

Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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- Bryan Berguson, Director, Member Services**

OFFICE HOURS

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

FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO

Big plans for the new year



by Craig Eccher

THE arrival of the new year provides a good opportunity to tell you what your cooperative has planned for 2009.

Beginning this month, members will be able to explore ways to conserve energy and improve their home's efficiency by utilizing the interactive features of a new online tool. The Tri-County HomeEnergySuite

contains a vast energy resource library, with home energy and appliance calculators, and an interactive house program that offers solutions and tips for members looking to save on energy costs.

In April, Tri-County will host an Energy Fair in Wellsboro for residential members. The fair will feature presentations on energy-efficient lighting, geothermal heating, alternative energy options and home envelopes. We'll tell you more about this later.

Tri-County is ringing in the new year with a number of projects designed to improve service to our members.

In addition to our regular pole replacement program, we have scheduled an aggressive line-replacement program in parts of our service territory for 2009 as a means of improving reliability.

We also have budgeted for the purchase and installation of 2,000 automated meters in 2009, and by the end of the year more than half of the electric meters on our system will be able to be read from the office.

Tri-County members will see a number of benefits from the automated meter reading project. The use of automated meters eliminates the need for estimated readings, which can sometimes cause significant fluctuations in your electric bills.

While timely and accurate meter readings are obvious benefits, there are also other advantages of automated meter reading technology. The new generation of automated meters will assist us in identifying power


outages, particularly during storms. This information will help us to assess the scope of system outages early on, enabling us to restore power more efficiently. In addition, the new meters will help us to detect illegal reconnections and give us the ability to monitor blinks and voltage levels.

A joint project we are undertaking with our generation supplier, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, will enable us to expand our load management program in areas of our system where it is currently unavailable. Our load management program, through which members voluntarily agree to allow their water heaters to be remotely shut down during times of peak demand, saves the cooperative and its members thousands of dollars annually, and we are eager for the opportunity to partner with more members in this conservation and cost-savings effort.

Clearing and maintaining our rights-of-way is critical to system reliability and is always an important planning item and major expenditure. This year, we are targeting our right-of-way clearing efforts in our Germania service district, in southeast Potter County.

I am also very excited about two proposed industrial projects. One involves the construction of a 35,000-volt underground transmission circuit that will feed a proposed industrial project in Chemung County, New York. The other project involves construction of a 115,000-volt circuit to a prospective large industrial customer in Potter County.

Your electric cooperative works closely with local economic development groups to help make projects like these a reality. These types of projects increase our electric sales, which helps us to keep rates stable, and, more importantly, they bring jobs to our local communities.

On a final note, this year's annual meeting will return to the Coudersport Consistory. I know summer's a long way off, but please mark your calendar for July 11. Best wishes for a safe and happy new year. 

Co-op crew assists in conservation project

The state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) enlisted the aid of a Tri-County line crew and bucket truck to help collect hemlock seed cones in an effort to preserve the state tree throughout Pennsylvania.

This marked the second year that the cooperative was called upon to assist in the hemlock conservation effort spearheaded by DCNR's Bureau of Forestry.

Seed cones harvested from healthy hemlock trees by co-op linemen Brian White and Eric McRoberts and others taking part in the collection effort will be used in reforestation efforts in areas of the state where the Eastern hemlock is being ravaged by a forest pest known as the hemlock wooly adelgid.

The seed collection took place Oct. 15

on state forest land near Fallbrook in Tioga County.

According to Steve Hoover, a DCNR forester who headed up the local effort, hemlock stands in the Fallbrook area have thus far escaped wooly adelgid infestation, although he noted the forest pest has begun creeping into the state's northern tier counties.

"We really appreciate Tri-County's willingness to partner with us to help to preserve our natural resources," Hoover said.

Noting that community involvement is one of the guiding principles of the cooperative program, Tri-County Director of Engineering and Operations John



CONE COLLECTOR: Tri-County lineman Brian White plucks cones from an Eastern hemlock tree on Armenia Mountain near Fallbrook. A forest pest, the wooly adelgid, has been damaging hemlock trees in the state, prompting the state Bureau of Forestry to begin banking hemlock seeds for future reforestation efforts. Tri-County volunteered the use of a bucket truck and crew to assist in the cone-collection effort.

Lykens said the co-op was pleased to be able to volunteer manpower and equipment for the conservation project. ☀

Energy assistance program offers help with heating bills

MANY households throughout Tri-County's service territory will struggle to keep up with energy bills this winter.

If you need help paying your heating bills, you may be able to receive assistance through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the program provides energy-assistance grants to help low-income households pay their heating bills through the winter.

To receive help:

- ▶ You don't have to be receiving public assistance
- ▶ You don't have to have an unpaid heating bill
- ▶ You can either rent or own your home

LIHEAP offers both cash grants and crisis grants. If you are eligible for a cash grant, the grant will be sent directly to your utility or fuel dealer, and the payment will be credited on your bill. You will receive written notice telling you if you are eligible for assistance and the amount you will receive.

