



Willie's World

A Publication of Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative

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Electric cooperatives own and maintain roughly 65,000 miles, or 6 percent, of the nation's transmission lines and 2.5 million miles, or 42 percent, of its distribution lines.

Source: Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory



May 2010 Issue

KEEPING POWER FLOWING

We often take electricity for granted. It makes our homes comfortable day-in and day-out, and it's at the ready with little more than the flip of a switch.

But what goes on behind the scenes once that switch is thrown is far more complex. The power grid, which can be described as the largest, most complex machine ever built, involves an intricate network of power lines crisscrossing neighborhoods and open country, over mountains and through cities, which has evolved over the last century to supply consumers with safe, reliable, and affordable electricity.

The tricky thing about electricity is that it must be used, or moved to where it can be used, the second it's produced; it generally can't be stored like water or gas. What's more, electricity moves at the speed of light along the path of least resistance. This basic principle calls for a carefully monitored, intricate system to move it 24 hours a day.

Literally millions of miles of power lines span the United States in a complex series of "highways." These lines can be broken into two main

categories: **transmission**, the high-voltage "interstates" supported by steel towers and other similar structures that move electricity over vast distances; and **distribution**, the "local roads" that run through small towns and neighborhoods and into homes and businesses. Electric cooperatives own and maintain roughly 65,000 miles, or 6 percent, of the nation's transmission lines and 2.5 million miles, or 42 percent, of its distribution lines, according to the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. This co-op-maintained system could cover the distance to the moon and back five times over.

Arkansas Valley Electric alone has its own sizeable distribution system to maintain: our line workers stay busy keeping more than 7,800 miles of line up and running, 24/7.

When there's a problem somewhere on our system, a power outage typically results. Pinpointing the cause of an outage among those thousands of miles of line may seem like trying to find a needle in a haystack, but Arkansas Valley Electric line crews have the process down to a science.

To understand how co-op staff restore power during an outage, think of electricity distribution like a river in reverse. It originates at a single ocean of power—a generation plant—and diverges from there into a series of transmission lines, substations, and smaller feeder lines until it reaches homes and businesses at a trickle of its original strength. So when we start assessing storm damage, we work to fix the biggest problems first (those starting near the "ocean"), prioritizing repairs according to how they can get the most homes back in service the fastest.

It's a big job, but our line crews are up to the challenge. If there is an outage in your area, you can help crews pinpoint damage by calling us at 1-866-862-8322. Even if your neighbors have already called, every bit of information we have helps get the river flowing smoothly again.

Scott Gates
Chelsey Simpson contributed to this article.

Sources: North American Electric Reliability Corporation, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

MONTHLY SAFETY TIP

Willie Wirehand wants you to remember...



"When working outdoors, use only weather-resistant heavy gauge extension cords marked for outdoor use."

5 WAYS TO SPRING INTO ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Spring is a perfect time of year to make your home more energy-efficient. Here are five quick tips that will save both energy and money. To learn about additional ways to cut your energy bill this spring, visit TogetherWeSave.com, or contact an [energy expert](#) at Arkansas Valley Electric at 479-667-2176.

1. Seal the cracks and gaps around your home. Spring may be the right time to put away those storm windows, but it is also a good time to add weather-stripping and caulking around leaky window panes. TogetherWeSave.com shows how easy it is to use a caulking gun to seal up leaks around your house around doors, vents, ductwork and windows. A typical member at Arkansas Valley Electric can save more than \$200 annually.

2. Change filters regularly. Furnace and air conditioner filters need to be changed monthly and this can really help lower monthly energy bills. Dirty filters can restrict air flow and reduce the overall efficiency of your cooling system and make it work even harder on hot summer days.

3. Clean the refrigerator inside and out. Now is a good time to not only throw-out the leftover fruit cake from the holidays, but also to check the temperature

settings on your refrigerator. Ideally, a refrigerator's temperature should be between 37 and 40 degrees for maximum operating efficiency.

When it's time to replace that old refrigerator, be sure to buy an ENERGY STAR® rated appliance. Energy-efficient appliances can save Arkansas Valley Electric members as much as \$100 a year based on calculations from the [TogetherWeSave](http://TogetherWeSave.com) website.

4. Think sun block. TogetherWeSave.com demonstrates that by pulling the shades on your windows this spring and summer, you could save about \$35 a year. Your local hardware or do-it-yourself stores has lots of inexpensive window coverings. Best of all, by blocking the sun, your house will stay cool and comfortable year-round.

5. Enjoy the spring breezes. Use a clothesline throughout the warmer months to let the sun and breeze dry clothes naturally. This will reduce both energy and water bills, and add a genuine clean scent to your family's laundry.

You can learn more about ways to lower your monthly energy bill by visiting TogetherWeSave.com or by calling the energy experts at Arkansas Valley Electric.



Holiday Closing

Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative offices in Ozark, Waldron, Pocola, and Van Buren will be closed Monday, May 31, 2010 for the Memorial Day Holiday.

In case of emergency in the Ozark, Van Buren and Pocola service area call 1-800-468-2176.

Waldron service area calls 1-800-468-2152.

For automated outage reporting or account information call 1-866-TOAVECC.

MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY
MAY 31, 2010



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

During summer months when air conditioners work hardest, do energy-intensive tasks such as laundry and dish washing during off-peak energy demand hours, usually in the early morning or later evening.

Source: Alliance to Save Energy

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CO-OP CONNECTIONS CARD

Since its launch in August 2009, the Co-op Connections card program has saved Arkansas Valley Electric members **\$106,784.54** on prescription medication!

For more information, contact [Member Services](#) at 800-468-2176.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY ON THE GO

Doug Rye may be the best-known residential energy consultant in the nation. Since 1990, his weekly "Home Remedies" radio show has provided practical insight into home construction ideas and energy efficiency measures. Doug is known nationwide for his honest down-to-earth and friendly style.

Listen to Doug on KFAY 1032 AM and KWHN 1320 AM every Saturday morning.

Can't tune in to the live show? Download the [podcast](#) on your iPod or iPhone and play it at your convenience!

EARTH DAY



After all, we live here too!

Arkansas Valley Electric recently demonstrated the benefits and savings of using CFL's to Earth Day participants in Waldron.

Did you know, compared to conventional fluorescent bulbs, CFL's consume 75% less energy, last up to 10 times longer, and typically pay for themselves within 2 months?

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We Welcome Your [Comments and suggestions](#).