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WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

February 2024

PIERCE PEPIN
COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

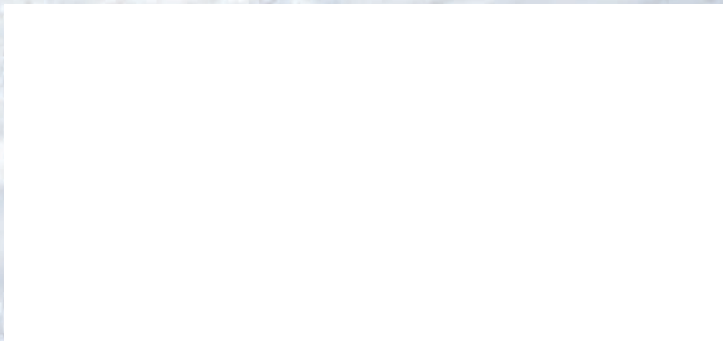


EAU CLAIRE TO HOST U.S. NATIONAL SNOWSHOE CHAMPIONSHIPS

TREADING WATER

**EFFICIENCY TIPS FOR
MANUFACTURED HOMES**

**JOIN PPCS FOR COFFEE AT THE CO-OP
FEBRUARY 9**





Nate Boettcher,
President and CEO

I LOVE IT WHEN A PLAN COMES TOGETHER

Recently, I was reminded of the 1980s hit show “The A-Team.” At

the end of each show, the A-Team leader, Hannibal, would say, “I love it when a plan comes together.” At the end of December, we hit a major milestone. We connected our 3,000th customer to our SwiftCurrent Connect fiber internet. This is a wonderful achievement for the co-op, our members, new SwiftCurrent customers, and most importantly, our staff. Whether it’s ordering material, staking for pole upgrades, taking customer orders, putting together maps, or paying the invoices, every one of our employees has contributed to this success.

Along the way, we’ve created new jobs, brought significant investment into our community, and helped transform the lives of thousands of members. Our broadband network now extends from Roberts to Hammond, River Falls to Prescott, Maiden Rock, and beyond. Even though we’ve built 800 miles of fiber in two years, we’re not done. We still have more miles to build, poles to replace, fiber to string, and more customers to connect. As a statement of our success, we just launched our 2-Gig internet service and doubled everyone’s speed at no extra cost. I am sure Hannibal would approve of this plan.

We are now a month into our new calendar year for the co-op. With any luck, our solar farm will be up and running before long. We’ve experienced delays in getting the final switch gear for the project. However, the panels are installed, and we are ready to start producing electricity. We anticipate having a ribbon-cutting ceremony this spring. This will be another plan that will come together and be a great thing for our members.

In February, members will see a rate change on their bill. As we discussed last month, we will begin implementing a three-part rate consisting of the

facility charge, the energy charge, and the demand charge. These rates were approved by the board in January. The rates reflect a shift in how we view energy. For the past three years, we have been encouraging members to “SHIFT for Savings” by moving heavy energy use out of critical periods. By using energy outside of these windows, members will control the cost of energy.

As part of this new rate, members will be charged a fee for demand measured in kW from 5–8 p.m. during the weekdays, excluding any major holidays. For those three hours, the members’ highest demand reading will be used for billing. Our residential rates will now contain a charge for a block of demand. If a member exceeds that block, they will be charged an additional amount for each kW over the block. Members with eligible rates and enrolled in our load control program can receive a \$5 credit for this demand charge, provided they have a controllable load, such as an electric water heater. In addition, some of the rates will have a lower kWh cost; this is possible because we are aligning more of the rate with our wholesale power costs.

Rate increases are necessary to help pay for the wholesale power rate increase we received last year. As I said last month, the rate increase is not

because of the broadband business. Our team has worked incredibly hard over the past several weeks and months to prepare a budget that accomplishes our goals and keeps rates affordable. We have also spent significant time reducing the number of rates to make things more efficient. In some cases, specific rates have not been updated for several years. These changes will help us streamline and be more efficient in the future. If you have questions about the rates, feel free to reach out to me.

Lastly, on a personal note, I want to send a big kudos out to our employees who helped make our office and community a little more festive this past holiday

season. I jokingly tell our employees that we should have more Christmas lights up than anyone, especially since it’s using our power. They went above and beyond this year putting up lights on our building, decorating our office, and lighting East End Park in Ellsworth, not to mention participating in the River Falls River Dazzle Parade. Our employees give back to their communities in remarkable ways. As your locally owned electric cooperative, we are here to help our members Live Better. If you see one of our employees, please take a minute to thank them for helping brighten our community. It means a lot to me that they are willing to support our communities. Have a great February!

