

# WEC CO-OP CURRENTS



Vol. 64, No. 8

The newsletter of Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc., East Montpelier, Vermont.

December 2003

## Big Blow Whacks WEC's System

**W**ashington Electric Co-op, like other electric utilities in the Midwest and Northeast, got its first taste of severe winter weather when a storm with snow and high winds hit the area on Thursday evening, November 13.

Everyone saw it coming: Before the storm reached Vermont its winds, reported by the Associated Press with gusts of more than 70 mph, "knocked out power to nearly a million customers." The blow whipped up waves 16 feet high on Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, caused deaths from fallen trees, and closed school districts and airports on its way to Vermont.

When the storm hit Co-op country, the first damage was to transmission lines



that feed WEC's substations in East Montpelier and Maple Corner. Those lines, which are owned and maintained by Green Mountain Power Corp., went dead at around 8 p.m., cutting off power to WEC's substations and all the Co-op members who depend on them.

"That dumped 2,000 people, immediately," said Dan Weston, WEC's director of engineering and operations. GMP responded quickly, and had the power restored in less than an hour. But losing a substation is a bad way to begin a stormy evening, because from the perspective of utility dispatchers who coordinate the repair efforts of linemen in the field, it muddies the waters.

"You get lots and lots of people calling

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**Your Co-op Board of Directors.** From left: Vice President Roger Fox, Wendell Cilley, General Manager Avram Patt (not a Board member), Carla Payne, President Barry Bernstein, Marion Milne, Bud Haas, Richard Rubin, Treasurer Don Douglas, Monique Hayden.

### President's Report

## Energy Issues Prominent As 2003 Closes

By Barry Bernstein

**A**s we approach the winter season, energy issues dominate much of the news. Some have become more prominent over the past several months, on either the national or Vermont front.

The top stories include the energy bill in Congress; the Vermont Yankee/

Entergy request for a 20-percent increase in generating capacity; the proposed expansion of VELCO's in-state transmission grid; issues surrounding the future of the Connecticut River hydro dams; the August transmission grid failure in the Northeast; the Green Mountain Power/IBM economic-development special contract; the

*continued on page 2*

### Inside

**Off to a snowy start.** Coverage of the storms and outages that plagued WEC and other Vermont utilities in recent weeks continues on page 4.

**Rates and reliability are primary concerns** for WEC members, and for the board and staff, too. Avram Patt addresses both in his end-of-the-year Manager's Report. Page 3.

**Back-Up Power - a home-brewed, temporary solution for power outages.** Learn about alternatives, for keeping life 'normal.' Page 6.

**WEC making headway with its methane energy project.** Coventry update, page 5.



Janet LaRochelle, the Co-op's long-standing Finance Director, is retiring. Read Don Douglas' tribute to Janet on page 8.

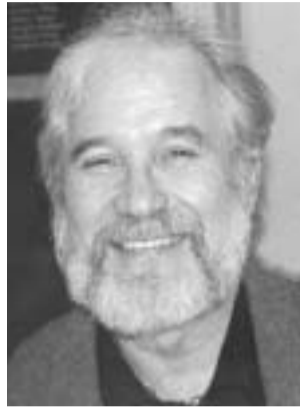
**Washington Electric Cooperative**  
East Montpelier, VT 05651

## President's Message

*continued from page 1*

pending VEC (Vermont Electric Cooperative) purchase of Citizens Communications' electric-distribution system in northern Vermont; and the Vermont Department of Public Service's new 20 Year Energy Plan.

Even though these issues may not appear directly related to Washington Electric Co-op and its service area, each could prove to have a significant affect on our Co-op membership. In the next few months I will address several of these issues in my President's Message, and we'll plan to cover some of these stories in *Co-op Currents*.



Barry Bernstein

address fuel efficiency, any real recognition of the need to support the development of renewable energy in our energy future, or the environmental effects of unclean Midwestern power-stack emissions on our lives and health. It would be refreshing if Washington

power brokers chose to address our energy future with a more realistic, and fairer, allocation of the billions of budget dollars in the bill.

Even though the proposed federal legislation contains some specific provisions that may be helpful for WEC's Coventry project, we cannot support a bill that does more harm than good. My congratulations go out to our

Congressional delegation of Sen. Jeffords, Sen. Leahy and Rep. Sanders, for their united and outspoken opposition to this bill as it now stands.

### Vermont Yankee/ Entergy Upgrade

Entergy Corp. has asked to increase the generating capacity of the 32-year-old nuclear plant by 20 percent. The plant, whose license to operate ends in 2012, is already slated to begin storing spent fuel rods in dry casks outside of the

designated pool storage at the Vernon site by 2008. If the plant is granted this upgrade the dry cast storage of radioactive material on-site will begin much sooner.

The decision for the wisdom and safety of this upgrade rests with the Vermont Public Service Board, and ultimately with the FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission).

If anything disastrous should happen at Vermont Yankee, no one in this state will be immune from the consequences. A 20-percent upgrade to this aging nuclear plant – at a time when we should be putting our efforts into preparation for its shutdown in 2012 or sooner – is going in completely the wrong direction. The public good should not be compromised, no matter how attractive the short-term carrot of dollars dangled in front of us.

The discussion needs to be focused on safety and security concerns at this plant, and the long-term effects on all Vermonters, not on the dollars Entergy may put in front of us to gain approval for this upgrade.

## Salutes and Salutations

As 2003 comes to a close I want to thank WEC's Board of Directors, our general manager, Avram Patt, our management staff, and all our employees for their joint efforts in keeping the lights on, improving service reliability and supporting the Cooperative.

