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On the line

*New campaign
encourages cooperative
commitment to safety*

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ON THE COVER

Electric cooperative lineworkers practice climbing poles and using "hot sticks" to push away an energized power line before beginning a simulated conductor change exercise during the Job Training & Safety School's Advanced Hot Stick course at Indiana-based REA Energy Cooperative.



Invisible dangers

Safety in the time of coronavirus

By Frank M. Betley

May is the time we traditionally observe National Electrical Safety Month across the country. This May, however, safety has taken on a much broader context as the world contends with the COVID-19 pandemic. From a trip to the grocery store to simply greeting our neighbors, public health concerns have come to dictate our daily lives. In this crisis, we are all being asked to keep safety in mind.

Keeping safety in mind is nothing new to electric cooperatives. In this business, safety month is every month, and responding to crisis situations is just part of the job. Electric cooperatives regularly plan and prepare for emergencies. Each cooperative strives to build and maintain a culture of safety that lends itself to responding quickly in crisis situations, including the current pandemic. Working daily with electricity, cooperative employees fully appreciate the dangers of an invisible threat that has the potential to be deadly.

As the COVID-19 threat emerged in the Commonwealth this past March, the state's electric cooperatives immediately mobilized. Cooperatives closed off office lobbies to the public and

instituted staggered work schedules, social distancing, and remote operations for employees. To keep the power flowing, they reacted quickly to ensure the safety of the cooperative workforce, including lineworkers and office personnel. Member meetings were canceled or postponed in response to the pandemic, and the cooperatives launched an extensive outreach effort via social media, *Penn Lines*, and their websites to communicate operational changes.

Your generation provider, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., also activated crisis response measures to ensure the safe flow of electricity from its source to your local cooperative. Office personnel moved to a mostly remote working posture, while power plant workers at our Raystown Hydroelectric facility and the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station nuclear plant instituted industry protocols to protect personnel and ensure compliance with state and federal pandemic safety guidelines.

The Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA), which represents electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, also instituted safety protocols, moving personnel to work remotely while continuing to coordinate with state and federal governmental agencies, and our member cooperatives. PREA also produces your *Penn Lines* magazine, and was able to coordinate its production remotely this past month.

These actions reflect a cooperative commitment to safety at all levels, as well as a healthy respect for potential

danger. Nowhere is this more apparent than at your local electric cooperative, where there is a conditioned response to matters of safety. Understanding the potential for danger, the cooperatives immediately placed a priority on the health and safety of their employees, their members, and the general public. Much like their storm response, cooperatives are conditioned to take care of their communities in a time of need.

This "concern for community" is a guiding cooperative principle, and it goes beyond providing electricity. In recognizing the financial impact of the crisis, electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania were among the first utility providers in the Commonwealth to address members facing financial difficulties. As part of their outreach, cooperatives encouraged members struggling with power bills to contact their local electric cooperative for assistance.

It goes without saying this is an unprecedented time, with the crisis still very much with us. In just over one month we have gone from zero to nearly a million COVID-19 cases in the United States alone, with more than 50,000 American lives lost. While we are all looking for hopeful signs that this pandemic will slow its spread, we must remain vigilant. At this time, there is still no cure for the coronavirus, so we must all proceed cautiously. As this crisis continues, your electric cooperative remains committed to providing you this essential service — and doing it safely, this month and every month. 🌟



Frank M. Betley
President & CEO
Pennsylvania Rural Electric
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Allegheny Electric
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COMPARE TO WORX \$99.98

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Customer Rating

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COMPARE TO NEOCRAFT \$39.99

SAVE 50%

MODEL: 60635

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SAVE 44%

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BLACK ITEM 64486 WHITE ITEM 64739 63483 shown

COMPARE TO PORTFOLIO \$39.98

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6AMP VARIABLE SPEED RECIPROCATING SAW

Customer Rating

Blade sold separately.

NOW **\$19.99**

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COMPARE TO PORTER-CABLE \$59.98

SAVE 66%

MODEL: PCE360

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News from across the Commonwealth

U.S. Census Bureau adjusts 2020 census operations

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the U.S. Census Bureau is adjusting the 2020 census operations in order to protect the health and safety of the public and bureau employees, and ensure a complete and accurate count of all communities.

In March, the bureau suspended field data collection activities. Current plans are for the field offices to be reactivated on June 1 with resumption of field data collection operations to begin as soon as possible after that date. All in-person activities will incorporate the most current guidelines to promote the health and safety of bureau staff and the public.

Once 2020 census data collection has been completed, the bureau will begin a lengthy process to produce the apportionment counts, redistricting information, and other statistical data products that help guide hundreds of billions of dollars in public and private sector spending per year for the next decade.

The bureau is seeking statutory relief from Congress of 120 additional calendar days to deliver the final apportionment counts due to the delay in obtaining information this

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year. Under this plan, the U.S. Census Bureau would extend the

window for field data collection and self-response to Oct. 31, 2020, which will allow for apportionment counts to be delivered to the president by April 30, 2021, and redistricting data to be delivered to the states no later than July 31, 2021.

Funds available for fire companies to fight wildfires

The state has announced funding is now available to help Pennsylvania's rural communities increase protections from wildfires.

In 2019, almost \$620,000 was awarded to more than 130 volunteer fire companies serving rural areas and communities where forest and brush fires are common. The grant program, offered through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and paid through federal grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, has awarded more than \$13 million since it began in 1982.

Local firefighting forces in rural areas or communities with fewer than 10,000 residents qualify for the aid, which is used for training and equipment purchases directly related to fighting brush and forest fires. Priority will be placed on projects that include the purchase of wildfire suppression equipment and protective clothing.

Grant applications must be electronically submitted through DCNR's grant website by 4 p.m. on May 21, 2020. Applicants should visit the volunteer fire assistance grant webpage at grants.dcnr.state.pa.us/Dashboard/VFAGrants.

Online courses available for boaters, paddlers

During a time when many Pennsylvanians have been advised not to leave their homes, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) is encouraging boaters and paddlers to take advantage of online educational resources.

Many of these resources designed to enhance knowledge of boating regulations and best safety practices are free of charge, while some providers charge

nominal fees for services. These online educational experiences will help the entire family learn how to be a safe boater and direct them to the best local boating or paddling destinations.

Online courses include:

- ▶ Boating Safety Education Certificate and Boater Safety Courses. A Boating Safety Education Certificate is required by the PFBC for anyone who operates a personal watercraft, and for those born on or after Jan. 1, 1982, who operate a boat powered by motors greater than 25 horsepower. Although



in-classroom boating courses are not taking place at this time, boaters can earn a boating safety education certificate through online courses. There are two courses approved by the PFBC. The courses cost \$34.50 each. Those who successfully complete the course receive a temporary certificate valid for 60 days from date of issue and can receive a permanent certificate from the PFBC for an additional \$10 fee.

- ▶ Paddlesports Online Learning. The PFBC recommends that anyone paddling a canoe, kayak, or stand-up paddleboard complete basic safety training from an accredited source, such as the American Canoe Association or certified PFBC instructors.

The Pennsylvania Boating Handbook can be downloaded for free on the PFBC website at fishandboat.com. 

Now available in the U.S. without a prescription!

Popular French Diet Pill Goes On Sale Nationwide

Clinical study shows active ingredients trigger weight loss in the abdomen without harmful side effects; guaranteed results or get 110% of your money back

A compound that triggers weight loss in the abdomen has been used safely in France for years. It is now available in the United States without a prescription.

The pill contains ingredients that not only burn belly fat... but... also help maintain healthy cholesterol levels.

Plus, at just two dollars per daily dose, it's very affordable.

Today marks the nationwide release of this pill in the United States. It's being offered by the Applied Scientific Research Center in Colorado. The U.S. brand name of this pill is OxiTrim.

Clinical results show dieters can lose up to 5 inches from their waistline within just 8 weeks of daily use. That's because OxiTrim works to enhance the body's ability to burn a specific type of fatty acid found in the abdomen.

