

Operation Round Up Reaches \$700,000 Mark

Look What We Did Together

Tri-State EMC (TSEMC) would like to thank our members who participate in Operation Round Up. By choosing to round up your electric bill each month to the nearest dollar, you put your pennies to work. Contributing members have allowed our TSEMC Foundation Board of Directors to grant just over \$700,000 to enrich the communities we serve.

“Operation Round Up fits perfectly with the principles of our cooperative. By pooling our individual resources, we make a big difference for our communities as a whole,” says Stacy Chastain, Manager of Tri-State EMC. “While individual contributions average only 50 cents a month, when added together with my contribution and those of many other TSEMC members, we can make a big impact in the communities we serve.”

For the average cost of one cup of specialty coffee per year (\$6), our contributing members have helped fill community food pantries. Your combined pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters provide hope, shelter and comfort for children and families in need and crisis.

Schools in our communities have received funds to support technology and literacy programs.

With your continued support, Operation Round



Up will continue to grow and enrich the communities in which we live and work.

These are some of the organizations that received funds from Operation Round Up in recent months:

- Community Meal
- Copper Basin Elementary Snack Pack
- Fannin County Brain Injury Support Group
- Snack in a Backpack Inc.
- Fannin County Shop With a Cop
- Good Samaritans of Fannin County Inc.
- First United Methodist Church/Pastor’s Discretionary Fund
- Fannin County Special Olympics
- Mineral Springs Advocates Inc.



Holiday Office Closing

Tri-State EMC will be closed Friday, April 15, in observance of Good Friday. We wish everyone a Happy Easter!

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Sign Up to Receive an E-bill

Reduce paper clutter by enrolling in e-billing, Tri-State EMC's paperless billing solution. When you sign up for an e-bill, you receive an email each month when your current monthly bill is ready to be viewed. This email will provide a link to your bill.

You can also pay your bill online. All online payments are processed by Southeastern Data Cooperative Inc. (SEDC). Better yet, sign up for automatic draft payments and have your monthly bill debited from your credit card, checking or savings account.

E-billing eliminates paper billing, while giving you the same information. Anytime you need a hard copy of your bill, just contact the office or print it out directly from your computer at home.

E-billing is provided through a secure server, so your information is private and safe. It is also fast, informative, simple and secure. Call TSEMC at (706) 492-3251 to sign up for e-billing today.



Take Steps to Avoid Being a Scam Victim

The world, it seems, never lacks for folks who want to separate you from your hard-earned money. Electric co-op members are some of the hardest working and most trusting people in the nation. Identity thieves and scammers have caught on to this and are preying on unsuspecting members by pretending to be co-op employees.

Reportedly, imposters call and demand bill payment over the phone by credit card. Some scammers may not take no for an answer and repeatedly call back demanding money, getting more and more forceful each time. They may call late at night or on weekends when your local cooperative office is closed.

Never give out your personal information—credit card numbers, Social Security number or bank account

numbers—over the phone unless you initiate the call. If anyone calls soliciting this information, hang up immediately and call your local police department or sheriff's office.

Tri-State EMC employees will never call and demand payment over the phone. Call us at (706) 492-3251 if you have questions about your account.

Our employees also drive vehicles that are clearly marked with the co-op's name. If you suspect someone might be an imposter, ask for identification. You're encouraged to call the TSEMC office

and verify the information given to you.

Remember: Protect your information like it is a hidden treasure chest and only you have the key. Thieves see your information as treasure to be stolen, so do not give others access to it.



Get Your Ducts in a Row

By Miranda Boutelle

Understanding the basics of how a heating and cooling system works will help you create a more efficient, comfortable living space. To get started, let's go over how it works.

If you have a forced air system, you have ducts. A forced air system consists of the equipment that heats or cools the air and the ductwork that moves it around the home. Your furnace, or air handler, has a fan inside that pushes the heated or cooled air through the supply ducts into the rooms. The return ducts bring air back to the furnace to be heated or cooled again and sent back through the home.

This continuous loop of supply and return is susceptible to inefficient practices and leakage.

Here are some steps you can take to keep your system running efficiently and maintain a comfortable living space:

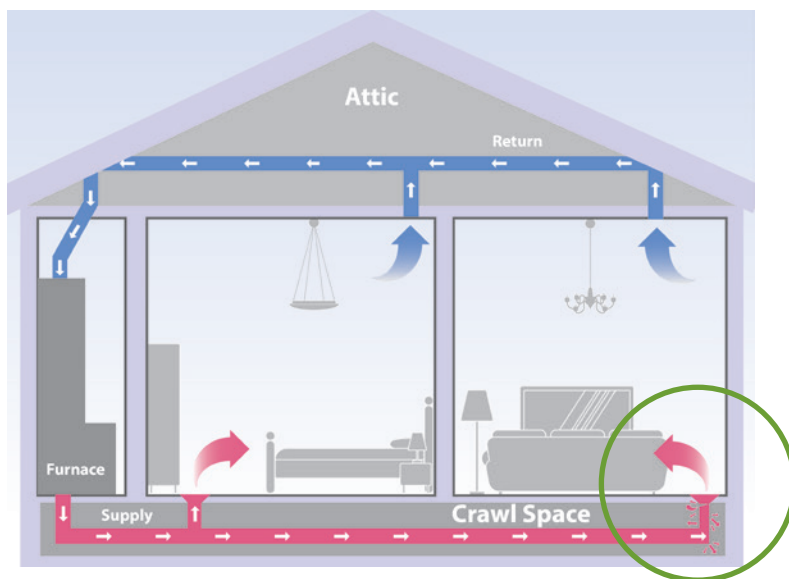
Check your vent dampers. Make sure the air you paid to heat or cool is freely moving through the home. Closing registers does not save energy. It can cause your system to work harder, shortening its life span and increasing duct leakage. Check that your supply register dampers are open and not blocked by furniture or rugs throughout your home. This is easy to do and costs nothing.