We are here to help our members Live Better.



SHIFT for Savings!
Reduce non-essential energy use from 7 to 11 AM and 4 to 8 PM.

Together, we can lower demand and help keep rates stable.



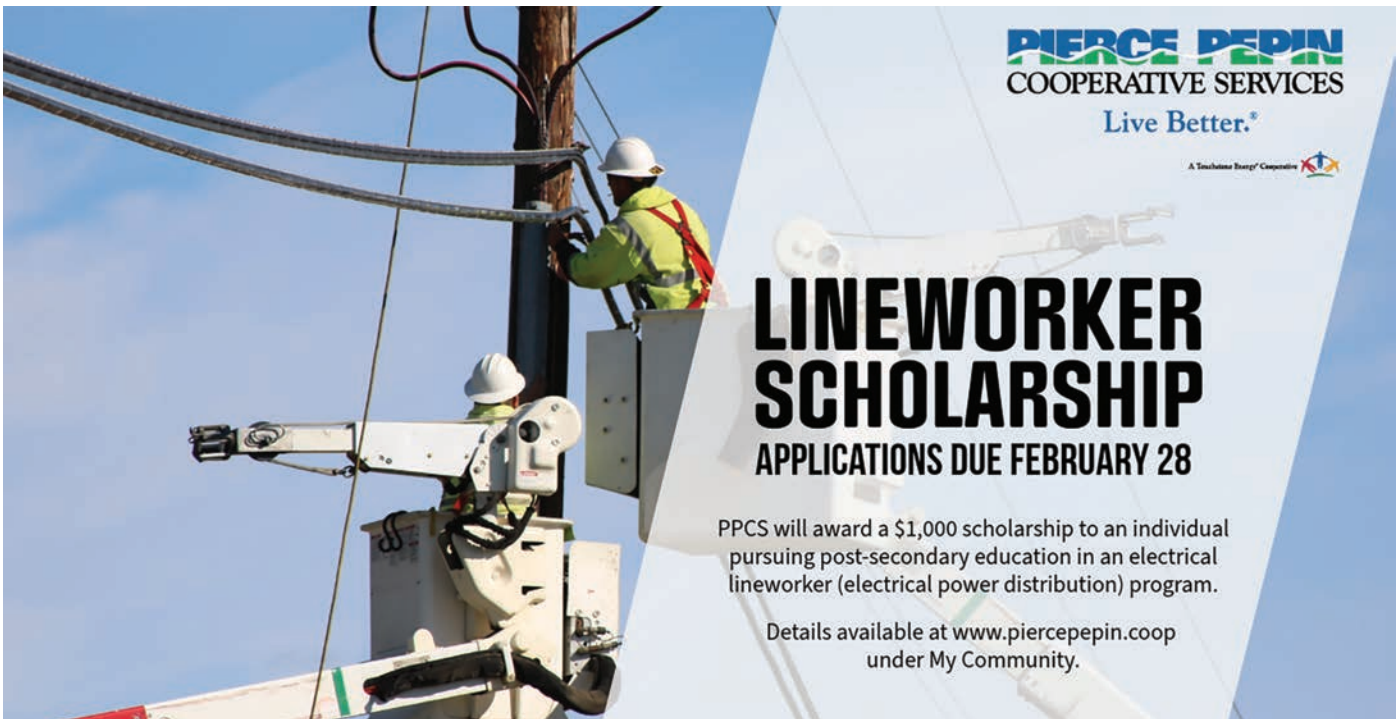
2024 WORK PLAN FOCUSES ON RELIABILITY

Maintaining our electric distribution system is the most important and costly component of providing safe, reliable electric service. One new construction/conversion project is defined in our power delivery plan for 2024 and is essential for service reliability—reducing service interruptions, increasing load capacity, and cutting line losses in the distribution of electricity. In 2024, our planned project is:

- **Ellsworth along 450th Avenue and 610th Street:** Roughly two miles of single-phase line will be upgraded to three-phase 4/0 ACSR for load balancing.

In addition to this project, the work plan and budget also includes:

- Annual replacement of failing underground cable
- New service installations and upgrades
- Pole changeouts and transformer replacements
- Vegetation management and clearing in Isabelle, Hartland, Trenton, and eastern portions of Diamond Bluff townships.



