

TVA board approves rate increase

Citing coal, natural gas and purchased power costs that are significantly higher than budgeted for 2006, the TVA board of directors has approved an increase of 9.95 percent in firm wholesale electric rates.

The rate increase will be applied April 1 to customers of Pickwick Electric Cooperative and is necessary to offset more than \$500 million in increased fuel and purchased power costs TVA has incurred since last July, when the board approved the last rate increase of 7.5 percent.

"Rate increases of any magnitude are never welcome news," said PEC President Karl Dudley. "But TVA's need to increase wholesale power rates is due to a period of high price volatility in the coal, natural gas and purchased power markets since last summer."

TVA said the rate increase will provide an estimated \$276 million in additional cash at the end of fiscal year 2006. Reductions in costs and cash reserves are expected to save another \$240 million.

"Last summer, when we approved the 2006 budget recommendation, no one could have possibly predicted the events that have affected our nation's coal and natural gas markets," TVA Chairman Bill Baxter said. "Our forecasts show that by the end of this fiscal year, costs for fuel and purchased power will have increased \$1.1 billion since 2004. That's a 52-percent increase in two years."

Baxter said TVA has absorbed a significant percentage of the increase and worked very hard to hold the rate increase below 10 percent.

Dudley said that power distributors across the Tennessee Valley are united in the belief that TVA must remain vigilant in its efforts to implement cost-containment measures and maximize resources for the benefit of all consumers.

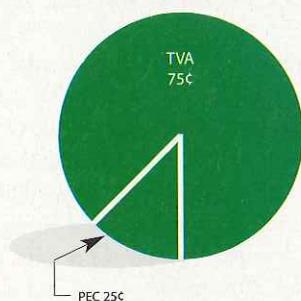
The TVA board also directed staff to proceed with testing a fuel cost adjustment mechanism that could adjust the agency's rates up and down as fuel and purchased power costs rise and fall.

"The fuel cost adjustment is a solution that would keep TVA's rates more closely aligned to costs and help reduce the need for large rate adjustments in the future," said Baxter. "Most utilities across the nation already have this type of mechanism in place to recover these costs."

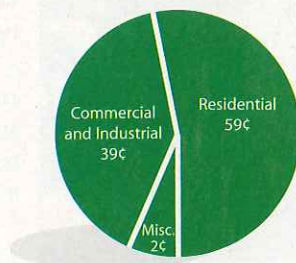
Dudley said that prior to its implementation, power distributors want TVA to continue a dialogue with them in order to test and fine-tune the mechanism so that when implemented it will be effective.

"Obviously, this is a new concept for Tennessee Valley power distributors, and we want to give any proposal from TVA due diligence to ensure that any possible rate impact on our customers will be as little as possible," said Dudley.

PEC revenue distribution

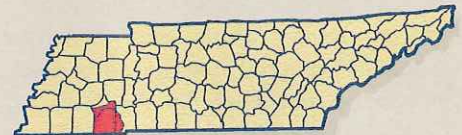


PEC income



Pickwick Electric Cooperative

Serving members in all of McNairy County and portions of Chester, Hardeman and Hardin counties in Tennessee and Alcorn and Tishomingo counties in Mississippi



530 Mulberry Avenue

P.O. Box 49

Selmer, TN 38375

Phone Numbers:

(731) 645-3411

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Web site:

www.pickwick-electric.com

These five pages contain local

news and information

for members of Pickwick

Electric Cooperative.



Directors receive board leadership certification

The Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association (TECA) offers a training and development plan for directors of its member electric cooperatives. This program, known as the TECA package plan, is composed of five National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) courses that are necessary for board certification.

To achieve the board leadership certification, each director is required to complete a total of 10 credit hours of classroom study. The courses, taught by NRECA instructors, provide an excellent avenue for professional growth.

Four Pickwick Electric Cooperative directors recently received board leadership certification. They are, from left, front row, Dean Glidewell and Harold Finley and back row, Owen Qualls and John Roberts.



New telephone system installed



To better serve our members, Pickwick Electric Cooperative has installed a new telephone system. This new system will allow our members to call a direct line to the person with whom they wish to talk. Below is a list of employees and their direct lines. Customers can still call 645-3411 or (800) 372-8258 to get the operator, who in turn can connect you to your party.