OxiTrim does not contain stimulants or dangerous chemicals. The active ingredients have a track record of safety showing no harmful side effects.

France's Weight Loss Breakthrough

In 2013, scientists announced a pill that facilitates weight loss in the abdomen. It contains a combination of ingredients shown to enhance the metabolism's ability to burn belly fat.

Since then, it has become a popular diet pill in France and Germany. Sales continue to climb as new people discover how well the product works.

Michael Kenneth, President of the Applied Scientific Research Center is not surprised by the popularity. He says, "The pill is safe. It's effective. It works fast. Plus, it costs less than a cup of coffee per day."

"And now, we're making it available in America under the new brand name OxiTrim. We can't wait to receive feedback from first time users. We know dieters are going to love this pill," he added.

Double Blind Clinical Results

A double blind clinical study was conducted on OxiTrim's active ingredients. The study was reviewed and analyzed by scientists from the University of California, Davis.

The findings were then published in the Journal of Medicinal Food... and... the Obesity Journal.

Participants were given either a placebo... or else... OxiTrim's active ingredients twice per day for 8 weeks. They then ate a normal 2,000 calorie diet and walked for 30 minutes, 5 days a week.

The results were stunning.

Those who took the active ingredients lost almost 4 times more weight than the placebo group. Even more exciting was the quantity of inches they lost from their waistline.

The group taking OxiTrim's active ingredients lost almost 5 inches of belly fat. That's equal to 2 pants sizes for men... and... 4 to 6 dress sizes for women.

The pill even helped maintain healthy cholesterol and blood sugar levels. This is especially good news for anyone who is overweight, given the health risks they often face.

How It Works

The active ingredients in OxiTrim trigger weight loss in a way scientists have not seen before. Research shows they activate a protein in the body that breaks down fatty acids found in abdominal fat.

"You can think of OxiTrim as a match that lights the fuse in belly fat," said Kenneth. "This fuse effects metabolic rate which results in enhanced fat loss around the mid section and other parts of the body, too."

Kenneth also said, "Dieters should know OxiTrim is made from natural plant extracts. It is not a drug. It does not contain any stimulants or dangerous chemicals either."

"Plus, unlike a lot of other diet pills, OxiTrim won't increase your heart rate or make you anxious. In fact, you won't even know you're taking it until you begin to see a slimmer waistline," he added.

Approved By Top Doctors

"The advanced ingredients found in OxiTrim have been used successfully in France for years. The clinical trials show they can burn fat fast for those with a few extra pounds to lose." — Dr. Ana Jovanovic.

"OxiTrim is the most exciting breakthrough in natural weight loss to date.



Sales Frenzy: The newly released OxiTrim pill from France is set to break sales records nationwide this week. In clinical studies, users taking the pill's active ingredients lost up to 5 inches from their waistline in 8 weeks without strict dieting.

It's a proven pill for men and women who want to cut pounds of belly fat." — Dr. M. Usman, M.D.

"I have reviewed the research and have decided to recommend OxiTrim to overweight people. That's because OxiTrim doesn't just reduce weight, it helps maintain healthy cholesterol and triglyceride levels, too." — Dr. Ahmad Alsayes.

110% Money Back Guarantee

Amazing feedback from users of OxiTrim has generated a wave of confidence at the company. So much so that they now offer OxiTrim with a 110% money back guarantee.

The company's president, Michael Kenneth says, "We've seen how well it works. Now we want to remove any risk for those who might think OxiTrim sounds too good to be true."

Simply take the pill exactly as directed. You must enjoy fast and impressive weight loss. Otherwise, return the product as directed and you'll receive 100% of your money back plus an extra 10%.

How To Get OxiTrim

Today marks the official nationwide release of OxiTrim in America. And so, the company is offering a special discount supply to every person who calls before inventory runs out.

A Regional Order Hotline has been setup for local readers to call. This gives everyone an equal chance to try OxiTrim.

The Order Hotline is now open. All you have to do is call TOLL FREE 1-888-303-9543. Then provide the operator with the special discount approval code: OTD20. The company will do the rest.

Initial supplies of OxiTrim are limited. Those who don't call soon may have to wait until more inventory is produced. This could take as long as 6 six weeks.



On the line

New campaign encourages cooperative commitment to safety

There is no doubt electric lineworkers have a tough job — harsh weather, long hours and slim margin for error make for a dangerous profession. But dangerous work can still be accomplished safely, and each cooperative throughout the Commonwealth has invested in programs and procedures to foster a culture of safety.

Due to the risk inherently present in line work, most lineworkers go through apprenticeship programs that emphasize the necessary safety fundamentals, explains Dave Daugherty, safety and rights-of-way manager at Indiana-based REA Energy Cooperative. Most continue on to formal school training before

By Michael T. Crawford
Associate Editor

entering the workforce, which provides a solid foundation of safe work practices. This allows cooperative safety and operation supervisors to focus on the potential No. 1 threat to safety: short-cuts.

“Our brains will instinctively take shortcuts — if you can save time doing it another way and it works, our brains will say ‘Take the shortcut,’” Daugherty notes. “We’re instructing our employees to fight instinct — stop and focus to avoid shortcuts that can result in negative outcomes to employees and the cooperative.”

HANDLE WITH CARE: Lineworkers cover power lines with rubber mats to avoid electrical contact before practicing equipment change-outs during a JT&S Advanced Rubber Glove School at REA Energy Cooperative in Indiana, Pa.

Grim data

Overcoming complacency has become a concern in cooperatives across the nation. There’s hard — and grim — data to back up cooperative concerns. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), 5,147 workers were killed on the job in 2017 — about 14 a day — with electrocution being the third-leading cause of death. Looking at its own data, Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange (Federated), the insurance provider for electric cooperatives nationwide, no-

ticed a startling trend — the number of fatalities from electrocution was staying the same even as the number of claims was dropping.

“At Federated, we were seeing a nearly constant number of serious injuries and fatalities, staying around 23 to 24 a year,” explains Jason Springs, Federated safety and loss prevention consultant. “In this business, one accident is too many, but we just weren’t seeing the improvement we had hoped for, even though we were bringing down the total number of claims. We talk about it every meeting we go to — we actively participate in cooperative safety meetings, we do annual observation visits with each co-op and we also attend conferences. We never pass up an opportunity to talk about it.”

In 2018, the continued fatalities prompted the cooperative insurer to launch a far-reaching safety campaign — Commitment to Zero Contacts — to double down on reinforcing basic safety protocols. The issue, as far as safety advocates could see, isn’t a lack of knowledge or distaste for regulation — it’s a fight against instinct.

“Whenever you take a shortcut, it becomes easier to take it again, and it becomes easier to get hurt,” explains Shane Farrell, operations manager for DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative (EC). “We fight that with our safety meetings — restating our safe practices and making sure everyone knows what they’re supposed to be doing.”

Indefinite commitment

Springs stresses that the key to overcoming the instinct to take a shortcut is replacing it with a new one. Rather than be a once-and-done campaign, the goal of the commitment is, well, just that — an indefinite commitment to safety.

“If the only time we’re talking about safety is at safety meetings, we’re not talking about it enough,” Springs says. “We found that the more you talk about it, the more you discuss it, the more second nature it becomes to the linemen, so we wanted to raise their awareness and make sure they all understand the

pitfalls of what they’re doing and what they can do to make it better.”

Federated’s Commitment to Zero Contacts safety campaign calls on cooperatives to sign a pledge to improve — and talk about — safety to prevent contacts with energized equipment. In return, Federated offers ideas and resources to help cooperatives eliminate serious injuries.

“Federated has emphasized the use of a qualified observer, an electrically qualified employee that is a second set of eyes for a lineworker conducting energized work,” Daugherty explains. “We’ve communicated this practice to our employees and have included it in our Safe Work Practices revision. Federated, as they were sifting through all this data from electrical contacts, found that after an incident, when crews were asked what happened, most would say, ‘I don’t know. I didn’t see it.’”

