



# Powell Valley Electric Cooperative News

A message from your General Manager:



Randell Meyers  
General Manager  
& CEO

## Love for our community

*“To move forward, you have to give back.”* This quote from Oprah Winfrey reflects the special bond and obligation that ties Powell Valley Electric Cooperative to the community we serve.

With Valentine’s Day approaching, we can’t think of a better time to express how much we love this community and serving you, the members of the co-op.

We know when we helped to bring electricity to this rural community many years ago, the quality of life improved for all. Through the years, other issues needed to be tackled, and we have been at the forefront of helping to address some of those issues. We want to help meet the long-term needs of our community to ensure it continues to thrive – because just like you, we live here too.

While our top priority is to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of the consumer-members (that’s you!) that we serve. This focus to benefit the larger community is central to the way we operate as a cooperative. Powell Valley Electric Cooperative knows that electricity is a critical need for modern-day life, but it takes more than poles and power lines to make a community.

Over time, our co-op has evolved to meet the changing needs of our community, thereby improving the quality of life for everyone. And that can mean many different things. It can mean programs for our youth, such as education scholarships or the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, where we take our community’s brightest young people to Washington, D.C. for a week-long immersion to experience democracy in action. It means participating in co-op day of service by providing care bags to local nursing residents or sponsoring a luncheon in honor of fellow first responders. It means partnering with organizations with local food pantry distribution and other worthy programs.

Over the last eight decades, our community-focused programs and other giving projects have enriched our communities. As a local business, we are proud to power your life and bring good things to our community. We hope you will continue to guide our efforts by sharing your perspective as we plan for the future. The energy landscape is undergoing dramatic change fueled by evolving technology and consumer desires for more options. While the larger environment in which we operate is constantly changing, one thing remains the same. By working together, I’m certain that we can continue to do good things for our community.

— Randell W. Meyers

### POWELL VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

420 Straight Creek Road  
P.O. Box 1528  
New Tazewell, TN 37824

Office Hours: M-F 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

#### Tazewell Office:

Service Requests: (423) 626-0707  
Billing Inquiries: (423) 626-0706  
Outages/Trouble: (423) 626-5204  
Other Inquiries: (423) 626-5204

#### Jonesville Office:

Service Requests: (276) 346-6003  
Billing Inquiries: (276) 346-6003  
Outages: (276) 346-6065  
Other Inquiries: (276) 346-6016

#### Sneedville Office:

All Inquiries: (423) 733-2207

Calls to all PVEC locations will be answered by emergency operators after office hours, on weekends & holidays.

Visit us at [pve.coop](http://pve.coop)

You may also contact us at [info@pve.coop](mailto:info@pve.coop)

Randell Meyers  
General Manager & CEO

Ronnie Williams  
Tazewell Area Supervisor

Jason Stapleton  
Jonesville Area Supervisor

Joey Southern  
Sneedville Area Supervisor

*Powell Valley Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

## REMINDERS:

- Washington Youth Tour short-story contest deadline: Feb. 14.
- Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives’ Education Scholarship deadline: Feb. 28th.
- Debit or credit card payments will show on your card’s monthly statement as Southeastern Data Cooperative (SEDC) located in Atlanta, Georgia. Southeastern Data Cooperative processes PVEC’s card payments.

# Years-of-Service Awards

Cooperative employees were recently recognized and presented years-of-service awards in the company of their co-workers. Employees receive awards beginning with their fifth year of employment and at five-year intervals thereafter. Pictured are cooperative employees with PVEC General Manager/CEO Randell Meyers, as he presents their service awards. At the bottom right, PVEC General Manager/CEO Randell Meyers receives his award from Assistant Manager Charles Goodin.



Travis Tolliver – 15 years of service



Bobby Johnson – 25 years of service



Joey Southern - 35 years of service



Ronnie Williams – 45 years of service



Randell Meyers - 55 years of service

## What's a-Cooking?

Justin Robbins shares his Mamaw's vegetable casserole recipe. Justin has been employed in the Tazewell area since 2018.

### Ingredients

- 2 cans green beans (drained)
- 2 cans white whole kernel corn (drained)
- 1 can water chestnut slices (drained)
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 stick of butter
- 1 ½ rolls of Ritz crackers

### Directions

Mix the first seven ingredients together and put in a buttered 9-by-13 dish. Bake in oven at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Melt one stick of butter and crush 1 ½ rolls of Ritz crackers. Mix butter and crackers together and sprinkle over casserole. Return to oven for 15 minutes or until brown.

