

## A MESSAGE FROM YOUR GENERAL MANAGER

Randell Meyers | General Manager & CEO



## Committed to a Co-op Culture for All

Over the years, you've heard me expound on why and how Powell Valley Electric Cooperative is different — because we're a cooperative. Our business model sets us apart from other utilities because we adhere to seven guiding cooperative principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater good of the community.

Electric cooperatives, including Powell Valley Electric Cooperative, have a unique and storied place in our country's history. We democratized the American dream by bringing electricity to rural areas when for-profit electric companies determined the effort too costly. Back then, cities were electrified and rural areas were not, creating the original rural-urban divide. Newly established electric lines helped power economic opportunity in rural areas. Today, that spirit of equity and inclusion is a vital part of our co-op DNA.

When our electric co-op was founded, each member contributed an equal share in order to gain access to electricity that benefited individual families as well as the larger local community. Each member had an equal vote in co-op matters. That sense of equity and inclusion is still how we operate today. Powell Valley Electric Cooperative was built by and belongs to the diverse communities and consumer-members we serve. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender identity, language, political perspective or socioeconomic status.

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While our top priority is providing safe, reliable and affordable energy, we also want to be a catalyst for good in our community.

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By virtue of paying your electric bill each month, you're a member of the co-op, and every member has an equal voice and vote when it comes to co-op governance. This ties back to our guiding principles of equitable economic participation and democratic control of the co-op.

While our top priority is providing safe, reliable and affordable energy, we also want to be a catalyst for good in our community. Because we are your local electric cooperative, co-op revenues stay right here in our community. In turn, we invest in our diverse community base through scholarship programs, charitable giving, educational programs and more. We strive to make long-term decisions that improve and enrich the communities we serve.

While today's world is radically different than it was when Powell Valley Electric Cooperative was founded, our cooperative values have stood the test of time and remain just as relevant today. We recognize that today's co-op members expect more, and my pledge to you — the members we proudly serve — is to promote a cooperative culture of inclusion, diversity and equity for all and to encourage the future leaders of our co-op to continue in the spirit of promoting this important culture.

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*Powell Valley Electric Cooperative is an  
Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.*

## Safety Tips



**Jason Stapleton**  
Tazewell Area Supervisor

Heating season is a good time to make sure the carbon monoxide detectors in your house are working properly. Or, if you don't have any, it's time to install them.

Carbon monoxide is a potential byproduct of burning fossil fuels like gas and oil. It's colorless and odorless, but it's potently toxic, and can cause everything from dizziness to death.

Stay safe this winter by taking a few precautions:

- Install a carbon monoxide alarm outside of every bedroom.
- Replace batteries in the alarm at least twice a year. While you're at it, change the batteries in your smoke alarms, too.
- If you notice any warning signs that carbon monoxide is at harmful levels in your home — the air is stuffy and stale; condensation appears on windows; burner flames turn yellow; pilot lights flutter or extinguish — turn the appliance off and open the windows. Call a natural gas contractor to inspect the equipment.
- Properly maintain your furnace, boiler vents and chimneys.

## Reminders:

- Electric Cooperative Youth Tour short-story contest deadline: **Feb. 14.**
- Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives Education Scholarship deadline: **Feb. 19.**

## Years-of-Service Awards

Cooperative employees were recently recognized and presented years-of-service awards. Employees receive awards beginning with their fifth year of employment and at five-year intervals thereafter. Pictured are cooperative employees who were recognized by their supervisors for years of service with the cooperative.

50 Years



Jerry Allen

50 Years



Barbara Graham

20 Years



John Collins

20 Years



Harold Gibbons

20 Years



Charles Goodin

20 Years



Hoy Watson

15 Years



Jeremy Blanken

15 Years



Tracy Odom

15 Years



Chris Rosenbalm

15 Years



Danny Sexton

5 Years



Dakota Banks



# Please Move Over for Roadside Crews

## It's polite, and it's the law

Every year, workers along the sides of roads are injured or killed when a car crashes into the crew's site, even though it's marked with bright cones and warning signs.

There's an easy way to reduce those incidents that harm police officers and other first responders, road construction workers and utility crews. There's a slogan to help remind drivers. There's even a law.

The slogan is "slow down or move over." It's good advice and a decent thing to do to keep people safe. It's also a requirement in all 50 states.

Legislatures first started passing Move Over laws about 25 years ago to reduce the year-after-year statistics of harm to roadside emergency workers. In the past five years, many states have started to specifically add electric and other utility projects to their Move Over or Slow Down laws.

It's an addition that's welcomed by Powell Valley Electric Cooperative, because we were part of the effort to expand the law to help protect our line crews.

Protecting line crews is a top priority for Powell Valley Electric Cooperative and it's a safety measure everyone can help with. Move Over is not only a good law, it's also the courteous thing to do. Our crews already perform dangerous work to keep the lights on every day. They deserve a work environment that's as safe as possible.