He adds, “Now, with a qualified observer notifying a coworker to put on their personal protective equipment — rubber gloves and sleeves — before approaching the minimum approach distance of an energized line or equipment and to add another piece of rubber cover-up to prevent their coworker — their friend — from suffering a serious injury, or even death, is what it is all about.”

Tough talk

Even with dedicated safety personnel on a job site, cooperative safety leaders emphasize the need for lineworkers to speak up when they see something that doesn’t look — or even feel — right.

“Through our Speak Up, Listen Up program, even if you’ve only been here one day, we want you to speak up when you see something wrong, something unsafe,” Farrell says. “We’re going to



CAREFUL INSPECTION: Joe Selnekovic, PREA/Allegheny manager, JT&S/environmental adviser, inspects a bucket truck at New Enterprise REC during an unannounced RESAP inspection in 2019.



stop the job and talk about it. We use the S.A.F.E. (Stop and Focus Everyday) app that Federated developed, and that helps walk our crew chiefs through a detailed job briefing to help address potential hazards on the job site.”

He adds, “We have to keep on it, keep with the message and talking about it so we keep making sure they all go home safe.”

To help support each cooperative’s own safety policies, the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association’s (PREA) Job Training & Safety (JT&S) Program exists to share the latest industry knowledge and resources. The program offers training classes year-round to electric cooperatives across the state, ranging from schools on climbing and operating winches to changing transformers and stringing new power lines. Lineworkers and crew chiefs assist the program by offering their services as instructors, and, in most cases, JT&S schools take place at cooperative training yards.

“We built a training yard behind our office building to help host JT&S schools,” Farrell says. “PREA does an outstanding job of providing beneficial training for apprentices, journeymen, all the way to guys who have been doing this for 30 years, and Brenda

(Swartzlander, CEO for United EC) really wanted to show the cooperative’s commitment to the JT&S program.”

Working together

The program, Farrell notes, brings together cooperative lineworkers and engineers from across the Common-



UNDERSTANDING ELECTRICITY: Dave Allison, a meter technician for Bedford REC, examines wiring in a simulation box for a meter replacement exercise during the JT&S Metering School held in 2019 at Somerset REC.

SAFETY CHECK: Shane Farrell, operations manager for United EC, left, and Jeff Young, safety & loss prevention consultant for Federated, right, discuss work procedures during an unannounced crew observation in 2019 as United EC lineworkers set a pole to provide electricity to a new member’s home.

wealth, giving them the chance to work together before meeting on a job site when a storm disrupts power.

The JT&S program also supports cooperatives’ participation in the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP), an initiative designed by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) to re-enforce cooperatives’ own safety policies.

“All the CEOs feel it’s their responsibility to participate in RESAP,” says Jeff Dishong, operations supervisor for REA Energy Cooperative. “It’s all in an effort to get a handle on complacency. You do the same job day in, day out, and ... something you may have grown accustomed to could be slipping by. It’s just an effort to make sure everyone goes home the same way they came to work.”

RESAP adds a layer of safety and accountability on top of cooperatives’ in-house crew observations. Operations supervisors from electric cooperatives across the state enlist the aid of the

JT&S crew to conduct unannounced crew visits and workspace inspections at the request of each cooperative's CEO.

"Onsite inspections are done every three years," says Doug Nichols, director of operations for Wysox-based Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC). "We know the year we're up (for inspection), but we don't know when they're going to come, which I think is a very good thing because it keeps you in the mindset of 'You always have to be prepared.' It should be just another day at the office."

Above and beyond

RESAP takes safety beyond what is dictated by regulations and make suggestions on how to improve safety. For cooperative inspectors, the visits provide a chance to learn new and different ways to maintain safe working environments.

"There are some regulations involved, and each co-op goes above and beyond regulations," Dishong says. "We do more of pointing out things co-ops excel in than we do finding faults. I may see something here that I can take back to my own co-op ... and that's another reason for everybody being involved. Every co-op you go to, there's always something you can learn and always something you can share — it's cooperation among co-ops."

After completing a RESAP observation, inspectors upload their findings to NRECA, compiling data to show where a cooperative stands in comparison to cooperatives across the state and the nation, as well as comparing the cooperative to those of similar size and membership. Inspectors pass along these numbers to cooperative CEOs along with comments and recommendations.

"It definitely gives us a reset button every three years of things that we need to look at," says New Enterprise REC General Manager/CEO Mark Morrison. "Everybody needs to work safely — you can't get complacent — so I think it's a really good program. We use it as an educational tool to make things better." 🌱

Local leadership on the national level

Co-op director chairs national insurance group with a commitment to safety

Local leadership is the cornerstone of the electric cooperative model. Cooperatives are led by members of the local community — directors who are elected by their fellow members and neighbors. These leaders, armed with local insight and a commitment to service, can bring great value to organizations far and wide.

Tim Burkett is the vice chairman of both the DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative Board of Directors and the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association Board of Directors. He also serves as the board chairman of Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange (Federated), the insurance provider for electric cooperatives nationwide. Burkett, who owns and operates a machine shop — R & S Machine in Porter, Pa. — spoke with us about his interest in fostering a culture of safety at electric cooperatives across the state and the nation.



Tim Burkett

Penn Lines: How does your service on the board of Federated help support cooperative safety efforts?

Tim Burkett: I like to think of Federated as a safety company that also provides insurance. The safety of lineworkers, and the members who depend on them, is every cooperative's chief concern, and Federated is, in fact, a cooperative. And we support our members by helping them identify areas for improvement and sharing best practices from around the nation. It's not enough to just tell lineworkers, "Wear your gloves and your hard hat." Safety has to be part of the workplace's culture.

P. L.: What does it mean to have a "culture of safety?"

T. B.: It's easy to work on the big things — everybody knows you're supposed to wear personal protective equipment — but a culture of safety means viewing the smaller details as equally important. If you go to a co-op — or any business, for that matter — and their workspace is neat and organized and regulations are posted in plain sight, you can tell that they are paying attention to the little things that

keep everyone vigilant. Chances are if you're following up on the little things, the big things fall into place.

P. L.: What steps has Federated taken to encourage a culture of safety at its member cooperatives?

T. B.: In April 2018, Federated, along with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, introduced the Commitment to Zero Contacts initiative to provide ideas and resources to help eliminate serious injuries and fatalities due to electrical contact. In the first year, more than 540 cooperative CEOs signed the pledge to commit to zero contacts, and that number has been growing ever since.

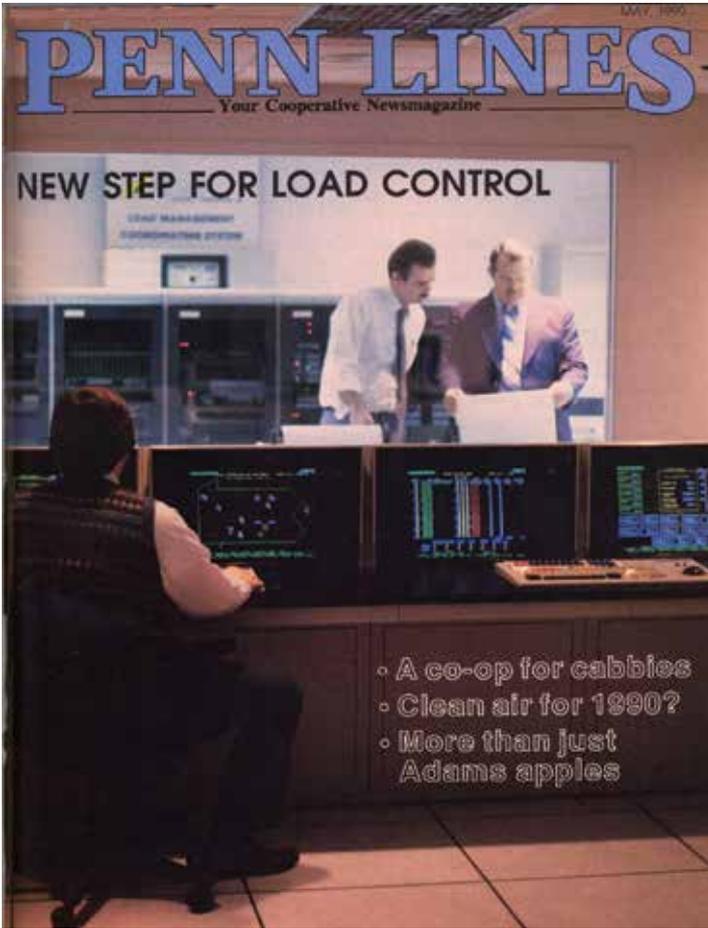
P. L.: What more can cooperatives do to build upon their own cultures of safety?