Beverly Lambert	646-3786	Jeanie Montgomery	646-3768	Lorie Hamm	646-3783
Bill Jackson	646-3782	Joey Lawson	646-3795	Larry Carroll	646-3790
Bobby Barnes	646-3764	John Bowers	646-3766	Scotty Ashe	646-3772
Brad Howell	646-3796	Jon Hughes	646-3771	Sharon Wicker	646-3785
Chris Combs	646-3787	Josh Derryberry	646-3777	Steve King	646-3775
Christy Rowsey	646-3797	Katie McClain	646-3784	Tina McDuffy	646-3763
Debbie Tennyson	646-3776	Keith Johnson	646-3773	Trey Riley	646-3822
Donna Kennedy	646-3780	Kelly Weatherford	646-3774	Customer Service	646-7502
Jackie Inman	646-3781	Kevin Roy	646-3798	Receptionist	646-4000
Jackie Weaver	646-3778	Larry Gage	646-3765	Warehouse	646-3791
Janet Browder	646-3767	Layne Moffett	646-3770	Shop	646-3792

Just Picked

Vine-ripe tomatoes

Greenhouse in Morris Chapel sets gardening standards

Most people can't wait for that first crop of garden-ripe tomatoes to come in. There's just something about the homegrown taste that is usually missing in out-of-season tomatoes.

If you are looking for that homegrown flavor during the winter and spring months, then Just Picked, a new business in Morris Chapel, is growing greenhouse tomatoes that have that vine-ripe taste.

The business is owned by Roy Riley and his son-in-law, Steven Hargreaves. This year alone, the family-owned business grew more than 1,600 tomato plants that bore fruit, the largest tomato weighing 1.54 pounds. Although the business is in its first year of operation, it has already proven to be very successful.

The venture was started when Riley, who had a background of growing tomatoes while living in New Jersey, was approached by his son-in-law to start a business in this area.

After a few months of searching, they found an abandoned greenhouse in Millington. Upon purchasing the greenhouse, it



At Just Picked, customers will find vine-ripe tomatoes that are totally insecticide-free. The tomatoes are not picked until they have turned red on the vine, which gives them the best taste.



Riley's greenhouse tomatoes bear fruit from the end of November until sometime in May.

took Riley, with the help of his wife and Hargreaves, 11 days to disassemble. Then it took most of the summer for Riley to reconstruct it on his property in Morris Chapel.

Once the greenhouse was in place, Riley proceeded to build beds for his seedlings, which he had planted in containers on his back porch in September. It took several weekends to build the beds and then another two days to transplant the 1,600 plants.

Riley grows two different varieties of tomatoes: Trust and Cobra. The seeds of the Trust variety are more expensive but will bear fruit longer than Cobra.

To fertilize his tomatoes, Riley uses an injector pump system that mixes two different types of fertilizers separately. Once inside the injector, the fertilizer is diluted with water and pumped through pipes to the tomato plants.

Everyone who comes here says the tomatoes have that "garden-fresh" taste.

Few people realize it, but tomato plants in a greenhouse need to be pollinated, just as those grown in a garden. To accomplish pollination, Riley purchased a hive of bees and placed them inside the greenhouse. The bees only have a lifespan of 12 to 14 weeks. Once the bees die, Riley then pollinates the remaining plants by hand. He said the bees have saved him many hours of hard work.

“The pollination process, along with the wind and rain, affects the shape of the tomato,” Riley says. “That’s why these are so perfect: because weather conditions didn’t have a chance to affect the process. Sometimes the bees affect the shape by kicking their back feet into the bloom.”

“When we picked our first crop of tomatoes, I was worried about having a market for them,” Riley continues.

“But once the word got out, we couldn’t keep enough tomatoes to sell. People who have eaten our tomatoes keep coming back. Everyone who comes here says the tomatoes have that garden-fresh taste. The taste is excellent.”

According to Riley, his customers buy anywhere from 10 to 20 pounds per trip. He tells of one man who drove all the way from Burnsville, Miss., just to get that homegrown taste. “He bought two 20-pound boxes and another five pounds to eat on the way home,” Riley says with a grin. “That’s how good they are.”



During the last few months of the growing season, Roy Riley pollinates each tomato bloom by hand. This, along with pruning, takes about 30 hours a week.

“People want a good-tasting tomato regardless of the price. We don’t pick our tomatoes until they are ripe on the vine. The last few days on the vine enhance the taste of the tomato.

“I was getting \$1.25 a pound but had to go up to \$1.50 a pound due to increased fuel cost. That didn’t seem to matter because they still keep coming back.

“Sometimes people stop by and I will temporarily be out of big tomatoes. These people usually wind up buying my smaller tomatoes, which are just as good.”