On behalf of the Board and the Cooperative, I also want to offer our deepest gratitude, appreciation and special thanks to longtime employee, Co-op member and

**A 20-percent upgrade to Vermont Yankee, when we should be preparing for its shutdown in 2012 or sooner, goes completely the wrong direction.**

WEC Director of Finance and Administration, Janet LaRochelle, who is retiring. We have all appreciated the values Janet has brought to her position as a person of strong integrity, hard work and grounded in the co-op philosophy. We wish her the best in her retirement, and are grateful she will be only a phone call away.

To all the WEC employees – the folks in the office, at the warehouse and in the field – and to our membership in the 41 towns we serve, on behalf of the entire Board I wish you a safe and happy holiday season and a healthy New Year.

## The Federal Energy Bill

The congressional energy bill, supported by the Bush Administration, is at least temporarily stalled and continues to be extremely controversial over such issues as immunity for manufacturers of the gasoline additive MBTE, incentives for ethanol production, along with billions of dollars of gifts to the oil, gas, coal and nuclear industries.

Policy makers seem unwilling to

## Co-op Currents

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### Editorial Committee

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*The Board of Directors' regularly scheduled meetings are on the last Wednesday of each month, in the evening. Members are welcome to attend. Members who wish to discuss a matter with the Board should contact the president through WEC's office. Meeting dates and times are subject to change. For information about times and/or agenda, or to receive a copy of the minutes of past meetings, contact Administrative Assistant Deborah Brown, 802-223-5245.*

## Notice of Reduction Adjustment in the Energy Efficiency Charge to take effect in January 2004 for Washington Electric Co-op Members

On 21 November 2003 the Vermont Public Service Board (PSB) issued an Order concerning the amount to be collected in 2004 by the state-wide Energy Efficiency Charge (EEC).

Starting with January 2004 electric usage and bills rendered after February 1, 2004, the EEC paid by WEC members will be reduced from the levels most recently set by PSB Order in November 2003.

The Energy Efficiency Charge is paid by all Vermont electric consumers to pay for efficiency services that cost-effectively reduce Vermont's needs for electric power generation. Energy efficiency programs and services are Vermont utility requirements and are part of the cost of your electric service. The Vermont Public Service Board has found that energy efficiency programs benefit Vermonters in two ways: first by lowering the electric bills of individual customers who directly receive the services; and second, and more importantly, to offset more expensive utility power costs thereby lowering electric rates and bills for Vermont consumers over time.

Efficiency Vermont provides these statewide energy efficiency services, including information, technical advice, education, rebates and other financial incentives for homes, farms and businesses. Over one in four Vermont electric consumers have already improved their energy efficiency with Efficiency Vermont's help. For more information about these efficiency services, contact Efficiency Vermont toll free at 1-888-921-5990 or at [www.encyvermont.com](http://www.encyvermont.com).

**WEC members.** Effective on February 2004 bills, for January 2004 use, the 2004 EEC charge will be as follows for WEC members:

Residential: . . . . . \$ .002254 per kWh  
Commercial: Non demand members: . . . . . \$ .002148 per kWh  
Industrial: Demand members: . . . . . \$ .001353 per kWh, plus .211922 /kW/month  
Street and Area Lights: . . . . . \$.07733, \$.19332, and \$.30931 per month for 100, 250, and 400 watt units, respectively.

Customers with questions about the EEC, or about energy services for WEC members can contact WEC at 1.800.932.5245, or: [www.washingtonelectric.coop](http://www.washingtonelectric.coop). Also for more information about the EEC, please contact the Department of Public Service toll free at: 1-800-622-4496.

## Manager's Report

# WEC's Goals At New Year's: Maintaining Our Stable Rates, Improving System Reliability

By Avram Patt

As 2003 comes to an end, I'll start my report by discussing the two most-basic things that come to mind when you think about Washington Electric Co-op: keeping the lights on, and your electric bill.



a new Four-Year Construction Work Plan, which will lay out in more detail exactly where and when we will be doing the work. Unlike some "plans," these documents do not get put on a shelf. Our operations staff and consulting engineers put a great deal of thought and analysis into improving our distribution system across the board, as well as

focusing on technology improvements and locations in our electric system that are having more problems than they should.

Your Board of Directors carefully reviews these plans, making sure they

agree with the basic direction and focus, as well as assuring that the plans are financially realistic.

We also continue to do more right-of-way maintenance. As the woods continue to grow in around our lines in what were once open fields, we keep

improving our maintenance efforts. This includes not just budgeting to increase the number of miles cleared annually, but also prioritizing the work that gets done, and trying out new technology.

Our members are more and more sensitive about cutting trees on their own land or in their neighborhoods, and at the same time have higher expectations

about reliability and outages than they used to. We are working hard to improve the system technically, as well as to stay ahead of those trees and branches.

### Rates and bills

It's been a little while since we discussed rates and bills in detail in *Co-op Currents*.

While WEC's rates are relatively high, due in part to our serving the most rural territory in Vermont, we have worked hard to control costs and manage our finances.

We last filed for a modest rate increase in late 1999. Since that time, despite dramatic increases in some of our major cost areas (property taxes, health care benefits, and more recently, wholesale power costs from some sources), we have managed to avoid increasing rates and have no plans to do so in 2004. Our planned landfill gas generating project in Coventry will further help stabilize our power costs once it comes on line in 2005.

Forecasting the future is always risky, especially in the energy business. But I am very pleased that we have been able to keep rates level for the past few years, and that we are looking forward to a period of relative stability and predictability.