T. B.: Electric cooperatives have high standards for safety that exceed Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations, and most fatalities can be prevented simply by taking the time to review those basic safety protocols that are already in place. Last year, we launched the S.A.F.E. — Stop and Focus Everyday — app in an effort to eliminate shortcuts and missed steps, and conduct more effective job planning. It makes you slow down, have discussions and consider possible near misses.

P. L.: What is a "near miss?" Why do we want to identify those?

T. B.: A near miss is a potential hazard or incident that has not resulted in any personal injury, but these can help identify working conditions, work habits, or use of equipment that could present a danger to employees. In any workspace in any industry, we get accustomed to our environment and can overlook a hazard because we don't see it as one. Sharing near-miss reports on one side of the state can help another make a change that could save a life.

Your Newsmagazine Through the Years

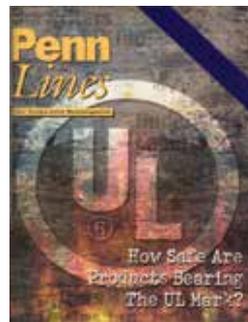


1990



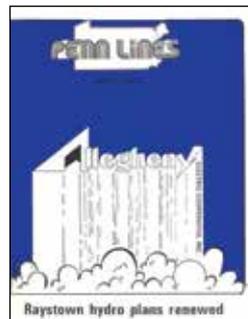
2010

James "Biff" Houldin, a member of Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, is a regular volunteer at Habitat for Humanity worksites, both locally and around the world.



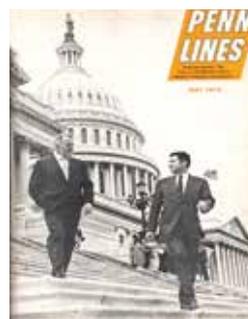
2000

Penn Lines checks into claims that the "gold standard" of American safety in appliances – the Underwriters Laboratories seal – may be tarnished.



1980

Allegheny Electric Cooperative Inc. files an application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for a license to build a small hydroelectric power station at Raystown Lake.



1970

Harold Ritchey and Douglas Smith, Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, are among 20 cooperative representatives visiting congressional offices in Washington, D.C.

Thirty years ago, the final portion of a multi-year project aimed at controlling electricity costs for rural residents of Pennsylvania and New Jersey began service. Completion of the central computer and monitoring system at the Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny) office in Harrisburg allowed engineers there to monitor power supply and use so they can better forecast exactly when peak periods of electric demand will occur in cooperative territories.

The coordinated load management system (CLMS), initiated in 1986, helps temper power costs by trimming demand during peak use periods by temporarily switching off water heaters and other appliances in the residences of participating cooperative consumer-members.

The program provides cost benefits to cooperatives because the price Allegheny pays for its purchased power is partly based on its power use during suppliers' peak periods. Power purchased during peak demand periods is more expensive because auxiliary generating stations must be brought on-line to satisfy increased demand for power. By avoiding the need to purchase that supplemental energy, the cooperatives can reduce energy costs for their members. Since 1986, CLMS has saved cooperative consumers more than \$150 million in avoided power purchase costs.

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Email: trico@tri-countyrec.com
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7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Jeff Fetzer, *Local Pages Editor*

From the President & CEO



We're here for you

By Craig Eccher

AS I WRITE this column in late March, it's hard to know what our world will look like by the time you are reading it in early May.

By now, you'll know whether the COVID-19 coronavirus has run its course or if we're still self-isolating and practicing social distancing. You'll know if life has returned to some semblance of normalcy or if we're still having a hard time finding cleaning supplies and toilet paper at the grocery store.

Since I have no way of knowing any of those things, I'll tell you what I do know: Regardless of the path this virus takes, your electric cooperative will always be here for our members. We care about you, and we will live up to our motto, "People You Can Count On."

As your local electricity supplier, we are resolved to delivering safe and reliable electricity, while at the same time protecting the health and comfort of our community.

In response to the spread of the COVID-19 and to comply with state and federal action, we adjusted our daily operations in many ways beginning March 16, when we closed our offices to walk-in traffic.

We hope our doors have re-opened by now, but if not, we will continue to meet your needs in a variety of other ways. Members can always conduct Tri-County business over the phone or email. You can pay your electric bill by using the drop box at the Mansfield office, by mail, or by using our SmartHub application or electronic banking.

Because of the difficult economic times we are encountering, we sus-

pending the disconnection of electric service due to nonpayment through May 1, and temporarily waived late payment fees to assist members experiencing financial difficulties. Please remember, we are not waiving the payment of electric bills; we are providing additional time for members to pay their bills without disconnection or late fees.

In an effort to reduce exposure to the virus and keep our workforce as safe as possible, some of our employees began working from home in mid-March, providing needed separation for those who remain in the office. The first week of April, we began a weekly rotation of our outside crews to provide employee separation and workforce continuity in the event of an outbreak in our area.

These efforts were taken to help ensure our ability to continue to operate 24/7 to respond to power outages and other emergencies, just as we have for more than 80 years. In the event of an outage, please call 1-800-343-2559 any time, day or night. You can also report outages using the SmartHub application.

The safety and well-being of our employees and members remains our utmost priority. We remain committed and responsive to the needs of our communities and our members. We are here to help.

If you have any questions about your electric service or account, please call us at 1-800-343-2559 or email us at tricobilling@ctenterprises.org. You can also find updates through our website, tri-countyrec.com, and Facebook page. 

Fiber project to deliver better reliability, more efficient outage response

By Jeff Fetzer

TRI-COUNTY'S ambitious project to deliver high-speed internet throughout its service territory over the next five to six years will bring a bevy of obvious benefits to co-op members and the region.

One benefit that may not be so apparent is how the cooperative's fiber-optic build-out will help Tri-County improve service reliability and reduce the scope and duration of power outages in the future.

As part of the cooperative's high-speed internet project, Tri-County began construction of its "fiber backbone," a fiber-optic loop that will link all of the co-op's substations and district offices, last month.

Over the course of the next year, contractors will be stringing approximately 400 miles of fiber transport cables across the co-op's 5,000-square-mile service territory in order to interconnect the cooperative's 22 substations and five district offices.

Officially dubbed Phase Two of the broadband deployment project, the fiber backbone will greatly enhance communications capabilities between all Tri-County substations and facilities to accommodate future deployment of smart grid technology. The fiber backbone will give Tri-County the ability to make use of intelligent controls on its electric system, which will allow for remote operation and monitoring of the co-op grid.

The first phase of the project, establishing a data center in Couder sport and building a 110-mile fiber-to-the-home broadband network in Tri-County service territory outside of Coudersport, is expected to be completed this spring. Tri-Co Connections, the cooperative's broadband subsidiary, began hooking up internet customers in the Phase One service region last month and expects to complete home internet installations in that area over the next six months.



A LINK TO THE FUTURE: Tri-County journeyman lineman Todd Rumsey uses a tablet to access mapping information at the co-op's English Center Substation. Tri-County will begin work to construct a fiber loop that will interconnect all of its substations and district offices with fiber optic lines this spring. The fiber backbone project will provide a redundant state-of-the-art communications link between all of the cooperative's facilities.

