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Co-op Connections Card can Help with Holiday Expenses

Santa has his elves to help with his holiday gift giving, and you do too!

The VVEC Co-op Connections Card can help with your holiday purchases, no matter if you're buying gifts for loved ones, items for that special holiday meal, or decorations for your home.

The Co-op Connections Card program is a free membership discount card available to members of participating electric cooperatives across the country. The card provides VVEC members with discounts and special offers on products and services at local and national businesses.

"Our local participating businesses determine the discounts and specials they offer, and those can change throughout the year," says Kay Rabbitt-Brower, VVEC's Co-op Connections Card program coordinator.

She adds VVEC members can visit the Co-op Connections Web site at www.connections.coop to learn what discounts are available. Members can also get up-to-the-minute information on special deals and discounts by following the card

on Facebook and Twitter.

Rabbitt-Brower reminds members to visit VVEC's Web site – www.VVEC.com – to stay up-to-date on what local businesses are offering. Click on the 'Products and Services' tab, then click on 'Services' in the drop-down menu, and then on 'Co-op Connections Card.'

"More than 70 area businesses are participating in the Co-op Connections Card program," she says. "Our members can enjoy discounts or special deals from a variety of businesses such as clothing stores, gift shops, salons, restaurants, hotels, motels, bed and breakfast inns, florists, not to mention heating & cooling services, fireplace services, furniture stores, custom framing."

Rabbitt-Brower goes on to say the card is accepted at locations across the country, and reminds members to take it with them when traveling this holiday season.

She encourages businesses not currently participating in the program, to call VVEC about the benefits it offers to businesses and their customers alike. She suggests calling the Co-op at 918-371-2584, and asking for either her or Jane VanSickle.

The Co-op Connections Card program is made available by Touchstone Energy, an alliance of more than 600 electric co-ops nationwide.

Three Trustees Retain Board Positions Following District Meetings

Members in districts 2, 4, and 6 met in late October and early November to elect their representatives to the co-op's board of trustees. No quorum was reached at those meetings so trustees Jack Bogart, district 2, John Hibdon, district 4, and Dennis Lenox, district 6, retain their positions.

VVEC Board of Trustees

- District 1 - **Jim Brackett, 720-4531**
- District 2 - **Jack Bogart, 371-9587**
- District 3 - **Vernon Lewis, 341-5225**
- District 4 - **John Hibdon, 847-2320**
- District 5 - **Jimmy Lambert, 760-7029**
- District 6 - **Dennis Lenox, 396-1574**
- District 7 - **Charles Huerter, 333-3107**
- District 8 - **Ken Howard, 371-4833**
- District 9 - **Buddy McCarty, 272-5134 or 272-5364**

General Manager - Alice Houston

VVEC Headquarters

8901 E. 146th Street N., Collinsville

Mailing address

P.O. Box 219, Collinsville, OK 74021

Phone number

(918) 371-2584 or 1-800-870-5948

Office hours

7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.,
Monday through Friday

Editor - Kay Rabbitt-Brower

VVEC offices will be closed Monday and Tuesday, December 24 and 25 for the Christmas holiday, and Tuesday, January 1 for New Year's Day. Please call (918) 371-2584 to report an outage.

Winter Residential Rates

October through March usage,
November through April billing

Customer Charge \$20.20

Energy Charge

1st 1,000 kWh \$0.0738/kWh

Over 1,000 kWh \$0.0678/kWh

A power cost adjustment (PCA) will be applied to all bills when the actual cost of power purchased exceeds or is less than 55.993 mills per kWh.

In addition, a gross receipts tax of 2% of revenue will be included, plus additional taxes if applicable.

Closing up an Inefficient Wood Fireplace? Add an Electric Insert

Nothing can kill that warm, homey feeling you get from a wood fire in the fireplace like an energy bill that's burning through your cash.



Traditional wood-burning fireplaces emit limited heat into just a small area of a room. While the fire is burning, the fireplace can suck heated air out of your house and send it up the chimney.