There is some talk these days about "lowering" electric rates in Vermont. Honestly, I don't think that is realistic talk, and energy costs nationally are certainly not going down either, at the wholesale or retail level. As individuals or business owners, our members have seen their other energy

costs (gasoline, oil, propane) climb steeply or swing wildly and unpredictably over the past few years. Basic costs such as health care and property taxes have certainly affected our pocketbooks as well. As other costs creep up (or in some cases skyrocket), we should keep in mind that the Co-op's rates are holding pretty steady.

The fact that the average WEC residential member uses less electricity per month than the average electric ratepayer in Vermont also helps keep electric bills in line for a great many Co-op members. People always notice a rate increase. We don't always take note of the lack of one.

### A Valued Co-op Employee

In this issue you will find Treasurer Don Douglas' appreciation of Janet LaRoche, who is retiring after 23 years at WEC.

Janet does not like a lot of hoopla being made about her retirement, but I need to say something. As Director of Finance and Administration, Janet has

served the Co-op, its members and employees, with dedication, honesty and integrity. She has been an integral part of the management team, and we have come to rely not only on her knowledge and skill, but her institutional memory. As General Manager, I have trusted her financial reports and analysis, but just as important, her advice.

On behalf of all the Co-op's employees, past and present, I too want to offer Janet a big thank you, and heartfelt wishes for a really great retirement!

### The New Year

In closing, a big thank you also to all of Washington Electric Co-op's employees. It's been a busy year and 2004 will be as well. Whether it is keeping the lights on, keeping our financial and other records in order, handling routine and not-so-routine billing matters, bringing power to new members, or planning and developing a new landfill-methane generating plant (something we don't do every year!), your Co-op's employees are hardworking, skilled, and they serve WEC's members well.

And, I wish all of our members a happy holiday season and new year!

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**Despite dramatic increases in some major cost areas, we have managed to avoid increasing rates since 1999. There are no plans to do so in 2004.**

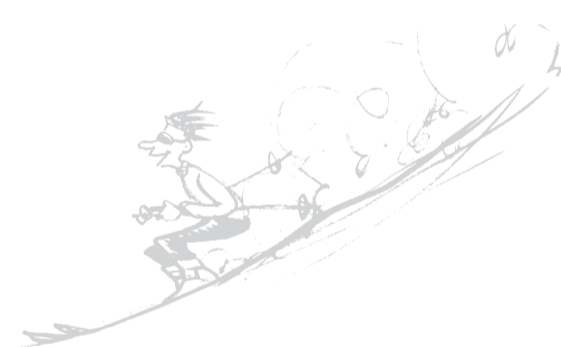
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**In our new 10-year plan we lay out in detail what work we need to do on our system.**

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## Now, Call WEC for Mad River Glen Tickets

The geese have flown south, the temperatures are lower, and the prospect of snow has forced recognition that ski season is coming. And the Co-op has a member ski deal unlike what we have been able to offer before.

WEC members who ski at Mad River Glen—which is also a co-op—now are able to purchase day passes at the WEC office. The ticket price varies depending on the day, but weekday adult passes are one third off compared to tickets purchased at the Basebox.

WEC is now a ticket retailer, and members are eligible for special prices (see Co-op Store, page 7). You can call and order tickets by phone and pay with a credit card, and either pick up or we will mail tickets to members.

Get the boards tuned, pray for snow, and we'll see you on the mountain!

The wind-and-snow storm that began on November 13 and resulted in extended outages for many members is described on page one in this issue. Instead of repeating that, I'd likely to briefly describe our ongoing efforts to maintain and improve reliability and to reduce the frequency and duration of outages that do occur.

We are presently finalizing a new Long-Range Plan, which will be adopted by our Board of Directors. This is a 10-year plan where we lay out in some detail what work we need to do on our system. This includes everything from replacing aging poles and conductor (wire), moving lines for better access in some places, replacing and upgrading equipment, and continuing to replace one of our substations every few years.

## Big Blow in November

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in to report that they're out of power. That's definitely what you want them to do," Weston emphasized. "We need people to let us know, so we can respond to the problem."

Unfortunately, when a hefty proportion of 2,000 households are calling to report their outages, the phone lines get overwhelmed and callers become frustrated with busy signals. But it's more complicated than that.

"When a substation is knocked out by damage on another company's (transmission) lines, we can't do anything until they have restored the power," Weston explained. "Meantime, the storm is getting a jump on us, because after the trans-mission line is repaired we still can't be sure

everyone has their electricity back. There might be damage to *our* lines in that area. We can't call 2,000 people back to ask them, especially when other things are going on."

For the storm was intensifying, and the damage was spreading into other parts of the service territory, which was obvious from the many locations reporting outages. By now, Weston had called the line crews back to work and Kevin Stevens had joined him in the dispatch

center.

"As these reports were coming in and the weather was getting worse, you could see the system dropping out," said Weston. "Even after the substations were restored there were times when we were approaching 2,000 people out (of power)."

Some of those members would remain without electricity for 48 hours or more.

### Long hours, broken poles

Virtually all the electric utilities in Vermont were hit hard by the November 13-14 storm (Central Vermont Public

Service reported 5,000 customers without power). It was the worst kind of weather for a heavily forested state, not because of snow but because of the winds. High winds blow down trees, and when trees fall they'll take nearby power

lines down with them.... sometimes even the poles. This storm broke seven Co-op poles.

"We are responsible for protecting the power lines from trees within our right-of-way," Weston said. "We aren't always able to do that perfectly, either. But in this situation, 75 percent or more of the trees that came down were outside the right-of-way, and many were good, healthy trees. A lot of them were softwoods, which tend to be the tallest, and where the needles

create more wind resistance."

Areas suffering the worst damage were Orange, East Montpelier and along Hampshire Hill Road in Worcester (there alone, three poles were broken). People dependent on WEC's Jackson Corner substation in Williamstown also suffered, as trees blew into the three main lines leaving the sub and virtually everyone lost power.