"For families and businesses that currently have limited or no access to high-speed internet, our broadband project is going to make a huge difference, and it will also make our territory more attractive for people who want to buy property, start up a business or visit the area," says Austin Helmuth, director of engineering for Tri-County. "It will also be great for Tri-County and all of our members because it will reduce outage hours, keep members in power more efficiently and allow for better communication with our crews."

Helmuth explains the lack of quality communications links to the co-op's

distant rural substations and district offices was among the primary reasons Tri-County began exploring the possibility of bringing broadband to the region more than three years ago.

"In order to keep up with advances in technology that allow for system automation and to reduce outage hours, it's imperative that we have excellent communications options available to our facilities," Helmuth says. "The fiber backbone will achieve that."

In addition to interconnecting the co-op's substations and district offices, the fiber backbone, a looped circuit built primarily along Tri-County's main

three-phase electric distribution lines, will provide redundancy for both the co-op's electric grid and its broadband network.

"Our goal is to keep both our members in service and our substations operational with the least amount of down time as possible," he says.

He explains that with fiber and automatic switching equipment in place at co-op substations, when a substation loses power from its transmission supplier, electricity could be automatically backed, or re-routed, from a different substation with minimal disruption in service to members.

As an example, Helmuth notes that one of the co-op's first automatic switching schemes is being deployed at the co-op's Bentley Creek Substation, which is fed by Penelec, the co-op's transmission supplier. The Bentley Creek Substation in Bradford County experiences frequent drops in transmission service, and when they occur, a crew has to travel to the substation to perform switching manually in order to keep co-op members in electricity while awaiting the restoration of power to the substation.

If that were to happen on a weekend or evening, it could take up to two hours before a line crew arrived on site and performed the switching necessary to enable backfeeding from another

substation. With automatic switching and fiber in place, backfeeding from nearby substations at Ayers Corners and Jackson Corners would be done automatically and result in an outage lasting minutes, not hours.

"We are doing Bentley Creek first because it has been the most problematic," Helmuth explains. "Our goal is to have that operational by end of year."

The fiber project will also allow the cooperative to make more use of its supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) equipment installed in co-op substations.

"Right now, we use SCADA to get values like volts and amps and to look at event logs," Helmuth said. "With the addition of fiber and the ability to open and close breakers automatically or remotely, we will be able to tell where a fault is and isolate it to the smallest area possible so more people stay in power. It's not going to eliminate power outages altogether, but it will help keep them to the minimal amount of members out of power when they do occur."

The availability of reliable, high-speed internet at the co-op's district offices in Mainesburg, Liberty, Germania, Westfield and Coudersport will also enable the cooperative to remotely update digital system maps housed on computer tablets line crews use in the field, improve digital inventorying that

takes place at the district buildings, and improve communications activities such as sending documents, photographs, and work orders through email.

Eventually, Helmuth says, Tri-County will be switching out all member meters on the co-op system to Wi-Fi-based smart meters.

The automated meters currently in use on the system transport information through the electric lines, a process that takes about a day to perform. Once Wi-Fi meters are in place, the cooperative will have access to real-time information regarding each member's electric use and demand, as well as immediate notification of when power is lost to a meter.

"The smart meter project will take a long time to complete," says Helmuth, "but once we get there, we will be able to pinpoint outages more accurately because the data will be live." 📡

Co-op offers scholarship to MU students

Applications are being accepted for a \$1,000 scholarship that is available for the 2020-21 academic year to a Mansfield University student who is a Tri-County member or dependent.

To be eligible for consideration, students must:

- ▶ be enrolled full time at Mansfield University
- ▶ demonstrate financial need
- ▶ be a member or dependent of a member of Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative
- ▶ demonstrate the highest traits of leadership, citizenship and character.

Applications may be obtained by contacting Bryan Berguson, Tri-County director of member services, at 1-800-343-2559. Students can also apply online by visiting our homepage, tri-countyrec.com, and clicking on Mansfield University Scholarship under the "Member Services" drop-down menu at the top of the screen.

Tri-County endowed the scholarship fund at Mansfield University in 2000, with a goal of providing financial assistance to any member or dependent of a member pursuing a degree at the university.

A member of the State System of Higher Education, Mansfield University attracts many students from throughout the cooperative's service territory.

SmartHub: Manage your account from anywhere

SmartHub, Tri-County's online bill payment and account management program, lets you manage all aspects of your account online or with your mobile device.

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- ▶ Receive a paperless bill
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- ▶ Report power outages
- ▶ Monitor your electric use with average daily consumption graphs.



Signing up for SmartHub is easy. Visit our website, tri-countyrec.com, click on the SmartHub icon and follow the registration instructions. The SmartHub mobile app is available for download through your app store.

All Tri-County offices will be closed on Monday, May 25, in observance of Memorial Day.

Co-op available for electrical safety demonstrations

WHILE May is officially designated as National Electrical Safety Month, Tri-County works year round to promote electrical safety throughout its service territory.

The cooperative provides safety talks and electrical safety demonstrations free of charge to schools, youth groups, fire companies, and other organizations each year.

The co-op can tailor safety demonstrations to meet the needs of its intended audience. For schools, youth organizations and service organizations, the co-op's portable tabletop electrical display, known as TED, provides an ideal way to learn about some of the hazards of electricity in a small-group setting.

TED is used to visually demonstrate the dangers of overhead powerlines and other utility equipment in every day settings around the home, farm and community.

Tri-County personnel are available to provide electrical safety demonstrations using TED free of charge to schools, youth groups and other organizations. TED is particularly effective at teaching school-age children the importance of staying away from power lines. Students can see first-hand what happens when a ladder or kite comes into contact with a live wire on the dis-

play. Demonstrations with the tabletop safety display typically run from 30 to 45 minutes and can be tailored to meet the needs of the intended audience.

For larger audiences, Tri-County demonstrates a variety of outdoor electrical hazard situations using its high-voltage safety trailer.

The mobile safety trailer replicates an electrical distribution system, from the substation to a member's home, and incorporates many of the devices that can be found on an electric distribution system. During high-voltage safety demonstrations, our lineworkers demonstrate a variety of electrical contact scenarios involving animals, trees, ladders and equipment.

High-voltage safety trailer demonstrations have been conducted during the co-op's annual meeting, as well as at county fairs, schools, fire departments, and PennDOT offices throughout the region. The demonstrations typically last about 45 minutes.



SAFETY FIRST: Tri-County member services technical representative Don Martindale presents an electrical safety demonstration using the co-op's Tabletop Electric Display (TED) to educate the public about potential hazards involving overhead and underground electric lines and how to avoid them.

If you are interested in scheduling an electrical safety demonstration for your organization, school or employees, contact Tri-County at 1-800-343-2559.

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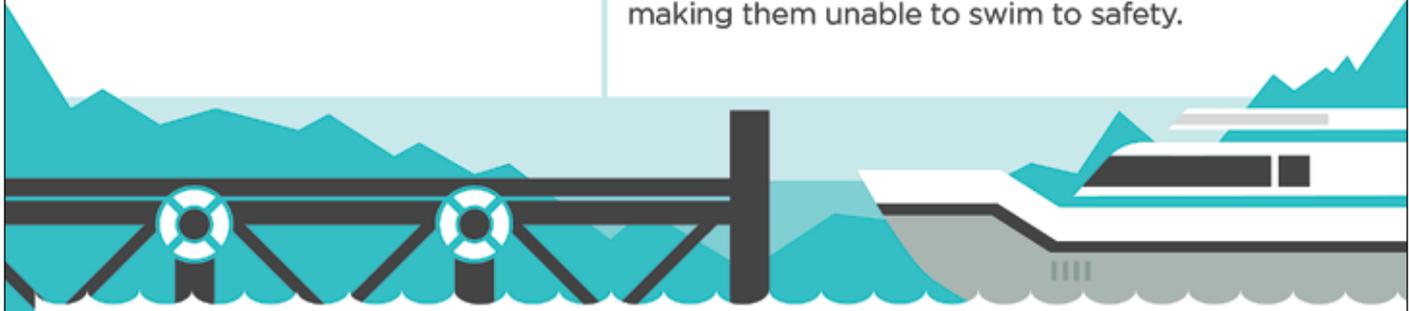
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*All new and current members signed up for Auto Pay, formerly known as the PAiD program, are eligible to win. If you are already signed up for automatic payment from your checking/savings account or credit card, you will be automatically entered into the drawing. Only Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative members are eligible. One lucky member will be randomly selected in a drawing to be held on July 1, 2020.

