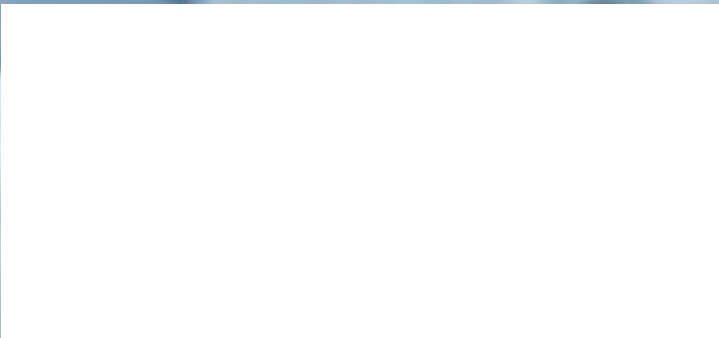


Since 1940

# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* January 2024 NEWS

**PIERCE PEPIN**  
COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



# Happy New Year and Rate Update



Nate Boettcher,  
President and CEO

**H**appy New Year! Your cooperative had a successful 2023. We will have many positives to discuss in the next couple of months, especially as we prepare for our April annual meeting. The future is bright for your cooperative, and with the addition of our broadband business, we are attracting new businesses and services even in a turbulent economy.

As we move into 2024, the PPCS management team has reviewed our wholesale power costs and operational expenses. Last year, we received over a 6.2% wholesale power cost increase. This is the largest increase we have received in quite some time from our wholesale supplier, Dairyland Power Cooperative. And while wholesale rates will remain generally flat this year, we are unable to absorb the cost of power and the upward pressure on expenses caused by inflation. Our goal is always to maintain safe, reliable service at an affordable price. Unfortunately, this means we will incur a rate increase to cover these additional costs. I want to be abundantly clear: the rate increase is not because of our broadband business. Our broadband business is supporting itself and likely will begin adding additional revenues to the cooperative by the end of 2024 and into 2025.

We are moving to something called a three-part rate. These rates include the daily facility charge, the charge for your usage (kWh), and a demand (kW) component. As we have discussed over the past couple of years, demand is nearly 60% of the cooperative's monthly wholesale power bill. Like other industries, when the need

is greatest on the electric system, the cost of power goes up. The demand will include a charge for your energy use during these critical periods of the day, which are typically in the afternoon and early evening. If you can shift your usage out of these periods, you will receive a lower charge and, in return, help the cooperative save money. You can do this by limiting high-use type appliances or by participating in our load control program. Load control participants will save \$5/month and will have a portion of their demand automatically controlled.

While rate increases are never favorable, your board of directors remains committed to affordable energy costs. These decisions are never taken lightly. These rates will go into effect in February. In July, we will begin offering additional rates that will allow members to choose a rate that fits their lifestyle. Look for more information mid-year about these changes.

In January, we will connect our 3,000th SwiftCurrent Connect customer. The impact of this business will contribute over \$3 million of revenue to PPCS over the next year. This significant amount and the overwhelming support demonstrate that connectivity is important.

Lastly, we want to say thank you! We anticipate that 2024 is going to be a great year. We hope you take a few minutes to stay connected with us. Please follow us on social media or by updating your contact information with our office. This will help us ensure you receive the latest news and information. Plus, we use this information to contact you during outages and notify you of cooperative events and load control days. Happy New Year!

Since 1940

# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

January 2024

**PIERCE PEPIN**  
COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative 



## EXCITEMENT SOARS AT SNOWFLAKE SKI JUMP

**HOODWINKED**

**HARDENING FOR CYBERSECURITY**

**HOT & SPICY RECIPES**



# PIERCE PEPIN CARES GRANTS AWARDED IN 2023



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



In 2023, Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) members provided significant support to local non-profit organizations through the Pierce Pepin Cares Foundation. Pierce Pepin Cares is funded through contributions to the Operation Round-Up® program by participating PPCS members.

## 2023 Pierce Pepin Cares Grants

Recipient	Amount
Community Food Shelves: Pierce County, Pepin County, Spring Valley, River Falls, Pepin, Prescott, Plum City, Elmwood .....	\$17,600.00
Ellsworth Area Ambulance (create mass casualty treatment kits) .....	2,125.00
St. Croix Valley SART (build a conference training space).....	1,000.00
Spring Valley Seniors Staying Put, Inc. (expansion of fitness program).....	1,000.00
Spring Valley Fire Dept. (purchase of monitors and pagers with chargers).....	1,000.00
Our Neighbors Place (purchase gas cards for clients).....	1,000.00
Have-A-Heart (purchase materials for crafting, baking & experiments) .....	750.00
Cooperative Family Fund (aide to children of deceased co-op employees).....	500.00
Healing Play, Inc. (equipment for Phase 2 of the adaptive park) .....	2,000.00
Durand Fire Dept. (new tender truck).....	1,500.00
Basics for Local Kids, Inc. (winter wear program and kids in crisis) .....	1,500.00
Ellsworth Gift Box Program (holiday assistance to families in need).....	1,500.00
Free Clinic of Pierce/St. Croix Co. (exam dictation equipment) .....	1,500.00
Assistance & Resource Center (short-term basic need assistance) .....	1,500.00
<b>Total 2023 Donations .....</b>	<b>\$34,475.00</b>



