Between the Lines

News from your community

Let’s connect

When we say that we live in a “connected” world, most of us think about technology like our smartphones and other devices and gadgets. But when you’re a member of an electric co-op (that’s you!), there’s so much more to being part of our connected co-op community. As a member of Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, you help to power good in our local community through initiatives like Project Help, food and clothing drives and other initiatives that help the most vulnerable in our community.

We depend on you because you power our success, and when CEMC does well, the community thrives because we’re all connected.

We greatly value our connection to you, the members we serve. And we’d like to help you maximize the value you can get from CEMC through a variety of programs and services that we offer our members. For example, we can help you save money on your energy bill through our free online energy resource center. When you download our SmartHub app, you can monitor and manage your home energy use, pay your bill online and access a menu of additional options for potential savings and more.

When you follow CEMC on social media, you can stay up-to-date on power restoration efforts, planned outages, co-op director elections, energy and safety tips, and more. You’ll also see photos of our line crews in action and our employees helping with community service projects — and who doesn’t enjoy seeing good things happening in our community?

By connecting with us, you can get real-time updates from your co-op. That’s why we want to make sure we have your most current contact information on hand. If we can’t connect with you on these platforms or in person, you could miss out on potential savings or important information.

CEMC relies on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, and up-to-date contact information from our members helps ensure that we can provide the highest level of service that you expect and deserve.

Updated contact information can even speed up the power restoration process during an outage. That’s because when you call to report an outage, our automated system recognizes your phone number and matches it with your account location. Accurate information helps our outage-management system predict the location and the possible cause of an outage, making it easier for CEMC crews to correct the problem.

We hope you will connect with us whenever and wherever you can — whether that means attending our annual meeting, providing feedback on a recent visit or call with our employees, or simply downloading our app.

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Youth programs have Feb. 26 deadline

Students interested in submitting short stories for the Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest, applying for the Senior Scholarship Program or entering the Calendar Art Contest, mark your calendars for Friday, Feb. 26, which is the deadline for each of Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation’s youth programs.

Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest
The Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest is open to high school juniors within CEMC’s service area. To enter, students are required to write short stories explaining how electric co-ops are “Building a Brighter Tennessee” through investments in energy, education, broadband, economic development and more. Each writer of the top 12 entries will win a $1,000 college scholarship to assist with his or her continued education. Additional details about the 2021 Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest can be found at youthtour.tnelectric.org.

Senior Scholarship Program
CEMC’s Senior Scholarship Program will help graduating seniors pay for college by awarding 12 scholarships of $1,000 each to qualifying students. Each interested student must submit a completed application, including two letters of reference and an original essay of at least 300 words describing what the student most looks forward to about attending college and how a scholarship, in terms of financial assistance, will help in completing his or her education. Applicants must have also attained a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade-point average, enroll or plan to enroll as a full-time student at an accredited Tennessee college (Murray State and Western Kentucky universities are included) and be a graduating senior whose parents or guardians are members of CEMC and receive electric service from CEMC at his or her primary residence. Applications are available online at cemc.org.

2022 CEMC Calendar Art Contest
The 2022 Calendar Art Contest is available to students in grades kindergarten through 12 who live within CEMC’s service area. Winning entries will receive cash prizes and be featured in CEMC’s 2022 calendar.

Entries will be accepted through participating schools, and each grade has been assigned a calendar month to illustrate: January, sixth grade; February, seventh; March, eighth; April, ninth; May, 10th; June, 11th; July, kindergarten; August, first; September, second; October, third; November, fourth; and December, fifth. Seniors will design the cover.

Five unexpected ways to keep your house warmer

You don’t have to crank up the thermostat to stay warm indoors this winter. Try these easy strategies to stay warm without sending your energy bill through the roof:

1. Add rugs to uncarpeted rooms. Rugs help insulate floors by trapping cool air underneath them and keeping it from wafting into the room. Rugs will keep your feet warm, too.
2. Install a filter whistle on your furnace. This $5 device will alert you when it’s time to change the filters. Dirty filters prevent air from easily flowing through your heating system, which means your furnace has to work harder — and use more energy — to keep you warm.
3. Move furniture away from air vents. The air vents on the walls or floor of your home might be eyesores, but hiding them under carpets and couches can render your heating and cooling system inefficient.
4. Add a humidifier. When the air in your home is too dry, the indoor air will feel cooler. Keeping the humidity in the home between 30 and 50 percent will make the air feel warmer — and stave off the dry skin that winter usually causes.
5. Insulate the door leading from the house to the attic. It’s an often-overlooked energy-waster that can let the unheated attic air seep into your home and send the warm air from the house into the cold attic.
Prevent frozen pipes by keeping your house warm

A mid-winter getaway seems like a dream during a pandemic, but if your family has found a safe destination and is heading out of town for a couple of weeks, leave the heat on at home.

It might seem like a waste of energy and money to heat an empty home, but the cost of cleaning up after a water pipe that has frozen and burst will be far more costly than leaving the thermostat set high enough to prevent the problem.

When the water inside a pipe freezes, it expands and puts pressure on the pipe. That pressure can cause the pipe to crack or break, and water can gush out, causing a nonstop flood of water and causing massive damage to your property.

