A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

P.O. Box 1335, 3230 N. 14th Ave. Dodge City, KS 67801 620-227-2139

www.victoryelectric.net

THE VICTORY

# **ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

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Supervisor of Operations

**Tom Lowery** 

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#### FROM THE CEO

# Vote "Yes" for Self-regulation

Self-regulation saves our members money and maintains safety and reliability

In last month's CEO message, I introduced you to the concept of self regulation and the benefits it presents to Victory Electric's members. As a recap of that message, a "yes" vote gives Victory's member-elected board of trustees the decision-making authority to self-regulate the electric rates for Victory's members, a responsibility previously held by the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC).

This month, I would like to focus on the financial savings for the cooperative and our members. Victory's members voted to self regulate in 2000, but when Mid-Kansas (MKEC) was formed to acquire the assets/ customers of Aquila-West Plains Kansas in 2007, those new customers remained regulated under the KCC. As a result, for the past seven years, part of our members have been self-regulated, and the other part have been under KCC jurisdiction. This requires the cooperative to invest significant time and staff resources to keep separate tariffs and financial reports for both the native and MKEC systems.

KCC Fees and the significant cost of a KCC rate case

Victory pays an annual fee of approximately \$12,000 to KCC. These fees are based on the number of our members who fall under KCC jurisdiction.

A rate increase in 2010 for the KCC-regulated MKEC customers cost Victory \$215,074. This money was used to pay for the costs incurred to process the rate case by the KCC and the Citizens Utility Ratepayer Board (CURB). It also included hourly fees for lawyers; KCC staff time for asking questions, reviewing the answers, reviewing materials submitted to the agency; and costs to officially publish information about the proceedings in the Kansas Register.

In addition to charges from KCC, Victory also incurred costs for lawyers and consultants to help prepare the proceedings. All of these costs were ultimately passed on to you via your monthly electric bill.

Continued on page 16-B ▶



Shane Laws

regulation resulted in an 89 percent savings to our members.

#### **Time Change Begins March 9**

On March 9, remember to spring your clocks foward one hour. This is also a great time to do the following:

- ▶ Change the batteries in smoke detectors.
- ▶ Have a professional check your fire extinguishers.



# Self-Regulation Continued from page 16-A

#### Cost of a self-regulated rate case

In contrast, the native, self-regulated members of Victory had a rate increase in 2011, the first and only increase since 1992 (with the exception of some modifications to irrigation rates). Victory paid approximately \$23,274 for consulting fees relating to the rate case.

#### **Difference**

Based on the rate cases described above, self-regulation resulted in an 89 percent savings to our members. Rate cases regulated at a local level also take much less time. While it can take up to a year to process and gain approval through the KCC, self-regulated rate cases tend to take fewer than six months. A majority of those six months are used to conduct a cost-of-service study.

#### Value of self regulation

Victory's member-elected board of trustees is entrusted with making financial decisions for the cooperative, including rate changes and adjustments. They are members, too, so when rates are increased, their electric bills are affected just like yours and mine. To give you an idea of the responsibility of our board regarding self-regulation, the native members did not have a rate increase for 19 years between the years of 1992 and 2011. Can you imagine if the price of gasoline, bread or other staples did not increase for 19 years? We feel electricity is still a great value.

In fact, according to US Energy Information Administration (EIA) statistics, Victory has the cheapest residential electric price/rate of the 27 cooperatives in the state of Kansas. Our residential rate is also competitive statewide among all electric utilities including investor-owned utilities, municipalities, and other cooperatives at 1.84 cents below the state average. To put this into perspective, Victory's average residential member pays \$104 per month, whereas a residential member at a neighboring utility pays

an average of \$167 per month.

Victory is also a great value for our industrial and commercial customers. We fall behind only one other cooperative in having the lowest commercial and industrial rates in Kansas at 1.6 and 2.64 cents, respectively, under the state electric utility average.

# Protection for members will continue

The board of trustees has

established a policy that governs the process to change rates, adding more opportunities for member information and feedback. Two of the steps included in the policy are also required by Kansas law. First, notice of the time and place of any board meeting when rates will be discussed and voted on must be sent to members ten days before the meeting, and that meeting must be open to members. Second, any rate change must include a notice to members of their right to request the KCC to review rate changes.

