

Guest
COLUMN:

The beauty of blinks



by Mike VanBergen
Senior Director of Operations

It's Monday morning, and you awake to the sound of chirping birds and a sun-filled bedroom. Funny, you think to yourself, you're up before the alarm has sounded. Not only that, but you feel terrific — wide awake and ready to start the work week.

You glance at your alarm clock and immediately know why. **12:00 12:00 12:00** — the red numbers of your digital clock flash annoyingly.

You jump out of bed, grab your wristwatch from the dresser and stare in disbelief. You're feeling so well-rested because you've overslept by an hour.

The cheery mood deserts you. You feel as if your electric provider has let you down. But has it really?

While you were sleeping, you may have experienced a blink — a

momentary power interruption that can wreak havoc on sensitive equipment like digital alarm clocks, VCRs, microwave ovens and computers.

Blinks most often occur when tree limbs or animals come in contact with electric lines. Other sources include lightning and equipment failure.

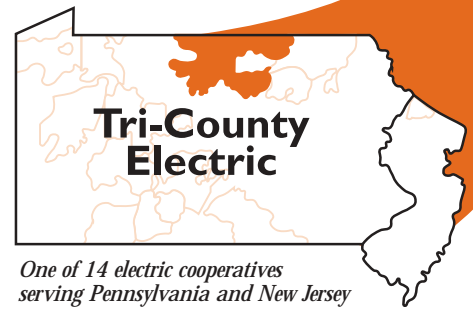
A blink usually lasts less than one second and takes place when a recloser — a safety device on our system — detects a short circuit, or fault. The recloser — which acts like a self-resetting circuit breaker — instantly halts the flow of power when a fault is detected, preventing serious and costly damage to our equipment and lengthy outages for our members and line crews.

This momentary interruption in the flow of power gives the fault a chance to clear. Our equipment will make up to three attempts — three blinks — to allow the fault to clear before permanently shutting off the power flow.

If the fault does not clear after the third blink, an outage occurs requiring a line crew to be dispatched to locate and eliminate the source of the problem. In many instances, however, the fault clears, the recloser resets and a prolonged outage is avoided — that's the beauty of blinks.

Blinks have been a normal occurrence on utility systems for many years. But until the arrival of the digital age, they were scarcely noticed. Thirty years ago, most devices and appliances in the home were very tolerant of minor power disturbances. Not so with today's digital equipment, which is extremely sensitive to changes in the flow of electricity.

With battery-powered overrides becoming increasingly common on digital equipment, blinks may one day return to their previous state of obscurity among consumers of electricity. But until that day, utilities and consumers



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

will have to deal with the problems associated with brief power disruptions.

For its part, the co-op has expanded its right-of-way maintenance efforts considerably this year. By reducing the amount of vegetation that can come in contact with our electric lines, we reduce the number of tree-related blinks — outages, too!

We know it is impossible to eliminate blinks entirely, especially since they are often caused by animals and acts of nature. But in blink-prone areas, we can often isolate the problem and correct it. One trouble with blinks, however, is that we don't usually know when or where they are occurring. That's where you can help.

If you experience more than an occasional blink, please contact us. We can begin monitoring the line in your area to determine the source of the problem and correct it.

There's also a great way to help reduce the frustration that blinks can sometimes cause — get yourself a good analog clock and use it as a backup.



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
E-mail: trico@epix.net

For Emergencies call
1-800-343-2559

Robert O. Toombs President & CEO

Staff

Bobbi Jo Kilmer <i>Executive Assistant</i>	Michael W. VanBergen <i>Sr. Director, Electric Operations</i>
Barbara Johnson <i>Director, Financial Services</i>	Bert Cunningham <i>Director, Human Resources</i>
Ralph Park <i>Sr. Director, Engineering Services</i>	Alex F. Hartley <i>Director, Member Services</i>

Board of Directors

Ferd W. Irish.....	<i>Chairman</i>
Ralph E. Snyder	<i>Vice Chairman</i>
Alston A. Teeter.....	<i>Secretary/Treasurer</i>
Donald H. Blackwell	Alfred G. Calkins
James R. Davis	Jay E. Haldeman
Gerald A. Kite	Barbara J. Seeley

Summer Hours

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





LEFT: Pennsylvania's Youth Tour contingent makes its way along the Korean War Veterans Memorial, with its ghostly images etched on highly polished granite.