## Thank you, PPCS members – Your small change is changing lives!

In 2023, Pierce Pepin Cares Foundation was able to award \$34,475 to local organizations for the betterment of our communities. Pierce Pepin Cares Foundation is funded through Operation Round Up, and direct donations. Operation Round Up allows PPCS members to round up their monthly energy bills to the next dollar and pool this money. On average, this amounts to about \$6.00 per member annually. These donations allow the cooperative to support worthy causes on behalf of our members that benefit everyone in our community.

Pictured left: Eight local food pantries each received a donation of \$2,200 from PPCS members through Pierce Pepin Cares Foundation.

## RESOLVE TO SAVE ENERGY AND MONEY IN 2024!



Considering energy efficiency when making home improvements or purchasing new equipment and appliances for your home or business is important. As a member of PPCS, you have access to a variety of rebates and incentives offered through our ElectricSense program and Wisconsin's Focus on Energy program.

From appliances to water heaters, PPCS can help you save energy and money, and live more comfortably.

Information about rebates and incentives is available on our website at [www.piercepepin.coop/programs-rebates](http://www.piercepepin.coop/programs-rebates) and the Focus on Energy websites at [www.focusonenergy.com/piercepepin](http://www.focusonenergy.com/piercepepin).

# A VERY HAPP-*EV* BIRTHDAY!

**T**urning 60 is a great time to reflect on how far you've come in life and how you want to move forward into the new decade. For Liz Gunderson, PPCS communications coordinator, that's exactly how she ended up having a very happ-*EV* birthday in November.

As a communications professional, Gunderson has closely watched all the information about climate change, its impacts on the electrical grid, the push to move to more renewable sources of energy, and the evolution of electric vehicles. She says the more she learned about all these issues, the more uncomfortable she felt driving her 2013 Ford Edge.

"I loved that car," she said. "It was incredibly comfortable to drive and ride in. I just never felt good about the fuel mileage, to the point of almost feeling guilty. It always stayed at about 20 miles per gallon." She wanted to make a change that would better fit with her desire to make a positive change for the environment.

## Investigations lead to a test drive

Gunderson has the good fortune of working at a cooperative with EVs in its fleet. This has allowed her to drive a couple of different EV models and get used to how they operate and charge. She knew she wanted a vehicle like her Edge. She did a lot of internet searches, looking for models, battery ranges, and features. Several dealerships told her she could pick out an EV model that she wanted, put down \$100, and they would order it for her; if she didn't like it when it arrived (sometimes more than a year later), they would sell it to someone else. The problem with that is she wanted to be able to test-drive a vehicle before committing to it. In early November, one of her searches brought up the Volkswagen ID.4, and as luck would have it, a dealership within 45 minutes of her home had multiple models available for test drives.

## Test drives lead to a lease

Gunderson's husband, Tom, was apprehensive about moving into an all-electric vehicle. He had a lot of concerns about range and vehicle comfort. However, he was impressed with the ID.4 and agreed that the couple's fossil-fueled truck could serve as

a "backup" in instances where they had range concerns. The ID.4's range fits in well with Gunderson's commuting needs for work, plus any side trips to visit grandkids or shopping. While they originally planned to purchase the vehicle, the salesman discussed the options for a lease, explaining that an outright purchase would provide the federal rebate in the form of a tax rebate that would only be applied if you must pay in; leasing allowed the dealership to take the entire \$7,500 off the price of the vehicle upfront. Tom also liked the idea of a lease because, at the end of three years, the car can be turned in and upgraded to a new version, with potentially even more technological advances.

## Preparing for long-term EV ownership

When they first brought the ID.4 home, the Gundersons used public charging for the vehicle. Knowing that the EV would be used for commuting from River Falls to Eau Claire a couple of times a week when Tom begins teaching at CVTC for the spring semester, they decided installing an EV charger at home would be smart. After talking with her co-workers on the Energy Innovation team, Gunderson found and purchased a Level 2 charger that accommodated the car's charging capacity and scheduled the installation with Ryan Meyer, the PPCS Master Electrician. Her local municipal utility has a \$500 rebate for the installation of a charger to help defray some of the costs.