Self-regulation will not eliminate all regulatory requirements for Victory. We will continue to be subject to other state and federal environmental, safety, reliability and labor regulations, even after self regulation. Certain functions will remain under KCC authority, regardless of the members' vote.

For example, the Cold Weather Rule is currently mandated by the KCC. Victory will maintain this important protection for residential customers under self regulation per Victory's rules and regulations. No changes have been proposed.

The intent behind the vote for self-regulation is not about raising rates; it's about the right to keep decisions about rates at home versus in Topeka. Our goal as a not-for-profit electric cooperative is always to provide power as close to cost as possible while maintaining reliability in a safe and effective manner.

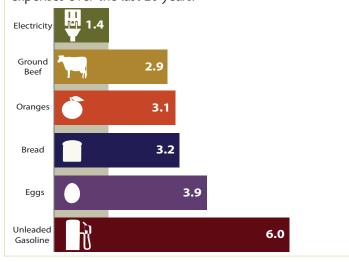
The vote on self-regulation is slated for May 2014, and you will be hearing more about self-regulation in the coming months. We have also scheduled a public meeting at Victory's offices on April 22 to answer any of your questions or concerns about self-regulation. For more information, please visit our website at www.victoryelectric.net.

Thanks, Shane Laws

### The Value of Your Dollar

#### **Average Annual Price Increases**

The cost of powering your home rises at a slower pace than other expenses like gas and many groceries. Compare the average annual percentage increase of these expenses over the last 20 years.



# Ed Stegman Retires after 53 years of Service

ED STEGMAN, construction coordinator for Victory Electric, retired in February 2014. Stegman started at Victory Electric in April 2007, when Victory acquired a portion of the Aquila electric properties. Previous to Victory, Stegman worked for Aquila as a lineman and a staking engineer for

"All of us at Victory will miss Ed," said Greg Underwood. "I've known Ed for many, many years. He is a hardworking individual and he leaves us with big shoes to fill. He will be hard to replace, but we wish him the best of luck in his retirement."

Stegman started at Western

Light as an apprentice lineman in 1961. He transitioned many times as the company was bought and sold, finally ending up as a construction coordinator at Victory Electric for the past seven years.

"It has been a lot of years," Stegman said. "I was finally ready to retire."

On his last day in the office, management and employees of Victory Electric hosted a reception for Stegman to celebrate his retirement.

All of us at Victory Electric thank Ed for his many years of service to Victory Electric and the local community. We wish him a happy and relaxing retirement.



**Ed Stegman** 

# **Amy Grasser Named Victory's New Manager of Human Resources**



**Amy Grasser** 

Victory Electric is pleased to announce the selection of Amy Grasser as the new manager of human resources, effective February 17, 2014.

"I am excited to join a company who believes as I do, that the company's most valuable resource is its employees and key to company's overall success," Grasser said. "I look forward to meeting all the employees and for the opportunity to become a part of a company that cares so much about its people and to see how I can make a difference in their lives going

Grasser has 14 years of experience in management and ten years experience in human resources. She most recently was the lead human resources generalist for all of Trinidad

Drilling's United States employees. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in business administration from Bellevue University in Bellevue, Nebraska.

"Amy has extensive background in human resources," said Shane Laws, Victory CEO. "I have no doubt she will be a great asset to the cooperative and bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to Victory Electric.

Grasser currently lives in Cimarron and enjoys watching college football, gardening, being in the outdoors, and spending time with family and friends. She has two stepchildren, Paige and Trevor, and has been married to her husband, Travis, for seven years.

## **Area Third Graders Receive Dictionaries**

Victory Electric teamed up with the Cimarron Rotary Club and United Telephone to donate a children's dictionary to all third grade students in Gray County. Victory also donated to the Dodge City Rotary Club for Ford County students.

The Rotary Club Dictionary Project is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization. The goal of this program is to assist students in completing the school year as good writers, active readers and creative thinkers by providing students with a dictionary. The dictionaries are gifts to students to use at school and home for years to come.



Ms. Ziegler's class at Copeland Elementary received dictionaries courtesy of Victory, Cimarron Rotary Club, and United Telephone.

# **Online Outage Reporting**

# Three easy steps to report an outage from your phone, tablet or computer

Boom! The power goes out ... catching you completely off guard and unprepared. Like most friends and neighbors, your first instinct is to pick up the phone and call Victory Electric to report the outage.

