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August 2026



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DATA CENTER REALITIES

Nate Boettcher, President and CEO

Over the past several months, data centers have become one of the most discussed topics in the electric industry. While attending a baseball tournament earlier this summer, I picked up three different local newspapers. Each featured an article about data centers. I cannot recall another issue affecting our industry that has gained so much public attention in such a short period of time.

With that attention has come important discussion. Communities across Wisconsin are considering moratoriums, while residents are asking thoughtful questions about electrical demand, water use, noise, land use, and environmental impacts. These are important conversations, and our communities deserve accurate information as decisions are made.

One challenge is that the term data center covers an incredibly broad range of facilities. Federal law generally defines a data center as: a facility that houses electronic equipment used to process, store, and transmit digital information. Under that broad definition, many organizations, including Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services, operate data centers every day.

In fact, PPCS operates several small facilities throughout our service territory that house the equipment necessary to provide reliable fiber broadband service to our members. If communities adopt broad restrictions without clearly defining what constitutes a data center, there is the potential for unintended consequences that could affect essential community infrastructure. I am confident that is not the intent of our local leaders, but it does demonstrate why clear definitions are important.

It is equally important to recognize that not all data centers are alike. A small telecommunications facility serving rural broadband customers is vastly different from a hyperscale data center requiring hundreds of megawatts of electricity. Lumping every project into the same category does not reflect the realities of the industry and can make productive discussions more difficult.

Many of the concerns surrounding large hyperscale data centers are legitimate. Residents understandably ask about electrical demand, water consumption, noise, traffic, and environmental impacts. Those questions deserve thoughtful answers based on the specific facts of each project.

It is also important to recognize the realities of our region. St. Croix, Pierce, and Pepin counties currently have limited infrastructure suitable for hyperscale facilities. High-voltage transmission availability, electric capacity, and site characteristics all influence whether a project is even feasible. Simply put, our area is not overly well positioned to attract many of the very large projects that often dominate national headlines.

Smaller projects, however, present a different conversation. Earlier this year, a proposed 6-megawatt data center in Hammond

generated significant public interest. The project was proposed within an industrial area, planned to use a closed-loop cooling system, and included measures to reduce sound and visual impacts. Like any development, it deserved careful public review and open comment. It also demonstrated how quickly misinformation can spread when discussions occur before all the facts are available. Public engagement is essential, but informed conversations are best served when everyone is working with accurate information.

As your electric cooperative, PPCS has a responsibility to understand these issues and help ensure discussions are grounded in fact. We also stand ready to serve as a resource for local governments, residents, and policymakers as these conversations continue. Our cooperative has firsthand experience planning electric infrastructure and operating communications facilities, and we welcome opportunities to share that knowledge with our communities.

Whether or not additional data center projects are proposed within our service territory, our responsibility remains the same, to protect the interests of our member-owners. That is why the PPCS Board of Directors will soon consider a policy governing the interconnection of new large electric loads. This policy will establish a clear and consistent process for evaluating future projects while ensuring that existing members are protected, system reliability is maintained, and the long-term interests of the cooperative remain the highest priority.

The conversation surrounding data centers is likely to continue for years to come. My hope is that these discussions remain grounded in facts, thoughtful planning, and a clear understanding that not all data centers are alike. When communities make decisions based on accurate information rather than assumptions, they are better equipped to balance economic opportunity, responsible development, and the values that make our communities such great places to live.



TURNING UP THE POWER:

Transformer Installation Sparks Local Growth

Electricity is one of the most essential forces shaping modern life, quietly powering nearly every aspect of today's society. From the moment we wake up and turn on the lights to the devices we rely on for communication, work, and entertainment, electrical power serves as the backbone of our daily routines. It fuels homes, businesses, and transportation systems, enabling a level of productivity and convenience that would have been unimaginable just a century ago.

Beyond comfort and convenience, electricity plays a critical role in supporting economic growth and innovation. Industries depend on stable power systems to manufacture goods, run machinery, and maintain supply chains. This holds true in our own community of Ellsworth, Wis., where efforts toward economic growth are underway with the construction of a new Kwik Trip location.

Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) Vice President of Electric Operations, Brad Ristow, played a key role in the project, from early planning discussions to the installation of transformers.

"We started working with Kwik Trip

on what their site plan was going to be and what route we would use to get into their property," Ristow explained. "This helped map out where everything would go on the electrical side, as well as the broadband (internet) side, since they will also be using our broadband service through SwiftCurrent Connect."

SwiftCurrent Connect delivers high-speed internet and voice-over-internet services to Pierce, Pepin, and St. Croix Counties. Launched in 2021 as a wholly owned subsidiary of PPCS, it aims to connect every home and business currently without access to fiber and reliable high-speed internet.

"From start to finish, we've been coordinating with Kwik Trip for about a year now—since we first learned they were planning to move to town," Ristow said. "They've been very timely and provided clear deadlines. Soon, our three-phase system will be connected, marking the completion of our work on the electrical side."

