

**Tri-County
Rural Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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For Emergencies Call:
1-800-343-2559

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

GUEST COLUMN

Taking control of power costs



by John Lykens

MANY OF the factors driving up electricity prices — increasing global demand for energy, dwindling natural resources, rising fossil fuel costs, more stringent environmental regulations — are outside of the control of your rural electric cooperative.

But there is one way Tri-County can have some direct control over our power costs, and you, as a member, can help. By volunteering to participate in our load management program, you can help the cooperative save thousands of dollars on its monthly energy bill. While those savings are shared by all co-op members in the form of a lower generation charge, members who participate in the program also automatically receive a \$5 credit on their electric bills each month.

Here's how it works: Cooperative members allow Tri-County to install load control receivers (LCRs) on their electric water heaters. During periods of high electrical demand on our regional grid, the LCRs automatically interrupt power to those water heaters. This immediately reduces Tri-County's demand by the size of each controlled water heater — approximately 3,500 to 4,500 watts per tank. Multiply that number by the more than 1,700 Tri-County members who have allowed us to deploy LCRs in their homes and we're talking about a sizeable reduction in demand, one of the main components on which the co-op's monthly power bill is based.

So how does shutting off a bunch of water heaters save the co-op money? Well, load control works by reducing the demand for electricity during those times of the day when it costs the most to purchase. Those times are called periods of "peak demand," and they typical-

ly occur during the work week, usually in the early morning and early evening hours, when the majority of electric consumers are at their homes and either getting ready to go to work or returning from their jobs.

After the peak demand period has passed, the LCRs allow the water heaters to turn back on. With a properly sized water tank, most members never know that their water heaters are being controlled.

Tri-County, with help from its members, has been actively shifting demand away from these expensive peak periods for many years through the load management program, which is monitored and administered by our wholesale power provider, Allegheny Electric Cooperative. By reducing Tri-County's demand for power during those peak periods, we are able to achieve lower power costs. Since generation is a direct pass-through charge to the consumer, that means all members benefit from this activity.

Saving on energy costs isn't the only benefit of the load management program, however. By reducing demand, members are helping to delay the need to construct new transmission lines and power plants, which translates into some obvious environmental benefits.

I would like to thank all of our members who participate in the load control program for helping to keep Tri-County's power costs down. I'd also like to encourage members who are not enrolled to save \$60 a year on their electric bills by signing up for the load management program.

To learn more about Tri-County's load management program, please visit our website at www.tri-countyrec.com/trico/loadManagement.asp or call our engineering department at 1-800-343-2559 and ask to speak with our load management technician. 

It's all downhill from here

BY JEFF FETZER

TRI-COUNTY MEMBER Mike Knefley Jr. has just the ticket to help folks escape the winter blahs this time of year.

It's called a lift ticket, and it can be purchased for a very reasonable price at Ski Sawmill Family Resort, where Knefley serves as the general manager.

"We pack this place out at the beginning of December, when we only have a few slopes open but everybody is anxious to get skiing," Knefley says. "But some of the best skiing can come later in the year, when everything is covered (with snow), all the slopes are open, and the weather is more comfortable."

Knefley, who has operated the resort since 2001, says Ski Sawmill is building a reputation as a ski area that remains open as late in the season as possible. The resort boasts 16 powerful fan snow guns and 20 "water sticks" that typically produce enough man-made white stuff through the winter to ensure skiing until late March.

This ski season, snow making commenced the last weekend of November, and the resort opened for business Dec. 8. During a typical season, Ski Sawmill is open about 80 days. The resort, the only ski area served by Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative, is located just off



of State Route 287 south of Morris, Pa., in northern Lycoming County.

Focused on families

In operation since the late 1960s, Ski Sawmill houses 14 slopes and trails, including a terrain park, a tube slide and a beginner's slope. It is known throughout the region as being an affordable, family ski resort. Its rates are among the lowest of any ski area in Pennsylvania, and it's an alcohol-free facility.

"This is a real family-friendly, kid-oriented place," says Knefley. "Probably 70 percent of our skiers are 18 and under. We're also known for being a great place to learn to ski. We've got gentle slopes and a great fleet of instructors."

He says beginning downhill skiers can learn how to safely navigate the slopes via group lessons offered daily. Lessons last from an hour to 90 minutes, depending on group size.

When people learn to ski properly, Knefley says, they are much more likely to develop into lifelong skiers.

"A lot of people don't take advantage of the winters here," Knefley says. "Skiing is a sport the whole family can do, and it's a fun way to spend time outdoors."