Gunderson and her husband are very happy with their decision. The vehicle is fun to drive and very comfortable, and its technological advances compared to the 2013 Edge are stunning. For example, Gunderson can start the car warming and start/stop charging using an app on her smartphone. With the fob in her pocket, she can start the car by pressing on the brake, and it shuts off automatically when she exits the vehicle. Gunderson is happ-*EV* to move into her new decade by positively impacting vehicle emissions.



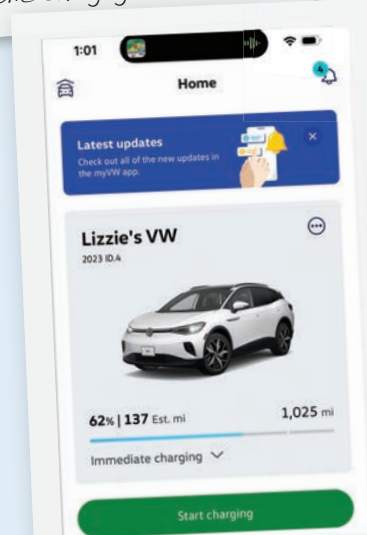
*Gunderson picking up her new EV.*



*The vehicle's navigation system "finds" public charging stations.*



*The car's display provides real-time information about the vehicle.*



*Gunderson can control functions on the car through a phone app.*



# NAVIGATING THE ELECTRIC HIGHWAY:

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUYING AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE AND CHARGER



As the world transitions toward sustainable living, electric vehicles (EVs) are gaining popularity for their eco-friendly nature and long-term cost savings. However, purchasing an EV is not just about the car itself; it also involves selecting the right electric vehicle charger. The energy experts at PPCS are available to help you navigate the electric highway. Here are some essential tips to consider when embarking on the journey of buying an EV and its accompanying charger.

### Understand Your Driving Needs:

Before delving into the world of EVs, it's crucial to assess your driving habits. Consider your daily commute, the average distance you cover, and whether you have access to charging infrastructure at home or work. Understanding your driving needs will help you determine the range requirements of the EV and the charging speed necessary for your lifestyle.

**Research Available Models:** With an increasing number of EV models hitting the market, it's essential to conduct thorough research on the available options. Compare different models based on factors such as range, performance, features, and price. Look for models that align with your driving needs and preferences. It's also wise to consider the availability of charging stations for your chosen model, both in your local area and on potential travel routes.

### Evaluate Charging Infrastructure:

One of the critical aspects of owning an EV is the accessibility to charging stations. Evaluate the charging infrastructure in your area, including public charging stations, home charging options, and workplace facilities. The availability of convenient charging points will significantly impact your overall EV experience. Consider investing in a home charging station for added convenience, as it allows you to start each day with a fully charged vehicle.

### Check Charging Speeds and Connectors:

Not all charging stations are created equal. Different chargers offer varying charging speeds, measured in kilowatts (kW). While home chargers typically have lower power outputs, public fast chargers can provide higher kW rates, allowing for quicker charging times. Additionally, consider the maximum charging rate your EV can take. For example, if your car can only accept 7.7kW of level 2 charging rate, it will not charge any faster with a more powerful level 2 charger. The same concept applies to level 3 DC fast charging. Connectors can be different, too. Most EV manufacturers currently use the J1772 connector for level 2 charging. Many are beginning to transition to the North American Charging Standard (NACS). This is the Tesla connector. There are adapters on the market to charge an EV with most different types of connectors.

### Explore Incentives and Rebates:

Many governments and local authorities offer incentives and rebates for EV purchases and charger installations. For example, PPCS offers up to an \$800 rebate for the installation of an

EV charger connected to our load management system. There is also a federal tax credit of up to \$7,500 for the purchase of an EV. These rebates and incentives can significantly reduce the upfront costs of both the EV and charging infrastructure.

### Consider Smart Charging

**Features:** Opt for EV chargers with smart charging features. Smart chargers allow you to monitor and control charging remotely through a smartphone app. This provides convenience and helps optimize charging times to take advantage of lower electricity rates during off-peak hours. Some smart chargers also offer energy management features, allowing you to integrate your EV charging with solar panels or other renewable energy sources.

As the automotive industry continues to evolve, EVs are becoming an increasingly viable and attractive option for environmentally conscious consumers. To ensure a smooth transition to electric mobility, it's essential to consider both the EV and its charging infrastructure carefully. By understanding your driving needs, researching available models, evaluating charging infrastructure, checking charging speeds and connectors, exploring incentives, and considering smart charging features, you can make an informed decision that aligns with your lifestyle and values. PPCS staff are available to answer your questions about EVs and EV charging, as well as assist with the installation of chargers. Contact our Energy Innovation and Operational Technology team at 800-924-2133 for help with your questions on EVs.