The crews worked all night on the 13th and through the day on Friday, the 14th. Late that night, after 28 hours on duty, Weston sent them home, except for one four-man crew kept on duty to respond to emergencies while continuing to make repairs.

"After that length of time people get tired," Weston said. "We frequently work through the night in storms, but when the hours pile up you begin to slow down and you need to get some rest. If you're going to take a break it's best to do it at night, because that's when we're less effective. You have to use a flashlight to look for problems you'd be able to spot easily in the day, and you have to walk more

because you can't see the lines as far. In a storm, that gets to be exhausting."

The crews reported back at 6 a.m. the next morning (Saturday), and worked through the weekend.

The linemen weren't the only ones pulling extra duty. WEC's office personnel came to work Friday morning at 7:00, and fielded phone calls, in shifts, until Sunday morning (see "Staffing The Phones", page 8).

### The elements of prevention

There are lessons to be learned from a severe storm, no matter how often a utility has been through it. You study your response and try to figure out how you could do better.

One of the first things Weston did after the mid-November storm, knowing further storms were predicted into December, was to send the line crews out in specific areas to look for dead trees or trees leaning toward the power lines.

This can't always be done through the windshield. The Co-op had people hiking across the mountain range from Harwood

**Before reaching Vermont the AP reported the storm knocked out power to nearly a million customers, caused deaths from fallen trees, and closed school districts and airports.**

## Piling On

The November 13-14 storm, which dropped around 15 inches of snow and featured winds up to 50-60 mph at times, was just the beginning of a month (and counting, as *Co-op Currents* goes to press) of wild weather that brought rain, more winds ... and lots and lots of snow.

Despite their severity, however, not all the storms were as unkind to WEC and its members as the mid-November blow. Two significant storms, on December 6-7 and on December 14, caused no outages anywhere on the system – despite the fact that the December 14 storm dumped up to two feet of snow in parts of WEC's territory. That's because of the nature of the storms, said WEC Operations Director Dan Weston.

"When it snows and the temperatures are 0 to 15 or 20 degrees, even with moderately heavy winds, we do not get the outages," he said. "We get outages when the winds get up there in excess of 30 mph, typically, or when the temperature is warmer and it's a wet, heavy snow. A good, cold dry snow like we had on December 14 isn't going to hurt us."

But if WEC seemed to hit a lucky streak, that ended on December 17-18, when drenching rains followed a snowstorm... and were followed again by more snow. On Thursday morning, Dec. 18, the Co-op reported approximately 1,100 members out of power. Repairs were completed by late morning. There were multiple outages in the Mad River Valley (the Co-op has members in Moretown, Fayston and Waitsfield), Middlesex and Maple Corner, and scattered outages elsewhere (such as Calais and Topsham).

WEC didn't have the worst of it in this storm. Green Mountain Power reported 10,000 customers still out overnight on the 18th, and a spokesman for Central Vermont Public Service Corp. said in a radio interview that one out of seven CVPS customers had suffered outages (more than 21,000 customers in all).

General Manager Avram Patt could have been speaking for virtually all Vermont utilities on December 19, when he said, "It's been a tough start to the winter season."



Union High School in Duxbury to the North Fayston Road, marking some 30-35 trees along the power corridor and going back later to cut them down. On the lines from Jackson Corner to Northfield they identified 54 "danger trees," and returned with chainsaws on December 5 to begin taking them as well.


"These trees represented guaranteed outages in the future," said Weston. "Ideally, you get them before they go down. We certainly try to."

But Weston also hoped that Co-op members, too, could take a lesson from the November 13-14 blow. Electric utilities have the authority to manage growth within their rights-of-way (a corridor 25 feet wide), but must ask

permission from property owners to trim trees outside that corridor that present potential danger. Understandably, though, people like their trees and want to protect them.

"The reluctance to allow us to cut trees is greater than ever," Weston said.

"At the same time," he added, "people's reaction to outages is also greater than ever. In this case, we had 60-mile-an-hour winds, taking down trees 50 feet outside our corridor. The reality is, we live in an extremely forested area of the Northeast, and weather like that is going to affect our electric system."

Limiting the damage is a battle WEC can wage best with its members' cooperation and understanding. 



# Proceeding Apace In Coventry

## WEC Tackles Power Line Route, Regulatory Approval

In August, Washington Electric Cooperative announced it had reached an agreement with Casella Waste Systems Inc., to develop an electric-generation facility in Coventry, Vermont. The project will use methane from the state's largest landfill, initially to produce four megawatts (MW) but eventually six MW, of renewable power for the Co-op's own use. Though WEC is primarily an electric-distribution utility, and supplies members with power the Co-op purchases elsewhere, the Coventry plant will be WEC's second generating facility. WEC also owns and operates the 1MW hydroelectric plant at the Wrightsville dam in Middlesex. The methane generation plant is expected to be productive for at least 30 years.

Since the announcement, the Coventry project has proceeded on schedule. WEC's Board of Directors remains optimistic that it will be ready to be included on the ballot for next May's Annual Membership Meeting. The project requires member approval, and such aspects as the cost of development and the expected benefits to the Co-op need to be clear on the ballot.

Progress can be measured at this stage on two fronts: obtaining regulatory approval from the Vermont Public Service Board, and designing the actual generating facility and the system (poles and wires) to carry the power 7.2 miles to the VELCO substation in Irasburg, where it will enter the statewide transmission system.

### Good poles make good neighbors

Designing the power plant and transmission route requires establishing and maintaining good faith and good

relations with the people of Coventry and Irasburg. Washington Electric has sought to be open, considerate and available to those citizens, who obviously want a say in the power-line route going through their neighborhoods.

