


Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* January 2023 NEWS

PIERCE DEPIN
COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

A Happy New Year to **NO** Rate Increases



Nate Boettcher,
President and CEO

Happy New Year! We hope 2023 is one of the best years ever for you, your family, and your loved ones. Turning the calendar each year provides us with a foreshadowing of the cooperative work that needs to get done to serve our members. Truth be told that work starts towards the end of the summer as we prepare a budget, plan for our strategy, and begin to review work processes. In previous years, we have focused on work plan projects, increasing our engagement, and ensuring we deliver value to our members. With an added element of broadband connectivity, we've added to the stack of things to do. In addition, we've been reviewing rate structures for the upcoming year, which leads us into Part 3 of our Rate Discussion.

I am proud to say we are not forecasting any base rate increase this year! This marks the third year in a row where we have not had an across-the-board rate increase for our members.

Now hopefully, you didn't stop reading, because there is a little more to the story that is important to note. The cooperative received a 6.62% rate increase from Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC), the cooperative we own and where we purchase our wholesale power. Based on anticipated natural gas prices, we expect this might end up being closer to 7.40% by the end of the year. This is a situation we will monitor closely, with the hope that we don't have to pass on these increases. So why are we not passing this increase on to our members at this point? Well, the answer is a little complicated, but can be simply answered by saying, "Our broadband business is successful and helping us to manage this increase." We are in a unique position this year where our revenues from our broadband business are providing electric rate relief and we haven't seen the full impact of the broadband network expense. We know this won't be a forever thing but being part of the cooperative means that we only raise rates when it's necessary to do so.

Currently, our rates are competitive and, in some cases, lower than other utility providers. As we look into the future, we fully expect rates will be adjusted to meet upward pressure from higher wholesale prices and inflation. Wholesale rates are expected to continue rising over the next couple of years. We are also seeing new types of energy costs in the market. Recently, DPC reacted to a change that will eventually create two additional seasons of load control. Today we have summer and winter load control seasons; in the future, we will have fall and spring. PPCS is already planning for this within our rates by looking at a demand charge to meet these additional wholesale rates. In December,

**We are not
forecasting
any base
rate increase
this year!**

we discussed with the board of directors the cost of energy for members who do not participate in our load control program. The numbers are staggering. Our new rates will need to even the playing field to ensure that all members pay for the energy costs during peak periods.

Long term, we want our rates to look more like the rate we pay to our wholesale supplier. The cooperative needs to cover its fixed costs to run and maintain the cooperative; however, this can be done with a fixed fee. In doing so, it's our hope members recognize energy prices go up and down throughout the year, no different than fuel prices at the pump or groceries at the store. Those consuming more energy will pay more and those using more energy during peak periods should pay a higher cost. Our future rates will reflect a model in which energy is priced in a way that is fair for all members. As a member-owned cooperative, our rates will never be there to satisfy our investors, but rather a mechanism to ensure the cooperative remains viable, the system is reliable, and the value of being connected is at the center of our world each day.

Thank you for being a member, thank you for a great 2022, and we look forward to a prosperous 2023. Happy New Year!

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COOPERATIVE SERVICES

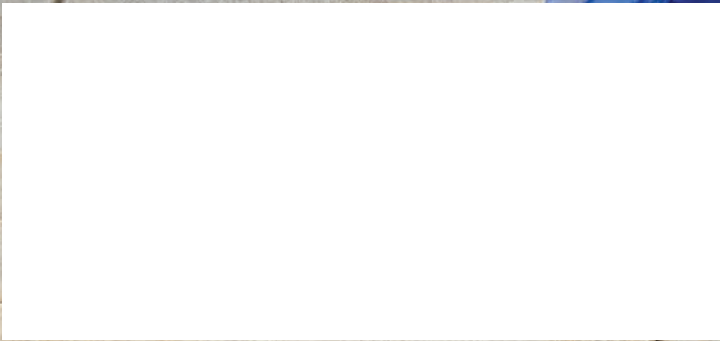
A Truist Energy[®] Cooperative 

THE POWER OF GRACE

SHOULD I CHANGE
MY CHARGING HABITS?

TACO TUESDAYS

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO
NO RATE INCREASES





LIVE BETTER COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD PRESENTED TO BECKY BECHEL

Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services named Becky Bechel the Live Better Community Service Award winner for the fourth quarter of 2022. Bechel received the award and a \$100 Visa® gift card on December 1 for her generous work volunteering as the coordinator for Ruby's Pantry in the Ellsworth community.

"Becky has been instrumental in coordinating Ruby's Pantry for her church in providing a service to our community delivering food to those in need," said Jay Nesseth in nominating Bechel. "Her dedication to bringing

volunteers together to help with the distribution has been incredible. I participated in my first drive-through event and watching her and the other volunteers work together was a great experience."

In addition to her work with Ruby's Pantry, Bechel also coordinates the Kids Country Festival at Bethel Covenant Church, hosted around Halloween for all kids in the community. In her spare time, Bechel babysits her three grandchildren, sells Pampered Chef, and enjoys family vacations.

