


Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Craig Eccher
President & CEO

STAFF

- Annette Bender**, Executive Assistant
- John Lykens**, Director,
Engineering & Operations
- Barbara Johnson**, Director,
Financial Services
- Bryan Berguson**, Director,
Member Services

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO

Rates to rise slightly in 2007



by Craig Eccher

WHEN your cooperative's management team and board of directors began budget preparations in the fall, it became readily apparent that a rate increase would be required in 2007 in order for us to continue to meet members' expectations for reliability and service.

As you probably know, the last few years have been very challenging for electric utilities across the nation. In addition to skyrocketing generation pricing, costs for other items like fuel, construction materials, equipment, and insurance have risen dramatically — along with interest rates.

In order to meet the rising cost of doing business today, Tri-County implemented an overall 5 percent rate increase on Jan. 1. The increase will be reflected in the bills you receive in February. For our average residential member who consumes 800 kilowatts of electricity per month, the increase will amount to less than \$4 a month.

Considering the double-digit price hikes other utilities in Pennsylvania and surrounding states have been experiencing, we were able to keep the rate adjustment to a minimum. As a not-for-profit utility, Tri-County's primary mission is to meet members' needs for electric service. Since there is no profit motive with a cooperative, and your elected directors are bill-paying members just like you, we always strive to hold down rate increases. And we have been successful at that over the years.


In fact, over the past two decades Tri-County has implemented just two minimal increases to our distribution rate, which covers the cost of operating and maintaining our local electric network. We have kept rate increases to a minimum primarily because we have been

able to take advantage of operating efficiencies and use the shared resources available to us through our management services subsidiary, C&T Enterprises.

At the same time, we have invested heavily in right-of-way maintenance, system-improvement and -replacement projects and new technologies — all to bring you and your fellow members reliable and safe electricity. In the past three years alone, your cooperative has invested more than \$10 million in system repairs and upgrades. That sounds like a lot of money, and it is. But that's what it takes to maintain an electric system with 22 substations and more than 3,000 miles of line — enough line to stretch from the southern tip of Florida to the northwest corner of Washington state and have wire to spare.

Though the cost to maintain and improve such a vast electric system has increased considerably since 2004, we have experienced very little growth in electric sales to help offset today's higher prices. After much discussion and debate, we decided a slight rate increase would be required to bridge the gap.

We will be including a letter with your February bill that explains implementation of the increase in greater detail. We also will work with you to make sure you have the information and help you need to use energy wisely. For example, on the following pages of this month's issue of *Penn Lines* we have included several articles that offer tips for lowering your heating bills, making smart energy choices, and conserving energy.

As we prepare for whatever challenges 2007 may bring, rest assured that we will continue looking for ways to operate your cooperative more efficiently while continuing to bring you reliable electric service at a fair and reasonable price. That's our resolution for this year and for all that follow. 

Juniors eligible for free trip to D.C.

TRI-COUNTY Rural Electric will send six students from the cooperative's service territory on an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital this summer.

If you are a high school junior who enjoys sightseeing, history, politics, and making new friends, then this trip may be for you.

The lucky students will have the opportunity to explore Washington, D.C., with a group of their peers from across the country during the 2007 Rural Electric Youth Tour, a six-day sightseeing excursion that mixes fun and education.

During the tour, which takes place June 10-15, participants will have the opportunity to explore Washington's historic sites, visit the Smithsonian, make friends with Youth Tour students from throughout the United States, meet with federal legislators, and learn about electric co-ops and the cooperative movement.

The 43rd annual Youth Tour is expected to draw more than 1,300 students to Washington for the week. If you are interested in being one of them, here is what you need to know:



LARGER THAN LIFE: Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative's 2006 Youth Tour delegates pose on the head of "The Awakening," a popular metal sculpture at Hains Point along the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. The students are (seated, from left): Danek Torrey of Coudersport, Sarah Satterlee of Knoxville, Alison Spanner of Morris, Danielle Fulmer of Westfield, (standing) Jessica Barrett of Middlebury Center, Zachary Kreger of Morris, and Nicole Karschner of Ulysses.

Rules for 2007 Rural Electric Youth Tour

1. Contest is open to any high school junior (2006-2007 school year) whose parents or legal guardians are members of Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative.
2. Submit an essay not exceeding 400 words on the following topic: "How electric cooperatives differ from other electric utilities."
3. Essay must be typed and double-spaced.
4. Complete the accompanying student information sheet and staple it to your essay. *Also be sure to include a wallet-size photograph of yourself.* Mail to: Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative, Attn: Bryan Berguson, P.O. Box 526, Mansfield, PA 16933.
5. Entries must be received by Friday, March 2, 2007.
6. After reviewing the applications and essays, Tri-County will select six Youth Tour delegates. They will be notified by March 9, 2007. The Youth Tour delegates will be eligible for special scholarship opportunities, and the top-scoring delegate will compete with other candidates from Pennsylvania cooperatives for the chance to represent the state at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's 2008 Annual Meeting.
7. The decision of the judges is final.



For more information about the Youth Tour and agenda, call Tri-County's Mansfield office at 570/662-2175 or 1-800-343-2559. You can also see your high school guidance counselor or browse our Web site at www.tri-countyrec.com.

