliances.
- ▶ Never hold a child while using the stove or oven or when removing hot food from the microwave.
- ▶ Turn pot handles in, away from reaching hands.
- ▶ Use the back burners on the cooktop whenever possible.
- ▶ Prevent hot tap water scalds by lowering the setting on water heater thermostats to 120 F or below and by installing anti-scald devices in water faucets.
- ▶ Once your holiday meal is ready, check that the stove and oven are turned off and that other kitchen appliances are unplugged and out of reach.

For more information, visit [holidaysafety.org](http://holidaysafety.org). Source: ESFI 

# Money coming back to you next month

BY SUSAN R. PENNING

Contributor

**NEXT MONTH**, as a Valley REC consumer, you will enjoy one of the most obvious benefits of membership in the cooperative: the capital credits refund.

Valley will return nearly \$890,000 in capital credits this year to eligible members and former members of the co-op and to estates. The funds will be applied to active members' accounts and will appear as a credit on the December electric bills. Paper checks will be mailed to former members.

## What are capital credits?

Capital credits represent your investment in the co-op. A private power company, such as Penelec or PPL, obtains the money it uses for capital projects from the sale of stock, bonds and the profit it makes on selling electricity to its customers. An electric cooperative, on the other hand, does not have stockholders and cannot sell bonds to generate funds for system improvement projects. Instead, capital is obtained from borrowed funds and member-provided capital through consumers' purchase of electricity.

Built into the price of each kilowatt-hour of electricity that is sold through Valley REC is a small margin that supplies a portion of this needed funding, which reduces the need for the co-op to borrow money. With private power companies, stockholders receive a portion of the profits (margins) as annual dividends. By the way, their customers — who provided this profit — receive nothing. With cooperatives, the margins get allocated to each member's capital credits account based on that member's total use of electricity throughout the year. When the board of directors considers the

cooperative to be on solid financial footing, it refunds a portion of that accrued capital to the membership.

## How are the refunds determined?

Since 2003, the cooperative has retired capital credits using a combination of two methods.

The first-in/first-out approach allows the co-op to return money to members who have had money in their capital credits accounts for the longest time.

The percentage method enables each member to receive a refund proportional to his or her total capital credits allocations, so that present-day members who are paying for current costs are rewarded for their patronage of the cooperative.

In addition to monies returned through these two methods, another portion will be earmarked for distribution to the estates of deceased members.

Combined with previous retirements,

**CAPITAL CREDITS REFUNDS:** For the 34th year in a row, Valley Rural Electric will be returning money to its members. This year, nearly \$890,000 will be distributed. The funds will be applied to active members' accounts and will appear as a credit on the December electric bills. Paper checks will be mailed to former members.

Valley has paid back more than \$19.5 million in capital credits to its members over the years.

The size of your refund is determined by the number of years that you have been a member and your use of electricity during that time. But whether your credit is large or small, it represents one of the fundamental principles of cooperative membership.

Your representatives on Valley's board of directors are pleased that, once again this year, the co-op is in a good financial position to give back capital credits to its members. And they are proud that, for the 34th year in a row, Valley REC is continuing its stellar record of returns. 🌟



ISTOCK PHOTO



The board of directors and employees at Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc. wish you and your family a ...

*Happy Thanksgiving!*

# Help available for heating bills

There's a chill in the air and winter heating bills are on their way. If the cost of heating your home this time of year could break your budget, you may be able to take advantage of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) available through your county's assistance office. LIHEAP is a federally funded program that helps to pay the heating bills of low-income individuals. Through LIHEAP, eligible applicants are provided with cash benefits. Crisis payments for energy emergencies may be made within 24 hours.

Effective now, consumers in low-income households may apply for: **LIHEAP Cash Program** — This program provides a payment applied directly to a member's electric account and can be used for both current and past due bills.

**LIHEAP Exception Program** — This program offers grants to help restore a consumer's electric service in cases where power has been disconnected. This particular program is only open now through Jan. 1, 2013.

Consumers in low-income households may also apply for: **LIHEAP Crisis Program** — This program offers grants to help consumers avoid disconnection when overdue bills aren't paid. Electric service may be restored in cases when power has already been disconnected.

### Requirements

To qualify for 2012-13 LIHEAP benefits, your annual gross household income must be less than the following amounts:

Size of household	Annual household income	
	2012	2013
1 person	\$ 16,335	\$ 16,755
2 people	22,065	22,695
3 people	27,795	28,635
4 people	33,525	34,575
5 people	39,255	40,515
6 people	44,985	46,455
7 people	50,715	52,395
8 people	56,445	58,335

Applications for the LIHEAP program are available through your county assistance office. For county assistance contact information, visit the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare website at [www.dpw.state.pa.us](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us). Click on the Find Facilities and Locations link.

