

## GUEST COLUMN

# Making the Call



by **Carol Geiser**  
*Manager, C&T Call Center*

**Y**ou may not realize it, but you and your fellow cooperative members play a vital role in Tri-County's efforts to restore power during an outage.

When you call to report an outage, you are providing the co-op with information that will help us determine the location and extent of the problem.

One of the most important pieces of information you provide is your telephone number, which correlates to your location on our electric system. When your number is typed into our computerized outage management program along with those of other callers, the system is able to predict the location of protective devices isolating the problem and the number of members affected.

That's why it is so important for you to call us any time you lose electric service — even if you think your neighbors

may have already reported the outage. The more calls we receive, the more map locations we are able to gather. With more map locations input into the system, the better we can assess where manpower is needed, allowing us to restore power more efficiently.

It's also important that we have your correct telephone number on file. Please be sure to check on your next electric bill to verify that your phone number is accurate.

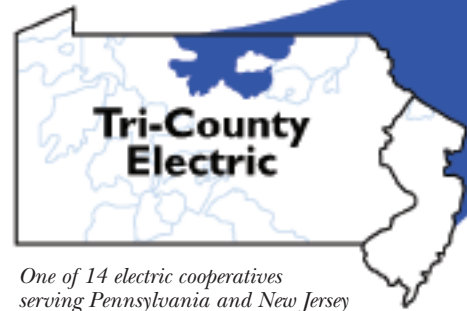
Callers can further help us expedite restoration efforts by reporting anything out of the ordinary they hear or witness prior to the loss of power.

If you hear an explosion or see downed lines, trees on electric wires, arcing, flashes of light, broken poles or a car accident in the vicinity, please relay that information to our operators. If your lights blink several times before going out, report that as well. All of this information is relayed to our crews and can assist them in diagnosing and correcting problems as quickly as possible.

Please refrain from venturing about to look for the source of an outage yourself. There could be live electric wires on the ground, and coming into contact with them or walking on the ground nearby could cause serious injury or death. Likewise, never attempt to remove trees or other objects that have fallen onto electric lines. Leave the repair work to our trained professionals.

We do request your patience at the onset of an outage. Many members ask our operators why they lost electric service and how long the power will be off. Unfortunately, when the calls first start coming in, we simply do not know much about the nature of the outage.

Until our line workers arrive on the scene, we are unable to provide much additional information. Remember, the service territory covered by our line crews is quite



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

large. It typically takes half an hour to an hour for a crew to arrive at the scene of a night or weekend outage. And while our line crews do their best to troubleshoot for possible causes of an outage while en route to the scene using information received from members who called in, often the problem is not readily apparent until a visual inspection is made.

Once the crews have identified the source of the outage, they notify us and provide an estimated time for repairs to be completed. As the details concerning the loss of service become available to our operators, we can then relay that information back to you.

At Tri-County, we do our best to make reporting an outage as easy as possible. We have operators available 24 hours a day, as well as an automated system that allows members to report outages by simply using the dialing pad on their touch-tone phones during times of heavy call volume.

How you report the outage is up to you — we just ask that you please make the call.

## Notice...

*All Tri-County offices will be closed Monday, May 30, 2005, in observance of Memorial Day.*



### Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

22 North Main Street • P.O. Box 526  
Mansfield, PA 16933  
Mansfield – 570/662-2175  
Coudersport – 814/274-8740  
Web Site: [www.tri-countyrec.com](http://www.tri-countyrec.com)  
E-mail: [trico@epix.net](mailto:trico@epix.net)

**For Emergencies call**  
1-800-343-2559

### Robert O. Toombs

*President & CEO*

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Annette Fowler <i>Executive Assistant</i>	Bert Cunningham <i>Director, Human Resources</i>
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### Office Hours

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

MAY 2005 12a



# Co-op rodeo crew ropes in top-ten finish

By Jeff Fetzer

It *was* their first rodeo.

And while there were no bulls nor blood, there was plenty of mud at this thing they call a linemen's rodeo (with apologies to Garth Brooks).

On a rain-soaked weekend in early April, four Tri-County linemen represented the co-op at the Third Annual Gaff-n-Go Rodeo & Expo held at the Oak Ridge Estate in Nelson County, Va.

The event, hosted by Central Virginia Electric Cooperative, was created to provide linemen with a friendly competition in which they could showcase their abilities and learn how other linemen tackle similar jobs. The rodeo featured 20 three-man teams from Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, as well as 21 apprentice linemen, who competed individually.

Mainesburg crew chief Dave Gibson and journeymen Bob Mathers and Jim Succowich comprised Tri-County's team. The co-op's apprentice participant was Chris Coates.

