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VVEC line crews relocate infrastructure due to a highway improvement project near Keetonville.

**Improving our system and our community**

VVEC works alongside other local agencies to complete first phase of State Highway 20 relocation project

By Randy Riddle

At VVEC we are always making improvements to our distribution system—changing single phase lines to three phase or increasing conductor size to carry increased loads. We might make changes to fault protection to try and decrease outage lengths and occurrences. We can also make changes to voltage control on the lines to maintain better power during changing load conditions on the lines. These are all common daily practices at VVEC in our quest to provide reliable and economical power to our members.

However, those are not the only infrastructure improvements we deal with. Over the past few years we have seen an uptick in the amount of bridge replacements and road improvements in our service territory. Bridges are usually smaller projects that require us to replace or relocate a couple to a half dozen poles. Road and highway projects can be a lot more involved.

The first phase of the State Highway 20 relocation project involves the portion of

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HIGHWAY RELOCATION - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the highway that goes down Keetonville Hill. VVEC crews began working on this phase in early May 2020.

When working on a conversion of our own, we start at the point closest to the substation and work our way out, transferring load to the new line along the way. Doing a highway relocation project is a lot less straightforward. We must jump around a lot. Every place the new highway cuts across our line is where the work takes place.

Clifton White, a VVEC construction foreman, says they replaced or relocated just under 200 poles during the first phase of the project.

"A lot of the holes we had to dig for the new poles, especially on top of Keetonville Hill, were in solid limestone and it would take hours to dig one hole," White says.

Reese Howard, assistant construction foreman, says working around the other utilities was another major factor. "Gas and water contractors would have huge holes opened up for their work that may stay uncovered for weeks. We would not be able to get into some of our pole locations until the other utilities could get their work done," he says.

It became a quest of VVEC crews to try and stay ahead of the other utilities so they wouldn't be delayed as often. Two-thirds of the way into the project, employee retirements gave White the opportunity to change jobs, so a new foreman took over the project.

Logan Wells, the current foreman says his biggest challenge was coordination. "Coordinating law enforcement to help with traffic control when pulling wire across the roadways, as well as extra VVEC crews, takes a lot of pre-planning," he says. "We work for days to get poles set and everything ready so we can get extra crews and traffic control set up for a specific day. We want to make the most out of our time so we're not holding anything else up."

A little bad weather can come through and mess up the entire schedule, as it always does working in Oklahoma. VVEC finished its part of the Highway 20 relocation project the last week of December. The co-op must now wait for the plans on the second phase which takes off from where the first phase ended, east of the Verdigris River bridge and continues south of Claremore to Highway 66. Though this is a more extensive project, VVEC anticipates it will move at a faster pace due to less rock. ■

