


**Valley
Rural Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



*One of 14 electric
cooperatives serving
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OUTAGES & EMERGENCIES

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FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Love on the line



by **Wayne Miller**
President & CEO

VALLEY Rural Electric Co-op line workers don't work alone on our power lines. Whether they are climbing 40-foot poles, restoring power or clearing tree limbs to prevent future outages, they are never far from the hearts of those who love them.

At this time of year, stores seem flooded with hearts, candy and cards professing true love. But to be honest, those sentiments pale in comparison to the bonds of love I see every time a storm sweeps through our area.

If the lights go out, our line workers' spouses send their loved ones out into the elements. When other electric cooperatives are in trouble after devastating hurricanes, tornadoes and floods, our line workers have traveled as far as Mississippi to bring the lights back on for complete strangers. Each time these brave men leave home to help those in need, their families are left behind, praying for a safe return.

Working with high-voltage electricity, line workers find themselves in life-and-

death situations on a regular basis. That's why Valley REC focuses on safety first. We know the folks who love our 24 line workers appreciate the time we take to make sure our employees get home safe every night.

Marrying into this profession isn't easy. Line crews are often on call and must be ready to respond at a moment's notice if our communities need them. This makes children's sporting events and family get-togethers hard to pull off sometimes. But the people who keep your power flowing do so because they know that without their commitment, many of the things we've come to expect — hot and cold food, lights, entertainment — wouldn't be possible. By devoting their lives to working on utility lines, they connect all of us to a better way of life.

This Valentine's Day, I'd like to take a moment to thank the folks who support and love our two dozen men who brave the elements and work long hours to keep power flowing to our homes each and every day. Thank you for putting your love on the line — we're committed to making sure the ones you love return home safely. ☀

Little things add up in home energy

BY DOUG ROLES
Director of Member Services

EVER HEAR that a mouse needs a hole only three-eighths of an inch wide to get into your home? Another pest — heating/cooling loss — can creep in and out of your house using much smaller nooks and crannies. Add the cost of thermal loss to that of another energy thief — standby power loss (energy consumed by electronic appliances even though they are switched off or not in use) — and the price of staying comfortable indoors this winter grows ever higher.

A home energy audit, either on your own or with the help of Valley REC's energy specialist, Travis Kuhstos, is the starting point for finding economical ways to keep your home comfortable and energy efficient.

"What you do is go through each room of the house and make a list of problems in each room," Kuhstos says.

Existing problems could include condensation and uncomfortable or drafty rooms. Look for air leaks around window frames, baseboards, doorways and fire-place dampers. Also check around wall or window-mounted air conditioners. When inspecting windows and doors for air leaks, if you can see daylight around the

door or window frame, that is where the leak exists.

When conducting audits for Valley REC members, Kuhstos uses a thermal-imaging device to show where heat is escaping from a home. He can also see hidden problems, like where there is not enough insulation in walls and ceilings.

"Anywhere you have trim, caulk the back of it," Kuhstos advises. "It slows down infiltration and exfiltration and allows your HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) system to condition your inside air properly."

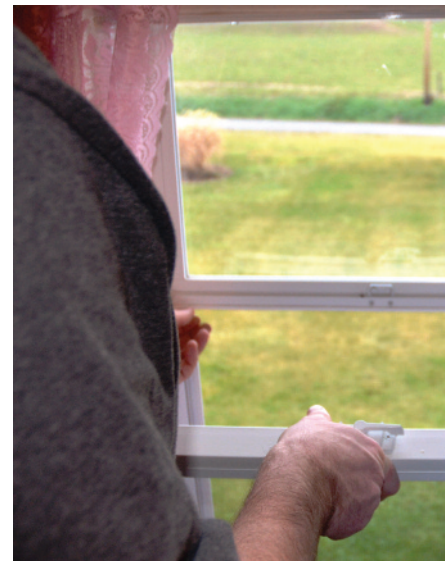
Another place to look for energy loss is where the two panes of double-hung windows meet. In many cases, replacing the felt insulation from the factory with a thicker piece of weather stripping will stop heat loss. Other items to put on the audit to-do list include:

- ▶ Seal gaps in pipe insulation.
- ▶ Use insulated sheathing and caulking or spray foam (not roll insulation) to seal the rim joists.
- ▶ Insulate your water heater and, if your home has the older metal heat ducts, also insulate them.
- ▶ Check for cold air around outlets. Placing an insulated plate between the outlet cover and wall can stop this loss of heating/cooling.