The Tour Begins

The Tri-County delegates, who had just completed their junior year of high school, boarded the motor coach at the co-op's Coudersport and Mansfield offices on a sunny Sunday morning and traveled to Gettysburg, Pa., where they took in a brief tour of the hallowed Civil War battlefield and posed for photographs at Little Roundtop. From there, it was on to the Hyatt Regency in Crystal City, Va., where they arrived around 6 p.m.

Following dinner and an orientation session for the 80-plus Pennsylvania students participating in the tour, they settled in for a week of sight-seeing, socializing and exploration of the nation's history and government.

The 2003 edition of Youth Tour kicked off in earnest Monday morning with National Youth Day. Highlights of the action-packed morning included an inspirational keynote address by Lt. Col. Brian Birdwell, who survived the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Pentagon.

After American Airlines Flight 77 slammed into the Pentagon, just a few feet away from Birdwell's second-floor office, the U.S. Army officer was thrown to the ground and engulfed in flames. He suffered burns over 60 percent of his body, requiring more than 30 operations and months of skin grafts and burn treatments.

Now well on his way to recovery, Birdwell received a standing ovation from the 1,300 Youth Tour delegates on hand for the event.

The high-charged assembly concluded with a town-hall meeting in which eager students lined up to take turns offering their input on the topic of "Cooperatives and You: Our Commitment to Community."

Following lunch it was on to Mt. Vernon for a tour of George Washington's historic home, outbuildings, gardens and orchards. Rounding out the day was an evening boat cruise on the Potomac

More than 1,300 rural high school students from around the country converged in Washington, D.C., in June for the chance to make connections with the nation's proud past and advance its promising future.

Bringing all these young people together was the 2003 Rural Electric Youth Tour, organized by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the service arm for the nation's 1,000 electric cooperatives.

The Tri-County Contingent

Tri-County Rural Electric sponsored eight students on the tour, held June 15-20.

Participants were: Robert Brennan, son of Judy Ziegler of Genesee and a student at Northern Potter High School; Ashley Douglass, daughter of Michael and Lori Douglass of Trout Run, Liberty High School; Scott Filer, son of Michael and Michelle Filer of Shinglehouse, Oswayo Valley High School; Sara Kasper, daughter of Bryan and Laurie Kasper of Columbia Cross Roads, Mansfield High School; Katie Mead, daughter of Richard Mead Jr. and Veronica Mead of Westfield, Cowanesque Valley High School; Lori Mitstifer, daughter of Lynn and Carol Mitstifer of Liberty, Liberty High School; Renee Norman, daughter of Dave and Aggie Norman of Liberty, Liberty High School; and Janell R. Thompson, daughter of Donald and Cathy Thompson of Westfield, Northern Potter High School.



LEFT: Renee Norman of Liberty, left, and Katie Mead of Westfield pose with a statue of Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the FDR Memorial.



LEFT: Mt. Vernon provides a scenic backdrop for these Tri-County Youth Tour participants.

BELOW: Tri-County Youth Tour delegates, from left, Janell Thompson, Renee Norman, Ashley Douglass and Lori Mitstifer relax on the deck of the Spirit of Washington. The evening boat cruise on the Potomac River features dancing and socializing, as well as a great view of nighttime Washington.

River, where the Pennsylvania delegates were able to dance and mingle with several hundred students from more than half a dozen states.

The weather took a turn for the worse on Tuesday afternoon, just as the Pennsylvania delegation met up with Congressman Tim Holden outside the Capitol. Hoisting an umbrella and battling over the din from a nearby construction site, Holden spent 10 minutes talking with students and fielding their questions.

Other highlights of the week included a tour of Arlington Cemetery; visits to the Smithsonian Museums, National Zoo, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt monuments and Vietnam and Korean War memorials; and a guided tour of the awe-inspiring National Cathedral.

