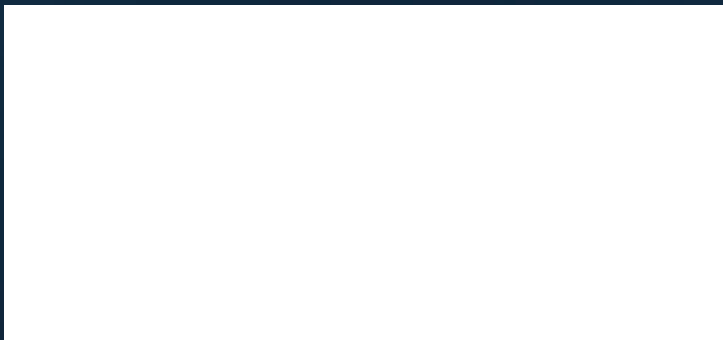


Since 1940

# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* July 2022 NEWS



SwiftCurrent  
Connect  
*Celebrating  
one year of  
service!*





# ONE YEAR LATER WITH SWIFTCURRENT CONNECT



Nate Boettcher,  
President and CEO

On July 13, 2021, Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) announced the launch of SwiftCurrent Connect, a broadband subsidiary committed to bringing high-speed fiber optic broadband to our underserved communities. It's hard to believe a year later we have built over 150 miles of fiber, with more being built each day. Phase 1 passes by 1,500 homes with hundreds of connections already completed and more on the way. In a lot of ways, I would love to say that we have arrived

and to take on a celebratory tone, but this is just the beginning for us, and our mini celebrations happen when members get connected.

Our first connected customer came on January 31, and it certainly didn't come without a few bumps in the road. We've learned a lot about picking your partners and making sure they are competent and have the same commitment to the job that we do each day. We've learned to be nimble and to adapt to change quickly. Just a couple of months ago, a load of replacement poles was on the way to our office, only to be diverted to storms in North Dakota. More recently the same thing happened when storms broke poles in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. When supply chain issues create a challenge, our team has figured out a way to adapt and continue the project.

Our PPCS team has shown resiliency learning new processes, revamping to meet the needs of a fiber business, and training new staff. During this period, we've added some talented people who came to us during a time of transition. A big credit goes to our office staff who has learned to juggle in periods of uncertainty and to our operations area who has supported many of the contractors doing the work. For a lot of us, we've been thinking about broadband for the better part of two years, and sometimes we forget the work that it's taken to get to this point. To say, "It's been a journey" would be an understatement. We are committed to this because it impacts our membership and our communities. I think this comment from one of our members summarizes the importance of broadband:



*"I wanted to confirm that the broadband is working great! My wife and I can't thank you all enough. Please pass along our appreciation to everyone involved. It's been a stressful few years and this is a huge relief to have fast and stable internet. Thank you again! Cheers."*

We started SwiftCurrent with one goal, serving our communities and helping people "Live Better." SwiftCurrent is helping provide new jobs, making investments in our communities, and establishing reliable connectivity. We wanted to make sure our communities had great broadband service, not just okay or no service. The first year has flown by, but we are thankful for the patience of everyone who has waited to get connected and for those who are waiting for future areas to be completed. Thank you for your support and we can't wait to get you connected. Have a happy Fourth of July and stay safe!

Since 1940

# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

July 2022

**PIERCE PEPIN**  
COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

WILD WISCONSIN

BATTERY STORAGE OR GENERATOR?

WISCONSIN'S WAKEUP CALL

PICNIC RECIPES





## CURRENT INFORMATION HELPS US SERVE YOU BETTER

Keeping your account information up to date is important for us to communicate effectively with you. Please notify us of any name changes, changes in property ownership, mailing address, phone, or email contact information.

Name changes are especially important. To protect your privacy, we can only discuss account information with the person whose name is listed on the account, or any other person authorized by the account holder. Situations that may prompt a name change to your account are marriage, divorce, death, or a change in bill responsibility.

Changes in the status of the property, such as from business to residential or dairy farm to residential, are also important to relay to us. These changes can impact the electric rate for your account.

Current account information is essential for the allocation and payment of capital credits, billing, and emergency/power outage situations. To update your account information, please contact the cooperative office or login to SmartHub at [www.piercepin.coop](http://www.piercepin.coop) or through our mobile app. Additional documentation and/or proof of identity may be required.