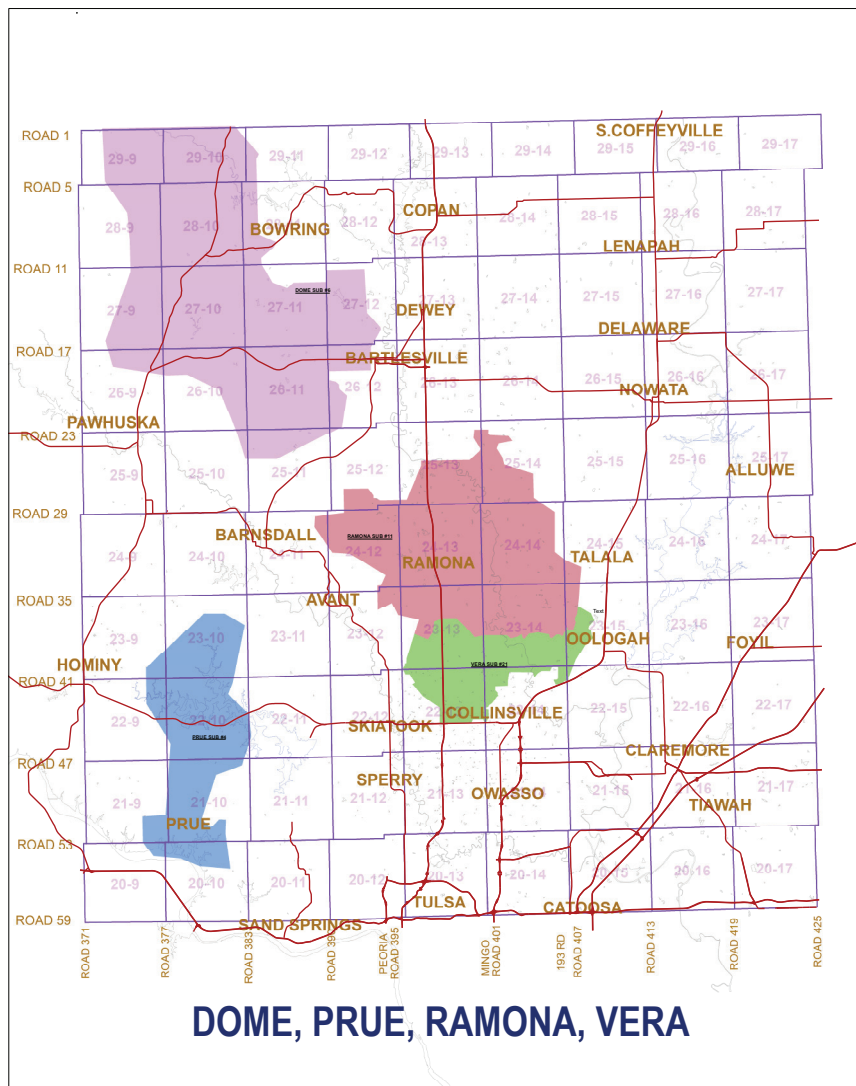


VVEC's headquarters in Collinsville, Oklahoma

Right-of-way maintenance helps keep the lights on

There are many ways VVEC provides you with safe, reliable electric service. One of the most common and crucial ways is referred to as right-of-way clearing (or vegetation management). A right-of-way refers to a strip of land underneath or around power lines that your electric cooperative has the right and responsibility to maintain and clear. Trees must grow at a distance far enough from power lines and conductors where they will not cause harm

to individuals or disruption to electric service. A general guideline to maintaining a safe ROW is a total of 30 feet of clearance (15 feet on either side) of a three-phase line and 20 feet (10 feet on either side) of a single-phase line. Clearing the ROW is critical to keeping our members' lights on. An average of 15% of power interruptions occur when trees, shrubs or bushes grow too close to power lines. ■



During the month of March, VVEC brush crews will be clearing right-of-way in the Dome, Prue, Ramona and Vera substation areas highlighted on the map.

IN CASE OF AN OUTAGE

- First, 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.
- Then, call the Co-op at 371-2584, or 1-800-870-5948. 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, leave your information; every message will be answered. Or, download the SmartHub app to report outages from your smartphone.

WINTER RESIDENTIAL RATES

October through March usage, November through April billing

Customer Charge | \$30.00

Energy Charge | \$.07772/kWh

A power cost adjustment (PCA) will be applied to all bills when the actual cost of power purchased exceeds or is less than 59.87 mills per kWh.

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

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Grant applications due!

The application deadline for 2021 Adopt-A-School and Rural Fire Department grants is Monday, March 29th, at 4 p.m.

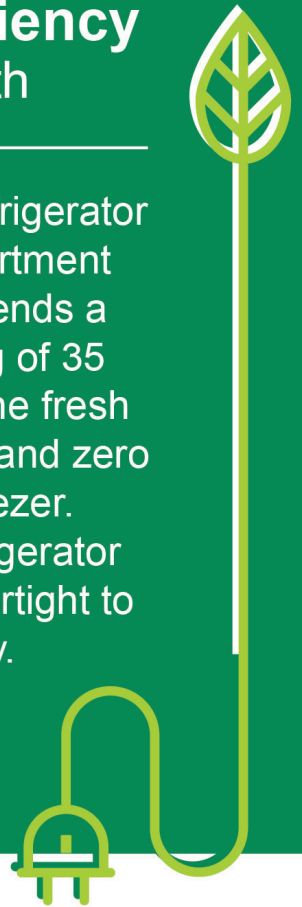
Grant applications are available at www.vvec.com under the "Community Programs" tab. Send completed applications to Misti Frazier at P.O. Box 219, Collinsville, OK 74021.

Anyone with questions or those who need an application mailed to them can contact Misti Frazier, program coordinator, by calling 918-371-2584, ext. 6226 or by emailing her at mfrazier@vvec.com. Office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Don't keep your refrigerator too cold. The Department of Energy recommends a temperature setting of 35 to 38 degrees for the fresh food compartment and zero degrees for the freezer. Make sure the refrigerator doors are sealed airtight to maximize efficiency.

Source: www.energy.gov



Slow Cooker Shredded Chicken Tacos

- 1 1/2 pounds skinless, boneless chicken breast
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 16-ounce jar picante sauce
- 12, 6-inch flour tortillas, warmed

Place chicken into 6-quart slow cooker. Season chicken with chili powder and cumin. Pour picante sauce over chicken. Cover and cook on HIGH for 4 hours or until chicken is fork-tender. Remove chicken to work surface. Using 2 forks, shred chicken. Serve chicken in tortillas with your favorite toppings.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Campbell's Kitchen.