Here are some precautions to take before you leave:

• Shut off the water at the cut-off valve.
• Remove garden hoses from outdoor faucets. Then drain those faucets and leave them in the “on” position.
• Leave the heat set at around 50 degrees.
• Open cabinet doors under sinks so the heat can circulate around the water pipes.
• If your washing machine is in an unheated garage, shut off the water to the appliance.
• Insulate pipes in the attic and in crawl spaces using a product designed specifically for pipes.
• Give your house key to a trusted neighbor who can check for frozen pipes while you’re away.
CEMC and TVA donate nearly $140,000 through COVID-19 Community Care Fund

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, in partnership with the Tennessee Valley Authority, is proud to announce that it has awarded nearly $140,000 thus far to local organizations aiding our communities during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

“These local organizations are working within our communities every day to provide much-needed assistance during these trying times,” said CEMC General Manager Chris A. Davis. “We are grateful for their efforts and proud to partner with TVA to support the wonderful work they do.”

Funding through CEMC was matched by TVA’s COVID-19 Community Care Fund, which was launched in April 2020 to help local power companies meet immediate needs in their communities by providing matching funds for local initiatives addressing hardships created by this pandemic. To date, more than 344 nonprofits and community programs have received more than $4.7 million across the TVA service area through the Community Care Fund.

“The Community Care Fund exemplifies the spirit of public power, which enables us to put people first,” said Jeannette Mills, TVA executive vice president and chief external relations officer. “We prioritize serving the region and partnering with our local power companies to support those hit hardest by the COVID-19 outbreak.”

Receiving donations to assist CEMC members with COVID-19 related relief during the second round of the Community Care Fund were:

- $15,000 — Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee
- $7,850 — Gallatin C.A.R.E.S.
- $7,850 — Good Samaritan of Stewart County
- $7,850 — Portland C.A.R.E.S.
- $7,850 — C.O.P.E. of Robertson County
- $7,850 — White House Hope Center
- $7,850 — Bethesda Center of Ashland City
- $7,850 — Urban Ministries of Clarksville

For more information about CEMC, visit us online at cemc.org. To learn more about TVA, see tva.gov.
Avoid solar energy scams

By Abby Berry

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, some businesses are, unfortunately, 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 successful solar installations, there are the occasional bad apples.

You’ve likely heard a story or two about solar vendors who 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:

• Talk to Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation first. Give Chad Corlew, CEMC’s energy consultant, a call at 1-800-987-2362. 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 that uses 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 that if you have any questions, you can always count on CEMC, your local 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.

Abby Berry is a program analyst for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation’s landscape.
Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation works very hard to keep your lights on and minimize interruptions. However, despite our best efforts, weather, car accidents and animals can sometimes create power outages.

Many times, these are brief interruptions that are restored quickly. Our team works hard to keep the lights on 99.97 percent of the time. Other times, widespread damage may make power restoration take much longer. During these times, a backup generator can be a handy tool to have around.

Backup generators come in many sizes — from permanently installed whole-home units to smaller, portable units that can run a few lights. This equipment can provide your family with comfort and convenience during a prolonged power outage. However, if used incorrectly, they can also create a dangerous situation for yourself and others.

Perhaps most importantly, never try to power the house wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet. This practice puts utility workers, your neighbors and your household at risk of electrocution. If you are interested in powering your whole home, contact a licensed electrician to ensure that proper safety equipment is installed to allow this to be done safely.

Here are a few more tips from the American Red Cross to ensure your backup generator is used safely.

• Plug appliances directly into the generator, or use a heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads.

• To avoid electrocution, keep the generator dry and do not use in rain or wet conditions. Operate it on a dry surface under an open canopy-like structure such as under a tarp held up on poles. Do not touch the generator with wet hands.

• Be sure to turn the generator off and let it cool down before refueling. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.

• Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning device inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area. Keep these devices outdoors and away from doors, windows and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.

Our energy experts here at CEMC will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Contact us at cemc.org or 800-987-2362.
WINTER ENERGY-SAVINGS WORD SEARCH

This winter, you can pitch in at home to help save energy!

Read the energy-saving tips below, then find and circle the bolded words in the puzzle.

MUSFASKSERUAZTHH
BETMIVLRJKMTJLBMCRRHQEMSKW
TDDGFWEDGUNMJL
KVKBPLXNRLVTZ
VYLXWLKSLHYASLP
SVPNTPKQIFAEZHK
NJCITEGVOSCPSCW
ZKMCHRANUOVERYO
GNIHTOLCRUSDMAFG
GIZCIFJBPINLGP
HJMWOVDBLYVIEJV
BCQKINWLINEBNNT
HNEXVRIDVCGBTG
CUJMQSCYPMPQDQKT

WORD BANK:

- Open curtains and blinds during the day to allow sunlight in to warm your home.
- Instead of turning up the thermostat, add more layers of clothing to keep your body warm.
- If you have a fireplace, ask an adult to close the flue when a fire is not burning.
- Unplug chargers when they’re not in use. They consume energy even when they’re not charging phones and other devices.
- Ask an adult to check the air filter for your home’s heating and cooling system. Filters should be replaced regularly to help the system run more efficiently.
- Always turn off lights when you leave a room.