

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

September 2022

PIERCE PEPIN
COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

MIDWEST LEADS
ELECTRIC SCHOOL
BUS TRANSITION

WILD WISCONSIN
PHOTO CONTEST WINNER

THE HEART OF CLEGHORN

EXPERIENCE ALL THINGS ELECTRIC
AT POWERED BY ELECTRICITY
SEPTEMBER 24



EXPANDING MEMBER GROWTH THROUGH EV TOURISM



Nate Boettcher,
President and CEO

In late 2020, 31 electric cooperatives formed CHARGE. CHARGE was created to help develop a national network of electric vehicle (EV) chargers powered by electric cooperatives. Electric cooperatives cover 56% of the United States landmass and collectively serve 42 million people. There is no better group of companies to help power the next generation of transportation than electric cooperatives.

PPCS is a founding member of CHARGE. In just a couple of years, CHARGE has grown to nearly 100 cooperatives spread across the upper Midwest, Florida, Alabama, South Carolina, and Oregon. As part of this network, cooperatives have invested in both residential and public EV charging. We are excited to announce that PPCS has also made this investment by recently installing two EV charging stations located at Belle Vinez Winery just outside of River Falls and one at Vino in the Valley.

While many public charging stations are located near transportation corridors such as Interstate 94, PPCS decided to take a slightly different approach and located chargers at destinations within our service area. Range anxiety continues to be a major concern for those looking to purchase an EV. By locating these charging stations near tourism and entertainment destinations, we are encouraging members and non-members to spend time at our community businesses. It's a great way to encourage individuals from outside of our area to drive through Pierce and Pepin counties, explore the back roads, and patronize businesses owned by PPCS members.

Ribbon-cutting ceremonies were

held for both places on August 27 and September 2. If you were unable to join us, please mark your calendars for Saturday, September 24. In conjunction with St. Croix Electric Cooperative, PPCS will hold our annual Powered by Electricity Day at UW-River Falls North Hall. The event runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and will be filled with EV discussions, beneficial use of electrification, and the ability to see several electric vehicles. If you're contemplating purchasing an EV or just want more information about using affordable electricity for everyday use,

this event will be sure to have something for you.

Lastly, as we head into the fall, we would like to wish everyone a great and safe school year. With heavy machinery, buses, and new drivers on the road, take a minute to ensure you can drive safely without distractions. This reminder goes out to those working in the fields around power poles. Each year, PPCS has several outages due to farm equipment that could have been avoided. Let's get through the year accident-free and reduce outages to our members. Have a great fall!

Second Annual

POWERED by ELECTRICITY

Saturday, September 24
10 AM to 2 PM
UW-River Falls
North Hall Parking Lot

GO ELECTRIC!

EV Driver Roundtables

Experience all things electric!

- Electric Vehicle Showcase
- EV Test Drives
- E-Bike Test Rides
- Electric Equipment Demos

Prize Drawings

Presentations on:

- Community Solar vs. Residential
- Beneficial Electrification
- Nationwide Charging Network Powered by Coops



Happy Labor Day

Office Closed: September 5
Report outages through SmartHub or call 800-924-2133.

LOCAL BUSINESS SEES A **SUNNY** FUTURE



As the owners of A-Z Produce and Bakery, Ted Fisher and Robbi Bannen rely on the sun to nurture and grow their crops. With the installation of a 20-kW solar panel system in 2019, now they also rely on the sun to power their farm.

Fisher and Bannen have been on their farm since 1995. They have grown vegetables and sold meat through CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) for more than 30 years. In 1998, they installed a brick pizza oven and began to sell pizzas on the farm every Tuesday evening. The pandemic caused them to close their pizza nights and they have only recently started hosting these

evenings again just twice a month and by reservation only.

Like most people who have been working for over 30 years, Fisher and Bannen have been considering what retirement will look like in the future. As farmers, they have not been able to put substantial amounts of money into investments or other types of savings accounts.

“We look at this whole solar project as a retirement project,” said Bannen. “Farmers generally don’t have a lot of Social Security income and your assets are all in your place. And if you don’t want to sell your place, then how do you stay there? And so, it seemed to me

reducing our costs was the answer.”

Fisher and Bannen decided to install their solar array on a new pole shed. They felt a pole shed offered more value by storing vehicles and tools than installing the system on racks. They worked closely with Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services to connect their solar system under the Distributed Generation program. This keeps the farm connected to the power grid so they can purchase power when their array is not producing enough and push power back onto the grid when they produce more than the farm needs.

They had some small glitches before they were confident the system was



Robbi Bannen and Ted Fischer welcome their customers to A-Z Produce and Bakery, where they sell meats and home-grown vegetables through their CSA business. They fire up their brick pizza oven for twice-monthly pizza nights, by reservation only.

fully operational. An inverter had to be replaced and a rapid disconnect. Those problems were all repaired under warranty, so there were no additional costs. They did have some additional costs to replace the underground wire that was initially connected to the system.