Crisis grants are available to help those who

have emergency situations in which they are in danger of being without heat. Those situations include: having broken heating equipment or leaking fuel lines; being without fuel; having utility service terminated; or in danger of being without fuel or of having utility service terminated.

If you have a heating emergency, or for more information about LIHEAP, call your county assistance office or the toll-free LIHEAP hotline at 866/857-7095.

To apply for help from LIHEAP, you will need to provide the assistance office with a recent heating bill, as well as the names, dates of birth, Social Security numbers and proofs of income for everyone in your household.

Below are the income guidelines for acceptance into the program:

Household Size	Maximum Income (before taxes)
1	\$23,110
2	\$30,221
3	\$37,332
4	\$44,443
5	\$51,554
6	\$58,665
7	\$59,998
8	\$61,332
9	\$62,665
10	\$64,200
For each additional household member, add \$5,400.	

SAFETYzone

OBSERVANT LINEMEN PREVENT POTENTIAL TRAGEDY

Tri-County's linemen are required to attend hazard-recognition training annually. The training teaches employees to watch for potential hazards in the field that could pose a safety threat to either the utility or the public.

This awareness paid off recently when Tri-County linemen Randy Smith and Steve Brewster came upon a potential hazard, saw the severity of it and reported it immediately, averting a possible tragedy.

A satellite television company had installed a satellite dish on top of one of Tri-County's 40-foot poles, just inches away from our primary power line. The installers had also left an aluminum ladder leaning against the pole, also inches from the primary wire. Not only could the satellite dish installers have been hurt or killed in this incident, but the unattended ladder leaning against our pole posed a potential tragedy to anyone passing by, particularly children, who could attempt to either move or to climb the ladder.

Attaching signs, posters or objects such as satellite dishes, bird houses or basketball hoops to electric utility poles is potentially dangerous to our crews, as well as the public. If you see something that looks unsafe near the cooperative's electric lines, poles or substations, please call the Tri-County at 800/343-2559 and report it so that it can be investigated before a tragedy occurs.

Juniors eligible for free trip to D.C.

Tri-County Rural Electric will send six students from the co-op'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 2009 Rural Electric Youth Tour, a six-day sightseeing excursion that mixes fun and education.

During the tour, which takes place June 14-19, 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 45th annual Youth Tour is expected to draw more than 1,400 students to Washington for the week. If you are interested in being one of them, here is what you need to know:



FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH: Tri-County's student representatives mug for the camera outside of the Kennedy Center during the 2008 Rural Electric Youth Tour. Pictured are, front, from left, Trevor Sickler, Brayden Sickler, Deprise Fivre, Nathaniel Kosa, and Levi Torrey; and back, from left, Aric Root and Kristen Haymen.

Rules for 2009 Rural Electric Youth Tour

1. Contest is open to any high school junior (2008-09 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: "What are the energy challenges facing your generation and what are some ways to address those challenges?"
3. Essay must be typed and double-spaced.
4. Complete the application on page 14d 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, Feb. 27, 2009.
6. After reviewing the applications and essays, Tri-County will select six Youth Tour delegates. They will be notified by March 6, 2009. The Youth Tour delegates will be eligible for special scholarship opportunities, and the top-scoring delegate will compete with other candidates from Pennsylvania co-ops for the chance to represent the state at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's 2010 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 800/343-2559, see your high school guidance counselor or browse our website at www.tri-countyrec.com.

Common cents can help a neighbor in need

With today's higher energy costs, more and more cooperative families struggle to keep up with their energy bills.

You can help some of your neighbors in need by participating in Tri-County's Family-In-Need Fund.

This voluntary program allows you to assist members of the cooperative who have difficulties paying their electric bills. Participating in the program is inexpensive – less than \$1 a month – and helps unite the entire co-op as members help each other through difficult financial times.

CONTRIBUTING IS EASY

The concept behind the Family-In-Need

Fund is simple. You allow Tri-County to "round up" your monthly electric bill to the next dollar amount. The difference between the round-up amount and your actual bill amount – which can be no higher than 99 cents in one month – goes into this new fund.

For example, if your electric bill is \$100.32, then you would pay \$101. The extra 68 cents goes into our member assistance fund for needy families of the cooperative.

In addition to being a great way to help neighbors in need, participating in the program can also make balancing your check book easier.

A FEW CENTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Your donation of less than a dollar a month doesn't amount to a large sum of money over the course of the year. On average a member would end up donating about \$6 annually to the program.

But your pocket change, when pooled with contributions from all of the other participating members of the co-op, can truly make a difference for a family that has fallen behind on its electric bill.

Call the co-op office at 800/343-2559 to learn how you can help your neighbors in need by contributing to the Family-In-Need Fund.

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 Feb. 27, 2009.**

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.*