

**Beware of Bill Payment Scam p. 3**

# Making History, Friends and Fun on Youth Tour

Joining more than 1,000 young people from across the country, Oklahoma Youth Tour delegates, including two sponsored by Verdigris Valley Electric Cooperative, experienced the sites, sounds and history of Washington, D.C. this summer.

The 48th annual Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, which was held June 16 through June 21, included over 70 students from Oklahoma, among them Luke Stringer and Colton Hayes from Oologah.

Oklahoma's delegation of young people toured the U.S. Capitol, Smithsonian museums, Arlington National Cemetery, and enjoyed a riverboat cruise down the Potomac River.

They also visited the U.S. Holocaust Museum, the Pentagon, Mount Vernon, and Ford's Theatre.

The group hosted a Congressional Summit for the Oklahoma Delegation, aides and guests, assisted by Congressmen Frank Lucas and Tom Cole, and Senator Jim Inhofe and their staff.

"In my opinion, the most exciting part of the trip was the stark contrast between our nation's capitol and rural Oklahoma," says Stringer. "The cultural diversity and urban setting of Washington enriched the experience."

Hayes agreed, saying "Experiencing the differences between the rural Oklahoma I know and love, and the urban style of living in Washington, D.C." was most exciting for him.

He goes on to say, "Trying new foods, meeting new people, seeing new places and things," were some of the week's highlights. "I enjoyed every minute of it," he adds.

"Other highlights of the trip for me were meeting other invested students from across the state and country, and getting to share the unforgettable history and culture of D.C. with them," says Stringer. "The whole trip was a highlight."



*VVEC's Youth Tour delegates Colton Hayes (left) and Luke Stringer pause for a photo in front of the U.S. Capitol. The pair begin their senior year at Oologah High School in August.*

Our Youth Tour essay contest is an annual event and open to any student who is a junior at a high school in VVEC's service territory. The tour is coordinated each year by the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives.

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**Summer Residential Rates**

April through September usage,  
May through October billing

Customer Charge                      \$20.20

**Energy Charge**

1st 2,000 kWh      \$0.0809/kWh  
Over 2,000 kWh    \$0.0860/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.

# Bigger Bills, Because of the Box

Do you have a satellite or cable box around your TV with recording capabilities, often called a DVR?

Chances are, you do. With 160 million of these so called 'set-top boxes' in the United States, there is roughly one box for every two people in America, and this number is growing.

These boxes are generally running 24 hours a day, even when not in use. They are massive energy hogs that can use as much electricity as your refrigerator. A recent study by the National Resources Defense Council found that these boxes use roughly \$3 billion in electricity per year. Most of this electricity is not put to use watching or recording any television.

Currently, manufacturers have little incentive to develop set-top boxes that are more energy efficient. However the EPA's Energy Star

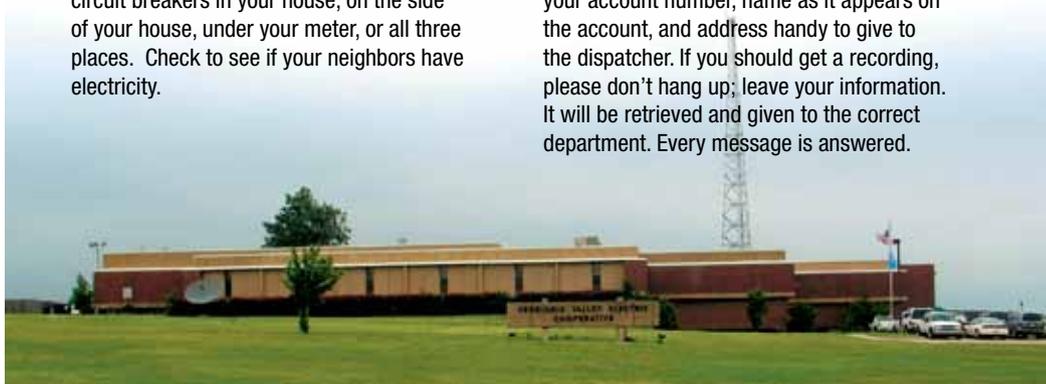


standards are beginning to tighten up, and by 2013 there will be new standards that will mandate that these boxes be more energy efficient in order to receive an Energy Star label. Cisco Systems, one of the largest makers, now offers a fanless DVR box to help meet energy efficiency regulations.

Until these efficient boxes are more widely available, consider unplugging your box when going away for a few days. Also, it may be wise to reconsider the need for multiple recording set-up boxes in the house.

## 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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## Beware of Bill Payment Scam

Co-ops around the country are warning members about a scam in which residents are told President Obama will help pay energy bills under a special federal program once they provide personal information such as a bank routing number or their Social Security number.