Regulating temperature is only half the strategy. While going room to room, take a look at where your electricity is going. Is it working for you or just costing you money?

"Anywhere from 12 to 25 percent of the power that comes in your house is lost to standby loss," Kuhstos says.

The electronics found in a typical entertainment center contribute greatly to standby loss. Anything that displays a clock, charges a battery, has an LED light or has a remote (such as entertainment systems or computers) is using energy even when it's not in use. Smart surge protectors eliminate this loss by allowing the user to shut off power to those electronics while other devices plugged into the "live" section of the strip still receive power. Cordless phones use electricity anytime the handset is placed in the charger. Charge them only as needed.



PHOTOS BY DOUG ROLES

CHECK FOR LEAKS: Double-hung windows can allow heat to escape if the felt insulation has deteriorated. Outlets, like the one below, are another place to look for thermal loss. If cold air is coming in around the edges of the outlet, installing an insulated pad between the wall and the cover can seal this leak.

Next, look at lighting around the home. Are there lights left on in unused rooms? Are so-called "dusk-to-dawn" lights using power because they don't turn off on cloudy, winter days? Do you have incandescent bulbs that could be replaced with compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs)? Making the switch to CFLs can save you over \$10 per bulb per year.

When performing your own home audit, make sure to examine the ceilings and walls. If these two areas are not properly insulated, you risk heat loss in the winter and cool-air loss in the summer. Check to see that the attic hatch is heavily insulated, as well as weather-stripped and closed tightly. In the attic, determine if openings for items such as pipes, duct-



NO PLACE TO HIDE: Heat loss can't hide from this handheld thermal imager being used by Valley REC Energy Specialist Travis Kuhstos during a home energy audit for a Valley REC member. The scan shows the temperature at the window at 59 degrees.



Energy audits

work and chimneys are sealed. If you see any gaps, seal them with expanding foam caulk or another permanent sealant. When looking at the outside of your home, examine areas where two different building materials meet.

This includes exterior corners, areas where siding and chimneys meet, and places where the foundation and the bottom of the exterior brick or siding meet.

"You want everything to be uniform," Kuhstos says.

Make sure to plug and caulk holes or penetrations for faucets, pipes, electric outlets and wiring. Also, look for cracks and holes in the mortar, foundation and siding of your home, and seal them with the appropriate material. Finally, check



CHECK EVERYTHING: The insulation wrap on the water heater is a good energy-saving start, but the old cellar door is hemorrhaging heat. Where you see daylight, you're seeing heating/cooling loss.

the exterior caulking around doors and windows to see if they are sealed tightly. Remember, if the air can't get in, the mice can't either.

For more information on home energy audits and energy-saving techniques, visit

www.valleyrec.com and click on the "Save Energy & Money" tab. ☀

Sources: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Touchstone Energy and the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Valley REC recruiting for Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL juniors and seniors: Are you searching for new adventures and new friends? If so, the 2013 Rural Electric Youth Tour might be for you.

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative will sponsor students from throughout the cooperative's eight-county service territory on an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital June 16-21.

The Rural Electric Youth Tour has brought high school students to Washington, D.C., every June since the late 1950s.

More than 40,000 students from rural areas and small towns across America have participated in this unique program.

