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WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

February 2023

PIERCE PEPIN
COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



TOY SHOW TIME

EASY WAYS TO CONTROL WATER USE

SPLENDID SPUDS

KIDS AND CRITTERS





THE FLYWHEEL HAS STARTED

Nate Boettcher, President and CEO

On January 31, 2022, SwiftCurrent Connect brought an internet connection to its first customer. As we go past the one-year mark, I thought it might be worthwhile to share some of the successes we have had over the past year in bringing broadband to our community. Connecting customer number one was a big effort, customer number 100 seemed impossible, but then something changed. Suddenly we had 500 customers, and just a week before Christmas we connected customer 1,000—a huge milestone for our employees, directors, and members. As we look forward to customer 2,000 and then 3,000, our flywheel has begun to pick up speed.

A quick update on the construction project: We have completed most of the mainline construction for Phase 1 and Phase 2. There will be a little work to wrap up Phase 2 once the ground thaws later this spring. However, between these two phases, we have built over 600 miles of fiber passing by 4,500 homes. In large part, these homes never had connectivity to a reliable fast internet provider. Even in those areas where service might have been offered, options for gigabit symmetrical service at a reasonable price did not exist. Other providers in our area have taken note; in fact, several providers around the area have upgraded their own technology and are now offering similar service offerings. Competition is a good thing.

More importantly, we pride ourselves on our ability to connect people. Prior to Phase 1, we had several people who told us that they were struggling to work from their homes. We know of at least two families that were renting “office” space in neighboring communities so they could “work from home,” which really meant they were commuting every day for their at-home jobs. Seems

kind of odd, but that was the issue with not having connectivity. In other situations, we had at-home businesses that were unable to keep up due to a lack of connectivity.

We’ve also heard stories about businesses being gouged by their current provider for subpar service.

The lack of competition meant certain providers could hold customers hostage, knowing there were no other options.

I recently received a life-changing email from a customer who stated their new SwiftCurrent Connect service allowed them to finally have the security and peace of mind knowing their medical equipment would be able to connect reliably to medical providers that help monitor and ensure that everything is working correctly. I’ve read this email several times and it has brought a tear to my eye more than once. Our broadband service isn’t just

about making sure people can get online to read the news, check email, or even work, which are all great features. It’s about making sure that our members and

Go to <http://www.swiftcurrent.coop/share> to learn more about how you can be a part of our effort to tell the story of connectivity and how it has changed your life.

customers can Live Better knowing they have peace of mind to stay connected.

We want to hear these stories. As part of our commitment to community, we want to share your stories with our customers, our community leaders, our legislators, and even those who haven’t taken an opportunity to sign up. Today, we are launching “SHARE WITH US”, a campaign to get these stories published. Learn more about how you can be a part of our effort to tell the story of connectivity and how it has changed your life by going to our website at <http://www.swiftcurrent.coop/share>.

LINeworker SCHOLARSHIP

Application Deadline: 03/15/23

PPCS offers a \$1,000 scholarship to a graduating high school senior pursuing post-secondary education in an electrical line worker program.

To apply, complete application and submit with essay titled "Why I want to be an Electrical Line Worker".

Details available at www.piercepepin.coop under My Community or call 715-273-4355, ext. 151.





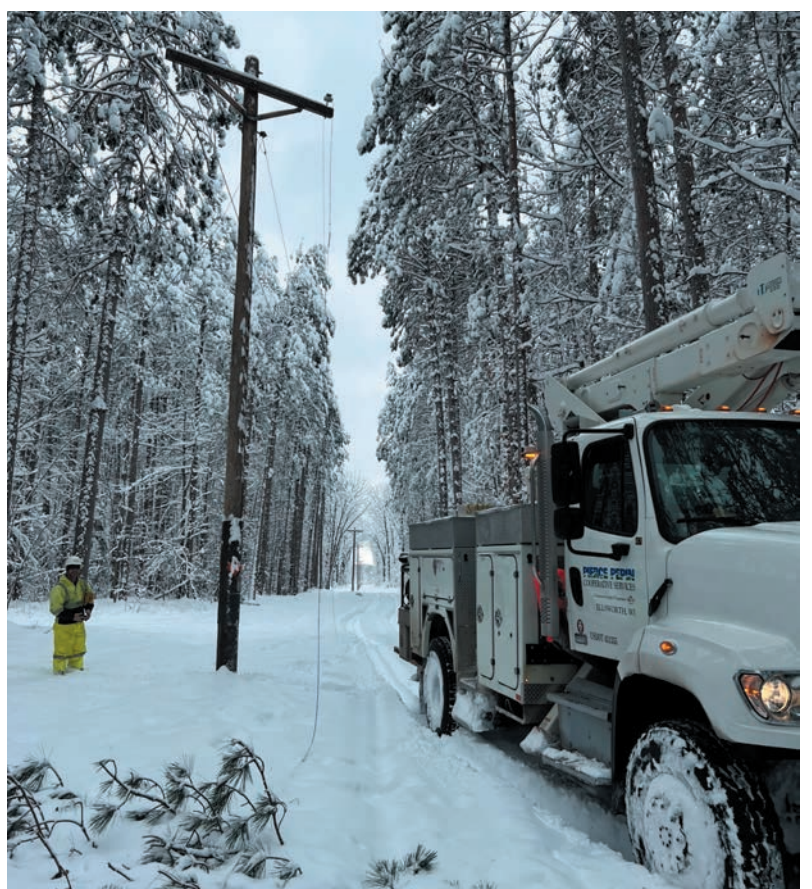
A Dumping in December Activates ROPE

Mother Nature must have gotten a bee in her bonnet back in December. She dumped inches, and in some areas, feet of heavy, wet snow. Cooperatives across Wisconsin suffered extensive outages from the storm that went through our region on December 14-15. Seven cooperatives put out the call asking for ROPE assistance (restoration of power in an emergency).

