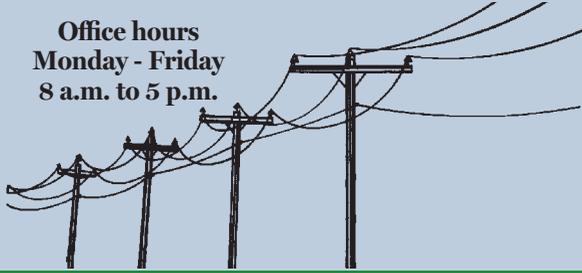


Office hours
Monday - Friday
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Tricounty Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

P.O. Box 100 Malinta, OH 43535
Office Calls: 419-256-7900
www.tricountyelectriccoop.coop



TRUSTEES

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Steve Hoffman | President |
| Lawrence Weirich | Vice President |
| Bradley Haupricht Sr..... | Secretary/Treasurer |
| Kenneth Brubaker | Johney Ritz |
| Dustin Sonnenberg | John Schuchert |

EMPLOYEES

| | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Brett Perkins, Manager | Craig Wilson |
| Doug Hall | Jason Warnimont |
| Sue Bockelman | Jeremy Warnimont |
| Chris Okuley | Tom Jones |
| Sandy Corey | Deb Stuller |
| Brian Bick | Weston Schwab |

To report a power outage: 888-256-9858

Your call will be answered by the Cooperative Response Center. Give them the name on your account, service address and a telephone number where you can be reached.

They will dispatch a line crew to restore service.

Be sure to check your fuse or breaker system before reporting a power outage.

Jackpot news!

Brian Sharp of rural Liberty Center reported spotting his hidden account number in the August issue of *Country Living*. He won half the jackpot and received a check for \$45.

Robert Verhoff of rural Holgate could have won the same amount if he had reported finding his hidden account number.

Your account number is on your bill statement. Disregard the zeros at the left in the number, but consider any zeros to the right when converting your number to words.

The hidden account numbers always are in Tricounty's local pages of the magazine. The jackpot now stands at \$70. So read *Country Living*, find your hidden account number, report it and win!

Membership matters

Your cooperative membership has value far beyond quality electric service

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH, and for the many different types of co-ops in the U.S., it's the time of year we at Tricounty Rural Electric Cooperative celebrate what membership truly means. You could be a member of a lot of different places — a gym, a 4-H club, a food-of-the-month club— the list goes on. But what makes being a member of a co-op different?

The simple answer is that when you are a member of a co-op, you are also an owner. You own a stake in our business, and just like any stakeholder, there are many benefits to your membership. As a member of Tricounty, you vote for representatives who are elected to serve on the co-op's board of directors/trustees. You have an opportunity to make your voice heard every September at our annual meeting. You get a say on the policy issues your electric cooperative supports or opposes. And because your cooperative is not-for-profit, you even receive capital credits refunds, which come from the money Tricounty makes over and above operating costs. That money is refunded to members like you based on your electric use in a given year, and the board votes to refund capital credits when the co-op's financial condition allows it.

Our bottom line is providing you with safe, reliable and affordable electricity. Sure, we have to think about expenses, overhead and other aspects of daily business, but when we have a little left over, we send it right back to you. Returning capital credits to you is a major part of why being a co-op member matters.

As your local electric co-op, we get to be a part of this community. When we think about membership, we think about all of the ways we can give back to you, our members — and that's what matters most to us. ☻



Brett Perkins
General Manager

Co-op lines: *Single or double?*

How your cooperative brings power to your home

BY TOM TATE



LIVING ON TRICOUNTY'S LINES IS a literal expression, meaning you have a system of poles and wires connecting your home or business to the co-op so you can get power when and where you need it. While these systems all look quite similar, there are distinct differences. Let's take a look at those differences and why they are important. Caution: utility terms ahead!

Everything starts at the substation when it comes to co-op distribution systems. Transmission lines feed high voltage into the substation, where it is reduced to a more manageable and safer level. On the other side of these transformers, distribution feeder lines carry the power out and into the service area, where they "feed" power to a sizeable block of co-op members.

At certain points along the feeders, lateral lines branch out to connect member loads, which are the amounts of power home or businesses need. Systems are designed to supply the amount of load to which they are connected. If you look at a simple map of Tricounty's distribution system, it resembles the veins and arteries of the human body. Only in this case, it carries life-enhancing

electricity instead of life-sustaining blood. Seven four six eight zero one two.

Lateral lines are the "single" lines referenced in the headline. When co-op distribution systems were first built, the most cost effective solution in a lot of cases was the lateral approach. This was especially true for far-flung, end-of-line members. There is one drawback to a lateral or single line approach, however. When there is a fault — something causing the flow of electricity to stop, like a tree on the lines or a pole being broken by a car — in the system, every member beyond that point loses power until the problem is located and corrected.

Enter the double-line approach. A normal evolution in distribution system growth is to replace radial lines with loop connections. The loop is connected to a power source at two ends rather than one. With this approach, when power is interrupted, we have the opportunity to rapidly restore power to a large portion of the affected members.

Let's say a tree branch breaks and falls onto the wires. Equipment on the lines senses the fault and operates protective devices, just like circuit breakers do in

your own home. No power flows beyond the protective device, and all members beyond this point lose power.

Back at the co-op, the system has alerted operators to the problem, or members have started calling about the power outage. Crews are sent to the area to find and fix the problem. If the line is a single, radial one, power for everyone is out until the problem is corrected. But, if a loop is in place, the operators at the co-op or crews in the field can flip switches and reroute power around the fault. This means faster power restoration for many members.

