



Serving more than 30,000 customers in Hawkins and Hamblen counties.



1200 W. Main St.
P.O. Box 190
Rogersville, TN 37857
423-272-8821 • 423-235-6811
Website: www.holstonelectric.com

Church Hill office
Highway 11-W and South Central Avenue
Church Hill, TN 37642
423-357-6441

Russellville office
Highway 11-E
Russellville, TN 37860
423-581-2066

Office hours: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Monday-Friday

General Manager
Larry Elkins

Board of Directors
President: Otis Munsey
Vice President: William W. Bales
Secretary-Treasurer:
Danny Cockreham
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Lynn Parker
Phil Pierce
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To report an outage or electrical emergency, call 423-272-8821 or 423-235-6811 day or night.

Trimming future problems

Autumn heralds some annual traditions at my home. Any time we get the opportunity, my wife, Pam, and I like to drive throughout the area and enjoy the vibrant fall foliage. Sometimes on these trips, we'll spot areas where Asplundh contract tree-trimming crews have been working by the road, trimming branches growing too close to power lines.

I enjoy the beauty that trees add to our region, especially at this time of year. But I also enjoy the comfort of knowing power will be available when I need it. At Holston EC, we're committed to providing you with reliable power. There are some things we can't stop — severe storms, strong winds, icy precipitation — but we do what we can to prevent other outage culprits.

As you can probably guess, weather-related events cause the majority of power outages for electric cooperatives — a whopping 19 percent, according to a survey by our national service organization, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. But vegetation — trees, shrubs, brush — growing too close to power lines and distribution equipment leads to 15 percent of power interruptions.

To "cut back" on potential tree-related problems, Holston EC operates an aggressive right-of-way maintenance program. We provide more than \$1.3 million in our budget to keep all forms of vegetation trimmed and/or cleared out of the power lines. We want to eliminate future problems that

may be caused by foliage growing under lines, over-hanging branches, leaning or other types of "danger" trees that could pull down a power line



Larry Elkins
General Manager
Holston Electric Cooperative

if they fall and trees that could grow into lines. We divided the service system into five sections, and we're on a plan to cover one section each year. In fact, we completed the first tree-trim cycle of the entire distribution system in January and then started a new trim cycle in the western end of system.

It's a job that's never done — by the time crews finish trimming activities along our more than 2,700 miles of distribution lines, vegetation has started to grow back at the starting point.

In working to keep a safe, reliable and affordable supply of power flowing to your home or business, we

It's a job that's never done ...

occasionally need your help. Let us know if you notice dangerous trees or hazardous branches that might pose a risk to our power lines. Even more important, before planting trees in your yard, think about how tall they may grow and how wide their branches may spread. As a rule of thumb, 25 feet of ground-to-sky clearance should be available on each side of our utility poles to give power lines plenty of space. Choose tree varieties with care, and plant with power lines in mind.

Thanks for your help as we work together to keep electricity reliable. To report trees you think may pose a problem, call 423-272-8821 or 235-6811. To find out more about proper tree-planting, visit www.arborday.org.

JB and the Honey Beans to entertain at Holston EC annual meeting

Mark your calendar for the 70th Annual Meeting of Holston Electric Cooperative on Tuesday, Oct. 12. As annual meetings have been in the past, this one promises to be an enjoyable event for the entire family. The main entertainment this year is the lively musical group JB and the Honey Beans.

Known throughout the region for outstanding vocal harmony and a wide variety of crowd-pleasing tunes, JB and the Honey Beans will take the stage with an enjoyable evening of exciting music for Holston EC members. This enthusiastic three-piece guitar and vocal group is known as part of the backup band for Percy Sledge, who had the hit we all remember, "When a Man Loves a Woman." JB and the Honey Beans had the honor of singing with Sledge in Gastonia, N.C., on the very night he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. What a privilege and a tribute to their fabulous vocal harmonies!

Based in Greeneville, JB and the Honey Beans have been together for more than four years, providing lively and fun shows to audiences of all ages. Bringing a rich and varied background to the stage, they cover popular music from the 1940s to present day. When this group hits the stage, all the audience can just kick back and enjoy. But don't think you'll be sitting for long! Get ready to join in on the fun as their song selections just might have you out of your seat, dancing and singing along!

"JB," or John Brown, is an extraordinary guitarist with more than 20 years of experience with the show band The Spontanes and



JB and the Honey Beans From left are Darlene "Honey" McCleish Brown, John "JB" Brown and Ashley Bean.

Harley Hogg and the Rockers. Two talented ladies, Honey McCleish Brown and Ashley Bean, join JB to share not only backup vocals but also the lead. They mix up tunes from classic standards such as "Chattanooga Choo Choo" and Patsy Cline's "Crazy" to hits by the Eagles, Nora Jones and Alicia Keys. You will hear something you like in this terrific mix of tunes!

