

# From the PRESIDENT & CEO: A wake-up call



**Robert O. Toombs**  
*President & CEO*

It takes a storm like the one that pummeled us on New Year's Day to remind us once again of the central role electricity plays in the lives of our members.

When we go through prolonged periods without any major weather-related outage problems, it's easy to take electricity for granted, thinking it will always be there at the flick of a switch.

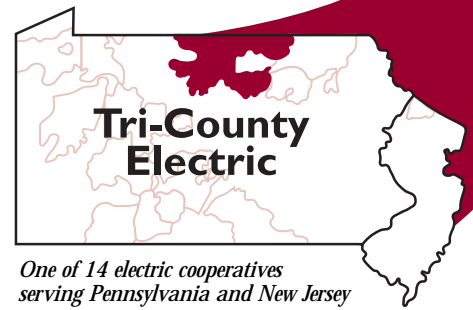
Then a sudden jolt of reality strikes in the form of a major weather event. We received just such a jolt on Jan. 1, when a winter storm glazed the Northern Tier with a thick coating of ice. A nor'easter followed just two days later and dumped more than a foot of snow in parts of our service territory.

Ice and snow accumulated on electric lines and trees, pulling and bowing them to the ground and ultimately knocking out power to more than 7,700 homes — nearly half our members.

When we experience devastating storms like this, I think of two things: the safety of workers trying to restore power under very adverse and dangerous circumstances, and the consumers who are without electricity in their homes during a time of cold, damp weather.

The New Year's outage was handled safely and as efficiently as was possible under the worst of weather conditions. Once problem areas were identified — and there were many of them — we devised a plan to restore power that involved enlisting the assistance of outside line and right-of-way crews.

Even though crews worked around the clock, some of you remained without power for several days. We know how much you rely on electricity, and we do our best to keep the power flowing to your homes. But as you can imagine, restoring power under wet, frigid, icy conditions becomes a difficult task, especially given the ruggedness of the



*One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey*

terrain and the remoteness of some of our distribution lines.

It is a task, however, for which our line crews are well-prepared. Our statewide organization, Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA), provides our crews with extensive and ongoing training related to coordinating and handling power restoration efforts under inclement conditions.


Your cooperative also takes a number of steps to guard against outages. We have an aggressive right-of-way maintenance program that runs from spring through fall. We budget a significant amount of capital for maintenance and upgrades to the distribution system to improve service reliability. We provide our crews with the resources they need to get the job done.

In addition, we are part of a network of electric cooperatives that provides assistance to one another during times of need.

Despite our best efforts, however, there always remains the possibility that members can be without power for extended periods when the weather turns nasty. That's just a fact of life in the Northern Tier.

It's been many years since a storm left so many of our members without electricity for such an extended period of time. Let's hope we don't see a repeat of the New Year's Day storm anytime soon.

## Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative

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## Robert O. Toombs *President & CEO*

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## Office Hours

7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Mon.-Fri.)



# JUNIORS: Win the Trip of a Lifetime

If you're a high school junior, you could be eligible to win an all-expense-paid trip to the nation's capital.

Tri-County invites high school juniors from the co-op's service territory to compete for a seat on the 2003 Rural Electric Youth Tour bus, which will be bound for Washington, D.C., this summer.

The co-op will offer six lucky students the opportunity to take part in Youth Tour, a six-day excursion that's as much fun as it is educational.

During the tour, which takes place June 15-20, participants will have the opportunity to explore Washington's historic sites, visit the Smithsonian, make friends with other students from across the United States, meet with federal legislators and learn about electric co-ops and the cooperative movement.

The 39th annual Youth Tour is expected to draw more than 1,000 students from across the country to Washington for the week. If you are interested in being one of them, here's what you need to know:



*ABOVE: The Tri-County contingent enjoys the view from Little Roundtop. The Youth Tour always includes a visit to the Civil War battlefield at Gettysburg, Pa.*



*RIGHT: Tri-County's 2002 Youth Tour participants pause outside the U.S. Capitol. Last year's participants were, from left: Jonathon Atherholt, Northern Potter High School; Martina Wood, Cowanesque Valley; William Brooks, Athens; Laurie Hedrick, Canton; Kerry Barrett, Athens; and Kristen Douglass, Liberty.*



## Youth Tour Rules

1. Contest is open to any high school junior (2002-2003 school year) whose parents or legal guardians are members of Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative.
2. Submit an essay, not exceeding 300 words, on "Electricity: How it affects my life."
3. Essays must be typed and double-spaced.
4. Complete the accompanying application, and staple it to your essay. Also include a wallet-size photograph of yourself. Mail to: Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative, Attn: Jeff Fetzer, P.O. Box 526, Mansfield, PA 16933.
5. Entries must be received by Friday, March 21, 2003.
6. After reviewing the applications and essays, Tri-County will select six Youth Tour delegates. They will be notified by Friday, April 25, 2003. 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 2004 annual meeting in New Orleans.
7. The decision of the judges is final.

*For more information about Youth Tour and the agenda, call Tri-County's Mansfield office at 570/ 662-2175 or 800/343-2559, see your high school guidance counselor or browse our Web site at [www.tri-countyrec.com](http://www.tri-countyrec.com).*



# Tips to avoid generating a hazardous situation

Protect  
our line  
workers —  
make sure  
your  
generator  
is properly  
installed.

**O**wning a standby electric generator can be a godsend during a prolonged power outage.

Backup generators can keep the farmer's milking machine running, the business owner's cash registers ringing and the homeowner's water flowing.

But if installed improperly or used incorrectly, emergency generators can be deadly — to you, your neighbors or the line workers attempting to restore your power.

Generators are available in a variety of sizes and configurations. Manufacturers rate the strength of their devices in terms of wattage output. The higher the generator's wattage rating, the more powerful it is.

It is important to select a generator with a wattage rating that exceeds the total rated watts of the appliances you plan to operate during a power outage.

Proper installation is also critical to the safe operation of an emergency generator.

To ensure safety, isolate your generator from the cooperative's power lines. A generator that is not isolated can "backfeed" electricity into the co-op's distribution system. Backfeed re-energizes lines that are believed to be dead, creating a potentially hazardous situation that can result in injuries or death to line workers restoring power. It can also cause extensive and costly property damage.

## Generator safety points

To protect yourself, your loved ones and Tri-County's line

workers, please review the following safety tips and guidelines:

- NEVER connect an emergency generator to a building's main power supply unless you have had a professional electrician install a double-throw transfer switch. The switch prevents electricity created by the generator from flowing out of your house and into utility lines. Without the installation of a double-throw switch, your generator can re-energize lines, creating a potentially deadly hazard to our line workers.
- Plug individual appliances into the generator using heavy-duty, outdoor-rated cords with a three-prong plug and wire gauge adequate for the appliance load.
- Do not plug the generator into a wall outlet.
- Prior to installation, notify Tri-County's engineering department of your intent to hook up a standby generator.
- Have a recognized electrical inspection agency inspect and approve your installation before operating the generator.
- Never operate generators indoors or in enclosed structures. Generators run on fossil fuels such as gasoline or diesel, which create carbon monoxide during combustion. This colorless, odorless gas can be deadly if allowed to spread through enclosed areas.
- Do not exceed your generator's rated wattage capacity. Overloading can damage the generator and any appliances connected to it and can create a potential fire hazard.

If you have any questions about the installation of your generator, contact Tri-County's engineering department at 570/662-2175 or 800/343-2559. For additional information about generators, visit our Web site at [www.tri-countyrec.com](http://www.tri-countyrec.com) or call our office to request the free brochure, "Choosing and Installing Emergency Generators."

