

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

October 2025



PIERCE PEPIN

COOPERATIVE SERVICES

Live Better®

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

**GENERATION AFTER GENERATION,
*We're Here to Serve Our
Members***



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COOPERATIVE SERVICES
ELLSWORTH, V

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Nate Boettcher, President and CEO

COOPERATIVE MONTH

Every October is National Cooperative Month. This year, we also celebrate the **International Year of Cooperatives**. To mark the occasion, our team has planned weekly activities, and by the looks of it, there will be plenty of good food at each one! Be sure to check out the events listed in the magazine and join us in celebrating.

Cooperatives have long played an important role in shaping rural America. Beyond electric cooperatives, there are telecom, dairy, agriculture, banking, food, sporting goods, housing, and many other types of co-ops. Someone once asked me if co-ops were “a thing of the past.” I paused and thought about that. The question implied that co-ops are outdated. My response was simple: I believe co-ops are not only relevant but will become even more important in the future. Younger generations value the fundamentals of the cooperative model—local control, returning profits to members, and operating with a values-based focus. Still, I sometimes worry that people forget these principles, and we risk blending into the background of “just another provider.”

Let me share an example. A few weeks ago, SwiftCurrent Connect

experienced a widespread outage. In the past five years, this has happened only once or twice, and at least one of those instances was associated with an electric power outage. This latest event was outside our control and was caused by a third party. What most members don’t see is what happens behind the scenes when something like this occurs. Picture this: it’s 2 p.m. on a sunny Sunday afternoon when the outage begins. Within minutes, employees are exchanging text and email messages. Support calls start to fill the phone lines. In under 20 minutes, the SwiftCurrent Connect technical team leaves home with laptops in hand and heads to the office. At the same time, other employees are posting updates on social media, checking telecom hut connections, and responding to customer emails and calls. These employees gave up their Sunday afternoons without hesitation, because they take pride in ensuring your service works.

We know how important staying connected is to our members. That’s why we appreciate every thank-you and compliment we receive. On the other hand, I hope those who were overly critical understand that our employees—

your neighbors—take those words to heart. They live here, work here, and are dedicated to serving this community.

We saw this same commitment during the July storm that caused widespread outages. Within an hour, crews were in the field, office staff reported in, and others stood by waiting to help—all just before midnight. Many didn’t rest until the following evening. These employees won’t go on social media to pat themselves on the back. They simply answer the call because that’s who we are and what we do. And many members were supportive, recognizing that restoring critical infrastructure takes time. Thank you to those who sent encouraging emails—it meant a great deal to our teams.

As we gather this October to celebrate cooperatives, I encourage you to take a moment to appreciate the employees of PPCS and SwiftCurrent Connect. They work tirelessly to ensure your lights stay on and your internet stays connected. We’re not perfect, but we are committed, resilient, and deeply dedicated to our members. This Cooperative Month, please join me in thanking our employees and directors. Together, let’s celebrate the cooperative difference.



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PIERCE PEPIN
COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

POWERING THE FUTURE

BE AWARE OF POTENTIAL ENERGY SCAMS

OCTOBER IS CO-OP MONTH

PORK RECIPES





GENERATION AFTER GENERATION, WE'RE HERE TO SERVE OUR MEMBERS

By Emily Keeler

For more than 40 years, Dennis Truttman helped keep the lights on for Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) members. Now, nearly two decades after his retirement in 2008, his grandson Jack is continuing the family's service as a lineman apprentice.

Dennis started at PPCS in 1967 after returning home from serving in Vietnam. His mother had become ill, and Dennis was grateful to find a steady job close to home. He soon married his wife, Patty, and even held their wedding reception in the original PPCS building, now known as the "lower" building. Dennis laughed as he recalled, "Getting married got me a 25-cent raise!"

In those early days, line work looked very different. Crews had no cell phones or GPS, just paper map books and long hours on the road. When calls came in after hours, the office phones rang directly to Dennis and Patty's home. "If I was out on a call, Patty would take the call from a member and write down the details," Dennis said. "Sometimes even the kids had to answer calls!" After working an outage in Pepin, for example, Dennis would drive back to Ellsworth only to find out he had to turn around and head back to Pepin for a different outage.

The equipment was different, too. Line crews used to have

to drive up and down roads or walk rights-of-way to try to find where a power outage originated. Today, PPCS has fault indicators installed on the lines that help isolate and identify the problem. Dennis remembered the first underground lines being installed. They didn't have a trencher, so they had to



Dennis' wife Patty and their children, Angie, Dan, and Mike played an important role in answering after-hours outage calls.

shovel out trenches by hand. “That kind of stuff builds character,” Jack joked as he listened to his grandpa’s stories.

Jack is now beginning his second year as an apprentice, having started as summer help in 2024. He says he’s inspired by his grandpa’s long career at PPCS and hopes to build one of his own. One of Jack’s earliest memories of Dennis on the job was as a boy in daycare. “They were out working by the town shop,” Jack recalled. “We ran up to the fence, and he came over and said hi. That’s one of the times I can remember.”