Congratulations, Becky, and thank you for using your talents to make a difference in our community!

Nominate a Volunteer for the Live Better Community Service Award

Nominate a volunteer from the communities within our service area by completing the nomination form available at www.piercepepin.coop under My Community or contacting the office at 800-924-2133. Nominations for the next award are due March 15.



Becky Bechel received the Live Better Community Service Award from Charity Lubich, PPCS vice president of member relations and human resources.



FARM ANIMALS CAN BE SENSITIVE TO ELECTRICITY

Animals, specifically dairy cows, may be more sensitive to electric currents than humans. If you notice sensitive behavior in cows and livestock on your farm, such as a tendency to shy away from objects or a hesitancy to enter stalls or milking parlors, you may have stray voltage issues caused by poor grounding or defective electrical equipment.

If you suspect a stray voltage problem, our highly trained team is ready to help identify any potential stray voltage sources. This is a free service to you, our members. PPCS also participates in the statewide Safety First! Farm Rewiring program to promote safety by assisting dairy farmers with the cost of rewiring projects.

For more information about the stray voltage and Safety First! Farm Rewiring programs, visit www.piercepepin.coop or contact us at 715-273-4355, 800-924-2133, or info@piercepepin.coop.



LINEWORKER SCHOLARSHIP
DUE MARCH 15, 2023

Open to high school seniors graduating in spring 2023.

Details at:
www.piercepepin.coop under My Community

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Extends to Emerging Economies

PPCS Director
Ann Young in Central
Park, Chişinău, Moldova.

How does a passion for adventurous traveling, an interest in sharing your knowledge, a love of meeting new people and developing relationships translate into a commitment to community? For Ann Young, Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) director for District 5, these qualities made her a perfect candidate to participate as a volunteer with the USAID-funded John Ogonowski and Doug Bereuter Farmer-2-Farmer (F2F) Program implemented by Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA).

In 2007, a former colleague who previously volunteered with F2F asked Young if she might be interested in volunteering. The program matches volunteers with specific areas of expertise with partners in developing countries to help them build knowledge and resources so they can thrive and prosper. F2F is a well-established U.S. government-funded program that relies on volunteers to share their expertise with farmers, agribusinesses, and others in the agricultural sector, facilitating sustainable improvements in food security and agricultural processing, production, and marketing. The goal of the program is to improve livelihoods, drive economic growth in emerging markets, and improve food security. Young was intrigued and decided to go for it. After filling out an application with CNFA and completing a background check, Young was approved to be a volunteer.

“While ‘farmer’ is in the program’s

name, the scope is much broader than farms. My F2F assignments have focused on my areas of expertise: financial management, accounting, and data aggregation/analysis,” said Young. “There are opportunities that tap into almost every skill set. Some projects involve hands-on production agricultural expertise (i.e., grain storage best practices, crop fertility, pest management, livestock management), while others call for knowledge in finance, strategic planning, communication, human resources, and leadership development.”

The CNFA-implemented Farmer-2-Farmer program in Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and in the European country of Moldova posts mid- to senior-level U.S. volunteers to farmer groups, agribusinesses, and other agriculture sector institutions to promote sustainable improvements in food security and agricultural processing, production, and marketing.

Young received her first assignment in 2008. She has volunteered for assignments in Moldova five times, three times to share advanced practices in cooperative financial management for the country’s largest agricultural cooperative and twice to share advanced financial management for the Moldovan Poultry Producers’ Association. She participated in a virtual assignment in Malawi to share financial best practices for an organic vegetable producer. She completed her most recent assignment in Moldova in November 2022.



Young places her pin on the volunteer map in the CNFA office in Chişinău, Moldova during her 2019 trip.

Young was a little nervous when she started on her first assignment; however, as soon as she was in the country, her mind was set at ease. Staff at CNFA made all the travel arrangements, including providing a driver to provide transportation from the airport and around the region, as well as a translator who also acted as a guide through the area. Typically, volunteers spend two weeks prior to their assignment preparing for the visit, then two to three weeks in the foreign

“That first trip has developed into an ongoing relationship with the wonderful people that I have met in Moldova.”

—PPCS Director Ann Young

country, and finally preparing final reports upon their return home.

“Even as an experienced traveler, I’ll admit I was both excited and nervous when I began my first trip from Minneapolis to Moldova,” said Young.

“My jitters turned to confidence when I met

the great CNFA team and my translator/support person. That first trip has developed into an ongoing relationship with the wonderful people that I have met in Moldova.”

Young has served on the PPCS board of directors since 2019. In her capacity with PPCS, she has received training through the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association and achieved her Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership certificates through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. She credits her experience on the PPCS board with being able to see the big picture, a more holistic view than just focusing on the finance side of things when she is on assignments with F2F.

