



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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TWIN VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS

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Co-op Connections Card Savings Update

In March, Twin Valley members filled 27 prescriptions using the Co-op Connections Card and saved **\$293.77!** That makes an annual savings of **\$1,121.49.**

FROM THE MANAGER

Exceeds Expectations

My kids always combed their grade-school report cards for EEs, which signified they had attained the coveted “exceeds expectations” rating in aspects of school life that couldn’t be assigned a letter grade.

As they grew, EEs turned into (we hoped) As and Bs. Yet I don’t think any of them lost that desire to exceed expectations.

At Twin Valley Electric Cooperative, we also strive for EEs, every single day. We don’t want to do what you only expect us to do—provide you with affordable, safe, and reliable electric service. We want to go farther and do better, from providing superior member service to offering programs that help you save time and money.

Twin Valley linemen provide the public face of our mission to exceed expectations. They routinely work in rough weather and put in long hours. But they do it gladly, because they care about doing an exceptional job for you.

However, we have many people behind the scenes who also make our cooperative the best it can be. Our staff continually explores new technologies to improve service reliability. Twin Valley has installed automatic metering infrastructure (AMI) meters on all of our services.

We are currently doing a complete GPS inventory of our electric system. Our finance department works to make bill pay easier and more convenient with programs like automatic bank draft and Budget Billing. You can pay your bills by mail, by phone, by Internet or using our drop box or coming in the office and paying in person. Our customer services representatives want to make sure you have a positive and satisfying experience when you call our office for help.

And because we’re a cooperative, we have a special responsibility to support the communities we serve and exceed expectations there, too. That means we aim to improve the quality of life by offering scholarships for local students attending lineman schools, giving support to local 4-H and FFA projects and supporting youth entrepreneurship projects.

Whether it’s a power outage or energy audit, a billing question or community event, we’re working hard to achieve those EEs from you every day.



Ron Holsteen

“We’re working hard to achieve those EEs from you every day.”

NOTES FROM OPERATIONS

Battling Copper Crime in Our Area**William Worthy**

As we all know, costs of material, services continue to rise, and we at Twin Valley Electric Cooperative take every possible action to keep those costs to a minimum. Proac-

tive maintenance of existing lines and structures help. In addition, I have instituted a strict vehicle maintenance rule that keeps small problems from turning into major repairs.

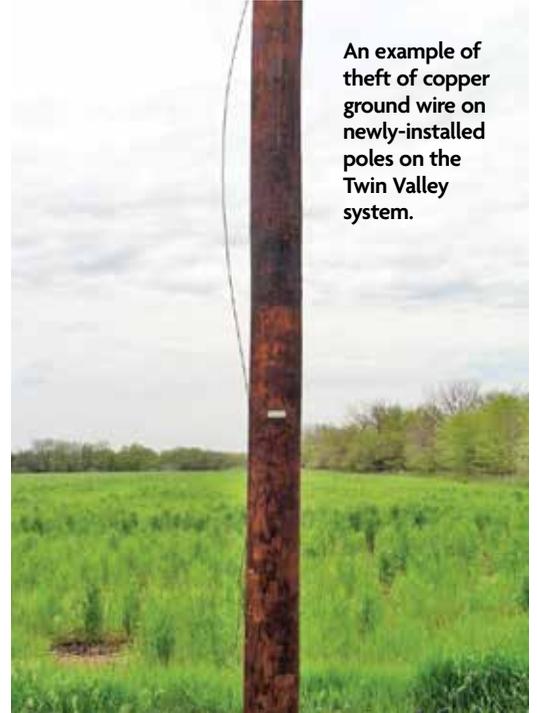
Your linemen work hard in repairing your electric system and in taking care of the equipment. These two work procedures go a long way in keeping costs down. Of course, aside from the occasional storm or inattentive farmer or equipment operator, we can control these. One thing we seem to have a problem with and no plausible solution can be found, is the common criminal.

When we are heading out to construction jobs or doing our required

line patrol, nothing gets under the skin of a dedicated lineman more than seeing copper wire missing from poles that serve our members. The criminals that perpetrate these crimes are idiots that know just enough to keep themselves from ending up in jail or in a six-foot hole. Not only are they jeopardizing their lives, they are compromising the integrity of your electric system. They have no clue that the penance they receive for destroying part of our system costs your cooperative a lot more than what they gain at the salvage yard.