HOW TO PREVENT ELECTRIC SHOCK DROWNING

Each year, 3,800 people die from drowning. Electric shock drowning occurs when an electric current escapes boats, docks and lights near marinas, shocking nearby swimmers. There are no visible signs of current seeping into water, which makes this a hidden danger. The electric shock paralyzes swimmers, making them unable to swim to safety.



ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIPS FOR:

Swimmers

- **Never swim near a boat or launching ramp.** Residual current could flow into the water from the boat or the marina's wiring, potentially putting anyone in the water at risk of electric shock.
- If you feel any tingling sensations while in the water, **tell someone and swim back** in the direction from which you came. Immediately report it to the dock or marina owner.

Boat Owners

- **Ensure your boat is properly maintained and consider having it inspected annually.** GFCIs and ELCIs should be tested monthly. Conduct leakage testing to determine if electrical current is escaping the vessel.
- **Use portable GFCIs or shore power cords** (including "Y" adapters) that are "UL- Marine Listed" when using electricity near water.
- Regularly have your boat's electrical system inspected by a certified marine electrician. **Ensure it meets your local and state NEC, NFPA and ABYC safety codes.**

IF YOU SEE ELECTRIC SHOCK DROWNING TAKING PLACE:



TURN POWER OFF



THROW A LIFE RING



CALL 911

DO NOT enter the water. You could become a victim, too.

This summer, seek savings through energy efficiency upgrades

By Derrill Holly

If May's warmer weather has you thinking about the sultry summer months ahead, this could be a great time to consider energy-saving options and make plans to help control your energy costs.

There's a combination of things you can do yourself, like making slight modifications to your family's routine that can help identify and achieve opportunities for savings while keeping your home more comfortable throughout the summer cooling season ahead.

HVAC tune up

When it comes to heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment, spending a few dollars at the beginning of the season can add up to big savings and help you avoid expensive surprises and system failures.

A qualified service technician can check key components like the compressor and condenser, clean the coils and inspect the ductwork. A technician may also offer advice on how to get the most value out of a programmable thermostat.

According to experts, sealing and insulating ductwork can improve the overall efficiency of your HVAC equipment by as much as 20%.

Consider replacing systems that are more than 10 years old (or those that no longer keep your home comfortable) with a high-efficiency system that is properly sized and designed to meet your needs.

Gain insights from energy audits

Sometimes it pays to get the big picture, so when it comes to energy



CONSIDER A SLOW COOKER: During summer months, consider using smaller appliances like a slow cooker to eliminate heat gain in the kitchen.

efficiency and getting real value for your home improvement dollars, professional advice is a good place to start.

Your local electric cooperative may be able to recommend professionally trained energy advisers who can conduct comprehensive assessments and provide recommendations that could help you control energy costs and improve comfort.

Energy audits include examination of heating, cooling, and water heating equipment, as well as interior and exterior lighting. Other available services can include inspections and assessments of windows, crawl spaces, and other voids for air leaks, which can degrade HVAC performance.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration, a professional energy auditor will review monthly, seasonal, and annual energy bills, consider household occupancy patterns, and examine condition, age, and use of appliances and other electronics.

An analysis developed from the collected information can help determine

a series of recommendations that, if accomplished, can produce savings. Homeowners can then decide which measures fit into their budgets or schedules as they consider improvement projects.

Small changes add savings

When the goal is keeping the house cool and comfortable, remembering that any activities adding heat and humidity to your air-conditioned spaces can increase your costs.

Open doors don't just allow people to come and go. They also provide an instant exchange of cooler inside air for warm, moist air, much the same as the cooling effect you experience when standing in front of an open refrigerator. A cooler stocked with cold drinks and chilled snacks and placed outdoors can help cut down on household traffic on hot summer days.

When cooking, consider using smaller appliances like a slow cooker — or better yet, take the extra heat from cooking outdoors and fire up the grill.

Ceiling fans operating in air-conditioned space can make you feel about 4 degrees cooler while you are in the room. But the benefits only occur when a room is occupied. Make it a habit to turn off the fan when you leave the room. ☀

Derrill Holly writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.

Be Ready Before a Storm Strikes

Lights out? Store these items at home in case of an outage.

- Water**
Three-day supply, one gallon per person per day.
- Tools**
Flashlight and extra batteries, can opener, wind-up radio.
- Food**
Three-day supply of non-perishable, high-energy food.
- First Aid, Medicine**
First aid supplies, hand sanitizer, and at least a week's supply of medications for the family.
- Documents**
Include copies of passports, birth certificates, and insurance policies.

Learn more at www.Ready.gov

Source: American Red Cross, Federal Emergency Management Agency

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Morning indulgences

By Janette Hess

On Mother's Day morning, what could be sweeter than buns, scones, or muffins prepared with love and care?

Coffee Shop Muffins served in bed with a hot beverage could provide an excellent start to Mother's Day — or any May day, for that matter. Tinged with coffee and packed with mini chocolate chips, these muffins are more unique than the obligatory box of chocolates.

If brunch is on the agenda, scones or buns could serve as a sweet centerpiece.

Creamy Scones depend on cream instead of butter for richness, so the step of cutting butter into dry ingredients is eliminated. Mom will never guess that these delicious scones came together in just minutes. Overnight Bubble Buns require a bit of forethought, but once the dough is thawed overnight, the buns are simple to prepare.

Mother's Day also is a great time to get the kids involved in cooking. Why not help them measure and mix dry ingredients, pat the scone dough into a circle or sprinkle muffin tops with sugar? 🍪



A trained journalist, **Janette Hess** focuses her writing on interesting people and interesting foods. She is a Master Food Volunteer with her local extension service and enjoys collecting, testing and sharing recipes.



Coffee Shop Muffins

- 2** cups (10 ounces) unbleached flour
- 2/3** cup sugar
- 2 1/2** teaspoons baking powder
- 2** teaspoons espresso powder
- 2** teaspoons unsweetened cocoa
- 1/8** teaspoon salt
- 1** egg, lightly beaten
- 1** cup milk, warmed to room temperature
- 1/2** cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted and cooled to room temperature
- 1** teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3/4** cup mini, semisweet chocolate chips
- Turbinado (coarse) sugar for sprinkling

Combine all dry ingredients in mixing bowl. Lightly beat egg in separate bowl or large glass measuring cup; whisk in milk, butter and vanilla extract. Pour into dry ingredients. Lightly stir to combine. Fold in chocolate chips, taking care not to over mix. Divide batter among 12 paper- or foil-lined muffin cups. Sprinkle tops with turbinado sugar. Bake at 375 degrees for 18 to 20 minutes, or until pick inserted in center of test muffin comes out clean.

Hint: For an even sweeter treat, lightly top cooled muffins with cream cheese frosting.



Creamy Scones

- 2** cups (10 ounces) unbleached flour
- 1/4** cup sugar
- 1** tablespoon baking powder
- 3/4** teaspoon salt
- 1 1/4** cups heavy cream
- 1/3** cup dried, chopped blueberries (or other dried fruit), if desired
- 1** tablespoon melted butter
- Turbinado (coarse) sugar for sprinkling

Combine dry ingredients in mixing bowl. Add cream and stir with stiff spatula until dough clumps around spatula. Transfer to lightly floured flat surface. Knead and fold 6 to 8 times, adding blueberries half way through kneading. Form into 10-inch circle on oiled, sprayed or parchment-covered pan. Brush with butter and score into 12 wedges. Bake at 425 degrees for 12 to 14 minutes, or until golden and firm. Cool slightly before using knife to fully cut scones along score marks. Serve warm.