"Our guys did an excellent job," said John Lykens, Tri-County's director of operations. "We had a three-man crew that doesn't generally work together; it was the first rodeo we have ever been involved with, and we were able to finish in the top ten. I am very proud of their performance."

The crew, in fact, finished ninth in the event. While Gibson and Mathers both work out of the co-op's Mainesburg service district, Succowich reports to the co-op's Germania district. Prior to the rodeo, Gibson, a 17-year co-op veteran, said he had only worked with Succowich during a couple of storm-related outages.

"This was a great team-building exercise," Lykens said. "We had guys from different crews working together for a common goal."

Lykens said the co-op decided to send a team to participate in the rodeo as a means of boosting morale and for the opportunity to compete against linemen from other electric utilities from throughout the region.



**Bob Mathers, serving as the Tri-County crew's ground man, hoists a transformer up the pole to teammates Dave Gibson and Jim Succowich during the transformer change-out competition. The co-op posted one of the best scores in the rodeo for this event.**



**Tri-County lineman Chris Coates works to achieve the desired line tension during the sagging event. A meter reader/first-year apprentice, Coates placed 13th in the apprentice competition.**

The team competition featured five events: pole-top rescue, transformer change-out, speed climb, underground change-out, and pole transfer. All of the events emphasized working efficiently and safely, with deductions resulting from unsafe practices.

"This rodeo was primarily about doing the job safely," said Lykens. "The judges stress that to win the competition, you need to do everything safely and proficiently. It wasn't about speed."



**Tri-County journeyman lineman Jim Succowich uses a hot stick to energize a cut-out during the underground changeover event at the Third Annual Gaff-n-Go Rodeo and Expo April 2. The local crew finished ninth out of 20 teams entered in the linemen's competition.**



**Germania journeyman Jim Succowich (left) and Mainesburg crew chief Dave Gibson work in tandem during the pole transfer event.**

Even the speed climb — in which the linemen were timed on how fast they could climb up and down a 40-foot pole — featured a means of emphasizing smoothness and safety over speed: each lineman had to descend the pole with a chicken egg in his mouth. Breaking the shell resulted in a mouthful of raw egg *and* a two-point deduction.

Three of the five contests were mystery events, meaning that the linemen

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# City library 'links' to rural areas

By Jeff Fetzer

It was a glorious spring day. The sun blazed against a backdrop of brilliant blue sky; songbirds found their voices again after being drowned out by flood-inducing rainfall the weekend before; temperatures topped out at 80 degrees — 6 degrees shy of a record, but not bad for the sixth day of April.

Books and videos beckoned. Or at least so it seemed at the Cogan House LibraryLink, where a steady flow of patrons perused the shelves for best-sellers and movies on the first summer-like evening of the year.

By 7 p.m. nearly a dozen people visited the tiny room that has served as the community library branch since it opened in the Cogan House Township Building more than two years ago.

Link librarian Mary Gregory was not surprised by the flow of foot traffic into the facility on this fine evening.

"We have high times and low times, but I've never had a night when someone didn't show up to use the library," says Gregory, a Tri-County member.

In fact, Gregory relates that patrons reported stopping by only to be disappointed when snowstorms forced the library to close on several occasions this past winter.

"The Cogan House Link is phenomenally busy," notes Stephanie A. Farr, county service manager for the James V. Brown Library in Williamsport. "It is open six hours a week, and in that time they check out an average of 150 items."

The link is one of three mini-branch libraries that the Lycoming County Library System established in northern Lycoming County as a means of providing library service to rural areas. The



**Cogan House Link Librarian Mary Gregory (seated) checks out movies for Tri-County member Tiffany Martz and boyfriend Dan Tyhanic II. The one-room library branch housed in the Cogan House Township Building holds about 500 books and 100 movies on video and DVD. It is open three nights a week all year long.**

other link locations are in Barbour's in northeastern Lycoming County and at Kuhn's Bros. Log Homes in the Slate Run area. The Cogan House and Slate Run links serve Lycoming County municipalities in which Tri-County provides electric service, including Brown, Cogan House, Cummings, Jackson, McHenry, McIntyre and Pine townships.

Funded by federal and local grants, each site houses approximately 500 books for children and adults, as well as more than 100 videos and DVDs. Each site also has two computers with Internet access that may be used by the public at no charge.

According to Gregory, the library link has been well-received by the public. Without so much as a sign advertising

its presence within the township building, the Cogan House Link has attracted more than 300 card holders since opening in early 2003.

"We really encourage people to come," says Gregory, who shares librarian duties with her sister, Tri-County member Lynn Meyer of Roaring Branch. "We have a lot great books and movies, and people really like to come here."