Looking through an old photo album, Dennis reflected on his career. “It’s kind of fun to look at them once in a while,” he said. When asked what advice he would give Jack and other young linemen just starting out, Dennis didn’t hesitate: “Enjoy your work, first of all, and enjoy the guys you work with. And work safe—that’s the main thing.” Now, with Jack carrying on the family

tradition, the Truttman’s story is a reminder that while technology changes and tools evolve, the heart of PPCS

remains the same: dedicated people helping their communities Live Better, one member at a time.



Dennis and other PPCS linemen often assisted with installing Christmas lighting along Ellsworth’s Main Street.

The Power to Make a Difference

DIRECTOR CANDIDATE INFORMATION SESSION

- WHO:** Cooperative members interested in running for a seat on the board of directors.
- WHAT:** Director candidates: nomination process, qualifications, duties, terms & compensation, and expectation of directors.
- WHEN:** **Tuesday, October 21, at 6:30 p.m.**
at the PPCS Office
W7725 US Hwy. 10, Ellsworth, WI
- RSVP:** Call Heather at 715-273-2413, or email hpeterson@piercepepin.coop by October 14.

As part of the **2025–2027 Wisconsin State Budget**, the **5% sales tax on residential electricity and natural gas** will be eliminated effective **October 1, 2025**. This change applies to all permanent residential accounts, including single-family homes, multi-family units, and apartments. This change will provide significant cost savings: Starting October 1, 2025, you will no longer pay the 5% sales tax on your residential electricity and natural gas bills. This includes **state, county, and city sales taxes**—all are waived for qualifying residential energy usage. PPCS will automatically update your account and remove the sales tax from your bills.



DID YOU KNOW?

WEATHERING THE STORM: PREPARATION IS KEY

By Emily Keeler

On the evening of July 28, a powerful summer storm swept through western Wisconsin, leaving an estimated 1,100 Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) members from River Falls to Durand without power.

As outages began rolling in, PPCS lineman on call Tucker Ingenthron quickly sprang into action, calling fellow lineman Brady Schommer for support. By the time Brady arrived, more than 400 outages had already been reported. Realizing the extent of the damage, they called in additional linemen and electric staff to assist. PPCS has protocols that all employees follow in significant outages. The priority is always to safely restore power to as many members as possible as quickly as possible.

Ingenthron and Schommer were dispatched to the Beldenville area, where they encountered a particularly difficult situation. A fallen tree had taken down a line in a location unreachable from the road. When the bucket truck became stuck in the mud while attempting to



Tucker Ingenthron (left) and Brady Schommer were two of the PPCS linemen who restored power after the July 28 storm.

access the pole, the crew decided to sectionalize power between the poles. This allowed them to restore service to as many members as possible, leaving about 13 homes without power overnight.

The following morning, the crew returned with mats to lay across the mud, making it possible to reach the downed line. A neighbor even arrived on an ATV to help move the mats into place so the linemen could work. Thanks to these efforts, power was fully restored by 1 p.m.

One of the members without power overnight was retired PPCS employee Laure Andrle. She recalled watching from her window as crews battled heavy rain and lightning to make repairs. Because bucket trucks cannot be operated safely during lightning, there was little the linemen could do until conditions improved.

Fortunately, the Andrle family had prepared for situations like this by investing in a backup generator. With July 29 bringing hot and humid weather in the high 80s, the generator provided power to refrigerators, freezers, and

other essential equipment—saving a full pork, whole beef, and lots of fresh produce. Andrle and her husband purchased the generator after the May 2, 2013, storm that left them without power for more than three days. While outages are rare, Andrle said they wanted to be confident they could stay self-sufficient if the situation arose again.

Andrle expressed her gratitude for the linemen's dedication, noting when power was finally restored, "They came out full of mud, head to toe." She appreciated both their commitment to restoring power and the peace of mind her backup generator provided during the outage. She brought a treat of ice cream sandwiches that were still frozen to the crew.

Severe weather is a powerful reminder of why storm preparedness matters. At PPCS, we're committed to helping our members stay safe and powered through uncertain conditions. Our crews are trained to restore power as safely and quickly as possible.

Continued on inside back cover



Lineman Brady Schommer inspects fallen tree on power lines during the July 28 storm. Credit: Tucker Ingenthron

TEEN DRIVER SAFETY WEEK:

SHARE INFORMATION THAT SAVES LIVES

Eight people die in distracted-related crashes on American roads each day, according to the National Safety Council (NSC). National Teen Driver Safety Week is observed the third week of each October, which is a good time to talk to the teens in your life about safety on the open road, including the hazards of distracted driving and downed power lines.

Distracted Driving

Texting while driving is the most alarming distraction behind the wheel, since sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for approximately 5 seconds. Other distractions include sifting through music, checking social media, using navigation, eating, talking on the phone, taking selfies, drinking a beverage, or using an app.