"We've had three meetings in Coventry since we broke the news about the project," said WEC General Manager Avram Patt. "The first was at the Coventry Community Center at the time of the announcement. We, and representatives from Casella, invited local people, town officials, the press and legislators. We explained the project and hopefully conveyed our enthusiasm for using the landfill to generate renewable electricity in Vermont for Vermonters."

The second meeting took place in November, and began to focus on the physical aspects of the project.

"The generation station is going to be built within the confines of the landfill itself, pretty much out of sight of the

public," Patt explained. "We anticipated all along that the transmission line to the VELCO substation would be the most sensitive issue, because it will be more visible."

"Previous to that November meeting we sent letters to every property owner that might be affected by the lines, inviting them to a meeting at the Community Center. People from about a dozen households showed up, especially people from an area where there's an intersection of two roads with a cluster of houses. Coming up with an acceptable route to work the lines through there will be our biggest challenge."

That was followed by an afternoon gathering on December 4, with Dan Weston, WEC's director of engineering and operations, and Dan Crockett, from E-Pro, the company designing the system for WEC. This meeting focused specifically on the area of that intersection, and local property owners

were invited.

"We met in Marshall Bowman's barn in Coventry," said Weston. "He had a wood stove and it was warm. We took along sandwiches and pie from Martha's Diner. It was a light-hearted, informal meeting, where every question was a good one. We went to listen, so we could be mindful of people's concerns as we try to plan the project."

The next step will be for WEC's senior field technician, Brent Lilley, and consultant Dan Crockett to stake out a proposed route for the 46-kilovolt transmission line.

"It won't be the final route," Weston said, "but people will be able to see the stakes and get an idea what we have in mind. It'll be our first attempt at a workable design."

### 'Public Good'

The other front for the renewable-power project is obtaining the approval of the Public Service Board (PSB). The route to winning that approval leads through the Department of Public Service (DPS), which acts as the public's representative in matters before the PSB.

"We filed our regulatory petitions (with the Board and Department) in December," said Patt. "They contain testimony from expert witnesses about what we're proposing, and voluminous exhibits that describe the project."

Even before that, WEC informally provided information to the DPS so that the Co-op could begin addressing any questions that caught the Department's eye.

"In many dockets before the Public Service Board a settlement is reached between the parties – in this case the



A truck loaded with solid waste enters Casella's New England Waste Systems landfill in Coventry.

*continued on page 6*

# Back-Up Power: Insurance Against Outages

By Bill Powell  
Director, Products and Services

The specter of another stormy Vermont winter raises concerns about power outages in our rural service territory. But Co-op members needn't be helpless to see to their own, temporary, power needs. It's time again to review the options members have to provide safe back-up electricity for their homes and businesses, using devices that meet appropriate codes and standards.

- There are two main back-up options:
1. fossil fuel engine-driven generators;
  2. battery-powered uninterrupted power systems (UPS) sized for emergency loads.

## Generators

Regardless of size, fuel choice, or frequency of use, a generator connected to a member's household presents a significant potential risk for utility lineworkers, unless properly installed. The single most-important element in a safe generator installation is a transfer switch.

The transfer switch separates the household (or farm or business, etc.)



from the electric grid during an outage. It is a simple manual switch, typical of what many Co-op farm members may already have, that allows a PTO-driven generator to supply power from a tractor.

Residential members could also use this switch, but a preferable installation would be a transfer switch and a sub-panel (see image above). This combines the transfer switch with a small electric circuit-breaker box, typically installed next to the household's main electric panel. An electrician would wire the sub-panel to those circuits in the main panel that supply power to the equipment and appliances most needed during an outage – such as the heating system, the water pump, the refrigerator and some lighting.

Installation typically involves adding the sub-panel/transfer switch inside the residence, and providing a cable – probably through the wall – to the generator. (Generators burn fuel and produce exhaust, and therefore are kept

outside.) Alternatively, the cable could terminate within a rain-tight power inlet box, which would connect, via another cable, to the generator.

A new product, combining the member's electric meter base and a transfer switch, is another option. Called "Generlink," this allows a generator to be connected directly to the meter base on the member's house. The generator can thus provide electricity to any circuit in the house, and is not limited to the small number of loads typical of a sub-

panel/transfer switch.

## UPS

An Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) is an alternative to a generator, and has significant advantages. One disadvantage, however, is its higher installation cost. Once installed, the main advantages include: silent operation, automatic transfer, and automatic transfer back to grid electricity when power is restored.

There are additional benefits to a UPS, compared to generators. Most residential-sized generator manufacturers recommend that the unit be operated for a couple hours each month while connected to an electric load, to verify system readiness. Lack of proper maintenance can also compromise the warranty on the generator.

Like any engine, fossil-fuel generators make noise and produce exhaust fumes. Because generators are usually kept in a storage site, when they become needed

## PUBLIC NOTICE

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### HERBICIDE USE NOTIFICATION

Vermont utilities maintain electric line rights-of-way with several methods, including the selective use of herbicides on trees and brush. They also encourage low-growing shrubs and trees which will crowd tall-growing species and, thus, minimize the use of herbicides. The application of herbicides may start as early as April 1. Requests to utilities for notice by mail, however, must be made by February 15.

The Public Service Board requires Vermont utilities to carry out vegetation management techniques which allow maintenance of electrical systems in a cost-efficient manner.

The types of herbicide treatment used to keep utility lines clear are: stump, injection, basal, soil and foliar. These are the common methods used, although they may not all be used by the utility in your town. Landowners have the options of requesting herbicide treatment on cut stumps only, or that no herbicide be used at all. In the later case, an administrative fee would have to be paid to the utility. Only electric utility rights-of-way which have tall-growing tree species with the potential of threatening the electric utility system are treated.