PIERCE PEPIN
COOPERATIVE SERVICES
Live Better.®
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LINeworker SCHOLARSHIP

APPLICATIONS DUE FEBRUARY 28

PPCS will award a \$1,000 scholarship to an individual pursuing post-secondary education in an electrical lineworker (electrical power distribution) program.

Details available at www.piercepepin.coop under My Community.



REDUCE YOUR USE

As the demand for electricity continues to rise, finding ways to reduce energy consumption at the residential level becomes crucial. This contributes to environmental sustainability, allows homeowners to save money on utility bills, and helps Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) keep rates stable. Here are some effective strategies for residential customers to reduce the demand in electricity use:

- 1. Energy-Efficient Appliances:** Investing in energy-efficient appliances can significantly lower electricity consumption. Look for the ENERGY STAR label when purchasing new appliances, as these products meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- 2. Smart Thermostats:** Installing a smart thermostat allows homeowners to regulate their home's temperature more efficiently. These devices can learn your heating and cooling preferences and adjust accordingly, saving energy and money in the process.
- 3. Sealing and Insulating:** Proper insulation and sealing gaps in windows, doors, and walls help maintain comfortable indoor temperatures without overworking heating or cooling systems. This simple step can result in substantial energy savings over time.
- 4. LED Lighting:** Replace traditional incandescent bulbs with energy-efficient LED lighting. LEDs use less energy, last longer, and provide

the same amount of light. This small change can have a noticeable impact on reducing overall electricity consumption.

- 5. Unplug Devices and Use Power Strips:** Many electronic devices continue to draw power even when turned off (phantom load). Unplug chargers, gaming consoles, and other electronics when not in use, or use power strips to disconnect multiple devices simultaneously.



- 6. Energy Audits:** Conduct a home energy audit to identify areas where energy efficiency can be improved. We have do-it-yourself booklets avail-

able for members. A certified energy audit professional can help identify air leaks or areas needing insulation.

- 7. Behavioral Changes:** Simple changes in daily habits, such as turning off lights when leaving a room, using appliances efficiently, and being mindful of water heating can collectively contribute to reducing energy consumption.

By adopting these strategies, PPCS members can play a crucial role in decreasing overall electricity demand, contributing to a more sustainable future, and keeping rates stable. Members also have access to rebates and incentives through our EnergySense program and Focus on Energy. For more information go to www.piercepepin.coop/programs-rebates or call our office at 800-924-2133.

JOIN US FOR
**COFFEE AT THE
 CO-OP**
 Friday, February 9*
 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. at
 the PPCS office.

*This is a member-focused event. Attendees will be entered in the prize drawing for bill credits in December 2024.

SAVE THE DATE

87TH ANNUAL MEETING
Thursday, April 18
Ellsworth High School
Registration & Meal 5:00 PM
Business Meeting 5:45 PM

Join us and participate in the democratic member control of your cooperative.



NEED HELP PAYING YOUR ENERGY BILL?

PPCS' Commitment to Community program offers energy assistance to low-income individuals or families who are electric members of PPCS. If you need assistance, start by contacting the Department of Human Services for the county in which you reside. If you qualify through the county, you will be eligible for a voucher to be applied to your PPCS electric bill.

- **Buffalo County: 608-685-4412**
- **Pierce, Pepin & St. Croix Counties: 715-265-4271**

For more information, please contact our billing coordinator at 715-273-4355, 800-924-2133, or info@piercepelin.coop.

LOVE STREAMING MOVIES?

YOU'LL LOVE OUR INTERNET!

What's not to love about streaming movies? You get to pop some popcorn, cuddle up on your couch, and watch whatever your heart desires through a streaming service.

The last thing you need as a movie buff is buffering. To avoid the dreaded buffering wheel showing up on the screen, switch to one of our super-fast and reliable internet plans.

CALL 715.350.7033 FOR A SPEED UPGRADE



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PIERCE PEPIN COOPERATIVE SERVICES



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Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram   

Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Power Outages and Emergencies: 800-927-5705

Nate Boettcher, President & CEO

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- District 2.....Edward Hass
- District 3.....Brian Berg
- District 4.....John Parkes
- District 5.....Ann Young
- District 6.....Ginny Huber, secretary/treasurer
- District 7.....Roger Wiff, chairman
- District 8.....Brian Bergseng, vice chairman
- District 9.....Daniel Reis