In the past couple of weeks, we have had new construction areas targeted by the thieves. Our contractor is rebuilding a line, and some of the poles that have been in the ground a very short time have been, or attempted to be, stripped of the copper ground wire that runs down the pole to a ground rod. The thieves may steal \$2 or \$3 worth of copper, but it costs the cooperative time and labor to replace it, up to approximately \$75. Doesn't make sense, does it?

A few months ago, a thief targeted your cooperative's headquarters and was caught red-handed stealing almost \$2,000 worth of copper wire, protective ground chains and truck grounds from our warehouse. Not only was this alarming because of the brazen stupidity, it brought to light a trend that is coming to small town, main street U.S.A.



An example of theft of copper ground wire on newly-installed poles on the Twin Valley system.

Not only the cost of the material and equipment that was destroyed needs taken into consideration, the cost for your cooperative to enhance security and beef up locks and doors hits the bottom line as well. Local law enforcement has returned the stolen copper, some of it can be used, but some had to be junked because of the damage done to compression connectors and clamps that takes special equipment to replace. The one thing that will not be recovered is the sanctity of small town life, and that is a shame.

On a side note, the thief that broke into our office was out on a felony bond for burglary when he was caught stealing from your cooperative. The district judge that heard the case involving Twin Valley Electric Cooperative decided that probation was sufficient punishment for him...and that is a bigger shame. As always, I welcome your comments or questions. You can e-mail me at wworthy@twinvalleyelec-tric.coop.



A close-up view of a cut ground wire.

Around-the-Clock Appliances May Mean More Energy Use in Your Home

In 2013, new appliances don't just cook your food and keep it cold, wash your clothes and dishes, or offer a few hours of entertainment. These machines boast myriad functions that make our lives easier—but in doing so also consume more energy.

While appliances have become more energy efficient as technology has evolved and federal standards tightened, few ever truly shut down anymore. And as Americans add more and more electronic devices to their households—25 on average, according to the Consumer Electronics Association—much more energy is consumed.

Take a phone charger as an example. Leaving it plugged in without a phone attached doesn't mean it's not drawing power—in fact, it uses 0.26 watts of electricity even when a phone isn't connected, and 2.24 watts when the handset is charging.

Of course, that 0.26 watts by itself might not be a big issue. But if

most of your electronic devices are doing that, it can add up to as much as 10 percent of your bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

Take a look around your house—how many cords are plugged in? Of those, how many are actually attached to a device? You might be surprised at how much electricity your family consumes, even when you don't realize it.

Cable boxes are a big culprit of 24/7 energy use. Leaving your cable box plugged in for a year and never turning it off adds, on average, \$17.83 to your electric bill. Toss in a DVR function and that total jumps to \$43.46, DOE reports.

And electronics aren't the only problem. Basic “white goods” appliances like clothes washers and dryers, refrigerators, and dishwashers are so savvy that you can set them to come on late at night, when the wholesale power your co-op must buy costs less—helping your co-op keep power affordable for you and your neighbors. Here again, the bigger you go with a new appliance, the more energy it will use.

Electric bills don't have to be held hostage by 24-hour-a-day energy use. For starters, use a power strip to turn several electronics on or off at once. For a bigger investment, look into “smart” power strips. They allow you to cut power to certain appliances—say, your TV—while letting power flow to your cable box because it takes time to reboot after being unplugged.

If you're in the market for a new appliance, look for an ENERGY STAR model. It generally consumes less power all around and uses less standby energy.

Remember that you actually have to use those energy-efficient settings on your appliances to see savings on your electric bill.

Tips for Copper Theft Prevention

As the price of copper has increased, so has copper theft. While trying to make a quick dollar by stealing copper, thieves risk their own lives and cause dangerous and expensive damage. Common targets for copper thieves are farming equipment, air conditioners, vacant buildings, construction sites, and electric utility properties, including substations and power poles. Twin Valley Electric Cooperative encourages you to help stop copper theft by reporting suspicious activity near any of these locations.