Building and maintaining strong relationships with members is a core principle of PPCS. This approach extends to large partnerships as well, including projects like Kwik Trip. Establishing a solid relationship with



Foreman Aaron Langer and Apprentice Lineman Tucker Ingenthron work with the crane operator to carefully position a pad-mounted transformer during construction.

a growing company creates future opportunities, particularly for broadband expansion through SwiftCurrent Connect.

"While we won't be able to service Kwik Trip stores outside our geographic area on the electric side, SwiftCurrent has the potential to serve multiple locations beyond our region," Ristow noted. "That depends on maintaining strong relationships on both the electric and broadband sides, which we've been doing."

Electricity remains a vital foundation of modern life, and its reliability is essential to sustaining the comfort, productivity, and progress we depend on each day. Equally important are the relationships built between service providers and the communities they serve—something Ristow values deeply.

"Electricity has become a necessity in people's lives," he says. "From my days on the line crew to now in my current role, our members have always been the most important thing. Building and maintaining those relationships has always been the best part of my job."

Together, dependable electricity and strong partnerships help support a more stable, connected, and forward-looking energy future.



Left: Underground conduit and primary electrical cable are installed before the pad-mounted transformer is set in place at the new Kwik Trip in Ellsworth. Right: Foreman Aaron Langer (left) and Apprentice Lineman Tucker Ingenthron guide a pad-mounted transformer into position.



ELECTRIC VEHICLES—WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU BUY!

Electric vehicles (EVs) are rapidly transforming the way we think about transportation, offering a cleaner, more efficient alternative to traditional gas-powered cars. By running

on electricity instead of fossil fuels, EVs significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, helping to combat climate change and improve air quality. In addition to their environmental benefits, they often come with lower operating and maintenance costs, thanks to fewer moving parts and the reduction of fuel expenses. As technology continues to advance and charging infrastructure expands, electric vehicles are becoming an increasingly practical and sustainable choice for drivers around the world. Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) has experts on hand who can help you get the most out of your EV purchase.

If you're considering purchasing an electric vehicle, here are a few important questions to think about:

1. How will you charge your EV at home?
2. Do you want to install a dedicated charger in your garage?
3. What type of charger is the most efficient for your vehicle?
4. Are there public charging stations available in your area if needed?
5. How will an EV impact your household electric costs?

Most EVs come with a **Level 1 charger**, so you'll always have a way to power your vehicle. However, it may not be the most practical option for daily use. Choosing the right charger can make a big difference in convenience and efficiency.

Charger Levels Explained:

- **Level 1 (Standard Outlet)**
Slowest option — may take **days** for full charge
- **Level 2 (Home Charging System)**
Most common for households — typically takes a **few hours**
- **Level 3 (DC Fast Charging)**
Public charging option — can charge in **minutes**

For many homeowners, installing a **Level 2 charger** in the garage is the ideal solution. Installation typically takes **2–6 hours**, meaning you could start charging the same day. Because installation appointments fill quickly, customers are encouraged to plan ahead and schedule their installation early to secure a spot.

“Buying an EV and installing a charger sounds expensive.”

To help offset the cost, **PPCS offers up to \$1,000 in rebates** on EV charging equipment. Additional rebates and incentives may also be available depending on your situation. PPCS also has on-bill financing available for these types of projects. Visit our website for full details on available programs.

“Why not just stick with a gas vehicle?”

The answer is simple—**cost savings**. Switching to an EV can potentially **cut your transportation costs in half**. While your electric bill may increase slightly, it's often far less than what you would spend on gasoline, especially depending on your driving habits.

Tip: Charging your EV between **9:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.** offers the lowest rates, helping you maximize savings.

For example: The 2026 Chevrolet Silverado EV making a 100-mile round trip charging at home using one of our 9.6 kW 240-volt chargers vs using the charger that comes standard with the truck at 1.4 kW 120 volts that plugs into a standard outlet.

- 9.6 kW 240 volts: 5 hours and 30 minutes to charge
- 1.4 kW 120 volts: 38 hours and 36 minutes to charge



Don't let the unknown hold you back. Our Energy Innovations Team is here to help you with every step—from choosing the right charger to understanding costs and rebates. At PPCS, we have EV chargers in stock; we can install them, offer on-bill financing, and have many additional programs that can help offset the installation costs. Contact us today for expert guidance and support.

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DIVIDEND DETECTIVES:

*The Search is on for
Unclaimed Capital Credits!*



Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) is on a mission to reunite members with their unclaimed capital credit (dividend) checks! We've compiled a list of members we're eager to locate, which you can find on our website under **My Co-op > Capital Credits**. Additionally, a notice of

forfeiture was published in the June 3, 2026, edition of *The Journal*, Ellsworth, Wis. To return these funds, we need the current addresses of the listed members.

Important Note: Checks were issued only to members with over \$100 in capital credit retirements or inactive accounts. Others received their retirement as a credit on their energy bills.

If you recognize any names on the list, please reach out to us with the member's name and current address at:

- **Phone:** 715-273-4355 or 800-924-2133
- **Email:** info@piercepepin.coop

Any unclaimed funds not located by **August 31, 2026**, will be forfeited to the Federated Youth Foundation and used for educational or charitable purposes as per our bylaws.

Help us spread the word and ensure these funds find their rightful owners!



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