Utilities advertise by radio and newspaper prior to herbicide applications on all lines. Lines usually are treated only once in a four-to-six year period depending on the specific management cycle of the utility. Please check with your utility regarding the cycle of a particular line.

Some utilities use metal letters and numbers on distribution and transmission line poles. Others use them only on transmission lines. The letters, such as V.E.C. (Vermont Electric Co-operative), or V.E.L.C.O. (Vermont Electric Power Company), are not found on every pole. A check of several poles on a line should aid you in determining whether poles are marked and which utility is the owner.

Persons owning or occupying land within 1,000 feet of a utility right-of-way may request in writing that the utility notify them individually by mail anytime, but at least 30 days prior to treatment of the line with herbicides. The landowner or resident is responsible for contacting the utility, in writing, to request placement on the mailing list. The utility should be provided with sufficient information as to the exact location of the residence and land. It is the duty of each landowner or resident to make the utility aware of the location of any potentially affected water supply, and any environmentally sensitive areas where herbicide application ought to be avoided.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT YOUR ELECTRIC UTILITY WITH COUPON PROVIDED

If you have further questions or concerns contact:

Plant Industry Division, Dept. of Agriculture  
Phil Benedict, Director  
116 State St., Montpelier, VT 05602  
1-802-828-2431

Consumer Affairs & Public Information  
Dept. of Public Service  
112 State St., Montpelier, VT 05620  
1-800-622-4496 or 1-800-828-2811

#### COUPON FOR PERSONAL REQUEST

Name	Town/City of Affected Property
Street Address	Telephone Number (Home)
Town	(Work)
State	O.K. to use Work Number: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Electric Account Number	Best Time to Call
Property of Concern: <input type="checkbox"/> Year Round Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Summer Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> Water Supply <input type="checkbox"/> Land <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Line and Pole Identification: Utility Initials	Numbers
We need All of this information in order to determine if you qualify for personal notification. If information is unobtainable, please state why. Use an extra sheet of paper if you need more space.	
RETURN TO YOUR LOCAL UTILITY	
VELC04	

## Coventry

continued from page 5

Co-op and the Department – beforehand, so they can both go to the Board and say 'we've agreed on this application and don't need further hearings,'" Patt explained. "If the parties agree, the Board often approves."

Specifically the application is for a Certificate of Public Good (CPG). The Board applies the same criteria used for Act 250, addressing environmental and economic issues to determine whether a project like WEC's proposal to generate electric power from landfill gas is generally beneficial for the public.

The Co-op must receive its certificate from the Board before bringing the project to the voters in May.

## 'Works well with others'

Although Washington Electric Co-op is taking the lead on permit applications, there are four co-applicants as well.

These are: the Coventry Clean Energy Corp., a wholly owned subsidiary of the Co-op which will operate the generation facility and technically sell the electric power to WEC; VELCO (the Vermont Electric Power Company), which owns and operates the substation in Irasburg and the major electric transmission lines in the state; Citizens Communications, and Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC). WEC's 7.2-mile transmission line will pass through parts of the service territories of both utilities. VEC is preparing to buy Citizens' assets, perhaps by March 2004, and will become the sole local utility. In any case, the utilities intend to move some of their local distribution lines onto WEC's poles, providing an upgrade to their systems.

"We're all working together very well," said Patt. "Everyone sees our construction project as beneficial to their own interests. All we have to do now is hope that the local people and the Public Service Board see things the same way."

during temporary outages they must be physically moved in order to connect them to the home's electric service – a chore that is beyond the physical ability of some elderly members. Starting a generator also can be difficult, unless the unit is equipped with an electric starter.

For these and other reasons, the UPS approach may be worth the extra cost.

A UPS system includes:

1. a sub-panel and transfer switch (comparable to the component

described above);

2. an inverter, which converts electricity into the alternating current (AC) used by the home's electric loads;
3. batteries (lead-acid, heavy duty, deep discharge, marine quality).

A whole-house UPS is similar to the device that the Co-op has been recommending in these pages for computer users, except that it can operate for longer periods of time and supply more energy than a computer

UPS.

Members interested in more information about UPS systems should contact the Co-op or their electrical contractor. The Co-op does not install generators or UPS systems, but we can assist members with decisions about the type and size of equipment to meet their needs.

More information is available on the Internet. Two sites of interest are:

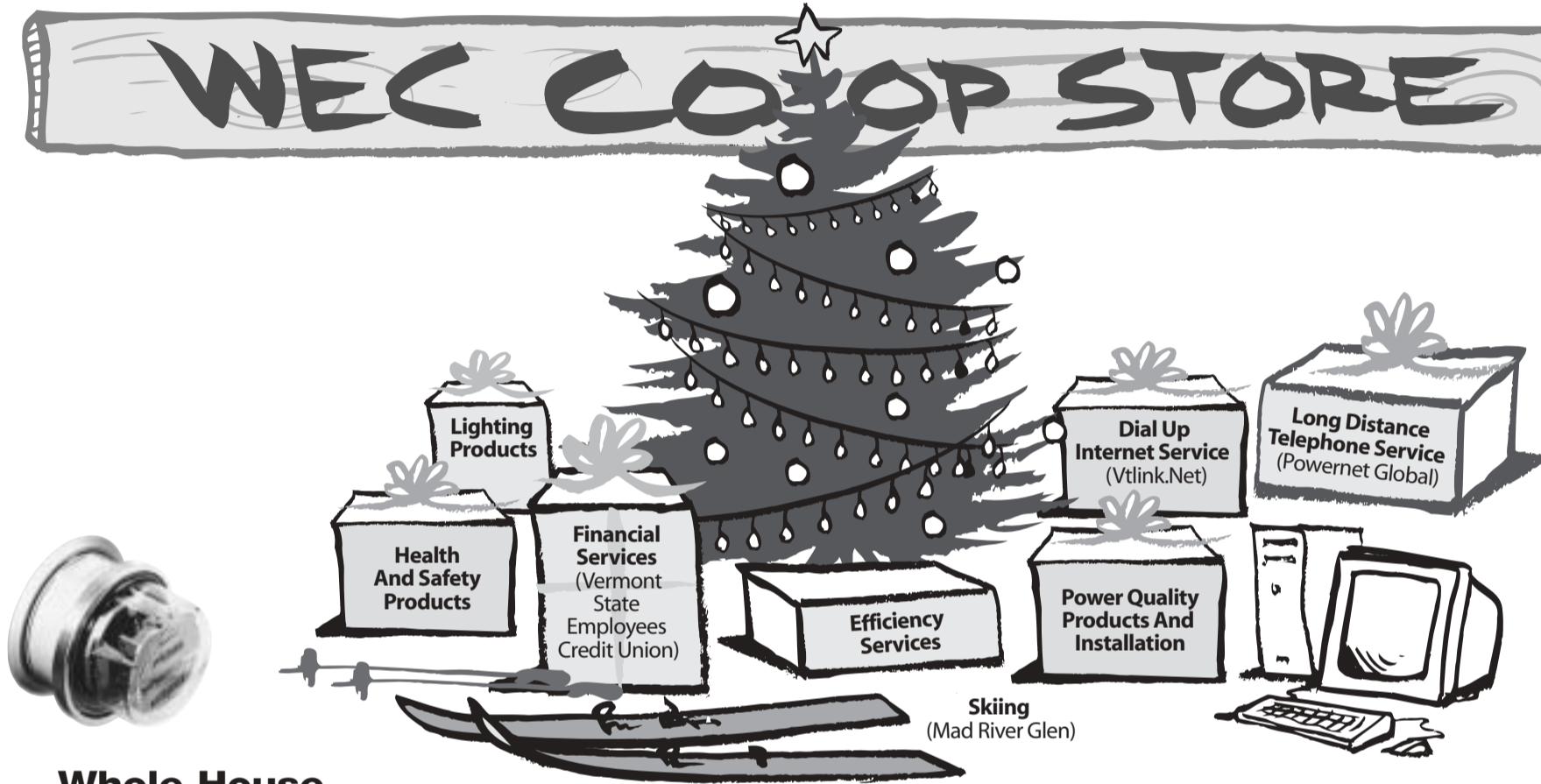
<http://www.backuppower.com/>  
<http://www.xantrex.com/>



**MARKETPLACE**

**FOR SALE:** Hotpoint electric range and hood. Harvest gold. Excellent condition. \$40. Call 479-0785.

# WEC CO-OP STORE



## Whole House Surge Protection

• **Meter-base Surge Suppression Device** protects all household appliances from storm or other electrical surges. Installed by Co-op or your contractor. Fully warranted to cover appliances from damage.

## CABLE SPECIAL OFFER!

Protect your cable modem/ VCR/TV, other audio or computer devices with: **PANAMAX Max2 Coax Surge Suppression Device.**

Retail value: \$49.95.  
 Member discount: \$35.95  
 includes no-charge shipping.



## Special Ski Ticket Offer

*Mad River Glen 2003/2004 Season WEC Members Ski Cheap!!*

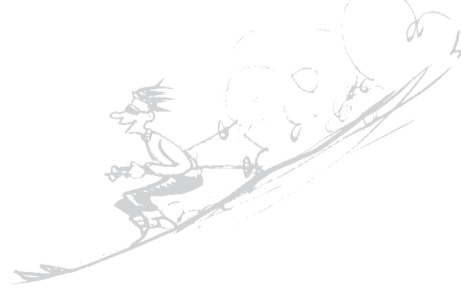
### Co-op Now Retail Ticket

**Voucher Site.** Purchase voucher, ski cheap! Charge order in advance, and we'll mail to you, or stop at the Co-op Office.

WEC member prices . adult		jr/sr
Midweek . . . . .	\$30	\$20
Weekend . . . . .	\$40	\$28
Holiday . . . . .	\$45	\$33

### MRG regular prices . . adult

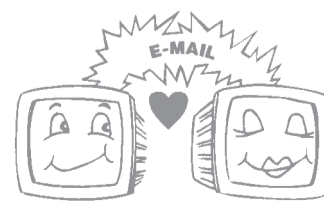
MRG regular prices . . adult		jr/sr
Midweek . . . . .	\$45	\$33
Weekend . . . . .	\$45	\$33
Holiday . . . . .	\$45	\$33



## Paying Too Much For Your Internet Service?

### Try Vtlink's Switch-It Program!

Vtlink along with WEC will give you one-month NO CHARGE service for simply switching to Vtlink. Sign up today and receive 1-month service FREE, then pay only \$17.95 per month billed by WEC. Send an e-mail to [weclink@vtlink.net](mailto:weclink@vtlink.net) with your WEC account #, name, phone, and a good time to contact you. A customer service representative will respond to help you make the switch. Offer applies to new customers only!



## Co-op Long Distance Telephone Service

- Reasonably priced
- No gimmicks
- Available to Co-op members
- Provided by Powernet Global
- Call 1.800.932.5245, or visit [www.washingtonelectric.coop/pages/phone.htm](http://www.washingtonelectric.coop/pages/phone.htm)
- **OR** call 1.866.216.0332 and switch today!