### SHIFT for Savings

Reduce non-essential energy use from 7 to 10 a.m. and 4 to 8 p.m.

Together, we can lower demand and help keep rates stable.





### Inquiring Members Want to Know...

#### Power Cost Adjustment

**Q.** There was a line item on my recent energy bill called Power Cost Adjustment (PCA). What is this?

**A.** From time to time, co-op members may see a power cost adjustment (PCA) on electric bills. A PCA is either a charge or credit. A PCA charge covers the higher cost of power. A PCA credit is applied when the power supply market is favorable. A PCA helps manage the fluctuating (increasing or decreasing) costs of purchasing power.

When the cost to purchase power in our regional energy market is significantly more or less than anticipated, our wholesale power provider, Dairyland Power Cooperative, passes the difference to PPCS, and we pass a charge or credit to our members. As a co-op, our rates are designed to reflect actual costs. We provide transparency on electric bills with a PCA, so our members know what they are paying for.

# SAVE THE DATE

## 87TH ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, April 18  
Ellsworth High School  
Registration 5:00 PM  
Business Meeting 6:00 PM

Join us and participate in the democratic member control of your cooperative.

**PIERCE PEPIN**  
COOPERATIVE SERVICES  
Live Better.<sup>®</sup>  
A Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative

## LINeworker SCHOLARSHIP

### APPLICATIONS DUE FEBRUARY 28

PPCS will award a \$1,000 scholarship to an individual pursuing post-secondary education in an electrical lineworker (electrical power distribution) program.

Details available at [www.piercepepin.coop](http://www.piercepepin.coop) under My Community.

## PIERCE PEPIN COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative

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Ellsworth, WI 54011-0420  
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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.....John Parkes
- 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!

*We wish you a year filled with  
good health and prosperity.*

Congratulations to our PPCS employees  
who had milestone anniversaries in 2023.



Sheldon Johnson  
40 years



Bryon Gilles  
20 years



David Chavie  
15 years



Austin Manore  
5 years



Joe Marcks  
5 years



Tim Marshall  
5 years

## 2024 CALENDAR

We've got lots of great events planned for 2024. We hope you will join us – each time you attend a member-focused event you will be entered in our drawing for three (3) \$100 bill credits to be awarded in December 2024. Watch our monthly magazine, *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*, for event updates, as well as on our website, Facebook, Instagram, and X.

- January 1** 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 issues can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.
- February 9\*** Coffee at the Co-op from 8–9 a.m. Stop in and enjoy coffee, donuts, and good conversations.
- March 29** Happy Easter! Our office is closed on Good Friday for the Easter holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet issues can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.
- April** Capital credit allocation notices are mailed in April.
- April 8** Lineman Appreciation Day
- April 18\*** Annual Meeting
- May 27** Happy Memorial Day! Our office is closed for the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet issues can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.
- July 4 & 5** Happy Fourth of July! Our office is closed in observance of the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet issues can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.
- July 16–18** 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](http://www.piercepepin.coop) under My Community.

- August 8-11\*** Join us at the Pierce County Fair! Our booth is in the Round Barn.
- September 2** Happy Labor Day! Our office is closed for the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet issues can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.
- September 28\*** Powered by Electricity! Join us at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls North Hall parking lot for an electric vehicle (EV) showcase, EV test drives, and more!
- October 11\*** Coffee at the Co-op from 8–9 a.m. Stop in and enjoy coffee, donuts, and good conversations.
- October 26\*** Join us from 9 to 11:30 a.m. for a member appreciation pancake breakfast.
- November** Happy Thanksgiving! Our office is closed for the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet issues can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.
- December 28 & 29** Join us for our Holiday Open House – cookies, coffee, and hot apple cider. Pick up your 2025 complimentary calendar!
- December 25 2-20** Merry Christmas! Our office is closed for the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet issues can be reported by calling 866-307-5326, option 1.

*\*Indicates member-focused event.*





*Building it*  
**BETTER  
TOGETHER**

*Let's see what we'll build in the new year*

At SwiftCurrent Connect, we do more than build fiber networks. We help build relationships, communities, opportunities, and quality of life. However, we don't do this important work alone. We do it in partnership with all of you, our loyal customers.

Communications technology is all about connections. Our wish for the year ahead is that our local connections grow even stronger.

***HAPPY NEW YEAR!***  
*Our office will be closed for the  
holiday on January 1.*



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715.350.7033 • [www.swiftcurrent.coop](http://www.swiftcurrent.coop)