Hint: For perfectly shaped scones, trace a 10-inch circle on parchment paper before patting dough into circle.



Overnight Bubble Buns

- 9** frozen, unbaked dinner rolls
- 3/4** cup brown sugar
- 1/2** cup heavy cream
- 3/4** teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/3** cup chopped pecans
- Cooking spray

The night before serving, place 9 rolls 2 inches apart on sprayed baking sheet or pan. Cover with sprayed plastic wrap and place in refrigerator. In morning, remove from refrigerator and, using kitchen shears, cut each roll into 4 pieces. (Spray blades to keep dough from sticking, if desired.) In microwavable dish, whisk together sugar, cream and cinnamon. Heat just until sugar is dissolved. Spray 12-well muffin pan. Divide mixture among wells. Into each well sprinkle pecans and place 3 roll pieces. Allow to rise at room temperature for 1 hour. Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 16 to 18 minutes, or until rolls are puffed and golden brown. Invert onto large serving dish. Serve immediately.

5 steps to a clear decision on new windows

By Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen

Dear Pat and Brad: Thanks for answering my question last month about replacing older windows. Clearly there are benefits in addition to energy savings, so we've decided to replace our windows. Can you offer any tips? — *Grace*

Dear Grace: Here are five tips I'll offer as you think about the types of new windows you should purchase:

1. Think beyond windows. Sometimes home improvement projects can grow into something bigger. There are advantages to replacing windows and siding at the same time, for example. You could consider adding rigid foam insulation to the exterior wall before installing siding. You could also pump some additional insulation into the wall cavities. These measures will reduce heat loss through the wall and make your home more comfortable.

Are you replacing doors, too? Maybe you'd like to reduce or increase the size of one or more windows. A larger window can let in more light and transform a room. A smaller window that lets in less sunshine can make a room less likely to overheat in the summer.

2. What is your type? Do you want fixed-pane units that don't open? Or casement windows that open with a crank? How about sliders, or double-hung windows that open from the top and bottom? Maybe awning-style options that open out from the bottom? I recommend a thorough search online, or visit a local window store to see examples of these styles.

3. Frame the issues. If the number of styles wasn't bewildering enough, now you get to choose the frame and sash (the inner frame that holds the



glass). Vinyl is the least expensive and most common option; it can also be quite energy efficient and does not require painting, but vinyl frames vary greatly in quality. Aluminum is an affordable option, but if the frames don't have a thermal break, they can lose heat and cause condensation. Wood windows offer high quality — but the biggest drawbacks are the price and maintenance requirements. There are wood options with vinyl cladding that never need painting. Fiberglass and composite windows are a newer option that fall between vinyl and wood in quality and price.

If your existing frames and sills are free of rot and in good condition, and you aren't looking to make any alterations to the walls around them, you could look into replacing the glass and keeping the existing frames.

4. Glass assemblies. Single-pane windows no longer meet building codes. Your two choices are double- and triple-pane. An add-on that is often well worth the price is a low-E

coating that reflects heat back into the room. You can also boost energy efficiency with windows that have either Argon or CO₂ gas between the panes.

5. Compare the numbers. Fortunately, there's an easy way to compare the efficiency of windows. Almost all windows are independently tested and rated by the National Fenestration Rating Council (NFRC). The most important number on the NFRC label is the U-factor. The lower the U-factor, the more efficient the window is.

I hope these tips help in the decision of choosing your new windows. Remember, you'll have to live with them for several years, so be sure to do your research and consider all options. And because new window installation is a complicated process, it's best to have them installed by a qualified professional with solid references. 🌟

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency. For more information on choosing windows, please visit: www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips.

The little blue logo that changed efficiency standards

By Paul Wesslund

The little blue (and sometimes black) logo with the star inside that you see on all sorts of appliances and electronics has changed the way we view savings through more efficient products.

The Energy Star® program claims credit for reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, and for saving Americans \$30 billion in energy costs. Analysts credit Energy Star with innovating the energy



industry, as manufacturers set goals of making more energy-efficient products than their competitors.

What Energy Star does is make it easy to know whether a product you're thinking about buying is more energy efficient. Essentially the program looks at the average energy use of each type of product, and awards the Energy Star rating to top performers based on different criteria — a refrigerator needs to be 9% more energy efficient than the minimum efficiency standard; a computer needs to use 25% less electricity than conventional models and include a power-saving mode option when it's not being used.

So, if the appliance or electronic device you're purchasing includes the Energy Star logo, you know it's among the most energy-efficient products available. That simplicity is the secret to the success of the program that is run by the federal Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The program's effectiveness comes from a complex process of making sure the Energy Star logo is accurate and trusted — and the numbers show it is trusted. Americans bought more than



ENERGY STAR-RATED DISHWASHER: The Environmental Protection Agency uses several specifications to determine if products meet the Energy Star standard.

300 million Energy Star-rated products in 2017 alone, and an Energy Star study found that three-fourths of U.S. households say the Energy Star label influences their purchases. According to energystar.gov, the EPA uses the following specifications to determine if products meet the Energy Star standard:

- ▶ Product categories must contribute significant energy savings nationwide.
- ▶ Certified products must deliver the features and performance demanded by consumers, in addition to increased energy efficiency.
- ▶ If the certified product costs more than a conventional, less-efficient counterpart, purchasers will recover their investment in increased energy efficiency through utility bill savings, within a reasonable period of time.
- ▶ Energy efficiency can be achieved through broadly available, non-proprietary technologies offered by more than one manufacturer.
- ▶ Product energy consumption and performance can be measured and verified with testing.
- ▶ Labeling effectively differentiates

products and must be visible to consumers.

Today, more than 500 certified labs in 25 countries around the world test more than 1,500 products a year, along with surprise inspections, to manage a list of 60,000 product models. Energy Star runs seminars on how to meet its standards. Those standards require that TVs must use 3 watts or less when switched off; lightbulbs must use two-thirds less energy than standard incandescent bulbs; and Energy Star home furnaces must be between 4 and 15% more efficient than standard furnaces.

Energy Star tests also require quality standards in addition to just energy efficiency. In general, products must have popular features, like internet connectivity for smart TVs. Lightbulbs must last up to 15 times longer and produce 70 to 90% less heat than conventional bulbs.

In 2018, Energy Star tested 1,792 models, disqualifying 59 of them. Of the 858 different kinds of lighting and fans tested, that year, 51 were disqualified. Of the 35 TVs tested, two were disqualified.

Energy Star has caught on because it has something for everybody — ways for consumers to save money; ways for businesses to promote their efficient products; online calculators for those wanting deep dives into finding the ideal energy use; and for the rest of us, a simple little logo that tells us we're buying one of the most energy-efficient products available. ☀

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.

Moving on with pets, plants, possessions

By Mitchell Kyd

"News from the Path Valley Hotel"

When's the flittin' party? my friend Betty asked. Eyebrows went up around us as if she was speaking code on the chance they wouldn't be invited. I knew she was asking about my daughter's move-in day. The owners of the arching eyebrows were all our age but the phrase was alien to them. For Betty and me, it was vintage vernacular from the rural world we'd always shared.

In the midst of the uncertainty from this spring's world events, my daughter finalized her divorce and bought her own home. Watching how she continues to handle it all while working full time reminds me of the wisdom of that great World War II rally cry: keep calm and carry on.

One thing she has mastered better than I have is how to upend priorities. There's a huge difference between what's urgent and what's important. The trick is to assess what is both urgent and important and deal with that first. In truth, much of the rest of it falls away after that.