Distracted driving is preventable. Teens and adults alike can follow these five easy tips to help them concentrate on just driving:

1. That text can wait. Do not text while driving.
2. Make responding less tempting by blocking texts while behind the wheel.
3. Do not eat while you drive.
4. Rely on playlists instead of searching for music.
5. Set up navigation before you leave or have a passenger navigate.

Downed Power Lines

Although no one wants to think about teens being in car accidents, it does happen. Severe storms can damage utility equipment, such as power lines/poles and

padmount transformers (green boxes). Have discussions with teens about what to do if there is a downed power line or damaged equipment.

Here is how the ground or objects can become energized without any visual indication:

- The energy spreads like ripples on a pond.
- If you walk or run from one voltage “ripple” to another, your feet experience a difference in voltage (this is called step potential).
- If you touch something at one voltage and step on or touch something at a different voltage, your hands (or your hand and foot) experience a difference in voltage (called touch potential).
- Your body becomes electricity’s path to ground when electrical current enters your body at one point and exits at another.



What To Do

If you are in a car accident, stay inside your vehicle, call 9-1-1, and report that there is damaged electric utility equipment. If you are a bystander, do not approach the scene to help. Stay at least 50 feet away and do not lean on or touch anything.

Downed lines or other damaged utility equipment can look lifeless and harmless and still be live. Downed lines and other damaged electrical apparatuses do not have to be sparking, moving, sizzling, or giving off flames to be energized.

Learn other electrical safety tips at SafeElectricity.org.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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Power Outages and Emergencies: 800-927-5705

As a licensed Generac dealer, we offer dependable backup power solutions that can keep your lights on and your home running smoothly—no matter the forecast. If you're exploring ways to enhance your storm readiness, we're here to help you find the ideal generator for your specific needs.

Right: Downed trees and debris were cleared from the power line following the July 28 storm, which left more than 1,100 PPCS members without power.




SWIFTCURRENT
CONNECT

**Fiber Internet
Plans For Your
Lifestyle**



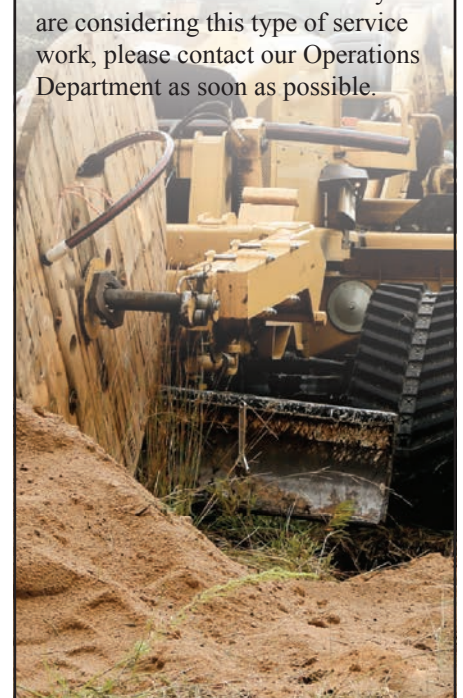
Electric cooperatives
provide power with
purpose.



NATIONAL
CO-OP
MONTH

DEADLINE FOR UNDERGROUND SERVICE IS NOVEMBER 1

New service installations for underground service or conversions from overhead to underground need to be completed by November 1. We cannot guarantee completion of any underground work once the cold weather and frost set in. If you are considering this type of service work, please contact our Operations Department as soon as possible.



JOIN US TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH!

October is National Co-op Month, and this year, it's extra special! We're not only celebrating the power of cooperatives but also joining the excitement of the International Year of Cooperatives. To mark the occasion, PPCS is hosting a special event each week, and you're invited! Here's what's coming up:

Bonus! Each event you attend earns you an entry into our year-end prize drawing for a chance to win one of three \$100 bill credits!

Pie + Ice Cream Social

Friday, October 10
1:00-4:00 p.m.

Satisfy your sweet tooth and catch up with fellow members over delicious pie and ice cream. Attendees can register to win a local gift basket valued at over \$250!

Coffee at the Co-op

Friday, October 17
8:00-10:00 a.m.

Start your morning with fresh coffee, yummy donuts, good company, and great conversation at your co-op. Attendees can enter to win a local gift basket valued at over \$250!

Member Appreciation Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, October 25
Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services
W7725 US Hwy. 10, Ellsworth
9:00-11:30 a.m.

We're flipping pancakes and serving up gratitude! Join us for a hearty breakfast as we celebrate YOU - our valued members.

- Gift for all attending members
- PLUS enter to win an EGO Trimmer & Blower, EGO Chain Saw, or Stihl Electric Garden Pruner
- Fun for Kids
 - Bounce House
 - Face Painting & Temporary Tattoos
 - AND Kids wearing their Halloween costumes will be entered to win prizes
- Bring a donation for the Food Shelf or Basics for Local Kids and enter to win one of four \$50 gift cards
- Flu Shot Clinic