Unfortunately, power outages tend to occur when least expected. But fortunately for our members, Victory Electric has several avenues to report a power outage. In addition to calling our office, you can also report an outage via Victory's online bill pay system from your smart phone, tablet or computer. One could even say it is faster than phoning in the outage.

#### More than just paying your bill

SmartHub isn't just Victory's online bill payment system. Available in both a mobile app and a web version, SmartHub gives members secure access to maintain account information, view bills, see payment history, make payments on one or more accounts,

set-up recurring payments, and report outages. They also allow members to monitor and manage usage by use of graphics and usage markers.

The SmartHub application is a great tool, even for those who are not interested in paying bills online. It allows members to monitor and manage usage by use of graphics and usage markers and report outages with a click of a button. You can also elect to receive notifications for account milestones, such as an approaching or a missed due date.

#### Signing up is easy

For those interested in signing up for SmartHub, the process is fairly simple and very secure. You will need your account(s) number and to answer passphrase and security questions.

Once an account is created, logging-in is simple and you can even download an app. Our mobile apps are native applications that can be

downloaded and installed on your compatible mobile phone or tablet device. The Web version is internet accessible from any web enabled device.

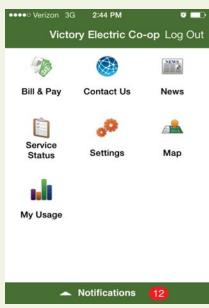
#### Save your time

For those members who still prefer to call in outages by phone, we have a few tips to expedite your call. If members can give their specific meter number or service location (located on electric bill), it speeds up the process tremendously, especially if a member has multiple meters.

During the day, our local office customer service representatives answer calls, but are limited to the 23 phones lines available. When we have a large scale outage, many members may not be able to get through to report the outage, which is where SmartHub is handy. After hours, we have an out-of-state answering service that takes calls and dispatches crews.

#### STEP 1:

Log-in or open your SmartHub mobile app to the home screen where you will click the "Service Status" icon.



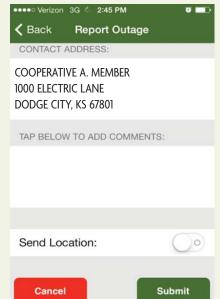
#### STEP 2:

To report an outage through the app, click "My Power is Out"



#### STEP 3:

Click submit. You also have the option of adding comments (i.e. a pole or live power line is down)



# **Pruitt Becomes Certified as a Master Electrician**



Jeremy Pruitt

Victory Electric electrician, **JEREMY PRUITT**, recently passed the exam to earn his master electrician license.

Pruitt has spent the past several years working as a journeyman electrician. Master electricians are at the top of their field. They have the experience and knowledge to tackle the most complex electrical systems, having moved past

apprentice and journeyman electrician status.

Electricians start their education through four-year apprenticeships, completing at least 144 hours of tech training and 2,000 hours of training on-the-job. After that, they can apply for the journeyman electrician certificate. After

four years of experience (in most states) journeyman can apply for their master electrician license. They are tested on the National Electrical Code, electrical theory and local/state electric and building codes. Also, electricians who do electrical work for the public rather than for electrical contractors often need a special license. Some states also require electrical contractors to have certification as master electricians.

A master electrician typically oversees a staff of laborers, electrician apprentices and journeymen electricians on commercial, industrial and residential jobs. He normally schedules each phase of the job to meet predetermined deadlines and orders all necessary parts, components and materials. At each stage of completion, the master electrician often checks the crew's work for quality and compliance with industry codes and standards.

The CEO, managers and employees at Victory Electric would like to extend our biggest congratulations to Jeremy for his achievements!

# **Enjoy a Safe Start to Spring**

As the spring season approaches, many will usher in the warmer weather by thoroughly cleaning their homes and tending to yard work. The Electrical Safety Foundation (ESFI) recommends homeowners ensure that electrical hazards are eliminated along with unwanted dust and clutter.

ESFI suggests starting with the basement, an important, but often overlooked space when it comes to home inspection and fire safety. These low-level rooms contain two leading causes of home fires - heating equipment and electrical distribution systems.

- Check the label inside the door or cover of your electrical service panel to see when your electrical system was last inspected. If the date has passed or is approaching, contact a licensed, qualified electrician to schedule an inspection.
- ▶ Be sure circuit breakers and fuses are correctly labeled with their amperage and their corresponding rooms, circuits or outlets. Use correct size and current rating for breakers/fuses.