## WHY IT'S GOOD TO SEE CO-OP WORKERS ON YOUR PROPERTY

P PCS employees and contractors work throughout our service territory, in the rights-of-way and easements, and across your private property and driveways. We appreciate your cooperation because we're working to ensure reliable power, and build our fiber-optic network, for you and your neighbors, and that means we must cross your property from time to time. You may see us:

- ✓ Making routine repairs
- ✓ Replacing meters
- ✓ Trimming trees and brush
- ✓ Restoring outages
- ✓ Locating buried utilities for construction and digging projects
- ✓ Working to upgrade poles, wires, transformers, and equipment
- ✓ Inspecting lines, power poles, transformer boxes, and equipment

While we do our best to perform this work during normal working hours, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, we're also trying to get as much work done as possible during our short summer construction season. Some contractors, locators, and others may work into the evenings and on weekends. Every effort is made to avoid damage and unnecessary intrusion. If you have concerns about our work, contact our operations department at 800-924-2133.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

# Community Corner

The board of PPCS' charitable foundation, Pierce Pepin Cares, met on May 5 to review and approve grant requests. Pierce Pepin Cares is funded by PPCS members through Operation Round Up® and with direct donations.



David Charie (left), PPCS manager of energy innovation & operational technology, presented Trevor Myers of Durand Fire Dept. with a \$1,500 check from Pierce Pepin Cares for the purchase of an AED and thermal imaging camera.

Charity Lubich (far right), PPCS vice president, member relations & human resources, presented a \$1,500 check from Pierce Pepin Cares to Gina Klecker, Deanna Hines, and Sam Hines (left to right) to support upgrades to the wash racks at the Drewiske Building at the fairgrounds.



Audrey Severson, Clair Severson, and Donna Constant received a check for \$1,000 from Pierce Pepin Cares to assist with upgrades to the well and septic system. The check was presented by Charity Lubich (far right), PPCS vice president, member relations & human resources.



Charity Lubich (far right), PPCS vice president of member relations & human resources, presented Bethany Christianson, Alison Ennenga, and Mindy Allsop (left to right) with a \$2,000 check. Funds will be used for building an inclusive playground at Fairy Wonderland Park, Prescott.

**SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE**  
 June 20 to August 5  
 Please consider donating notebooks, backpacks, crayons, pencils, glue, markers, calculators, etc. for students who need them in our community.

Northwest 4-H also received a \$300 grant through Federated Youth Foundation to support their annual golf fundraiser. Federated Youth is funded through unclaimed capital credits and is used for projects that support youth education. (No photo available)

## WE'RE LOOKING FOR YOU – DO YOU HAVE UNCLAIMED CAPITAL CREDITS?

PPCS is searching for members who have unclaimed capital credit (dividend) checks issued in 2017. Capital credits are a member's share of the cooperative's margins for a year in which revenues exceeded expenses. The amount a member is credited is proportionate to the member's share of electrical costs and purchases for that year. Capital credits are refunded as approved by the PPCS Board of Directors based on the financial health of the cooperative.

PPCS is required by its bylaws and the State of Wisconsin to publish a list of all capital credit checks not cashed or returned to our offices as undeliverable mail. Therefore, it is important to notify

PPCS of your forwarding address when you move or change your address.

A list of members we hope to locate is included on our website, [www.piercepepin.coop](http://www.piercepepin.coop), under My Co-op > Capital Credits. A notice of forfeiture of funds was also published in the June 9, 2022, edition of *The Pierce County Journal*, Ellsworth, Wisconsin. A current address is needed so we can locate these members and refund their capital credits.

Is your name on this list? Do you know where we can locate these people or their heirs if deceased? If you recognize anyone on the list, please contact us at 715-273-4355, 800-924-2133 or [info@piercepepin.coop](mailto:info@piercepepin.coop) and provide the mem-



ber's name and current address.

If these members are not located by August 31, 2022, the unclaimed funds will be forfeited to the Federated Youth Foundation and used by the cooperative for educational or charitable purposes as directed by our bylaws.

### SHIFT for Savings

Reduce your energy use between 2 and 6 PM.