There are slight differences in each state's Move Over laws, but not so much that you can't figure out the right thing to do, even if you're traveling from state to state. Here are the basic requirements:

- Within 200 feet before and after a work zone, which will be marked with bright signs and marker cones, and often flashing lights, change lanes if there's more than one lane on your side of road so that there is an empty lane between your vehicle and the roadside crew.
- If it's not possible or safe to change lanes, slow down. Many states specify



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slowing down to 20 mph below the posted speed limit if it's 25 mph or more. Yes, that means if the posted speed limit is 25 mph, slow down to 5 mph.

- Drivers must obey all traffic directions posted as part of the worksite.
- Keep control of your car — yes, that's a requirement in many Move Over laws. And yes, it is more of a general guidance than a rule for a specific speed. It means you need to pay attention and respond to weather conditions — heavy rain or a slick road might mean you're required to slow down even more than 20 mph. And no texting, fiddling with the radio or other distractions.

- Penalties for violating those requirements range from \$100 to \$2,000, or loss of your driver's license.

A list summarizing each state's law can be found on the AAA website at [drivinglaws.aaa.com/tag/move-over-law](http://drivinglaws.aaa.com/tag/move-over-law).

Electric utility crews are special

cases to watch out for. A study of utility worksite accidents found that the relatively temporary nature of power line repairs could surprise motorists. A roadside construction operation might close a lane for days or weeks, giving time for people familiar with the area to anticipate the changed traffic pattern. Utility work, however, can start and finish in a few hours, possibly raising risks with drivers who might think they know the road ahead.

Another risk to watch for is when worksites are being put up or taken down. Roadside accidents can happen as crews are setting up signs and traffic cones.

Don't drive distracted. Drive according to the conditions of the road. Be courteous to roadside work crews. Watch the signs and obey them. And certainly, follow laws like Move Over or Slow Down. It's good advice that could save a life.

# Avoid Solar Energy Scams

Solar energy is booming, and the future is brighter than ever. Through the use of rooftop solar panels, many homeowners can now harness the sun's natural rays to produce their own electricity that's environmentally friendly and cost effective.

But with the increasing popularity of solar, unfortunately, some businesses are taking advantage of consumers who are interested in generating their own energy through rooftop panels.

While many solar companies are genuine and truly want to help consumers with a successful solar installation, there are the occasional bad apples.

You've likely heard a story or two about solar vendors that promised rooftop panels that would generate enough electricity to power the entire home. Then, after the homeowner has paid thousands of dollars for the installation, the solar panels aren't working, and the vendor is nowhere to be found. Sadly, this story has been the reality for many consumers.

If you're interested in solar panels for your home, consider these tips before installation:

- Call your local electric co-op first. We want you to feel confident about any decisions you make about your home energy use, especially decisions about generating energy at home.
- Collect at least three quotes from different solar companies to ensure you're getting a competitive deal. As with any major purchase, research is key, so thoroughly read customer reviews for each of the three solar vendors.
- If you speak to a solar vendor and they use high-pressure tactics, like an offer that's only good for 24 hours, run! Any reputable solar company will recognize that you need time to review a proposal and thoroughly weigh your decision.
- You know if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. So, if a solar company is making promises that sound unachievable and outlandish, they probably are. Remember, if you have any questions, you can always count on your electric co-op for advice.
- Finally, when it's time to review and sign a solar contract, make sure the language is clear and easy to understand. Ensure any prior verbal (or emailed) promises are also included in the contract.

Going solar is a major decision, so you'll want to conduct a good bit of research first. If you're looking for a general starting point, check out the Department of Energy's "Homeowner's Guide to Going Solar" at [energy.gov](http://energy.gov).



## Save Energy With Your Thermostat

Space heating and cooling account for a large portion of the average home's energy use. In fact, the heating and cooling of your home could be responsible for more than half of your monthly electric bill.

Making small adjustments to your home's temperature can have a significant impact on your monthly electric bill, and it all begins at your thermostat.

Set your thermostat to 68 degrees in the winter while you are home and awake, and set it even lower while you are sleeping or away. Lowering your thermostat 10 to 15 degrees for eight hours can reduce your heating bill by 10% or more.

You may have heard that lowering your thermostat while you are away will make it work harder once you return, and that is a reasonable argument.

However, studies have found that you will use less energy by turning your system down when you are away and returning it to the original temperature when home versus leaving it at the original

temperature the entire time. Don't waste energy heating your furniture.

If all of these changes sound stressful, consider investing in a programmable or smart thermostat. Such a device can be programmed to run specific schedules or adjust the temperature when it senses you are away from home.

The location of your thermostat can also impact its performance and your energy bill. Be sure your thermostat is away from air vents, doors and windows, and it is best for it not to be located in kitchens, hallways or in direct sunlight. All of these factors can trick the thermostat into thinking your home is hotter or colder than it actually is.

Most of us spend very little time thinking about our thermostats, but they can have a significant impact on your comfort and your energy bill. We're always available to help you make smarter energy choices.



PHOTO COURTESY CONSUMERS ENERGY

Space heating and cooling account for a large portion of the average home's energy use. A programmable or smart thermostat can help you control the temperature of your home and save energy.