Her time as a volunteer with F2F has been fulfilling. Young said she values these trips as an opportunity to share knowledge and build meaningful relationships that improve



Ann Young working with Moldovan program participants.

the livelihood of others. Volunteering has helped her expand her listening skills and opened her mind to other cultures. Typical assignments are two to three weeks, and usually require the ability to travel. While you won’t be able to work your normal job at the same time, the global availability of the internet makes it possible to keep connected with home.

“Making that initial commitment may be a big step,” said Young. “Sometimes you’ll be nervous. But you will be in good hands, meet amazing people, and do very meaningful work.”

More information about the Farmer-2-Farmer program is available through the website www.cnfa.org/opportunities/volunteer. Questions can be submitted to f2frecruitment@cnfa.org. Farmer-2-Farmer Ambassador Ann Young can be contacted through email at ann.young9@gmail.com.



Ann Young (fourth from right) with the Moldovan program participants in 2019.

SEASONAL CHANGES CAN AFFECT ELECTRIC BILLS



As a member, you can take ownership of working to keep your own electricity costs down. Conserving energy and using our resources more efficiently will help save you and your co-op money now and in the future. And there are many ways to conserve energy without giving up comfort in your home. PPCS offers members a variety of energy-saving programs and rebates through our Energy Sense program and Wisconsin's Focus on Energy program, all available at www.piercepepin.coop. During 2023, we encourage you to consider energy efficiency when making home improvements or purchasing new

equipment and appliances for homes or businesses.

PPCS also offers the services of a master electrician (me) as a convenience to our members. These services are billed at a standard service rate and cover projects like off-peak meter installations, EV chargers, service upgrades, backup generator installations, and electric heat repairs.

Our energy innovations team is available to answer your questions about changes to your bill, energy efficiency projects, and rebates to help you save money. Call us at 800-924-2133 or send an email to info@piercepepin.coop.

Holidays are a time for family, friends, and celebrations, but more electricity is used, making energy bills climb during this time of year. So, if your electric bill is higher than normal this month, here are a few possible reasons why:

- Lights are on longer because of fewer daylight hours
- Holiday lights have been twinkling for several weeks
- Extra showers, laundry, dishwashing, and cooking because of visiting holiday guests
- Furnace fans and electric heating systems run more to keep us warm
- Use of portable space heaters
- Engine block and stock tank heaters, livestock heat lamps, and electric heat tapes are plugged in, all big users of electricity

PIERCE PEPIN COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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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

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

HAPPY
New Year



FROM YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS AT
PIERCE PEPIN COOPERATIVE SERVICES

Congratulations to
Jay Nesselth, member
relations manager for
15 years of service



2023 CALENDAR

- January 2** Happy New Year! Our office is closed for the New Year holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet outages can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.
- March 15** Nominations for Live Better Community Service Award are due. Applications for Pierce Pepin Cares grants are due. Information is available at piercepepin.coop under My Community.
- April** Capital credit allocation notices are mailed in April.
- March 30** Annual Meeting
- April 7** Happy Easter! Our office is closed on Good Friday (April 7). Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet outages can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.
- April 10** Line Worker Appreciation Day
- April 29** Arbor Day
- May** Electric Safety Awareness Month
- May 29** Happy Memorial Day! Our office is closed for the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet outages can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.
- June 15** Nominations for the Live Better Community Service Award are due. Applications for Pierce Pepin Cares grants are due. Information is available at piercepepin.coop under My Community.
- July 4** Happy Fourth of July! Our office is closed for the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet outages can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.
- July 11-13** Youth Leadership Conference – PPCS sponsors high school juniors and seniors for a three-day conference at UW-Stout. Seniors can compete for scholarships. Find details on our website: www.piercepepin.coop under My Community.
- August 10-13** Join us at the Pierce County Fair! Our booth is in the Round Barn.
- September 4** Happy Labor Day! Our office is closed for the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet outages can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.
- September 15** Nominations for the Live Better Community Service Award are due. Applications for Pierce Pepin Cares grants are due. Information is available at piercepepin.coop under My Community.
- October** Capital credit checks are mailed in October.
- November 23 & 24** Happy Thanksgiving! Our office is closed for the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet outages can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.
- December** Join us for our Holiday Open House – cookies, coffee, and hot apple cider. Pick up your 2024 calendar!
- December 15** Nominations for the Live Better Community Service Award are due. Applications for Pierce Pepin Cares grants are due. Information is available at piercepepin.coop under My Community.
- December 25** Merry Christmas! Our office is closed for the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet outages can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.



Happy NEW GEAR!

The new year has begun, and your home may have new internet-connected devices in it. Maybe Santa brought your children new phones, tablets, or a gaming console. Or maybe you used holiday money to finally purchase the new computer or smart home devices you've been wanting.

The more devices you have, the more speed you need—to enjoy the best internet experience and avoid frustrations like buffering. We recommend our 1 Gbps plan for bandwidth-busy households.

**CALL
866-307-5326
TO UPGRADE TO
A NEW SPEED**