Copper theft from electric utilities is particularly hazardous to thieves and also to those who rely on electricity. In the past few years, copper thieves have caused power outages at businesses and homes, shutdown traffic lights, and forced hospitals to run on backup generators. In the worst cases, copper thefts have caused fires and explosions that have taken innocent lives.

Twin Valley Electric Cooperative suggests the following tips to stay safe and help stop copper theft:

- ▶ Never enter or touch equipment inside a substation; stay away from power lines and anything touching a power line.
- ▶ If you notice anything unusual with electric facilities, such as an open substation gate, open equipment, hanging wire, etc., contact your electric utility immediately.
- ▶ If you see suspicious activities near electric facilities, call the Sheriff's office or your local utility. Do not intervene. Allow officials to handle the situation.
- ▶ If you work in construction, store copper securely, especially overnight. Install motion-sensor lights on the outside of your house and business to deter possible thieves.
- ▶ Store tools and wire cutters in a secure location, and never leave them out while away.

For more information on staying safe around electricity, visit SafeElectricity.org.



GE's new dishwasher with exclusive Wash Zones allows consumers to run a cycle on just the top or bottom rack so favorite items are clean and sanitized when they want them. But consumers must remember to use these energy-saving settings to see savings on their electric bill.



Steve Black Wins Guess the Seal Contest

Can you guess how many seals are in the meter at the left? If you guessed 150 you are correct!

STEVE BLACK was the closest with his guess of 136 seals in the meter. He won a \$25 electric credit.

If you would like a chance to win, simply stop by the Twin Valley office **between now and June 15** to submit your guess or send your guess in with your payment.

- ▶ You must be a Twin Valley member to win.
- ▶ One guess per person per month.
- ▶ In the event of a tie, the final winner will be chosen by drawing. So, all members with the correct guess will have their names thrown in for the luck of the draw.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIPS

A Different Kind of Envelope BY DOUG RYE



Doug Rye

Oftentimes I refer to the term “building envelope” or “thermal envelope.” Both are interchangeable and synonymous.

So, just what is a building envelope? Well, in simple terms, it is the building components that separate the building interior from the exterior environment. And since this column is about energy efficiency, let’s call it the “thermal envelope.” On the simplest of buildings, the thermal envelope consists of the floor, the four walls and the ceiling or roof.

There are two things that can affect the energy efficiency of the envelope. One is the insulation value of the components and the other relates to the amount of air that can transfer to and from the envelope. For the sake of teaching, picture a normal ice chest. It’s a miniature ultra-efficient structure where the floor, walls and the roof are super-insulated, and there is only one doorway leading in and out. Some have a capped plumbing penetration—the drain plug. This structure requires very little energy to fulfill its job of keeping its contents chilled.

However, lifting the lid introduces air infiltration and will affect

the energy consumption (melting ice), energy cost (buying more ice) and comfort (warm soft drinks). Keep the lid closed, and the content stays cold, and the ice lasts much longer. You may not be aware that many of today’s new homes are insulated with similar foam used in ice chests. Plus, existing homes can be retrofitted.

So, how does an ice chest relate to a dwelling? After all, nobody wants to live in a big insulated box. Most people prefer to live in a building that contains amenities, comfort and improves our quality of life. Of course, we also want affordable utility bills. Well, the good news is building an efficient new home or retrofitting an existing home is doable. However, the bad news is many desired amenities can adversely affect the energy efficiency of the thermal envelope.

For example, the installation of windows into a well-insulated wall will almost always decrease the energy efficiency of the thermal envelope. This is because the windows may have some air leakage, and the insulation value of the window is less than the well insulated wall. Also, the glass will allow more heat rays from the sun to enter the house.

We all want windows in our house, so what can we do to enjoy the benefits of windows without dramatically affecting the envelope? The answer is that we must analyze the efficiency of each component and it’s direct impact on the envelope. In this particular case, we could install the fewest number of windows necessary to make us happy, and choose the most feasible energy-efficient windows. Keep this in mind as a general rule of thumb; if the energy efficiency of the thermal envelope goes down, then the energy bill usually increases.

We will continue this subject in next month’s column. Until then, let me remind you it’s that time again!

DOUG RYE is a licensed architect and the popular host of the “Home Remedies” radio show. You can contact Doug at 501-653-7931. Source: Arkansas Electric Cooperatives Corporation.