With your help, we can lower demand, keep rates stable, and decrease stress on the electric grid.



### 2022 RIGHT-OF-WAY CLEARING BEGINS MID-JULY

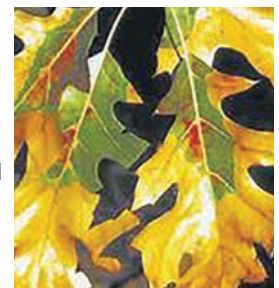
PPCS provides you with safe, reliable electricity. Although there are some things that interfere, things beyond our control—lightning, high winds, tornadoes, ice, and snowstorms—we work hard to prevent blinks and power outages.

To reduce potential tree-related problems, PPCS has contracted with Zielie's Tree Service, Inc. to cut trees and brush in the rights-of-way of overhead power lines. The right-of-way includes the area within 20 feet on either side of the pole line. Danger trees will be removed from outside of the 40-foot right-of-way.

Clearing will begin in mid-July and include the towns of Trimbelle, Martell, River Falls in Pierce County and Kinnickinnic, Rush River, and Pleasant Valley in St. Croix County.

#### A Message about Oak Wilt

To prevent the spread of oak wilt disease, PPCS does not trim oak trees from April through mid- to late July, except in an emergency. In those cases, proper pruning techniques are used, and the wounds are painted immediately with a special paint. This helps prevent sap-feeding beetles from transferring the disease to healthy trees.




**Happy 4th of July!**

Office closed Monday, July 4.  
Report outages through SmartHub or call 800-927-5705.

*Have a safe holiday weekend!*



## STAY FRESH: FIVE TIPS FOR BETTER INDOOR AIR QUALITY

**W**e spend a lot of time indoors. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates the average person spends 90% of their life indoors. Additionally, our homes are becoming more energy efficient—they're better insulated and sealed with less ventilation—which is great for our energy bills but not so much for our indoor air quality.

The thought of breathing in pollutants can be scary, but the truth is, indoor air pollution is common and simply unavoidable. The good news is there are ways you can easily improve the air quality of your home. Here are five tips to help you breathe a little easier.

**Change your air filter often.** Clogged, dirty filters reduce the amount

of airflow and the HVAC system's efficiency. When a filter becomes too clogged, the excess dirt and dust are sent through your air ducts, adding unnecessary allergens and other unwanted particles into your living space. During the cooling season (summer months), the Department of Energy recommends replacing your air filter every month or two. This is one of the easiest ways to promote better indoor air quality and energy efficiency.

**Regularly vacuum carpet and rugs—especially if you have furry friends.** The cleaner the home, the healthier the home. Vacuuming carpet and area rugs once a week can greatly reduce the accumulation of pet dander and dust inside your home. Frequently clean other areas that collect dust, like drapes, bedding, and cluttered areas.

**Use vents to remove cooking fumes.** Those exhaust fans aren't just for when you burn the bacon. Fans help remove fumes emitted while cooking and eliminate unwanted moisture and odors. They may be a bit noisy, but these handy tools can help you improve indoor air quality while you're preparing that culinary masterpiece (or even a grilled cheese sandwich!).

**Get a handle on humidity.** Summer months typically bring more humidity than we'd like, especially if you

live in a high-humidity climate zone. Moisture in the air can carry bacteria and other unwanted particles that you eventually breathe in. Dehumidifiers work to remove that moisture from the air, reducing the number of bacteria, mold, and other allergens in your home.

**Incorporate air-purifying plants into your living space.** There are several varieties of indoor plants that can help detoxify your home from dust and germs found in a variety of home products, furniture, and other materials. A few low-maintenance, air-purifying plants to consider are snake plants, aloe vera plants, and pothos plants (also known as Devil's Ivy). These vibrant, lush plants are eye-catching and beneficial for any home. Remember to review care conditions and think about placement for any new plants you add to your home.

Taking simple steps to purify indoor air can improve health and overall quality of life. With a little effort, you can improve the indoor air quality of your home and breathe a bit easier.