JB and the Honey Beans have filmed "Song of the Mountain" in Marion, Va., which will soon be aired on PBS. Tim White, host of the show, introduced this group as one that comes along just every once in a while and "something very special!"

Be sure to look for JB and the Honey Beans on this fun, award-winning show that you won't want to miss!

Holston Electric Cooperative 70th Annual Meeting Tuesday, Oct. 12 HEC headquarters, Rogersville	
Member Registration	4-6 p.m.
FREE Barbecue Dinner (served by Hawkins County 4-H members and leaders)	4-6:30 p.m.
Entertainment	4:30-7 p.m.
Business Session Business Meeting and Director Election	7 p.m.

Customer charge increases effective Sept. 1

As the cost of materials, fuel, equipment, insurance, taxes, labor and everything else has increased over the past seven years, Holston EC has managed to maintain electric service without an increase in the customer charge, the fixed amount of the bill each month that covers the costs of providing service to each location. It includes continued maintenance of all facilities needed to get power to the meter; obtaining the meter reading each month; calculating, printing and mailing the bill each month; and maintaining the facilities and offices to conduct business. The customer charge for residential accounts will be \$12 each month, an increase of \$3. The customer charge for general power accounts will be \$14, an increase of \$2.50.

The decision to increase the customer charges came after lengthy discussions by the board of directors.

Operating costs have risen steadily since the customer charge was last increased in 2003. Board members felt that the required operating funds could most fairly be distributed among all Holston EC members through the customer charge rather than increasing the kilowatt-hour or use charges.

A survey of other power distributors in East Tennessee revealed that their customer charges were significantly higher than Holston EC's. Even after the September increases are implemented, Holston EC charges will still be lower than surrounding systems.

Announcing an increase in charges is never an easy or popular thing to do, but this decision will protect service reliability and provide future growth potential while still maintaining Holston EC's status of having one of the lowest rates among area power distributors.

World's most expensive dirt

The most expensive dirt in the world may lurk in your home's heating-and-cooling system. If neglected, dust collecting in the equipment's air filter could increase your energy bills hundreds of dollars every year and result in costly repair or replacement costs.

Dirty filters cause a system to work harder and break down faster. That's because unfiltered dust and grime work into critical parts, creating friction that causes unnecessary wear and, eventually, failure.

As you move around your home, you drive dust into the air from carpets, drapes and furniture. Pets generate dust particles by being groomed, shedding and tracking in dirt from outside. Regardless of where it comes from, dust trapped in a heating and cooling system air filter leads to several problems, including:

- Reduced airflow in the home and up to 15 percent higher operating costs.



- Costly duct cleaning or replacement.
- Lowered system efficiency.

Every time a system with a dirty filter kicks on, the day of reckoning — total replacement — draws closer. To avoid this expense, change filters monthly when a system's in regular use. Discuss cleaning the unit and ductwork with your heating and cooling service professional.

While most types of filters must be replaced, a few filters are reusable. They're available in a variety of types and efficiencies, rated by a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV). MERV, a method developed by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, tests filter effectiveness. The higher the MERV number, the higher the filter's effectiveness at keeping dust out of your system.

To learn more about how to save energy around your home, visit www.TogetherWeSave.com.

The big green box

by Megan McKoy-Noe

They're big. They're green. They generally sit on concrete, often within housing developments. Some folks don't like these "electrical boxes" (a common nickname for pad-mount transformers) and try to hide them with bushes, fences or flower beds. But stay clear: Even small additions around pad-mount transformers create hazards.

To improve aesthetics of new neighborhoods, developers often put in underground power lines. While this eliminates utility poles and overhead wires, it requires installing pad-mounted transformers in some front yards. Unfortunately, some homeowners, concerned about curb appeal, attempt to screen padmount transformers from view, creating an unsafe situation for all concerned, including electric cooperative lineworkers.

"We realize landscaping represents an investment of time and money," says Holston Electric Cooperative Technical Services Supervisor Robert Davenport. "We respect the effort and care our members invest in making their properties attractive. However, landscaping around electrical equipment interferes with our ability to deliver reliable power."

Holston Electric Cooperative recommends leaving at least 10 feet of clear space in front of pad-mount transformers. Linemen repair units while they are energized so homeowners don't experience an interruption in service. To ensure safety, they use an 8-foot fiberglass hot stick that requires about 10 feet of "elbow room" in front of the access panel. Routine maintenance on the units is performed at least every two to three years.

"In some cases, members may leave plenty of space in front of the transformer but grow vegetation on the other three sides," explains



Davenport. "This invites other transformer problems. For example, plant roots can interfere with its operation. Overheating is another big concern that can cause service interruptions when air circulation is compromised."