When asked what they would tell others interested in installing solar power, the pair responded:

1. **Be prepared for the unexpected.** Things might not go according to a specific timeline, especially now because of supply-chain issues and technician schedules. These are big projects.
2. **Be clear that you're in it for the long haul.** Thirty years is a long time, but it really does go by quickly.
3. **It's a good investment.** Lowering costs for the long-term is a good strategy.

Overall, Fisher and Bannen are very pleased with their investment in solar. Their monthly electric bill has dropped from \$5-600 per month to roughly \$100 per month. Plus, they are happy they can make a small contribution to improving the environment by producing renewable power.

"I think it's a great idea for anyone to put solar panels on their house," said Bannen. "Don't we all have to try to do our part? Whether it's conserving energy, switching all our lightbulbs to LEDs, or putting in solar, every bit will help."

Interested in learning more about the PPCS distributed generation program? Details are available at www.piercepepin.coop under the Go Green tab or give our energy innovation team a call at 800-924-2133, ext. 133.

PPCS WELCOMES CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Scott Freier joined Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) as chief operating officer on August 1. Freier is a resident of the local community, was raised on a dairy farm in Bay City, and attended Ellsworth Community Schools. He holds an associate degree in HVAC from Minnesota State College.



Freier comes to PPCS with several years of experience in the related industries of heating, renewable energy, electrical, and residential construction. Prior to joining PPCS, Freier owned and operated Freier Electric & Heating with his wife, Betty. Freier has several years of project management experience, and helping organizations become more effective and efficient using modern technology.

Freier will lead PPCS' broadband subsidiary SwiftCurrent Connect, which includes its fiber broadband service along with electrician services. Freier will also take a broader leadership role within PPCS as part of its senior leadership team.

"While Scott will primarily focus on broadband," said Nate Boettcher, PPCS president and CEO, "we look forward to his involvement in many of the strategic and important issues the cooperative is facing going forward."



YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND IN US. 🐾

OUR FIBER NETWORK PROVIDES INTERNET SPEEDS UP TO 1 GIGABIT PER SECOND. WE'RE PRETTY SURE THAT MAKES US FAST FRIENDS.





KEEP FOOD SAFE WHEN THE POWER GOES OUT

Severe winds, lightning, and even squirrels can temporarily cause the power to go out. Power outages of any length can be frustrating, especially when your fridge is stocked with perishable foods. Extended power outages are rare, but when they occur, it's important to take food safety measures to avoid illness.

Keep these food safety tips in mind before, during, and after a power outage.

Before an Outage Keep an emergency supply kit on hand. Include non-perishable food items like bottled water, powdered milk, canned goods, cereal, and protein bars in your emergency kit.

If you have advance warning that there may be an outage, fill a cooler with ice—just in case the outage spans several hours. Having a cooler ready to go can buy extra time for your perishable items.

During an Outage If an outage occurs, do not open the refrigerator or freezer unless necessary. An unopened refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours. A half-full freezer will keep food frozen for about 24 hours and a full freezer for about 48 hours. If it looks like the power outage will last longer than four hours, move your important perishable items to an ice-filled cooler.

After an Outage If refrigerated foods have been exposed to temperatures higher than 40 degrees for more than two hours, the American Red Cross recommends discarding the items. If any foods have an unusual color, odor, or texture, they should be thrown away.

While most perishable foods should be thrown out after an extended outage,

there are a few items that are safe to consume after a two-hour exposure to 40+ degrees:

- hard cheeses that are properly wrapped
- butter or margarine that is properly wrapped
- taco, barbecue, and soy sauces
- peanut butter, jelly, mustard, ketchup, and relish

The best way to avoid illness from spoiled food during or after an outage is to follow the four-hour rule. After an outage, always smell and inspect foods before consuming, and remember when in doubt, throw it out.

To learn more about food safety after an emergency, visit www.ready.gov/food.

Keep Food Safe During and After a Power Outage

Refrigerated or frozen foods may not be safe to eat after a power outage. Use these tips to minimize food loss and reduce risk of illness.

Refrigerated food will last four hours. After four hours, place refrigerated foods in a cooler with ice.

Food in a **half-full** freezer will last 24 hours. Food in a **full** freezer will last 48 hours.

Food Safety Tips

1. Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
2. Throw out any food with an unusual odor, color or texture.
3. Throw out perishable food in your refrigerator after four hours without power or a cold source (like a cooler with ice).

When in doubt, throw it out!

PIERCE PEPIN COOPERATIVE SERVICES

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