## PIERCE PEPIN COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Ellsworth, WI 54011-0420  
715-273-4355 • 800-924-2133

info@piercepelin.coop • www.piercepelin.coop

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram   

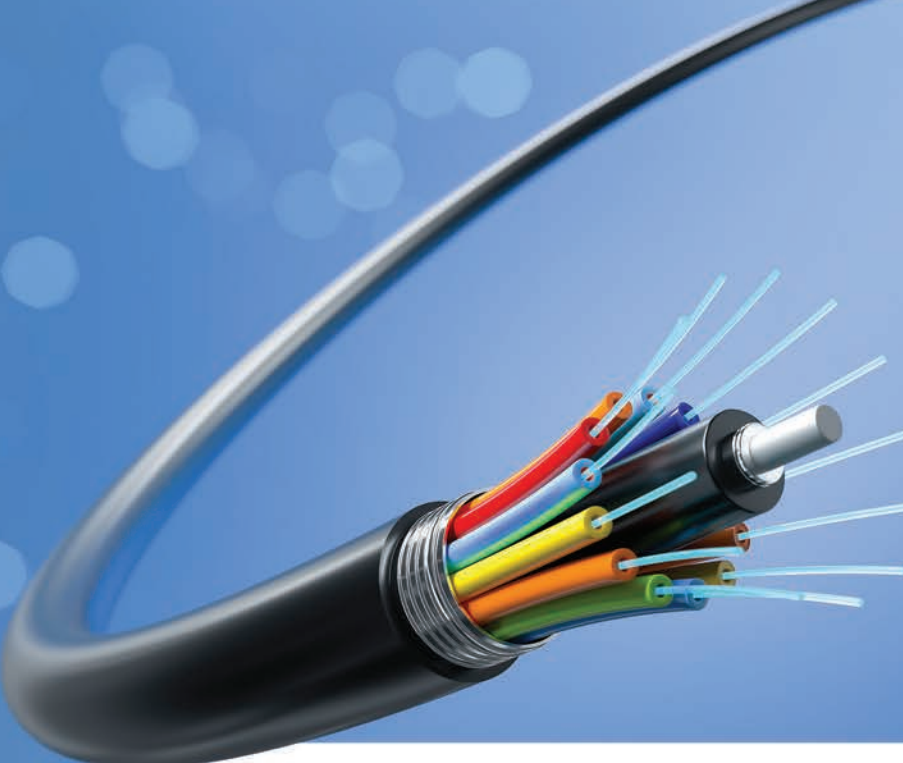
**Office Hours:** Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

**Power Outages and Emergencies: 800-927-5705**

## Nate Boettcher, President & CEO






### Board of Directors

- District 1.....Gerald Drier
- District 2.....Edward Hass
- District 3.....Brian Berg
- District 4.....Joseph Bacon
- District 5.....Ann Young
- District 6.....Ginny Huber, secretary/treasurer
- District 7.....Roger Wiff, chairman
- District 8.....Brian Bergsens, vice chairman
- District 9.....Daniel Reis



# WORKING TO BUILD AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT

**T**he first thing we learned when we launched SwiftCurrent Connect was that the fiber optic cable couldn't get installed fast enough. Through the trials and tribulations of launching a brand-new company, setting up all the back-office software to handle customer accounts, physically installing the fiber-optic cable, and working with state and local partners to secure grant money, our priority has been to serve the community and bring a critical service to residents of western Wisconsin. Here are a few of the milestones we've reached in the past year:

-  **July 2021** – SwiftCurrent Connect launched.
-  **August 2021** – Phase I area designed and pole inspection, make-ready work completed.
-  **September 2021** – Construction of fiber optic cable lines begins. These lines follow the PPCS electric line infrastructure.
-  **January 2022** – First customers connected and receiving high-speed fiber optic internet on January 31. Design and make-ready work for Phase II begins.
-  **June 2022** – Phase I construction nears completion—over 150 miles of underground and aerial fiber optic cable installed. Our 100th high-speed fiber optic internet customer was connected. Our first voice customer was connected. Phase II pole inspections completed and make-ready work underway.





# thank you

To all the local governments supporting the buildout of fiber optic broadband internet in their communities by committing a portion of their ARPA funds to SwiftCurrent Connect.

## St. Croix County and Towns of:

Clifton	Kinnickinnic
Ellsworth	Oak Grove
El Paso	River Falls
Esdaile	Trimbelle



DON'T LET THE  
*Big One*  
GET AWAY



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