- Increase your fire protection by having a licensed electrician replace your standard circuit breakers with arc fault circuit interrupters - AFCIs.
- Have your furnace cleaned and inspected annually by a licensed professional.
- ➤ Vent all all fuel-burning equipment, such as furnaces, stoves, and fireplaces, to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Check for excessive vibration or movement when the washing machine or dryer is operating. This can put stress on electrical connections.
- ▶ Make sure the area around your dryer is clutter free and that the dryer lint filter is cleaned after each load. Build up can be a fire starter.
- ▶ Don't overlook your basement when it comes to smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. These devices should be installed in these spaces as well as on every level of your home and outside every sleeping area. Test these alarms to ensure that they are in working order, and replace the batteries when needed.

#### **Outdoor Electrical Safety Tips**

Warmer weather brings an increase in outdoor work across the country, both on the job and at home. Increasing electrical safety awareness can help ensure those activities do not result in injuries and deaths.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) provides the following safety tips:

- ➤ Carefully check the location of all overhead wires before using a ladder. All ladders, even those made of wood, that contact a power line can shock or electrocute people coming in contact with them.
- Unplug outdoor tools and appliances when not in use.
- Inspect power tools and appliances for frayed cords, broken plugs and cracked or broken housing. Repair or replace damaged items.
- Water does not mix with electricity. Avoid damp conditions
  including wet grass when using electricity.

Visit www.esfi.org for more tips on keeping your home and family safe this spring and beyond.

#### **Victory Electric Bill Payment Options**



Pay your bill online at www. victoryelectric.net, our office, by mail or any of our pay stations.

Victory Electric has several convenient options for you, the member, to pay your bill.

In addition to paying in our office or by mail, options include online bill pay at www.victoryelectric.net, drop boxes at Victory Electric and City of Dodge City, and a pay station at Mr. Payroll, 400 E Wyatt Earp.

#### **CFL Charlie Says** "Come Get Your Free CFL!"

#### This month's lucky winners are...

Shay Zielke, Jerrold J Herr, Jenny M Clevenger, Issara Ayuthia, Raul Rincon, Esther Abbey, Fedailia Johnston, Kody G Quint, Refugio Cruz, Gerald

W Adsit, Edgar Villa, Federico 🌆 Torres, Hector Triana, and Steve R Tucker. Come by

Victory Electric Cooperative to get your free compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL). Every month Victory will be giving members free CFL light bulbs. Congratulations winners!

#### Visit Us Online



Visit us at www. victoryelectric.net to pay your bill and find energy calculators-just to name a few tools!

Find us on Facebook at facebook. com/VictoryElectric for updates and

energy efficiency tips

# Why All of The Crews Around My Neighborhood?

Starting in March, you may notice extra crews in our service area carrying handheld computers, cameras, and GPS devices. For the next 12 months, they will be looking at utility poles, street lights, transformers and other Victory Electric equipment in your neighborhood.

"They are here to conduct an inventory of our

electrical system and record the location, condition, and photograph each piece of equipment using special GPS tools," said Greg Underwood, manager of engineering for Victory Electric.

These tools are very similar to GPS units you may be familiar with, but they are much more accurate. The information will be stored in an electronic map called a Geospatial Information System (GIS). Having this type of data will greatly improve our response to outages and improve service to our members in many other ways.

Accurate maps are an important part of the co-op's toolkit. With these maps, Victory Electric can plot power lines, locate problems more quickly, and plan for future growth.

Victory Electric has grown rapidly through the years, and the maps that have been developed over the last 70 years are not always accurate. While



GPS crews will inventory every pole, transformer and piece of equipment in Victory's infrastructure.

Victory has been using geographic information system (GIS) maps, this project will allow the GIS maps to be corrected and have the same accuracy as GPS.

"The ultimate goal of the project is to replace the co-op's old, inaccurate database with a new, accurate database," Underwood said.

The folks you will be seeing are experts with the Global Mapping Solutions, an industry leader in this field. Their pick-ups and 4-wheelers will be branded with the Victory Electric logo. They will also be carrying identification that confirms they are employees of GMS working for Victory Electric.

As they move through our service area, we will provide updates to keep you informed of their work locations. Should you have any questions please contact us at 620-227-2139 or visit www.victoryelectric.net.