Seal your ducts. If your ductwork travels through an attic, crawl space or other unconditioned—not heated or cooled—space, it could have holes, cracks or gaps that cause duct leakage. This wastes energy and money by heating or cooling spaces you don't use. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates 20-30% of the air moved through duct systems is lost due to duct leakage. You could have the most efficient heating or cooling unit available, but if your ducts leak, you are wasting energy.

In addition to wasted energy, leaky ducts can cause air quality issues. Leaks in the return ducts can pull air into the ducts from surrounding spaces, through the furnace and then deliver it into the home. This can introduce dust, dirt, insulation particles and other gross stuff that is in your attic, crawl space or walls.

Sealing ducts can be difficult because they are hidden behind the walls, floor and/or ceiling. Attics and crawl spaces can be hard places to work. You can hire a professional to test your duct system for leakage with specialized equipment and seal your ducts. If you seal ducts yourself, do not use duct tape. Duct tape dries out quickly and loses its adhesion. Seal with metal tape or duct mastic specifically designed for the job.

One relatively easy place to seal is where the duct meets



Holes, cracks or gaps in your ductwork cause leakage. This wastes energy and money by heating or cooling spaces you don't use. You can hire a professional to test your ducts for leakage with specialized equipment and seal your ducts. Graphic Source: Duy Mai, Pioneer Utility Resources

the floor, wall or ceiling. Remove the registers and look for cracks or gaps around the edges. Remember to wear gloves to protect your hands.

Change your filter. The filter is on the return side of the duct system. It could be in the return registers or in the furnace. Checking your system's filter regularly and replacing it when dirty can help you improve your heating and cooling efficiency. Save by buying filters in bulk or set up auto ship for every three months.

In most cases, filters are designed to protect the furnace, not improve air quality. If you are worried about your home's air quality, getting the ducts cleaned and sealed can help. Add an air purifier if you need additional air filtration. Look for Energy Star-rated models.

Now that you know the inner workings of your HVAC system and what it needs to run efficiently, you can improve and maintain the comfort in your home year-round.

Miranda Boutelle is the Director of Operations and Customer Engagement at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy-efficiency company. She also writes on energy-efficiency topics 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% of the nation's landscape.

Tree Trimming Keeps Everyone Safe

If you love the big trees in your yard, you might not want to see Tri-State EMC's tree-trimming crews coming. But keeping trees and other vegetation away from overhead power lines is necessary to keep your neighborhood safe and the electricity on.

It's important to maintain a clearance of 20 feet on each side of the power line so branches, leaves and tree trunks won't touch the wires, even when they sway in the wind. So crews come out every few years to cut branches within an unsafe distance.

Trees and bushes that touch power lines can conduct electricity and interrupt the delivery of power to your house. In that case, it's probably not hazardous, but your lights might blink on and off. More serious problems occur when trees or branches fall and rip down lines or damage equipment. That can cause a lengthy power outage for your home and all your neighbors' houses.

An even greater concern is when a tree touches a power line, posing a safety hazard to anyone who comes into

contact with the tree or the line.

If a tree or other vegetation is growing too close to a power line near your home, give Tri-State EMC a call at (706) 492-3251 so someone can check to see if it needs to be trimmed. A word of caution: Don't trim it yourself. It takes a trained professional to work that close to a power line without getting hurt.

Next time you plant a tree in your yard, consider how tall and wide it will eventually grow. If it potentially will come within 20 feet of a power line, plant it a little farther away.

By law, everyone—including homeowners—must contact 811 by dialing 811 or 1 (800) 282-7411 for Georgia; 1 (800) 351-1111 for Tennessee; or 1 (800) 632-4949 for North Carolina at least 48 hours

before beginning any mechanized digging on your property. If you are unsure whether you should notify 811 before you break ground, remember—even if your digging project is small, it's always best to call.



April Is Safe Digging Month

Know What's Below: Call Before You Dig

Whether it's a dreamed-of deck addition or a landscaping masterpiece, spring weather is a great time for outdoor improvement plans to actually play out. But if your planned projects include digging, like planting a tree or using a backhoe for trench work, you'll have to wait a few more days so the job can be done safely.

Underground utilities, such as buried gas, water and electric lines, can be a shovel thrust away from turning a summer project into a disaster.

To find out where utility lines run on your property, you must dial 811 from anywhere in the country a few days

prior to digging. Your call will be routed to a local one-call center. Tell the operator where you're planning to dig and what type of work you will be doing, and affected local utilities will be notified.

In a few days, a locator will arrive to designate the approximate location of any underground lines, pipes and cables with flags or marking paint so you'll know what's below. Then the safe digging can begin.

Never assume the location or depth of underground utility lines. There's no need: The 811 service is free, prevents the inconvenience of having utility service interrupted and can help you avoid serious injury. For more information about local services, visit www.call811.com.



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