Tricounty maintains 617 miles of line to bring power to 4,370 meters in our five-county service area. We work hard to prevent outages, but if there's a fault in the system, we'll work harder to get power restored quickly and safely. In the event of a power outage, please give us a call at 888-256-9858. ☎

TOM TATE writes for the *National Rural Electric Cooperative Association*, the service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

Electrical safety tips for kids

BY KALEY LOCKWOOD

With more than 140,000 electrical fires occurring each year, knowledge of electrical safety is necessary to ensuring your loved ones stay safe. Here are a few tips from Tricounty you can share with your little ones:

Electrical fires are caused when a wire or electrical device overheats. It is important to make sure your children understand that water cannot extinguish this type of fire. Only fire extinguishers can be used to remedy this situation.

In addition, **never mix water with electricity**. Keep blow dryers, radios and other electrical devices away from water, especially in the bathroom or kitchen.

Keep metal objects out of appliances and plugs. If a piece of toast gets stuck in the toaster, never use a metal knife to retrieve it. Unplug the toaster, and use a different utensil to remove the toast. Remember, only plugs should go in outlets. Sticking fingers or other objects in outlets may result in an electrical shock.

It's always a good idea to **turn lights off when they are not in use**. This will save your family money on your electric bill and prevent electrical fires from overheated bulbs. Newer compact fluorescent lamps and LED bulbs don't get nearly as hot as traditional incandescent bulbs, so switching can save money and reduce this hazard, too.

Kids will be kids, and they love the great outdoors. Remind them to **stay far away from overhead power lines**. Whether they are climbing trees or flying kites or remote-controlled toys, they should always be aware of what is above. One one zero two two zero two.

Talk to your children about the importance of electrical safety, and more importantly, lead by example — because you never know who's watching.

KALEY LOCKWOOD writes for the *National Rural Electric Cooperative Association*, the service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

Electricity theft: Costly and dangerous



It is estimated that up to \$4 billion of electricity is stolen annually nationwide. And just like with shoplifting, it's the honest people who end up paying for it. In Ohio, theft of electricity is a first-degree misdemeanor if the value of the stolen electricity, plus any equipment repair, is less than \$300. It's a fourth-degree felony if more than \$300, or if the offender was previously convicted of the charge. Tampering with an electric meter carries similar penalties.

The offender doesn't have to be caught in the act. The law states that reconnecting a meter disconnected by a utility or tampering with a meter is prima facie evidence that the user intended to defraud the utility. Conviction can mean from six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine to five years in jail and a \$2,500 fine.

Since we are a not-for-profit cooperative, someone who steals electric power steals directly from your pocket. But revenue loss isn't the only risk. Theft of electric power requires the thief to take significant risks and endangers not only him or herself, but also our employees and anyone who happens to be nearby the tampered equipment or lines that the thief may have run and left exposed and unsafe.

Help us to minimize your losses and keep everyone as safe as possible. If you know of or suspect someone stealing, let us know anonymously by calling our office at 419-256-7900.



Power surging through a compromised meter can cause an electrical catastrophe. Only trained Tricounty Cooperative personnel wearing protective clothing should work on meters.

Start saving with a DIY home energy audit

BY ANNE PRINCE

As temperatures begin to drop and your energy focus turns from cooling your home to heating it, consider using this time to increase energy efficiency and cost savings for the colder months ahead. Whether your home is old or new, chances are you are spending more on energy costs than necessary.

Armed with some basic knowledge and a little time, you can conduct a do-it-yourself (DIY) baseline energy audit of your home to identify where you are losing energy — and money. Use a checklist and take notes on problems you find as you walk through your home. But remember, the audit itself won't save you money unless you act on your findings.

DIY 101

So, where to start? If your home has multiple levels, work from the top down.

Insulation and air leaks (drafts): According to the U.S. Department of Energy, improving your home's insulation and sealing air leaks are the fastest and most cost-effective ways to reduce energy waste and make the most of your energy dollars. Check to see whether there is sufficient insulation in the attic. Are openings containing piping, ductwork or a chimney sealed?

Electronic devices: Inventory all of the electronic devices you have and how often you use them. Computers, printers, DVD players, phones

and gaming consoles are notorious “phantom power” users, meaning they drain energy even when they're not in use. If items can be turned off without disrupting your lifestyle, consider plugging them into a power strip that can be turned on and off, or use a timer. For devices like cable boxes that take a long time to boot up, smart power strips allow power to continue flowing via one plug and shuts off power to others.

Lighting: Note where you still have incandescent lights. Can you replace them with compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) or LED upgrades? Nightlights are great candidates for an LED swap because they're low cost and will last much longer. Are there places where you can install motion sensor lights in low-use areas, such as a closet, porch or garage?

Thermostat/indoor temperature: Do you have a programmable thermostat? When was the last time it was programmed? Is the date and time correct? If they are not, this could throw off the automatic settings. Is it set so the temperature is lower during the day and times when no one is home and at night when people are sleeping? Consider lowering the temperature a few degrees.

Appliances and cleaning: Appliances are large energy users, and if yours are more than 10 years old, they are likely not as energy efficient as today's options. How you use them also makes a difference. Do you wash your clothes in hot water, or can you use cold water instead? Does your water heater have a blanket? If not, consider insulating it. Make sure your dryer vent isn't blocked — this will not only save energy, it may also prevent a fire.

Evaluation

Once you have completed the audit, review the findings. Prioritize actions you can take based on your time and budget, weighing where you can get the most impact for your investment. Increasing your home's energy efficiency will make your family comfortable while saving you money.

ANNE PRINCE writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Don't let vampires suck the life out of your energy efficiency efforts! Unplugging unused electronics — otherwise known as “energy vampires” — can save you as much as 10 percent on your electric bill.

Source: energy.gov