### **Four Nominated for Board Election**

On January 23, 2014, the committee of nominations, who were appointed by the Victory Electric board of trustees, submitted the following candidates for trustees of the cooperative.

The candidates nominated were:

- DISTRICT 2 John Leis
- **▶ DISTRICT 4** Jim Imel

- **▶ DISTRICT 6** Kenny Wehkamp
- **DISTRICT 10**

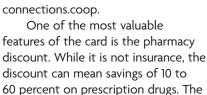
Randy Quint

Trustees will be elected to threeyear terms at the annual meeting on April 15. Members in these four districts will be eligible to vote for the candidate in his/her district. Ballots will be mailed with the annual report.

# **Co-op Connections Card**

The Co-op Connections Card connects you with discounts on everything from hotel stays to prescription drugs. The card also gives you access to online savings at more than 95

national retailers like Barnes&Noble.com. Hertz Rental Cars, Best Western hotels and ProFlowers.com. You can check out these great national discounts at www.



logo and information on the back of

your card is recognized at more than 60,000 national, regional, and local pharmacies.

You can use you card anywhere that Co-op Connections cards are

> taken. More than 350 electric cooperatives all across the United States participate in this program, with thousands of businesses offering discounts. More

businesses are being added every day. The benefits of your card are local, but also national - so the cards can be used while visiting other states or other parts of Kansas. Look for window and/or register stickers to identify local participating businesses.



#### **Mark Your Calendars**



The 68th Annual Meeting of Victory Electric has been scheduled for April 15 at the Western State Bank Expo Center.

A meal will be served and everyone attending will receive a registration gift and have a chance to win some great door prizes.

Stay tuned for more details on the upcoming annual meeting.

# Check out these Local Discounts with the Co-op Connections Card

- ▶ 4 ANGELS BOUTIQUE-10% off jewelry
- ► ACKERMAN COMPUTERS-10% off labor
- ► THE BAD HABIT SPORTS BAR AND GRILL-5% off (excludes alcohol)
- ▶ BAILEYS BODY SHOP-5% off parts and labor
- ▶ BELLA ITALIA-10% off
- ▶ BOOT HILL BED AND BREAK-FAST-15% off
- ► CARLOS BOOTS-10% off
- ▶ DEPOT THEATER COMPANY-53 off dinner theater ticket
- ▶ DODGE CITY YMCA Corporate rates with proof of being a Co-op Connections card holder
- ▶ DULCE LANDIA 5% off piñatas and bouce houses
- ► FLATLAND GRAHICS Free digitizing on pocket sized embroidery
- ► FLOWERS BY IRENE-20% off (excluding wire orders)
- ► HARDROCK SAND & GRAVEL, LLC-10% off materials, excluding delivery
- ► JIM'S AUTO SALES & SALVAGE-5% off towing services
- ▶ JOHN'S BODY SHOP-5% discount on deductible up to \$50
- ► K. MARTIN JEWELER- 20% off regular priced merchandise (this does not include items already on layaway)

- LA QUINTA INN AND
  - SUITES-10% off BAR rate. No discounts for 3i Show/Roundup Rodeo events
- ► LANG DIESEL, INC.-10% off parts
- ► MY-D HAN-D., INC.-10% off grain, hay and cattle equipment
- ► PREMIER MOTORS \$500 off regular price
- ► REGIS SALON-10% off
- ► RIDDLES JEWELRY-10% off
- ► SCOTT'S AUTO SHOP-10% off oil, filter and lube. 10% discount on Traxxas radio controlled vehicles and Traxxas parts.
- ► SOPHIA'S- 10% off
- ► STARR COMPUTER SOLUTIONS-Three months free for new alarm monitoring contracts (standard service)
- ► SUNFLOWER CREATIONS-7.45% off any new BERNINA sewing machine or 10% off regular fabric, books, notions, patterns, and embroidery supplies
- ► THE MATTRESS HUB-20% off bed sets \$399 and up. Not valid with any other rebates, discounts or special offers. (Offer excludes Tempur-Pedics) Dodge City and Garden City locations only
- ► TROPICAL ISLAND TAN AND FITNESS-No enrollment fees on fitness
- ► WATERS TRUE VALUE-\$5 off a \$30 purchase

#### **Annual Irrigation** and Technology Seminar Scheduled



Local irrigation farmers attended the 2013 Irrigation and Technology Seminar

Victory Electric announces the 16th Annual Irrigation and Technology Seminar. The seminar will be held on March 7, 2014, at Victory's office located at 3230 N. 14th in Dodge City.