In the early morning hours of December 15, Dairyland Power Cooperative contacted PPCS asking for volunteer linemen to help Jump River Electric Cooperative out of Hayward restore power for their members. The request for mutual aid included lists of needed equipment as well as the information that “roads were not plowed yet with 14 inches of wet snow to deal with.”

Journeyman Joe Marcks and apprentice Brady Schommer answered the call. After packing their gear, chainsaws, tow straps, and choosing their bucket truck, they left Ellsworth

Photos courtesy of Brady Schommer and Joe Marcks





before 7 a.m. It was a difficult drive due to snow-covered roads, so they didn't arrive in Hayward until around noon.

At the height of the emergency, Jump River had about 7,900 members without power. Crews worked 16-hour days to get power restored. Marcks and



Apprentice Brady Schommer and
Journeman Joe Marcks

Schommer joined crews from Polk-Burnett, Price, St. Croix, and Dairyland Power cooperatives, as well as Zeilies Tree Service. Jump River made sure the crews were well-fed and arranged lodging for everyone; however, the crews had to move to new hotels each night because residents who were without power were also booking rooms.

The conditions were rough. There was so much snow there were times they couldn't tell where the road or the right-of-way was. "Everything was snow-covered," said Marcks. "When you got out of the truck, the snow could be up to your chest in the ditches."

Marcks and Schommer said volunteering for ROPE events is the best part of the job. "You get to learn a lot on these assignments," said Schommer. "Every co-op does stuff a little differently. You can learn new tricks and meet new people."

Marcks agreed. "It's great to see how to manage these situations because it might happen at our coop, too," he said. "You are able to learn what to do in these kinds of emergencies."

Cooperation among cooperatives, the sixth cooperative principle, is critical to the successful restoration of power in an emergency. PPCS has had to call for help from other cooperatives in the past and does a tabletop drill annually to ensure that all employees understand and can execute their vital roles in an emergency.

ANNUAL MEETING PLANNING IS UNDERWAY

Planning is underway for our 86th annual meeting. The annual meeting offers co-op members the chance to participate in the democratic member control of the cooperative, as well as to gather with friends and neighbors, share experiences, and hear from co-op leadership. This year we will be electing directors for districts 4, 5, and 6.

The meeting will be held **Thursday, March 30**, with registration beginning at 5 p.m., at the Ellsworth High School Cafetorium. This year's meeting will again feature a traveling exhibit from the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, a light supper, and door prizes.

The March edition of *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* will feature our 2022 Annual Report. You'll also be receiving voting materials in a separate mailing in late February.

We hope to see you at the annual meeting.

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SHIFT for Savings to Help Beat the Peak

Ryan Meyer, Master Electrician

If you look around your home, you likely have more devices and equipment that require electricity than ever before. Our connected lives are increasingly dependent on more electricity to function. At the same time, as demand for electricity rises, Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) must deliver an uninterrupted 24/7 power

supply—regardless of market conditions or other circumstances.

As you would expect based on your family’s habits, electricity use fluctuates throughout the day based on consumer demand. PPCS must be able to provide enough electricity to meet the energy needs of all members during times of highest energy use, or “peak hours.” These peak times are typically in the morning as people start their day and in the evening as people return to their homes.

Over the past few months, our CEO Nate Boettcher has written in his column about the impact energy demand has on members’ energy bills. Electric utilities including PPCS typically pay more for electricity during those morning and evening “energy rush hours.” In addition, the demand for electricity is even higher when it’s especially cold outside and heating systems run longer to warm our homes.

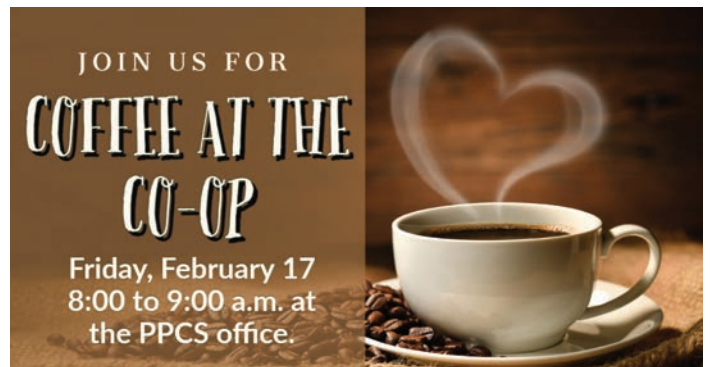
During peak periods when the cost to produce and purchase power is higher, we encourage you to take simple steps to SHIFT for Savings and beat the peak by shifting non-essential energy use to

times outside the peak demand window. Shifting is as easy as turning your thermostat down a few notches, turning off unnecessary lights, and waiting to use large appliances like washing machines during off-peak times.


You can also SHIFT for Savings by plugging electronics and equipment such as computers, printers, and TVs into a power strip, then turning it off at the switch during peak hours. If you have a programmable thermostat, adjust the settings to sync with off-peak periods. When we work together to reduce energy use during periods of high electricity demand, we can relieve pressure on the grid and save a little money along the way.

Another benefit of this time-of-use approach to electricity use is it allows greater control over your bill. Reducing the peak impacts the power-supply cost to every co-op member. Collectively, everyone conserving energy and making small changes can truly make a difference.

Remember, taking simple steps to save energy throughout the day and shifting energy-intensive chores to off-peak hours is a smart choice for you *and* our community.






PIERCE PEPIN COOPERATIVE SERVICES

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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.....Joseph Bacon
- District 5.....Ann Young
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- District 8.....Brian Bergsens, vice chairman
- District 9.....Daniel Reis