Call the Co-op at 800-932-5245 or visit us on the web at: [www.washingtonelectric.coop/pages/prod.htm](http://www.washingtonelectric.coop/pages/prod.htm)

*Janet LaRochelle:  
Finance Director With 'The Right Stuff'*

## A Farewell Tribute

By Don Douglas, Treasurer  
WEC Board of Directors

**W**ashington Electric Cooperative has had the good services of Janet LaRochelle for 23-and-a-half years.

Alas, she thinks it is time to retire.

Janet came to WEC almost by accident. The automobile dealership where she was working as a bookkeeper was sold and she was out of a job. She was looking forward to having the summer away from the working world. However, when she got to the employment office to fill out the necessary paperwork for seeking further work, she was told there had been a call only 30 minutes earlier and it looked like she had the right qualifications.

Janet telephoned WEC and was invited to an interview that afternoon. By evening she had had two interviews and been offered the position. After six months of working as the bookkeeper, the Co-op's Director of Finance left and Janet was offered the job. The rest is history.

Janet invested 23 years with WEC, overseeing the finances of our cooperative. In the beginning the job was done with adding machines, manual typewriters and mimeograph machines (some of us can remember that peculiar smell). Now, of course, the job is done with a computer on every desk, and the frustration of adding columns of numbers over several times has been replaced with new frustrations (those of you who get to work with computers have a good idea about that).

Accounting requires a specific temperament, and Janet certainly has the right stuff. From what I have seen, she has a strong work ethic and is totally committed to WEC and to the "cooperative" way of doing business. When I seek her guidance she responds, "Well, this is just my opinion, but..." Janet has bedrock conservative values when it comes to money. If a dollar is going to be spent, or borrowed, or invested, it needs to be done deliberately and with the best possible value to WEC.



Janet LaRochelle

Janet has worked for many different boards and with many past treasurers. Karen Storey, who served as treasurer for 10 years before me, commented that when she came on board Janet always took the time to answer her questions and provide accurate information. Charles Haas, who also served as treasurer and is currently on the Board, remembers a cheerful, pleasant person who could be trusted to provide information in a timely manner. Janet has worked for our current general manager, Avram Patt, and (working backwards) for Joe Bongiovanni, Gary Cavitt, William Smith, Bob Toombs, and John Rohr. If you were counting, that is six general managers.

Washington Electric Co-op will miss Janet LaRochelle and we certainly wish her all the best in her retirement. I am sure that the incoming Director of Finance, Linda Nelson, and I will be calling Janet to ask for advice as we direct WEC through the many complicated financial decisions we are sure to face in the future.

## Staffing The Phones During Outages

**W**hen storms hit and WEC members lose their power, it's not just the line workers who do extended duty setting the Co-op back to rights. Other operations staff join the crews as assistants to the linemen – and back in East Montpelier the Member Services Representatives and other office staff perform the crucial role of fielding phone calls from members reporting outages, and providing their information to the dispatchers who are directing the work of the line crews via radio communications.

Information can be a two-way street. When possible, the phone crew will tell the callers what they know about problems in their area – how widespread the outages are, if a main (feeder) line has been damaged by a tree, if a substation has been knocked out by transmission-line failure, if WEC knows about the problem but has not yet identified the cause.

"Handling the telephones under these conditions is a difficult job that requires skill, concentration and endurance," said Operations Director Dan Weston.

At night, under normal circumstances, calls to Washington Electric are handled by an answering service. In a developing storm situation, Weston decides when to bring in the office staff to work the phones, and how long to keep them on duty.

"These are the same people who deal with our members personally every day," said Weston (who works in the dispatch room during most serious storms). "They are familiar with many of the members and know their locations pretty well."

The dispatchers provide updates on restoration activities on a board that's visible to the phone workers, so they can relay the information to callers. For their part, the Member Service Reps learn what they can from the people calling in: Are their neighbors out of power? Have they seen a tree on the lines?

"That information exchange is what we're shooting for," said Weston. "The better the information we have, the quicker we can put the power back on. The linemen like nothing better than to be dispatched to a known problem, instead of having to walk the line in storm conditions to locate the cause. It can cut a restoration down from two hours to 15 or 20 minutes."

Meanwhile, WEC may also be receiving calls from fire departments and local emergency services, reporting wires down, or poles or trees on fire. Informed by the telephone crew, the dispatchers hasten linemen to these situations while the local authorities control traffic.

"It's mentally demanding work," Weston said of the office staff's contribution during these stressful periods. "They're always patient with callers. They contribute enormously to the restoration effort."

They put in long workdays, too. In the mid-November storm their services were needed for almost 48 hours. They arrived at the office Friday morning at

7 a.m., as usual, and stayed late on the job, rotating shifts of three or four hours (which meant coming to work at midnight or later, in hazardous weather) until Sunday around 4 a.m., when the last outage was repaired.

"Callers are sometimes upset," said WEC General Manager Avram Patt, "which is understandable, especially when their power has been off for a while or if they see WEC crews around but their power hasn't been restored. You need good communications between the Co-op and the members, to exchange information, to tell folks what's going on. Our Member Services Representatives, and the other office staff who handle calls during major storms, work well under those circumstances. They're a great asset to the Co-op."



***The better the  
information we  
have, the quicker  
we can put the  
power back on.***



### Washington Electric Cooperative Inc.

#### Statement of Non-Discrimination

Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc. is the recipient of federal financial assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which provide that no person in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or handicap shall be excluded from participation in, admission or access to, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organization's programs or activities.

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is Avram Patt, the Cooperative's General Manager. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from, and/or file a written complaint with, this organization; or the Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250; or the Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, Washington, DC 20250. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.