## Buy the right space heater for your room size

If you're in the market for a space heater to warm up an unheated room in your home, follow a few guidelines:

- Choose a model that's powerful enough to heat the room. A rule of thumb: You need 10 watts of heat for every square foot of surface areas. Measure your floor to determine the surface areas. An example: A 1,500-watt heater will warm 150 square feet—or a room that measures 10 by 15 square feet with an eight-foot ceiling.
- Space heaters with wheels are easy to move around a room or into different rooms on different days.
- Some heaters are ultra-quiet, and others have blowers that are loud. Turn on the model and listen to it before you buy it, especially if you plan to run it in a bedroom.
- Invest in a unit that comes with infrared technology to make sure the heater doesn't dry out the air in the room.
- Tip-over protection is a must. That feature will automatically turn the heater off if it gets knocked over.
- Determine how hot the outside of the unit gets when you run it. If children or pets use the room, look for a model that stays cool to the touch. Not all heaters do.
- If energy efficiency is a priority, look for a heater with an eco setting.
- Other bells and whistles on some heaters: remote control; timer and quick heat-up time.

# Maintaining the Cooperative's Rights-of-Way

**P**owell Valley Electric Cooperative is responsible for maintaining the rights-of-way along its 3,500 miles of transmission and distribution power lines. After extensive evaluation, PVEC has determined that the best and most effective way to maintain its rights-of-way includes the herbicide ground spraying program. The cooperative has been very pleased with the results of this program and believes that you, as co-op members, will be impressed with the results as well.

In 2017 and 2019, PVEC's spraying contractor treated the same miles of line. During the 2019 spraying season, the amount of herbicides used to treat these same miles of line was reduced by nearly 65 percent, which demonstrates that the condition of our rights-of-way has improved and the program is on the right course as projected. PVEC has the responsibility to provide reliable and economical power to all consumers. This requires a good, clear right-of-way.

As a landowner, you have the right to take care of your own property. If a landowner does not want herbicides used on his or her property, PVEC will provide the landowner the opportunity to clear his or her own property to PVEC's specifications. This clearing must be done at the property owner's expense. A landowner choosing to clear his or her own right-of-way must remember that working around power lines is extremely dangerous and should only be done by someone specially trained and qualified for that type of work.

Members affected by the 2020 right-of-way program will be notified through their electric bills. If you have questions or comments about this program, feel free to give us a call at your local area office: Jonesville, 276-346-6003; Sneedville, 423-733-2207; or Tazewell, 423-626-5204. This herbicide application is one of the many efforts used by PVEC to provide maximum reliability of service at the lowest possible rates.



## *Jonesville Area Supervisor Jason Stapleton shares safety tips*

It's no surprise that winter months bring increased potential for fire risks and electrical safety hazards. This makes sense because during the coldest months, consumers are using additional electrical devices and appliances, like space heaters, electric blankets and portable generators.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that 47,700 home fires occur each year in the U.S. due to electrical failure or malfunction. These fires result in 418 deaths, 1,570 injuries and \$1.4 billion in property damage annually. This winter, safeguard your loved ones and your home with these electrical safety tips from the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

1. Don't overload outlets. Overloaded outlets are a major cause of residential fires. Avoid using extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliance connections—they should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. If you're relying heavily on extension cords in general, you may need additional outlets to address your needs. Contact a qualified electrician to inspect your home and add new outlets.
2. Never leave space heaters unattended. If you're using a space heater, turn it off before leaving the room. Make sure heaters are placed at least 3 feet away from flammable items. It should also be noted that space heaters take a toll on your energy bills. If you're using them throughout your home, it may be time to upgrade your home heating system.
3. Inspect heating pads and electric blankets. These items cause nearly 500 fires every year. Electric blankets that are more than 10 years old create additional risks for a fire hazard. Inspect your electric blankets and heating pads—look for dark, charred or frayed spots, and make sure the electrical cord is not damaged. Do not place any items on top of a heating pad or electric blanket, and never fold them when in use.
4. Use portable generators safely. Unfortunately, winter storms can cause prolonged power outages, which means many consumers will use portable generators to power their homes. Never connect a standby generator into your home's electrical system. For portable generators, plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator. Start the generator first, before you plug in appliances. Run it in a well-ventilated area outside your home. The carbon monoxide it generates is deadly, so keep it away from your garage, doors, windows and vents.