To apply, you will need to have the following information available:

1. Names, dates of birth and Social Security numbers for all people living in your household;
2. Proof of income (such as paycheck stubs) for all members of your household; and
3. A copy of your most recent heating bill.

If you think you may qualify for LIHEAP benefits, **do not wait to apply.** Funds available through the program are limited. Both the cash and crisis programs are scheduled to close by spring. For more information about energy assistance, feel free to contact the co-op's billing department. Call 800/432-0680 or email [billing@valleyrec.com](mailto:billing@valleyrec.com). ☀



## Holiday shopping made easy

**VALLEY REC GIFT CERTIFICATES** make great gifts for the co-op members on your list.

To purchase one, complete the information below. If you'd like to surprise more than one person, please list the names, addresses and amounts for each on a separate sheet. Then mail this form with your check or money order for the total amount to: Valley REC, PO Box 477, Huntingdon, PA 16652-0477.

After we receive your payment, the co-op member's account will be credited in December with the amount you've specified. The certificate may be mailed directly to the recipient, or it can be sent to you for personal delivery.



Recipient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of Gift (\$5 minimum) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*(Make check or money order payable to Valley REC)*

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (including area code): \_\_\_\_\_

- Return certificate to me.
- Send certificate directly to recipient prior to \_\_\_\_\_ (date).
- I wish to remain anonymous.

## BEWARE OF PHONE SCAMS: The White House is *not* paying electric bills

BY ANGELA PEREZ  
*National Rural Electric Cooperative Association*

**LAST SUMMER**, thousands of consumers from coast to coast, including members at electric cooperatives, fell prey to a telephone scam promising bogus help with energy bills.

Basically, the criminals called and told residents that President Barack Obama had authorized a special federal program to pay electric bills. Then they asked each victim to provide personal information, such as a bank routing number or a Social Security number, to receive the payment.

Although this particular scam appears to have run its course, Valley Rural Electric Cooperative personnel stress that scammers are always coming up with new ways to steal consumers' personal information.

The co-op urges members to always guard their personal accounting and banking information and never share this information with family, friends or strangers.

As for the President Obama scam, six members at a Lexington, S.C., electric co-op were bilked and a few even had power cut off as a result.

"They were thinking their bill was



**COSTLY CALL:** Beware of phone scammers claiming to be employees of Valley REC and requesting bank account routing numbers or other personal information.

SOURCE: NRECA

paid without checking with us to be sure," said Eddie Richardson, the co-op's vice president for member services, who notified the state's department of consumer affairs about the incidents. "Others called us, saying they didn't get credit on their accounts."

Better Business Bureaus in several states issued consumer warnings, as well as attorneys general in Mississippi, North Carolina, Arizona and elsewhere. The state attorney general's office in Mississippi took more than 1,000 calls

from residents concerning the Obama scam, according to one state official.

Falling for a scam could prove very expensive, resulting in stolen identity, bank and credit card fraud, and, in the case of those believing their electric bill has been paid, power being cut off for non-payment.

Valley REC offers the following tips to avoid being scammed:

- ▶ The co-op will never call and ask for sensitive personal information over the phone.
- ▶ Members should only use methods authorized by the co-op to pay their electric bills.
- ▶ When Valley employees or contractors visit members' homes for service calls, etc., they will arrive in clearly marked vehicles and will carry with them proper identification.

In the case of the "President Obama is paying my electric bill" scam, much of the success of the crime can be attributed to the victims themselves, who, not realizing they had been scammed, told neighbors and friends about the wonderful bill payment program.

The bottom line? If something seems too good to be true, it probably is. 🌟

### Install insulation safely

When tackling an insulation project on your own, safety should be paramount. Follow these tips from the North American Insulation Manufacturers Association:

**Wear appropriate clothing.** To reduce the chance of skin irritation, wear a head cover, gloves and loose-fitting, long-sleeved clothing.

**Wear proper personal protective equipment.** Safety glasses and respiratory protection may be necessary, depending on your work environment. The U.S. Occupational

Health and Safety Association offers helpful guidelines in its Respiratory Protection Standard.

**Take care if fibers get on skin or eyes.** If insulation fibers collect on your skin, don't rub and scratch or remove with compressed air. Instead, place tape (adhesive-side down) on the area, then remove it gently, so fibers are pulled from the skin. If fibers get in your eyes, flush with water or eyewash solution. Contact your doctor if you experience continued irritation.

**Keep dust to a minimum.** Leave the materials in the packaging for as

long as possible. Use tools that create the least amount of dust. Power tools should have dust-collection devices. Put scrap materials in the trash immediately.

**Maintain adequate ventilation.** Determine whether your work site needs a dust-collection system. Also, exhausted air containing fibers should be filtered before being recirculated into inside work spaces. Finally, ventilation systems used to capture fibers should be regularly checked.

*Source: North American Insulation Manufacturers Association*