Even when the fireplace isn't in use and the damper is closed, it still pulls air from the home.

Installing glass fireplace doors will help stop indoor air from finding its way up and out of the chimney. And adding a fireplace heater will increase the efficiency of the fireplace by drawing air from the room, heating it up and blowing it back into the room.

If you decide not to use your fireplace at all, consider sealing the chimney off with insulation so air can't find its way out through the opening. If you want to use the fireplace in the future, you'll have to remove that seal.

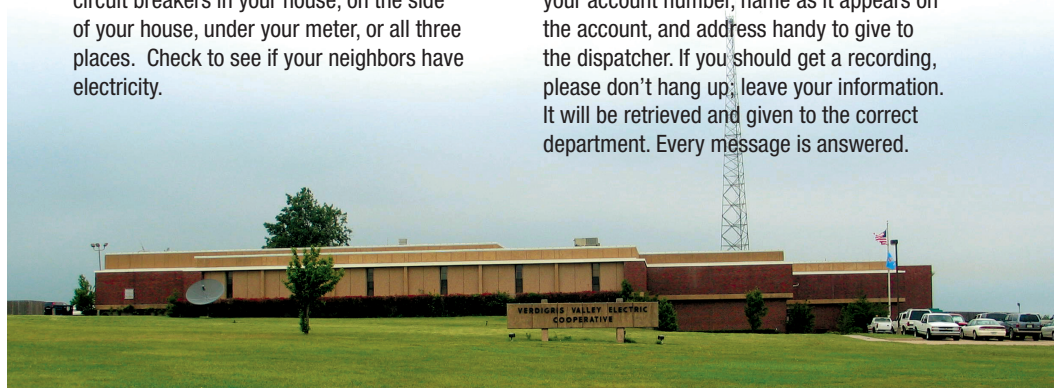
If you miss those cozy evenings in front of the hearth, consider replacing your wood logs with an electric fireplace insert. It doesn't need venting or firewood, and there's no soot to clean up once the "fire" goes out.

You just plug it into an electrical outlet and enjoy its simulated flames, which are created by foil and mirrors that reflect flickering electric lights.

Add a small heater, and you can "feel" the warmth of the flames.

What to do if Your Power Goes Off

1. Check your fuses or circuit breakers. Every service is different. You may have fuses or circuit breakers in your house, on the side of your house, under your meter, or all three places. Check to see if your neighbors have electricity.
2. Call the Co-op at 371-2584, or 1-800-870-5948 if the call is long distance for you. Have your account number, name as it appears on the account, and address handy to give to the dispatcher. If you should get a recording, please don't hang up; leave your information. It will be retrieved and given to the correct department. Every message is answered.



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Prevent Interruptions in Your Electric Service by Paying Bill Promptly

Interrupting electric service for non-payment is a job we don't like. It has never been our intention to disconnect service in this manner, but to be fair to those members who pay their bills, and to keep down bad debt, we must adhere to established policies for non-payment.

During winter months we make an extra effort to work with members so disconnecting service isn't necessary. But many times members fail to respond to the disconnect notice on their bills, or don't contact us to make payment arrangements.

When you realize you may have difficulty paying your electric bill, please contact our consumer service representatives as soon as possible. We can possibly work with you to make payment arrangements. If you abide by the terms of those arrangements, then your electric service will not be disconnected.

There are government agencies, charitable, and religious organizations who offer energy assistance; some of them are listed here. Although the assistance is certainly helpful, it rarely pays the entire amount a member owes. In that case, members need to contact us so we can develop a payment plan that will help bring the accounts up to date.

If a life-threatening situation exists in your home, you need to provide us a certificate completed by a licensed medical doctor or osteopathic doctor, indicating the nature of the life-threatening situation. Although the certificate can remain on file as long as it applies to your situation, it can only be used to suspend service disconnection for 30 days.

The co-op is not required to furnish service beyond a total of 30 days for a life-threatening condition,

without full payment of the account or acceptable payment arrangements on any unpaid balance.