Riley sells his tomatoes to anyone who wants them. His biggest customers are supermarkets in Henderson and Savannah and a health food store in Adamsville. He also delivers to some country stores in the area and plans next year to add more supermarkets to his delivery route.

Business has been so successful this year that Riley’s son-in-law wants to build another greenhouse.

“Although I enjoy doing this, if we add another greenhouse I’m going to need some help,” says Riley. “I’m 68 years old and don’t want to work forever.”

Just Picked will have ripe tomatoes until May. The business is located on Crooked Creek Road, off Marshall Road, near Morris Chapel. For directions or more information, call Riley at (731) 687-3665.



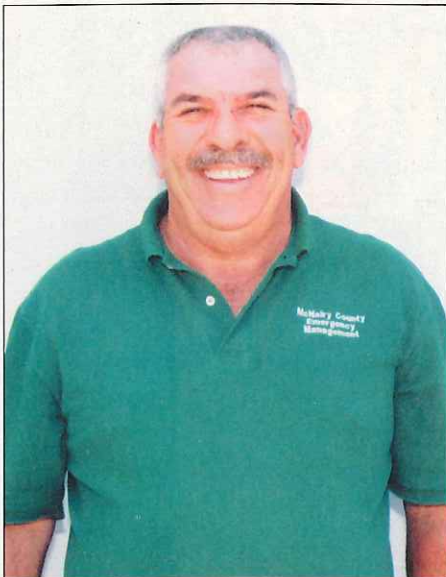
Riley grows his tomatoes in a 60-by-100-foot greenhouse. Next year he says he is going to set out fewer plants because each needs a certain amount of space to grow properly. Riley says more plants don’t always equate to more tomatoes.

Hazardous weather awareness

“**R**esponding to a disaster is certainly easier when the whole family is together at home, but local severe weather often occurs at inconvenient times,” says Rudy Moore, McNairy County emergency manager.

“Since your family is not together 24 hours a day, the first piece of your plan should consider how you would find each other,” Moore adds. “Even when you are at home, it is critical that your family has a plan for where to meet should severe weather or another emergency force you to evacuate your home.

“Look closely at the safety actions associated with each type of hazardous weather and build a family plan accordingly. But remember that this is only a guide. The first and most important thing that any person should do when facing hazardous weather conditions is use common sense.”



Rudy Moore, McNairy County emergency manager.

Steps to creating a hazardous weather plan

- Buy a NOAA weather radio and test it weekly. (The National Weather Service issues a test every Wednesday.)
- Discuss the types of disasters that could occur.
- Locate a safe room or the safe areas in your home for each disaster.
- Determine escape routes from your home and places to meet — one right outside your home and another somewhere else in your community (possibly at a child’s school).
- Have an out-of-state friend as a family contact so all your family members can call and tell that person where they are.

- Make a plan now for what to do with your pets if you need to evacuate.
- Post emergency telephone numbers by your phone and make sure your children know how and when to call 911.
- Check your insurance coverage — flood damage is not usually covered by homeowners insurance.
- Stock nonperishable emergency supplies and a disaster supply kit that includes:
 - A three-day supply of food and water, manual can opener, paper plates and plastic utensils, a change of clothes, a blanket or sleeping bag for each person and a First Aid kit that includes your family’s prescription medications.
 - Emergency tools: A battery-powered

radio, fresh batteries, a flashlight, candles, matches, a wind-up-clock, work gloves and a fire extinguisher.

- Important family documents in a fireproof and waterproof container, an extra set of keys, credit card and cash.
- Replace batteries not only in your smoke detector but also in your NOAA weather radio in the spring and fall when daylight saving time changes.
- Take first aid, CPR and disaster preparedness classes through your local American Red Cross chapter.

Information is available, and most is free, by calling the McNairy County Emergency Management office. Other sources include Pickwick Electric Cooperative, Tennessee Emergency Management Agency, local fire departments, rescue squads and other organizations such as church groups and the American Red Cross.

HAVE A SAFE FLIGHT

Spring is almost here. Soon spring flowers will bloom and kites will fly. To make sure your youngsters fly kites safely, remind them of a few simple rules:

- Always use cloth string.
- Never fly a kite near power lines.
- Don’t try to retrieve kites caught on or near trees, power lines or utility poles. If a kite gets caught in an electric line, call Pickwick Electric Cooperative.

Better yet, go along for the flight. It’ll be great fun, and you’ll spend some quality time with your youngsters, which is much better than merely telling them to go fly a kite.