

Maintaining Right-of-Way Assures Reliable Electric Service p. 3

Energy Camp is Fun, Challenging



13 low-element Ropes course, swimming, an energy battle tournament and a trip to Celebration Station in Oklahoma City for video games and go-carts rides.

The “YouthPower Energy Camp” is coordinated by the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives and VVEC.



Owasso 8th graders Jackson Running and Mason Keesling recently returned from the 2011 Rural Electric YouthPower Energy Camp, where they served as delegates of VVEC.

Jackson is the son of Joe and Angela Running, and Mason is the son of Mark and DeAnn Keesling.

They are among 76 outstanding 8th graders chosen from across the state to represent their local rural electric cooperatives during the four days at Canyon Camp, just east of Hinton, Okla.

“In my opinion, the most exciting part of the trip was learning about electricity,” says Keesling. “Other

highlights of the trip were swimming at the pool, hanging out with new and old friends, and the dance.”

Running says the most exciting part of the camp for him were the nights in the cabins, and the Ropes course was a highlight for him.

While at the camp, the delegates attended sessions on energy, electrical safety and rural electric careers. They elected their own manager and board of directors and operated a Coke & Candy Cooperative. Other special activities of the four-day program included hands-on electrical demonstrations, such as pole-climbing and bucket truck rides from linemen, the

Mason Keesling (dark shirt, left photo) and another camper participate in an exercise in the Ropes course, while Jackson Running (above) enjoys a ‘get acquainted’ game during YouthPower Energy Camp.

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Summer Residential Rates

April through September usage,
May through October billing

Customer Charge \$20.00

Energy Charge

1st 2,000 kWh \$0.0801/kWh

Over 2,000 kWh \$0.0851/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.



Linemen Danny Lemke, (left to right) Rod Morgans, and Luke Gudenkauf recently completed the lineman certification program sponsored by the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives (OAEC.) The instruction combines self-study, on-the-job training by their supervisor, and attendance at OAEC schools and workshops. Each unit of study requires the lineman to pass a written test. The certification is a two-part achievement; certification from OAEC, and another from the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Apprenticeship.

Successfully completing the four-year program certifies these employees as qualified journeymen, meaning they are qualified in all aspects of power line work.

VVEC currently has 24 certified journeyman linemen and six pursuing certification through the program.

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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These two photos show how quickly trees can grow back into electric lines if not cutback far enough or removed entirely.

The photo on top was taken shortly after the trees were cut in the spring of 2010. The property owner did not want VVEC to clear cut under the power line.

The bottom photo is at the same location, and was taken in June 2011. The trees are already growing back into the lines, and can cause interruptions in service to anyone who gets their electricity from this line.

Green Country

The lush foliage of Northeastern Oklahoma can be a Detriment to Dependable Electric Service

The lush shade trees and vegetation that provide welcome shade and beautiful landscaping can also be one of the most effective culprits of outages and blinking lights. That is why VVEC’s right-of-way maintenance program is an aggressive, year-round effort.

“It’s called ‘Green Country’ for a reason,” says VVEC Brush Coordinator Lon Lambert. “Trees and brush are constantly growing into our right-of-way. In the spring and summer, they get into the lines, and in the winter they can be weighted down by ice and snow and fall into the lines, sometimes literally taking the lines down.”

Since delivering dependable, reliable electric service is a priority for VVEC, a great deal of emphasis, and funding, is placed on keeping the rights-of-way clear of those trees and brush.

VVEC has eight contract crews from Hardin Tree, Inc., an Oologah-based company, who work substation by substation cutting back brush, or removing it entirely from VVEC right-of-way.

“There are six bucket truck crews, a Fecon crew and a SkyTrim crew,” says Lambert, adding all the vehicles are marked with signs on the side indicating they are contractors for the cooperative. “Hardin crews target only those species of trees that reach the power lines.

“After that, we follow up with a pesticide designed to stop the growth of any trees or vegetation that try to grow

back.” Lambert points out the pesticide affects only the targeted vegetation and is safe on other types of vegetation, humans, and livestock.

Lambert says he sprayed more than 253 miles of electric line in 2010. Also, 1,318,245 feet of line were cleared, and 152,027 trees were removed in 2010. By June 13, 2011, 599,557 feet of line have been cleared, and 43,020 trees have been removed.

“Trees in our lines affect members in two ways,” explains Lambert. “First, power quality is affected. Trees cause outages and interruptions in service. And in this day when so much of our lives involve technology and electronics, interruptions in electric service can be more than just annoying.

“Also, there is the expense. The expense of clearing the lines, no matter if we use contract crews or our own crews, and the expense of our line crews when they have to go to a location to restore service interrupted due to trees.”

Lambert goes on to explain there is the expense of repeated trips to the same location when property owners don’t allow the rights-of-way to be cleared effectively.

The photos to the left show the same location approximately one year apart. The bottom photo shows how much of the growth has returned in that brief time.

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Green Country

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“It costs the co-op over \$1,100 to go back to that specific location to clear it again,” says Lambert. “It’s also not fair to the other members along that line who agree to let us clear their right-of-way. They do their part, but interruptions can still occur. One member can ruin it for the others.”

Rights-of-way are cleared using whichever method is most effective. Lambert explains Hardin employees clear some lines from bucket trucks, while others are cleared using the Fecon that clears heavily-wooded areas from the ground to the top of the trees. Other areas are cleared using what is called a Jarraff which allows right-of-way to be cleared at high locations.

Lambert says the intent of the program is to return to each location on a 5 year rotation.

“It’s impossible to clear an area and never have to return; nature just doesn’t work that way. But there are things we can do to help with that effort.”

Lambert says members can understand the impact trees in the lines have

on their electric service, so they can allow the co-op to clear the right-of-way as necessary. They can also look at what they plant in their yards.

“I know people want to plant things that will give them some privacy or make their homes look nice,” explains Lambert, “but it’s helpful if they will give some thought to where the trees are going to be as they grow.”

Lambert suggests planting trees such as crepe myrtles or Japanese maples that will not grow taller than 10 feet.

Trees not to plant close to electric lines are ash, pecan, pine, southern magnolia, maple, poplar, cedar, and elm.

He also suggests not planting trees within 15 feet of the lines.

“Before planting, consider how tall the tree will be and where the branches will be as the tree matures. If it will grow within that 15 foot area, then I suggest moving the tree,” he says.

The lush landscape is a part of what makes northeastern Oklahoma so beautiful. Working together, members and VVEC can keep the co-op’s service territory picturesque, and maintain reliable electric service.

Anyone with questions can call Lambert at (918) 371-2584.



Side-cutting this tree (above) removed branches from growing into the power line.

In 2010, the tree below was trimmed back below the cable TV line, which is the lowest line in the photo. Within a year, it has grown back almost to the height it was when it was trimmed.



RECIPE

Cheese on the Cob

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 5 ears corn, husks and silk removed
- 1 cup shredded Parmesan
- Chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Prepare grill.

Brush a thin layer of mayonnaise on corn. Sprinkle the corn with cheese, chili powder, salt and pepper. Wrap each corn with foil and place on the grill. Turn occasionally and cook for about 10 minutes (until kernels begin to brown). Serve warm.