Pad-mounted transformers surrounded by vegetation or a structure may overheat and cause service interruptions when the air circulation around them is compromised. Allow at least 4 feet of space on both sides

and behind the transformer.

Members should also be aware that plantings along rights of way — strips of land owned by a member on which the co-op places poles, wires and other equipment like pad-mount transformers — could be damaged by co-op vehicles.

"Occasionally, we may need to repair a transformer, and eventually transformers must be upgraded and replaced," says Davenport. "To perform this work, line trucks must be driven into the right of way and the transformer lifted out. Although we try to minimize the impact, plants will be damaged if they're in the way."

Call before you dig!

Because underground service continues from the transformer to your home, you should never dig anywhere in your yard without first calling to find out where cables are buried.

Transformers need to be left alone

- Never let anything grow closer than 10 feet from a pad-mount transformer. (The access panel is marked by a handle, lock and sticker on the front.)
- Never enclose a pad-mount transformer with fencing, shrubs or anything else with less than a 10-foot-wide gate or opening.
- Never allow children to play near pad-mount transformers.
- Never pour waste oils, chemicals or other liquids on or near a pad-mount transformer. These liquids can seep into the ground and damage underground cables.

Megan McKoy-Noe writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives. Horry Electric Cooperative in South Carolina and Grey-Stone Power Corporation in Georgia contributed to this article.

Short circuits: Old wiring could be hazardous

Residential electrical wiring changed during the 20th century as new appliances appeared on the scene and electricity evolved from a luxury to a mainstay. More appliances at home led to safety improvements and an increased number of room outlets, leaving older home wiring to play catch-up.

Electric capacity is a major concern with older wiring systems. Homeowners in the 1930s didn't use a lot of electrical appliances, except for a refrigerator, a few lights and a radio. An explosion of appliance purchases followed in the late 1940s and early '50s. But the arrival of air conditioning during the 1960s soon rendered many mid-century home electrical systems obsolete. More recently, residences built as little as 20 years ago might be insufficient for handling entertainment systems and personal computers.

Each year, household wiring and lighting cause an estimated 32,000 home fires. On average, these fires result in 950 injuries, 220 deaths and nearly \$674 million in property damage, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

"Residential electrical systems are seldom inspected after they are installed and tend to be destroyed in house fires," explains John Drengenberg, consumer affairs manager for Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL), an independent product safety testing and certification organization based in Chicago. "Homeowners should not assume all is well simply because fuses aren't blowing, circuit breakers aren't tripping or they're not receiving shocks or smelling burnt plastic. Inside the walls, wire insulation could be cracking. The wood frame above plaster ceilings could also become charred by lightbulbs that are too close to the ceiling or higher in wattage than the fixture's rating."

To avoid such hazards, consumers should understand the limits of home wiring systems. Often, this depends on when a home was built or if the electrical system was upgraded. In other cases, though, telltale signs may indicate a problem.

"Anytime you receive a shock from an electrical appliance outlet or wall switch in your home, it's a warning that you should talk with a qualified electrician," Drengenberg cautions. "If a fuse blows or a circuit breaker trips right after you replace or reset it, you have trouble somewhere. Flickering lights could mean loose connections, overloaded circuits, improper wiring or arcing and sparking inside walls.

"If your receptacles or plugs are hot to the touch — you can't keep your hand on them for more than five seconds — you may have an overload."

When too much current gets drawn, wires heat up, baking and eventually weakening the insulation. Wires with damaged, decayed or brittle insulation can lead to shocks and fires.



Another issue associated with older home wiring systems is the number of receptacles in each room. Today's electrical code requires outlets be placed every 12 feet of running wall space, about one per wall in the average 10-by-12-foot room. Houses built before 1956 were required to have outlets placed every 20 feet, while homes built before 1935 weren't required to have wall outlets at all.

"Relying on extension cords is not the answer," says Drengenberg. "Extension cords are meant for temporary use only and should not be a substitute for permanent wiring."

Proper grounding, meanwhile, prevents painful or even deadly electrical shocks when electricity flows through an improper path. Every home electrical system should have some type of grounding.

Newer homes are wired with cables that include a ground wire. The ground wire allows for use of three-pronged receptacles needed to power certain appliances, particularly ones with metal shells such as refrigerators and washing machines.

Many wiring systems installed in the 1950s and earlier used nonmetallic wiring, which lacked a ground wire. Homes from this era boast only two-pronged outlets, unsuitable for many modern conveniences. Simply replacing two-pronged receptacles with three-pronged receptacles violates the National Electrical Safety Code if no ground path exists.

In some cases, older homes may feature newer wiring systems. But the era when the wiring was upgraded impacts electrical limitations. Before buying a home, have someone certified in electrical work inspect the system to be safe. Visit www.inspectorseek.com for referrals.