"We urge our members to guard their personal account and banking information and to never share this information with strangers," says VVEC General Manager Alice Houston.

Six members of the Lexington, S.C co-op were bilked, and a few even had their service disconnected as a result, reports Eddie Richardson, vice-president for member services for the S.C. co-op.

"They were thinking their bill was paid without checking with us to be sure," says Richardson, who notified the state's department of consumer affairs about the incidents. "Others called us, saying they didn't get the credit on their accounts."

Better Business Bureaus in several states also have issued consumer warnings, as well as attorneys general in Mississippi, North Carolina, Arizona, and elsewhere.

"If anyone has questions about programs, organizations or agencies who offer assistance with utility bills, we encourage them to contact the Better Business Bureau to make sure they are legitimate," says Houston. She goes on to point out VVEC consumer services representatives have contact information on area programs and agencies who might offer assistance.

## CRASH! What to do if You Hit a Utility Pole

If you have a car accident that involves a utility pole, don't get out of your car.

Instead, stay inside and use your cell phone to call 911. If you don't have your phone with you, yell for help until someone else offers to make the emergency call.

The reason: Until the electric utility line crew de-energizes the power line, you have to assume the wire is "live" and can electrocute you and your passengers. Wait for the OK from the pros before touching anything outside of your car.

Of course, if your car catches on fire, you'll need to get out in a hurry. In that case, jump out so you land – on both feet – as far away from your car as possible. Hop – don't walk – away from the car, making sure that both feet touch the ground at the same time with each hop.

Do not touch the utility pole, any utility wire or anything that's touching or even close to a utility line. Assume everything is energized with electricity and that it can harm or even kill you if you touch it.

Don't  
**SWEAT**  
Summer Electric  
**BILLS**

As temperatures rise, there's plenty of things you can do to save energy and trim your electric bill.

Raise your thermostat a couple of degrees—78° is the most efficient setting. Ceiling fans are a great way to move air around the house, and you can shade your electric bill by planting trees on the south side of your home.

Don't sweat summer electric bills—check out [www.EnergySavers.gov](http://www.EnergySavers.gov) for more ways to save!

Brought to you by  America's Electric Cooperatives

# Can Hot Weather Cause Electrical Outages?

When it's sweltering outside, everyone wants to keep cool indoors – so we all crank up the air conditioning at the same time. That creates a greater demand for electricity than when the weather is milder and homeowners can open their windows or leave the AC on a less-intense setting.

When that happens, power

lines tend to heat and expand, which in turn can force the lines to sag a bit and touch tree limbs and branches. That contact can result in short circuits.

At the same time, cables, switches and other equipment react to the high electric current by stretching, which can magnify minor flaws in insulation and connections.

Plus, lightning strikes are more common when it's hot outside. If lightning strikes VVEC's equipment, outages can occur.

We can't always prevent outages caused by extra-hot weather and super-high demand. Still, our crews are trained to restore service as quickly and as safely as possible.

## Eat Locally; Save Energy

It's a no-brainer that buying fresh food from local farmers helps the community's economy. It's also an energy saver.

When you patronize local farmer's markets and produce stands, you forego the food sold in grocery stores, which ship in much of their fare from out of town. The more traveling your fruit and vegetables have to do before you buy them, the more greenhouse emissions they contribute to the

environment.

In fact, some estimate that between 5 percent and 20 percent of the energy spent in the production of food is for transporting it – sometimes as much as 1,500 miles from where it was grown – to your local grocer.

So do yourself a favor by enjoying fresh, flavorful, locally grown food. Do your neighbors a good turn by buying from the food producers in your own community,

or at least those who grow within a 100-mile radius. And do your small part for the environment by choosing your chow from the many locals who can deliver it to you with a far smaller carbon footprint than stores that import it from far away.

For a list of local farmers markets, visit [www.okgrown.com](http://www.okgrown.com), and click on the markets tab.



### RECIPE

## Red Cinnamon Candy Pickles

Peel and core two gallons of large cucumbers, slice in thick slices. Soak 24 hours in 2 cups lime and 8 1/2 quarts water. Drain and set 3 hours in cold water. Drain and cover with 1 cup vinegar, 1 small bottle red food coloring and 1 teaspoon alum and water to cover. Simmer for 2 hours; drain and make syrup using:

- 2 cups vinegar
- 10 cups sugar
- 2 cups water
- 8 cinnamon sticks
- 1 (9 oz.) pkg. red hots

Heat and pour over slices. For 3 days, reheat. On the 4th day, reheat, place in jars and seal.