In strategic moves like a Tetris puzzle master, she sent her furniture and the bulk of her personal items to temporary storage. The previous homeowner had left her a bed and I had fun assembling a few things for the first stays: bedding, towels, and a little something for bare cupboards, fridge, and bathrooms. My daughter's top priority as urgent and important? Moving her critters.

Remember the riddle about the farmer who must cross the river with a fox, a chicken and a sack of grain? He can only cross with one item at a



time and if left alone, the chicken will eat the grain and the fox will eat the chicken. How does he do it? Yep, moving all her critters was just like that. Flash-changing the environments for dogs, cats, chickens, ferrets, fish and one solitary hermit crab means someone is likely to get nibbled on if left unattended. (Or more likely, several will claim new territory as their own and we all know how that turns out.)

Next came her plants and not just the ones that are content on sunny windowsills. My kids have deep roots so it wasn't surprising that she wanted to preserve her heirloom peonies, hydrangeas and snowball bush. She also dug up her blueberry bush and Rose of Sharon. Snow drops and daffodil bulbs came in buckets with a promise the sun would rise to wake them next spring, too.

Lucky for her, the mover charged by the hour, not by weight, when it came time to load her rock and fossil collections. Like her mama, she displays natural things as a reminder of our planet's little miracles and evidence that Earth has survived a lot of change.

She also moved two cast iron bathtubs. Her former home had been built in the early 1940s when things were never really thrown away, only abandoned. I'm guessing those folks had triumphed over years of you-never-know as they lived the World War II call to use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without.

There is beauty in repurposing old things and artists like my daughter see it. Pinterest is a fabulous playground for people who agree that one man's junk is another man's treasure. There are amazing second lives for old tubs refinished as loveseats, chairs and patio sets.

Before she pulled out of her old driveway for the last time, she made time to hug her trees: the towering twin larches, the red maples, the cedars and the grand royal paulownia. Thanking them for clean air and quiet beauty seemed like the best goodbye for her old friends.

As she was settling into her new nest, she donated unimportant possessions, redefined what is truly urgent and created a co-op with her back fence neighbors who also keep chickens. If you're invited to her housewarming, please bring a simple nest-cessity: dog food, cracked corn or maybe cans of tuna! ☀



YVONNE BUTTS-MITCHELL writes and blogs (deadmouse-daries.com) under the pen name Mitchell Kyd. The "News from the Path Valley Hotel" series was inspired by her encounters with contractors, critters and assorted creepy crawlies while rehabbing her family cabin after its 17-year stint as a giant closet.

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Nappers rank high in positive qualities

By Earl Pitts, American

Today I want to talk about naps. I just heard that people who like to take naps are happier than people who don't. They say that regular nappers are also more productive, more friendly and have a better work-life balance than people who stay awake all day.

Basically — what I'm sayin' here is that I'm better than the rest of you. 'Cause I am a professional napper. I have took nappin' to the next level. I don't want to brag, but I was probably the only 4-year-old in history who used to fight with my mama to let me lay down in the middle of the afternoon.

When I was 12, they took me to a clinic to be tested to make sure I didn't have no cat blood in me. They thought maybe I was narco-peptic. In high school, I was voted most likely to nod off. And my family don't talk about what they want to do on weekends. They talk about what they want to do when Dad gets up.

I like to divide my year into four seasons. Spring, summer, fall and nap. Every year, when the groundhog says six more weeks of winter, I hear "six more weeks of nappin'." What else you gonna do on a weekend in March? Give me a recliner an' Pearl's afghan, and I'll see you in April.

You hear where America has got a sleep crisis? Nobody's gettin' eight hours of sleep at night no more. I don't either, but it ain't no crisis to me. Because I know I'm gonna get another

two or three before supper.

Wake up, America! You worried about gettin' the proper 40 winks? Here's the secret. Hard work and a soft recliner. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go rest my eyes. I'm Earl Pitts, American.

People keep askin' me, "Earl, how is the Pitts family makin' it since this hunkerin'-down time for the Convict-19 virus started."

Lemme just say, you don't have to worry about the Pitts family. And it's not on account of we're smarter than you or we're more diligent than you or we looked into the Pitts crystal ball and seen this comin'. We don't got some magical ability that foresaw turmoil and strife and prepared for it. Me and Pearl both just grew up always figurin' somethin' was comin'.

Because when you live like our families do, somethin' is always comin'. Lay-offs, floods, even the head of the household suddenly being incarcerated. Folks like us spend most of their life lookin' back to see what's catchin' up with them.

And that goes a long way to explainin' our freakishly large selection of canned food. If you go to the headquarters of the SPAM company, I believe they have a photo of Pearl in their lobby. And the woman's got so much canned tuna, I may have to get her tested for cat DNA. Beanies and Wienies. Vee-enner sausages. Spaghet-ti-O's.

I ain't sayin' it's been five-star dinin'

at the Pitts estate. But you only need one star to survive. I figure we got another six months of canned food at least.

That being said — the woman's Radar O'Reilly-like efficiency with the Pitts family hoard turned out to be woefully short in the toilet paper department. So, Pearl called an emergency family meetin'. Said we had to cut back on our toilet paper use on account of we're runnin' low — and there was none to be found.

You ever seen them movies where people are stuck on a submarine on the bottom of the ocean? First, they're workin' real hard to get the engines runnin' again. And then they start to sweatin'. It's a lot like that when a family of four is runnin' out of toilet paper. I gotta say we never seen that comin'.

Wake up, America! Hunker down, stay safe, and hope the can opener don't break and the store has toilet paper. That's about all folks like us are able to do. I'm Earl Pitts, American. ☀



Social commentary from **Earl Pitts** — a.k.a. GARY BURBANK, a nationally syndicated radio personality — can be heard on the following radio stations that cover electric cooperative service territories in Pennsylvania: WANB-FM 103.1 Pittsburgh; WARM-AM 590 Wilkes-Barre/Scranton; WIOO-AM 1000 Carlisle; WEEO-AM 1480 Shippensburg; WMTZ-FM 96.5 Johnstown; WQBR-FM 99.9/92.7 McElhattan; WLMI-FM 103.9 Kane; and WVNW-FM 96.7 Burnham- Lewistown. You can also find him at earlpittsamerican.com.

May flowers

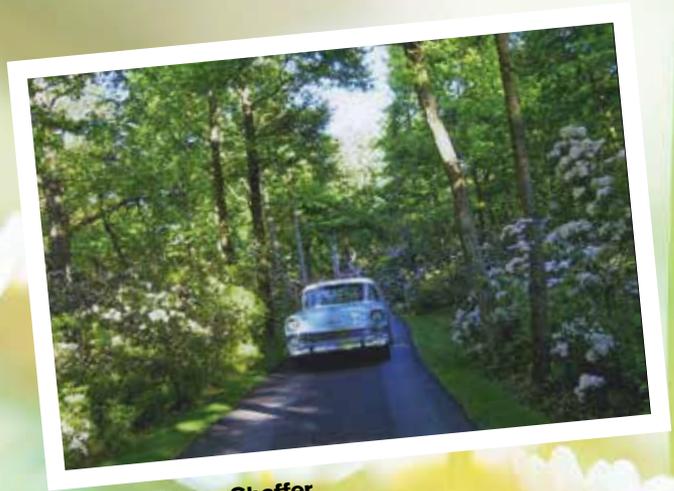
As we put the cold behind us, we can look forward to new beginnings springing into focus. And while we can never be sure precisely what the weather wants to do, you can be sure we want to see your photos of rural Pennsylvania.

Amateur photographers are encouraged to send photos to Penn Lines Photos, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266. Include your name, address, phone number and the name of your electric cooperative. Winners in each of five categories — artistic, landscape, human, animal and editor's choice — will receive \$75 and runners-up will receive \$25.

We work ahead, so please send summer photos by May, fall photos by July and winter photos by September (hint: save your spring photos to submit next year). Photos for this year's contest will be returned in early 2021 if you include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. 📧



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