To encourage the development of the next generation of skiers, Knefley and Josh Lieb, Sawmill's group sales coordinator, work especially hard to bring school-age children to the slopes. The resort offers steeply discounted rates to school ski clubs,

ON TOP OF THE WORLD: Ski Sawmill Family Resort General Manager Mike Knefley Jr., left, and Josh Lieb, group sales coordinator, stand atop the Chainsaw Run, one of 14 runs and trails at the resort.

whose participants populate the slopes most weekday evenings. Ski clubs based at schools within Southern Tioga, Northern Tioga, Williamsport, Montoursville, Jersey Shore and Lock Haven school districts all visit the ski area regularly.

"Once you get the itch for it, skiing is a sport that you can carry on for the rest of your life," Knefley notes.

Schooled on the slopes

That certainly has been the case with Knefley, who practically grew up on a ski slope. His parents, Joyce and Mike Knefley Sr., ran Ski Denton in Potter County from the time Mike Jr. was a young boy until about two years ago.

A native of Ulysses, Mike Knefley Jr. says he not only became a skilled skier and snowboarder as a youth, he also received invaluable business experience. He worked in all facets of his parents' operation, from manning the ski shop to making snow and grooming the slopes.

"I really loved the industry and wanted to get a degree to help my dad out and eventually take over the business," says Knefley, who holds a business management degree from Colorado Christian University in Denver.

For three years after graduating from



ON EDGE: A snowboarder slices down the mountain at Ski Sawmill. The Lycoming County ski area features a terrain park with jumps, rails and a half pipe that has proved popular with the snowboarding crowd.



STARTING THEM YOUNG: A father helps his young daughter slip into her skis.

college, Knefley ran a middle school outdoor adventure day camp in Colorado during the summers and returned to Potter County to assist his father at Ski Denton in the winter months.

In the winter of 2000, Mike Knefley Sr. was presented with the opportunity to purchase Ski Sawmill and asked his son if he would be interested in running it. He was. Within six months, the Knefley family owned Ski Sawmill.

The younger Knefley and his wife, Jody, pulled up stakes in Colorado in 2001 and moved to their new home on Oregon Hill. Just 25 years old at the time, Knefley's first season as general manager presented some significant challenges.

An uphill start

"The staff here was all pretty new to the ski industry, and we came into this without a whole lot of help from the former owners on the ins and outs of this particular place," he says. "Everything here at Sawmill was a lot different than our prior experience at Denton, from snow making to lift-ticket deals to the way they groom the mountain. But with a great staff on hand, we began to put the pieces together and form the ski area we are all proud of today."

That first season got off to a late start. Mild weather delayed the resort's opening

until the day after Christmas, and Sawmill saw just 56 days of business.

"On top of that, we had a fire that destroyed our 32-room motel, restaurant and bar," he says. "And it happened on a Friday night on Martin Luther King weekend, one of our busiest ski weekends of the year."

Almost every room in the motel housed youths from a church group that weekend, but all guests were safely evacuated. The restaurant, where the fire is believed to have originated, has not been rebuilt. However, the Sawmill has constructed new lodging facilities: Sawmill Mountain Inn, a ten-room inn that includes two jacuzzi rooms with hand-crafted log beds, and Group Mountain Lodge, a bunkhouse with four large rooms, each of which can accommodate up to 22 guests. In all, Ski Sawmill can sleep 164 guests at their resort.

"That first year was really tough," Knefley relates, "but we had a lot of good people step up and make everything go as smoothly as possible. I was a definitely a little nervous going into our second year. But we figured it couldn't get much worse."

And he has been right, thus far. Each year the Sawmill has added attractions, amenities and equipment — over \$1 million worth in seven years — aimed at improving the facilities and visitor experience.

"Our biggest goal when we came here was to turn this place into a profitable business and to make the operation as efficient as we could," he says. "Every year, we are moving closer and closer to that goal, but all it takes is one bad year to really set you back. This business is a lot like farming; there are so many things that are out of your control."

Despite the challenges of the ski

industry, Knefley says he can't imagine doing anything else.

"I've fallen in love with this place, the people, the pace of life up here on Oregon Hill," he says. "I absolutely wouldn't trade it for anything." ☀



IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT: Tri-County member Mike Knefley Jr. operates a groomer on the slopes at Ski Sawmill.