Student Information Sheet

*All participating students should complete this form and return it to the co-op office, along with their essay and a wallet-size photo, by March 2, 2007.**

Name	Age	Birthday
Address (RR, Box, City, Zip, Country)		
Social Security Number	Birthplace	Telephone Number
Parents' Names, Address		
School Name and Address	Major Study Interest	Career Goal
State Representative	State Senator	U.S. Representative

List activities you have participated in and any special honors you have received during high school, such as class officer, plays, music, athletics, etc.

Activity	Years	Remarks

Please list any public speaking experience you may have: _____

*** List extra curricular activities and years of involvement in which you have participated, such as 4-H, church, community and service clubs:*

Activity	Years	Remarks

List any other activities, special interest or hobbies: _____

List your local newspapers, dailies & weeklies: _____

List any health problems that could affect you during the trip, including medicines to which you are allergic: _____

* *Please include your essay, along with a wallet-size photo of yourself when submitting your student information sheet.*
 ** *Please attach an additional sheet of paper, if necessary.*

Visit Tri-County Web site for energy-saving options

HOMEOWNERS looking for ways to save energy dollars can get off to a good start by visiting Tri-County's Web site at www.tri-countyrec.com.

The site contains a wealth of information, including tips designed to help members lower their electric and heating

that will save them the most energy and money.

The Home Energy Saver site is divided into two main sections, "Energy Adviser" and "Making it Happen." Energy Adviser computes your home's total energy use based on information that you enter and calculates where energy is being wasted and what specific changes would result in energy savings.

Once you supply your zip code, Energy Adviser will calculate the energy use and costs for your area's typical house, and a comparable energy-efficient house. You can then answer a set of basic questions about your own house, including its floor area, the number of occu-

pants, type of heating and air conditioning equipment, and fuel prices to get a custom-tailored energy bill breakdown. The more information you enter, the more these recommendations become tailored to your house.

Energy Adviser also provides a customized set of energy-saving improvements for your house. These improvements cover all of your home's major energy-using systems: space heating and cooling, water heating, lighting, major appliances, and a host of "miscellaneous" appliances that are an increasingly important factor in residential energy bills.

The Making It Happen section provides time-saving links to hundreds of Internet sites with practical, detailed information about energy-efficient homes, products, service providers, utility programs, and online reading materials. An Answer Desk feature provides answers to frequently asked questions about home energy use in terms that the average homeowner can understand. It also provides context-sensitive help and e-mail access to energy experts who answer questions from users.



pants and conserve energy.

To view these tips, go the "Member Services" drop-down menu, run your cursor over "Electrical Tips" and then click on "Energy Saving Tips." From there you can access a variety of low- and no-cost tips designed to save you money, as well as a handy appliance energy cost chart that provides estimated monthly costs to run a variety of household appliances and electrical devices.

Free online energy audit

We have also recently added a link on Tri-County's home page that gives members the opportunity to participate in a free, online home energy audit. To get started, click on the "Touchstone Energy Home Energy Audit" button that appears on the right side of your computer screen when you are at the tri-countyrec.com home page. The link takes you to the Home Energy Saver Web site. This site, developed by the U.S. Department of Energy's Berkeley National Laboratory, employs advanced building simulation software with an easy-to-use interface to help consumers identify technologies

Help yourself to lower heating bills

With energy prices running high and the mercury dipping low, now's the time to take a few steps that should help you save money for the remainder of the heating season.

We've compiled a list of inexpensive energy conservation projects and tips designed to help you contain winter energy costs. As a side benefit, you'll be doing your part to reduce energy consumption, which not only cuts down on power plant emissions but helps stave off the need to build more generation facilities.

Here's what you can do to keep more money in your pocket this winter and be a responsible energy consumer.

- ▶ Turn down your thermostat. You can reduce your heating bills by as much as 20 percent by simply lowering the thermostat from 70 degrees to 65 when you're home and to 55 degrees when you're away or asleep.
- ▶ Use electric blankets or quilts for sleeping comfort and to allow a lower nighttime thermostat setting.
- ▶ Clean or replace furnace filter as often as it gets dirty.
- ▶ Check for drafts around doors and windows, and replace weather stripping and caulking where necessary. Use weather stripping for air leaks around moving parts like windows and doors. Use caulk for stationary structures like window frames and walls. Caulk that is cracked or shrunken should be replaced.
- ▶ For drafty windows, the best option is to replace them. If that is not a possibility, you can install storm window kits, window quilts or insulated window shades to keep cold air from entering your home.
- ▶ Examine your home for air leaks, paying particular attention to the attic area. Keep an eye out for spaces around electrical wiring, plumbing, vent pipes, areas above recessed light fixtures, and where walls are not completely sealed at the attic, such as stairway and interior partition walls.
- ▶ Insulate and weather-strip your attic door and make sure it closes tightly, stopping warm air from escaping.
- ▶ Install inexpensive foam draft blockers or gaskets around all of the electric outlets and wall switch boxes located on outside walls.
- ▶ Clean and vacuum baseboard heaters, heating ducts and vents. And while you're at it, remember to sweep the dust bunnies from under your refrigerator, allowing the unit to run more efficiently.
- ▶ Make sure radiators, baseboard registers, or heaters are not blocked by furniture or draperies.