



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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TWIN VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

NEWS

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FROM THE MANAGER

Co-ops: We Come in All Shapes & Sizes

What is a co-op, exactly?

When you hear the word “co-op,” what comes to mind? We hope you think of your friends here at Twin Valley Electric Cooperative, but maybe you think of a local farmers’ co-op or a credit union. You might be surprised to learn that co-ops, or cooperatives, can be found in many industries—and they offer a variety of services, each designed to serve their members in the best way possible.

A cooperative is a not-for-profit organization owned by its members. Across the globe, cooperatives remain steadfast, annually generating more than \$500 billion in revenue and providing more than two million jobs.

As a member of Twin Valley, you have a voice—in other words, you’re not just a customer. Every April, you have the right to vote for the cooperative’s board of directors.

Twin Valley strengthens our community by supporting economic development. As our service area grows, our distribution system grows, which makes it easy to see why strengthening the local economy makes sound business sense. We are involved in various local projects, such as providing economic development loans and grants through the USDA Rural Economic Loan and Grant program. We recently were able to provide a no-interest loan to the Labette County Fair Board to purchase

new bleachers for their arena. As those funds are repaid to Twin Valley, we can loan them out for other projects.



Ron Holsteen

Co-ops offer a variety of services

So, what other kinds of co-ops are out there?

Co-ops fall under a variety of categories and services, including agriculture and forestry; consumer and retail; banking and credit unions; health and wellness; and utilities, to name a few. Here are a few other national co-ops you might recognize.

- ▶ **Welch’s Grape Juice:** More than 1,000 family-farmer owners make up the Welch’s Grape Juice family, and they are located throughout the U.S. and Canada.
- ▶ **Ace Hardware:** More than 4,600 Ace Hardware stores are independently owned and operated by local entrepreneurs.
- ▶ **Sunkist:** This not-for-profit company’s membership is comprised of numerous growers located throughout California and Arizona.

The list goes on and as you can see, we come in all shapes and sizes. Our mission is to provide you with safe, reliable, and affordable electricity. For more information about the services we offer, visit www.twinvalleyelectric.coop.

Co-op Connections Card Savings Update

In March, members saved \$31.39 in prescriptions using the Co-op Connections Card. That’s a total of **\$166.36** in 2014.



NOTES FROM OPERATIONS

Copper Theft—A Minor Gain at a Major Cost



William Worthy

I was going to take my allotted space this month and write about Mother's Day and the sacrifices many moms make when the men in their lives have to leave the family in the middle of a storm to make repairs on the electric system. I have a great group of linemen that always answer the call and I am glad to be a part of this cooperative family. My brother Wade and I are both proud linemen and know the sacrifices that the women in our lives have to make for the sake of others. So, to Joan, Carol, Tracy, Rebecca, Jennifer, Chelse, Sherry, Anita, Arlene, Susan, Cindy, June, Halee, Kayan, Tyler and Brooke, Happy Mother's Day!

Unfortunately, I am going to spend this article writing about a select few idiots that continue to plague Twin Valley Electric Cooperative and almost every other electric utility in the nation... I'm talking about copper thieves.

Twin Valley has been targeted recently and it is becoming more frequent. On April 6, someone hooked onto a ground wire with a vehicle and tried to drive off with it. The copper wire did not cooperate and snapped back, wrapping itself around the energized 7,620-volt primary line. This knocked the line off and some of our members were out of power until the on-call linemen could repair the damage. The imbeciles who tried to steal the copper wire miraculously escaped unharmed—this time.

We are using materials that should help deter theft, but as we all know, the criminal element is resourceful and will find away to defeat the mechanisms we have in place. Instead of fighting the special staples we

use to hold the copper ground wire in place, the thieves cut the wire on either side of the staples that are approximately 18" apart.

On one pole, they acquired less than \$2 worth of copper, but it will cost your cooperative nearly \$75 to repair the damage and replace the copper. If you take this over multiple poles, what the thieves gain is minor and the cost to Twin Valley is major.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, copper thefts run in excess of \$1 billion and, as we all know, those costs are shared by every member. We are fortunate the thefts so far to Twin Valley are minor, and no one has gotten hurt or killed as a result. As with anything such as this, it will probably get worse before it gets better.

Several photographs floating around the internet show thieves that were not really as smart as they thought they were. They cut the wrong wire and went from healthy young men to crispy critters in the blink of an eye.

I don't want to sound uncompassionate, but I have no room in my vocabulary for thieves. Once you take something that does not belong to you, you fall pretty far down the food chain. Many thieves don't know the totality of what they are doing and death to themselves, a public citizen or a cooperative lineman is a potential any time thefts like this occur.