About Ski Sawmill

Location: 383 Oregon Hill Road, Morris, Pa. 16938

Telephone: 570/353-7521

Website: www.skisawmill.com

BY THE NUMBERS:

25,000,000 gallons of water used for snow making

20,000 skier visits annually

515 vertical feet

98 percent snow-making capabilities

95 percent lighted for night skiing

60 employees

40 ski school instructors

25 ski patrol volunteers

13 skier/snowboard runs, including 1 beginning slope

4 ski lifts, including handle-tow lift for tube run

4 tubing lanes

1 half pipe in Terrain Park

REGULAR RESORT HOURS:

Monday 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Tues. - Thurs. 1 - 9 p.m.

Fri. - Sat. 9 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Sunday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

UPCOMING PROMOTIONS:

Feb. 14: Ski with your Sweetie (Buy one all-day lift ticket, get one free)

Feb. 18: Kids 15 and under Ski for Free

Feb. 25: Men Ski for Free

March 1-2: Winter Carnival

March 15: King of the Mountain Snowmobile Hill Climb

WEEKLY TICKET DEALS

Monday: Ladies Night — \$10 lift ticket, \$10 rental, 5 - 9 p.m.

Tuesday: College Day — Half off all-day lift and rental with college ID

Wednesday: Business Card Special — \$10 lift with business card, 5 - 9 p.m.

Thursday: Cash Thursday — \$10 lift, \$10 rental

Sunday: Family Day — \$15 adult lift, \$10 child lift, \$10 rental, 1 - 5 p.m.

Tri-County's bill to change, overall rate to remain same

Tri-County members will see a change in the appearance of the electric bills they receive in February.

The fixed cost recovery charge of 1.75 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) will be removed as a line item on the bill. However, the generation charge will be increased by 1.75 cents per kWh. The two changes will offset each other; the bottom line of your electric bill will not change.

The board of directors for Allegheny Electric Cooperative, the wholesale power supplier for Tri-County and the other electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, elected to roll the fixed cost recovery charge into the generation charge in an effort to maintain stable wholesale generation prices for the state's electric cooperatives for the next several years.

The additional cash generated by this move will be used to offset future increases in the wholesale electric market that will impact Allegheny beginning in 2009.

While Allegheny owns 70 percent of its generation supply, it has 30 percent exposure to the wholesale energy market. Currently that 30 percent share of

Allegheny's generation mix is purchased through a long-term power supply contract that expires at the end of this year.

The generation charge on your electric bill is a "pass-through" on which Tri-County does not make a profit. The generation rate reflects the amount that Allegheny charges Tri-County for every

kilowatt-hour of electricity that members use. The fixed cost recovery charge is also a pass-through that was implemented in the late 1990s to pay down the debt service on the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station, a nuclear power plant in Berwick, Pa., in which Allegheny has a 10 percent ownership stake. ⚡

SAFETYzone

Appliance safety for kids

Parents who plug protective covers into their home's outlets are taking the first step toward keeping their children safe from an electrical mishap.

Along those lines, parents should also limit their children's access to electrical appliances – even the ones that seem harmless. Children love to mimic their parents' activities. Keep that in mind whenever you're using a heated electric appliance like an iron, or one with blades or other sharp objects like a blender or can opener.

Ironing, for example, can look fun to a child. But left unattended to discover how to turn on the device, a little homemaker-in-the-making can suffer a severe burn or even start a fire.

Here are a few tips for parents of young children:

- ▶ Operate appliances when children are not around.
- ▶ Store heated and sharp devices out of your children's reach.
- ▶ Search for appliances with child-proof "on" switches.
- ▶ Unplug sewing machines and other appliances when you're not using them.
- ▶ Install a lock on your oven door.
- ▶ When you do operate appliances in front of children, use them in a safe manner and teach youngsters how to use them safely.

Marathon
WATER HEATERS



A hot water tank you can count on from the People You Can Count On

Buy a new Marathon water heater from Tri-County and rest easy knowing it's guaranteed to last as long as you own your home.

A Marathon water heater is guaranteed not to leak...for a lifetime!

Marathon water heaters feature:

- ▶ **Plastic tanks**
Won't rust or corrode
Stronger than steel
- ▶ **Lifetime Warranty**
A warranty not to leak "for as long as you own your home"
- ▶ **Envirofoam Insulation**
The most energy efficient and environmentally friendly insulation on the market
- ▶ **Reliability**
Six years parts and labor

You can also lease a Marathon water heater from Tri-County. We'll install it and maintain it for the life of the lease.

Call for more information
1-800-343-2559