The featured speakers during National Youth Day provide insight regarding the important roles electric cooperatives play in their communities and in the nation. Students gain a personal understanding of American history and their responsibility as citizens by meeting their representatives and senators, and exploring the sights around the nation's capital.



YOUTH TOUR 2012: U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster (R-9th) meets with Youth Tour participants during the 2012 event. The students had a chance to speak with Shuster about issues affecting the 9th District.

It's not unusual to see a former Youth Tour participant working as a congressional aide on Capitol Hill. In fact, several former Youth Tour students have gone on to serve in the highest ranks of government, including the U.S. Senate.

Students interested in joining the Youth Tour delegation should meet the following criteria: Any high school junior or senior whose parent or guardian is a member or employee of Valley REC is eligible to apply. Students will be required to submit a transcript along with additional information to the co-op

selection committee. Selections will be based on academic achievement, as well as participation in extracurricular activities and/or community service programs.

Students interested in attending Youth Tour this year should visit their high school guidance counselor's office today to apply. Final selections will be made in early March.

For more details, visit www.valleyrec.com and follow the Programs and Services link to Youth Tour. Or call the co-op's member services department at 800/432-0680, extension 163. ☀

Meet your employees

BY DOUG ROLES
Director of Member Services

HIGHLIGHTED IN THIS COLUMN is a recent addition to the Valley REC team, Logan Booher. Logan came to the co-op last June, working full time as a Lineman Class 1 in the Huntingdon District. He had interned for Valley REC during the summer of 2011 while a student in an associate degree program for line workers.

Logan's job entails a number of responsibilities — installing new lines, maintaining existing lines and responding to outages. He may climb poles one day and work with underground lines in a trench the next.

"I do basically everything," Logan says. "I like the overhead work from a bucket most."

The son of Mark and Jodi Booher of Shade Gap, Logan is a 2009 graduate of Southern Huntingdon County High



Logan Booher

School (SHCHS). He works daily with two SHCHS alums he knew from school— John Fogelsonger (Class of 2006) and Justin Berrier (also Class of 2006). Logan pointed out that his father, Mark, has worked with Valley REC for 22 years, and is currently serving as district supervisor in the Shade Gap district.

"He started a month before I was born," Logan says.

Following high school graduation, Logan completed one year of a criminal justice program at University of Pittsburgh - Bradford before transferring into the Electrical Distribution Engineering Technologies Program at Blue Ridge Technical College, Martinsburg, WVa. Logan says his internship experience in that program helped cement his career decision.

"I was with the line crews every day," he says. "It gets you out and gives you a chance to prove yourself."

Logan currently resides in Huntingdon. He is engaged to Cortney Wright of Cassville. The couple plans to marry this fall.

In his spare time, Logan enjoys muzzleloader hunting for deer and is training two beagle pups to hunt rabbits. He plans to complete additional training offered through the co-op to advance through the lineman ranks.

Logan's fellow co-op employees look forward to working with him for a long time to come. He's one of the people you can count on. ☀

What Do Different Air Filters Block?

Air filters are rated by Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV). Filters with a higher MERV block more dirt, but also reduce airflow and system efficiency. Use this guide to find the right filter for your home or business.

	1-4 MERV \$2-\$10	5-8 MERV \$10-\$20	9-12 MERV \$18-\$25	13-20 MERV \$\$\$
Blocked Items	Pollen, sanding dust, large insect bodies 	+ Pet dander, mold, spores, dust mites, hair spray 	+ Lead dust, milled flour, car emission particles 	+ Bacteria, virus, face powder, smoke, sneezes, paint pigments, oil, carbon dust
Filter Types	Disposable, washable	Pleated, disposable, electrostatic	Pleated, disposable, electrostatic	High efficiency particulate arrestance (HEPA), box 6-12 inches thick, flexible 12-36 inches thick
Common Uses	Homes, window air conditioning units	Better homes, general office buildings	Superior homes, better office buildings, businesses	Hospitals, drug and electronic labs

Source: epa.gov/iaq