Twin Valley reports every theft of copper or any other item that is stolen from your cooperative. We have a great relationship with the sheriff's office and will continue to report and prosecute any theft. If you witness or get information concerning these thefts, please contact the sheriff's office or call Twin Valley. If you have suspicions that someone you know may be involved in these thefts, please remind them, it is better to be judged by 12 than carried by six.

Until next month, thoughts about this article or ideas for future articles can be sent to me at wworthy@twinvalleyelectric.coop

The thieves gain is minor and the cost to Twin Valley is major.



Remember to Use Caution When Burning

Each spring, all across Twin Valley's service territory, members prepare to plant. In clearing weeds and debris to begin the planting process, burning fields and ditches is a common method used by many.

Every spring and fall Twin Valley's employees witness damage being done to Twin Valley's poles and equipment by "controlled" burns. Please be aware that burning or even scorching a pole will compromise the integrity of the structure.

Power poles are treated with a protective coating that prevents moisture from entering the core of the pole and causing deterioration. If a pole is scorched or blackened, the protective coating is damaged. Though it may appear as just a discoloration or slight burn, this is, in fact, damage to the pole. This will significantly shorten the life of a power pole. This pole may then become a hazard and could cause an outage.

Twin Valley once again reminds members to plan your burning before you begin. It is much cheaper to prevent a pole from catching fire than to pay for a new pole. Members will be held liable for the replacement cost of pole(s) and/or equipment due to fire damage. This cost may vary from \$1,000 to more than \$2,000 depending on the structure of the pole and equipment. It only takes a little extra effort to prevent pole damage and help control costs for you and your cooperative.

Burning of ditches and fields does not have to result in the burning/scorching of power poles. If there are power poles in the area to be



Visit our Facebook page to watch a video showing pole damage due to burning at <https://www.facebook.com/TwinValleyElectricCooperativeInc>.

burned, clear the vegetation/weeds at least four feet around the base of the pole and wet the base of the pole with water before beginning to burn.

If the fire does get away from you and a pole becomes engulfed in flames, immediately call the fire department and Twin Valley. **Do not spray water close to the conductors!** Water and electricity do not mix! This may cause a short circuit. You and/or the firefighters could be in the path of that current and serious injury or death may result.

Report any fire damaged pole to Twin Valley immediately. Not reporting the damage may cause a serious accident to happen later.

A pole that has been burned through is likely to fall over. This can leave the energized lines about a foot off the ground. If a person comes into contact with the line, they most likely will be seriously burned, or even killed. This carelessness could cost a life.

What are Tamper Resistant Receptacles (TRRs)?

They may look like standard outlets, but tamper resistant receptacles, or TRRs, are different. Their most distinguishable feature—a built-in shutter system that prevents foreign objects from being inserted—sets them apart. Only a plug that applies simultaneous, equal pressure to both slots will disengage the cover plates, allowing access to the contact points. Without this synchronized pressure, the cover plates remain closed.

While a child's curiosity knows no boundaries, it can sometimes put them in peril, especially when electricity is involved. Located in practically every room of the house, electrical outlets and receptacles are fixtures, but they also represent potential hazards for children.

In recent years, more homes have been equipping their electrical outlets with TRRs, but in many public facilities, like hospital pediatric wards, these safeguards have been required for more than 20 years. Their efficiency also prompted the National Electrical Code to make TRRs standard in all new home construction. Existing homes can be easily retrofitted with TRRs using the same installation guidelines that apply to standard receptacles. TRRs should only be installed by a licensed electrician and should carry a label from a nationally recognized, independent testing lab such as UL, ETL, or CSA.

- ▶ Each year 2,400 children suffer severe shock and burns resulting from inserting objects into the slots of electrical receptacles. That's nearly seven children a day.
- ▶ It is estimated that 6-12 child fatalities result from children tampering electrical receptacles.
- ▶ Installing a TRR in a newly constructed home is only about 50 cents more than a traditional receptacle.
- ▶ Existing homes can be retrofitted with TRRs for as little as \$2 per outlet.

For more information on TRRS, visit www.esfi.org.





**EVERY MEMBER HAS A VOICE.
EVEN THE ONES WHO CAN'T YET SPEAK.**

As an electric co-op member, your household has a say in how the co-op is run. Which helps you care for an even bigger family – your community. Learn more about the power of your co-op membership at TogetherWeSave.com.



Touchstone EnergySM

TOGETHERWESAVE.COM