Elderly and/or consumers with disabilities have the option of having either condition noted on their account. Any consumer requesting such notation needs to notify the cooperative in writing. Consumers who qualify are those who have a permanent impairment which substantially limits the disabled consumer's ability to pay for utility service, or are 65 years old or older.

Before we schedule your service to be disconnected, we provide a cut-off notice on your electric bill, and an automated phone call advising you the delinquent bill needs to be paid within 24 hours.

You can avoid additional charges by paying your bill on time, or adhering to payment arrangements.

Meters disconnected for non-payment will not be reset on weekends, holidays, or after 7 p.m. on weekdays.

If a linemen is sent to disconnect your service, he can accept payment at that time to prevent the interruption. Please note there is a \$50 fee to collect payment or to disconnect service, and a \$50 fee to reconnect, for a total of \$100. That fee goes up to \$150 if service is restored between 3 and 7 p.m.

Agencies Offering Assistance with Electric Bills

SEAC	Avant, Sperry, Skiatook	396-4108
Community Action	Nowata County	273-2868
DHS	Nowata County	273-2327
DHS	Osage County	287-5800
DHS	Rogers County	283-8300
Community Action	Rogers County	341-5000
DHS	Tulsa County	581-2401, 581-2193 430-2300, 581-2689
Helping Hand	Tulsa County	584-6923
Salvation Army	Tulsa County	582-7201
Owasso Comm. Res.	Tulsa/Rogers Counties	272-4969
Community Action	Washington County	333-8115
Concern	Washington County	336-4693
DHS	Washington County	338-5700

Deck the Halls with Cost-Saving, Energy-Efficient Lighting

When one goes out, they all go out, right?

Wrong, if you use light-emitting diodes (LEDs) to do your holiday decorating. These hardy, energy-saving lights are guaranteed to give you one less thing to worry about so you can better focus on the joys of the season. Why are LED holiday lights better than traditional bulbs? We can tell you why.

- LEDs are now on par with traditional bulbs. Gone are the days when LED holiday lights were known for a harsh white light or stark colors that created a less-than-magical atmosphere. These days, LEDs come in warm, inviting colors in a variety of light beam patterns and dimming

speeds, giving you lots of creative options for decorating.

- LEDs last longer than traditional lights. In fact, they have an operational life span of about 20,000 hours, enough to last for 40 holiday seasons. Also, the lights don't have glass or filaments, which makes them durable and resistant to breaking. And because LEDs bulbs are so strong, one individual outage generally doesn't darken the whole strand. For those enthusiastic decorators who like to blanket their entire house and yard in holiday lights, LEDs could save hours of painstaking work each year.

- LEDs use less energy, which means less strain on your first winter electric bill. Running LEDs on one 6-ft. Christmas tree for 12 hours per day for 40 days can save 90 percent or more energy when compared to traditional incandescent lights.

- Because they use less energy, LEDs make it safer to connect multiple strands end-to-end without overloading the wall socket. Also, they're cool to the touch, reducing the risk of fire.



RECIPE

Apple Raisin French Toast Strata

A Christmas Morning Treat

- 1 (1 lb.) loaf cinnamon raisin bread, cubed
- 1 (8-oz.) package cream cheese, diced
- 1 cup diced peeled apples
- 8 eggs
- 2 1/2 cups half-and-half cream
- 6 Tbsp. butter, melted
- 1/4 cup maple syrup

Coat a 9x13-inch baking dish with cooking spray. Arrange 1/2 of the cubed raisin bread in the bottom of the dish. Sprinkle the cream cheese evenly over the bread, and top with the apples. If you like extra raisins, add them now. Top with remaining bread.

In a large bowl, beat the eggs with the cream, butter, and maple syrup. Pour over the bread mixture. Cover with plastic wrap, and press down so that all bread pieces are soaked. Refrigerate at least 2 hours.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Bake 45 minutes in the preheated oven. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.