We will send invitations soon to the irrigators on our system. If you have any questions, please call 620-227-2139.

# Disfrute un Seguro Comienzo a la Primavera

Al acercarse la temporada de primavera, muchos marcan el comienzo de los meses cálidos con limpieza minuciosa de sus hogares y atendiendo el trabajo del jardín. La Fundación de Seguridad Eléctrica (ESFI) recomienda a los propietarios asegurar que los riesgos eléctricos se eliminan junto con el polvo y desorden no deseado.

ESFI sugiere comenzar por el sótano, un espacio importante, pero a menudo pasado por alto cuando se trata de inspección de la vivienda y seguridad contra incendios. Estas habitaciones de bajo nivel tienen dos causas principales de incendios caseros por el equipo de calefacción y sistemas de distribución eléctrica.

- ▶ Revise la etiqueta dentro de la puerta o la tapa de su panel de servicio eléctrico para ver cuando su sistema eléctrico fue inspeccionado. Si la fecha ya caduco o está por caducarse, contacte un electricista calificado con licencia para programar una inspección.
- Asegúrese interruptores y fusibles están correctamente marcados con su amperaje en sus correspondientes cuartos, circuitos o tomas. Use el tamaño correcto y corriente para los interruptores / fusibles
- Aumente protección de fuego por tener un electricista autorizado reemplace sus interruptores estándar con interruptores de arco-AFCI.
- Mantenga su horno limpio e inspeccionado anualmente por un profesional autorizado.

- Asegúrese de que todo el equipo que quema combustible, tales como hornos, estufas y chimeneas, tenga ventilación al exterior para evitar la intoxicación por monóxido de carbono.
- ▶ Revise por exceso de vibración o movimiento cuando la lavadora o la secadora está operando. Esto puede poner presión en las conexiones
- Asegúrese de que el área alrededor de la secadora es libre de desorden y que el filtro de pelusa de la secadora se limpia después de cada carga. Acumulación puede ser un iniciador de fuego.
- No hay que ignorar su sótano cuando se trata de los detectores de humo y de monóxido de carbono detectores. Estos dispositivos deben ser instalados en estos espacios, así como en las áreas de dormir. Pruebe estas alarmas para asegurarse de que están en buen estado, y vuelva a colocar las baterías cuando sea necesario.

#### Consejos de Seguridad Eléctrica al Aire Libre

Clima más cálido trae un aumento de trabajo al aire libre en partes del país, en los dos en el trabajo y hogar. El aumento de conciencia sobre la seguridad eléctrica puede ayudar a asegurar que esas actividades no resultan en lesiones y muertes.

La Fundación Internacional de Seguridad Eléctrica (ESFI) ofrece los siguientes consejos de seguridad:

▶ Verifique cuidadosamente la ubi-



Instale detectores de humo y de monóxido de carbono en toda la casa y no olvidar el sótano.

cación de todos los cables aéreos antes de usar una escalera. Todas las escaleras, incluso las hechas de madera, que en contacto con una línea eléctrica pueden provocar corto circuito o electrocutar a la gente que entra en contacto con ellos.

- Desenchufe herramientas al aire libre y electrodomésticos cuando no estén en uso.
- Inspeccione las herramientas eléctricas y aparato de cables pelados, enchufes rotos y viviendas agrietado o roto. Repare o reemplace los artículos dañados.
- ▶ El agua no se mezcla con la electricidad. Evite condiciones húmedas incluyendo césped-
- mojado cuando use electricidad. Visite www.esfi.org para obtener más consejos sobre cómo mantener su hogar y familia segura esta primavera y más allá.



#### Visite Sitio Web y Únase a Nosotros en Facebook

Visite nuestro sitio web www.victoryelectric.net. En nuestro sitio Web, usted encontrará un calendario de eventos, con frecuencia pregunta, pago de factura y energía calculadora sólo por nombrar algunas herramientas!

También puede ser una fan de Victory Electric en Facebook buscando Victory Electric Cooperativa Assn, Inc. Consulte nuestra página en Facebook para actualizaciones, información de interrupción y consejos de eficiencia de energía. Facebook es una excelente forma de mantenerse en contacto con nuestros miembros.