Books and movies checked out of the link libraries may be kept for two weeks. Any Lycoming County resident may receive a link library card, which has the same privileges as regular James V. Brown Library cards, including the popular "Books By Mail" program.

Farr noted all three outreach libraries receive the newest book releases at the same time as the parent library in Williamsport.

"For someone who likes Danielle Steele, James Patterson or other popular writers," Farr said, "you have a better chance of getting the new book (at a link library) than you do at the James V. Brown Library, where there may be a waiting list of 20 people ahead of you."

Gregory says movies on video and DVD are the most popular items checked out of the Cogan House link. However, books are in demand, as well.

The librarian, who works in Williamsport during the day, makes weekly stops at the James V. Brown Library to retrieve specific books sought by some of her Cogan House Link patrons.

"There are a lot of older people who wouldn't dream of going down to the James V. Brown Library and getting a book," she says, "but they will ask me for a book on a certain topic, and I'll get it and bring it back for them."

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### Co-op rodeo crew ...

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did not know anything about the nature of those events until the day before the rodeo. Their only practice for the mystery events was what they do at work on a daily basis.

Once the crew discovered the nature of the mystery events during a rules meeting the day before the rodeo, they spent hours strategizing on each crew member's role in getting the job done and the most efficient means of performing the required tasks.

"These guys were very serious about competing," noted Lykens. "They were talking about what they were going to do to win."

Gibson says he was happy with the way the team performed and was appreciative of the opportunity to pit his skills against linemen from other utilities.

"I was very pleased with how well we competed," he said. "On a couple of the events we did really well, and on a few others we were average. We did very well on safety. That was one of our strong points."

Gibson said the rodeo also exposed the local linemen to new approaches to some of the tasks they handle during the work week.

"We had to use different tools and equipment and adapt in a short amount of time," he said. "It was definitely a good experience for all of us."

## Mark your Calendars! Annual Meeting set for July 9

Tri-County Rural Electric invites members to join us at the Coudersport Consistory Saturday, July 9, for the 2005 Annual Meeting.

We will provide a catered lunch, door prizes and a variety of displays. There's fun and games in store for the kids, too.

Don't miss out on this great opportunity to meet your Tri-County representatives, vote for directors and enjoy the fellowship of your co-op neighbors.



## Plug into electrical safety



May is National Electrical Safety Month, but electrical safety is an issue that should stay with us year round.

An estimated three people die each day in residential electrical-related incidents in the home. A great many of those are related to problems involving power cords and extension cords.

To help reduce those numbers, the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) encourages consumers to plug into electrical safety with the following tips:

- Check that all electrical items, including extension cords, are certified by a nationally recognized independent testing lab, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), CSA, and ETL.
- Extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis; unplug and safely store them after every use.
- Do not place power cords and extension cords in high traffic areas or under carpets, rugs or furniture, and never nail or staple them to the wall or baseboard.
- Never remove the ground pin (the third prong) to make a three-prong plug fit a two-prong outlet.
- Make sure extension cords are properly rated for their intended use, indoor or outdoor, and meet or exceed the power needs of the appliance or tool being used.
- All electrical items and extension cords should be kept in good condition. If damage is discovered, take the item to an authorized repair center or cut the cord and dispose of it safely.

For these and other electrical safety tips, visit ESFI on the web at [www.electrical-safety.org](http://www.electrical-safety.org) or call 703/841-3229.

### City library provides ...

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Not everyone visits the link to check out books and movies.

As she sat at a computer in the link library, Mansfield University student Jenifer Schon of Buttonwood comments that she has probably spent more time in the library than anybody, excluding the librarians.

"I took classes online last summer," she says, "and I was in here all three nights of the week that the library was open. It really helped me out a lot."

Another regular at the link, Tri-County member Tiffany Martz of Cogan House, says her primary interest is the collection of movies available to cardholders at no cost.

"This is a great thing to have in a little community like this," exclaims Martz.

That local access and acceptance is just what the Lycoming County Library System board had in mind when it sought grant funding to create the branch facilities.

"This is right in their backyard," says Farr. "We are doing everything we can to remove any barriers to receiving library services. If you live in some of these rural areas, you no longer have an excuse for not using the library."

Not even an excuse like the first nice day of spring.

#### Cogan House Link

**Location:** Cogan House Twp.  
Building, Route 184

**Hours:** 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Tuesday,  
Wednesday, Thursday,

**Staff:** Mary Gregory, Lynn Meyer

#### Slate Run Link

**Location:** Kuhn's Bros. Log  
Homes, Route 414

**Hours:** 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday

**Staff:** Bruce and Loretta Speck,  
Howard Giles

For more information, about the library link program contact the James V. Brown Library at 570/326-0536.