Students also enjoyed a dinner theater performance of "Pirates of



Penzance," as well as the popular All States Dinner Dance, which brought together all the nation's Youth Tour students for an evening of dancing, games, videos and socializing in the basement of the Hyatt Regency.

Tri-County has been a supporter of Youth Tour for many years. Each year the cooperative seeks out students from

its service territory who have an interest in learning more about the nation's capital and the rural electric cooperative movement.

Participants must be high school juniors whose parents or legal guardians are members of the co-op. Students must complete an application form and a brief essay for consideration.

Application information is generally available in February at local schools and in *Penn Lines* or through Tri-County's Web site.

Youth Tour, sparked by a speech by then-U.S. Senator Lyndon Johnson at the 1957 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Annual Meeting, has been held annually since 1964.



LEFT: The Tri-County crew peers down from the New York battlefield monument at Gettysburg's Little Roundtop. Enjoying the view are, from left, Robert Brennan, Scott Filer, Janell Thompson, Katie Mead, Lori Mitstifer, Sara Kasper, Renee Norman and Ashley Douglass.



Tri-County — more than just an electric provider

For more than 60 years, Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative's goal has been to provide dependable, affordable electricity to its consumer-members.

But over the years, your co-op has developed into more than just an energy provider.

"Cooperatives offer much more than reliable, affordable electricity for our members," says Alex Hartley, director of member services. "We provide many extra services and products designed to save our members time and money."

Following are some of those benefits that Tri-County offers to its members:

- **Water Heaters** — Members can lease or purchase high-quality, energy-efficient electric water heaters through Tri-County Rural Electric. With our lease program, members receive free maintenance of the water heater for the term of the lease.
- **PAiD plan** — Members never have to worry about late payments when they participate in our Payment Automatically Deducted (PAiD) program. We'll automatically deduct your electric bill payment from your checking or savings account each month.
- **Energy Audit** — Tri-County's trained professionals will visit your home and perform an energy-use audit to help determine your electrical consumption. From the audit, they may be able to offer suggestions that will help reduce your electric use and save you money.
- **Load Management** — Members receive a \$5 monthly credit to their electric bill when they install a load management switch on their water heaters.
- **SurgeTamer®** — Protect your expensive home electronic equipment and appliances by purchasing a

SurgeTamer surge protection unit. Tri-County carries a wide variety of surge-protection devices, which are available to members at discounted prices.

- **Gift Certificates** — Looking for a practical gift that can be used anytime throughout the year? Tri-County has gift certificates that can be purchased for any Tri-County member.
 - **Budget Billing** — Tri-County can set up a billing plan that lets you make uniform payments each month.
 - **Security Lighting** — Tri-County will install a security light on your property that automatically turns on at dusk and switches off at dawn. Installation — including the lighting fixture, wire and pole — is free as long as the security light is located within 125 feet of an existing cooperative facility.
 - **Stray Voltage Inspections** — If you believe you are experiencing a stray voltage problem at your dairy or hog farm, we can send a representative to check for any stray voltage on your premises. We can investigate causes and help with solutions to severe problems.
 - **Penn Lines** — Each month, members receive a full-color magazine, *Penn Lines*. Each issue brings you information about your electric cooperative and the energy industry as a whole. The magazine also provides suggestions regarding the safe, efficient use of electric energy, feature stories, recipes and readers' photographs.
- Tri-County believes in providing quality electricity to members. However, just as important is providing quality programs and services aimed at enhancing members' lives.

For more information on any of these products or services, please call the Tri-County office at 800/343-2559.



A friendly reminder to dog owners...

Your cooperative has a small favor to ask: If you own a dog, please make sure your pet is properly restrained.

Our service technicians and meter readers report numerous close encounters with loose canines throughout the year. Incidents such as these not only endanger our workers, but also reduce their efficiency — and as a result, become costly.

We ask you to keep your dogs inside your home or, if outside, secured in a pen or leashed. Also, please be sure to move dog houses away from utility poles and meter bases.

Be aware that under Pennsylvania law, all dogs must be under control and may not run at large. Dogs are considered personal property, and owners are responsible for damages caused by their pets.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.