# Solar Sunrise

The growth of solar power is making it a more useful energy source

Story by Paul Wessland • Photos by Dennis Gainer

Not long ago, solar energy was considered an oddity. Electricity generated from the sun was expensive, so not many people used it. Solar power barely registered on the list of electricity sources.

Then, members of local electric cooperatives started asking their co-ops if solar energy might be worth a try, so several of those local electric co-ops set up small panels of solar cells on their property as test projects.

Something to know about local electric co-ops is they don't generate their own electricity. That's a huge and costly project. So, they band together to form a larger co-op with the financing and technical expertise to build power plants and transmission lines. They call those generation and transmission co-ops, or G&Ts, because they make and ship the electricity to the co-ops, who ultimately send that power to your home or business.

As more and more solar panels started appearing on the front lawns of electric co-ops across the country, their G&T partners says, "We can help you out with those."

The result has been a dramatic increase in solar energy generation, says Debra Roepke, a solar energy specialist who consults with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

"There's been a tenfold increase in electric co-op solar capacity in the last five years," she says, "and that's on track to more than double over the next one or two years."

Electric co-ops aren't the only source of solar growth, of course. While the 900 electric co-op utilities across the country tend to serve small towns and rural areas, other utilities have been adding solar power as well.

Solar is spreading across the country pushed by improving technology and declining costs. One industry analysis finds that the cost for electricity from large-scale solar energy installations has fallen 13% a year for five years. The cost has reached the point where it's competitive with other fuels. Solar now supplies 2.3% of the nation's electricity. That may not sound like much, but it's the equivalent of more than 40 nuclear power plants, and the upward growth and declining costs are expected to continue.

And while electric co-ops can only claim a portion of the credit for the solar energy boom, they have pioneered parts of solar's success, especially in an area called community solar. With community solar, the electric co-op builds a bank of solar panels and co-op members can buy or lease the electricity the panels generate.

"Co-ops are leaders in community solar," says Roepke. Even though electric co-ops make up about 10% of the nation's utility industry, she says, "At one point, co-ops had about 60% of all the utility-led solar programs."

Roepke credits co-op solar energy developments to their industry business structure of member-owned distribution co-ops and their G&Ts.

She says, "When co-op members are engaged with their local distribution co-op and the distribution co-ops are working with the G&Ts that they own, solar is a story about how the co-op model works."

Community solar is one of three ways solar panels are used to make and deliver electricity. Probably the most well-known technique is called rooftop solar, where a homeowner lays solar panels on their roof or in the back yard. But most of the growth happens with utility-scale solar — fields of panels that can cover several acres. The growth in utility-scale solar is one reason costs are coming down — a bigger project can sell a lot more electricity without being that much more expensive to build, lowering the cost of each kilowatt.

As solar energy becomes more widespread, utilities are figuring out ways to make it more useful. Once it seemed obvious that there was no solar power at night. But bigger and more powerful storage batteries can soak up the sun for use later. Once it seemed solar power wasn't so useful because it peaked during the day when no one was home. But utilities are using sophisticated computer software to figure out how to juggle power sources like solar, wind, coal and hydro among users, like homes, businesses and manufacturers.



Other technologies make solar installations increasingly efficient and productive. Improvements in tracking technology mean more power as solar panels move to follow the sun across the sky. Bifacial solar panels contain solar cells on both sides of their surface, adding reflected light to the energy they receive.

Electric co-op expertise in solar energy includes rooftop and other residential solar setups. For a co-op member interested in trying solar power for themselves, Roepke says their local electric co-op makes a good first stop. The co-op can help answer questions like how much will it cost, will it pay off, how can it be installed safely and what vendors can be counted on. She cautions that there are a lot of people around the country installing residential solar panels, and their quality can vary.

"There are some very good rooftop vendors out there, but there are also some predatory vendors," says Roepke. "Someone can make a claim that they're going to save you all this money by putting solar on your roof, then six months after it's installed, you wonder why you're not saving all this money, and nobody can get a hold of the solar company."

If you're considering solar panels for your home, says Roepke, "Your electric co-op is a trusted energy resource. Talk to them first."

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.