

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* December 2025 NEWS



REINDEER ACRES HOLIDAY CHEER TAKES FLIGHT

"NOT-FOR-PROFIT" MEANS "ALL FOR YOU"

WATER HEATER WOES

BEST OF KIDS AND CRITTERS



SLEDDING DOWN THE BIG HILL

Nate Boettcher, President and CEO

Kids quickly learn that with great effort comes great reward. Take sledding as an example. The higher you are willing to climb, the longer the sled ride down the hill—and likely the more thrilling the adventure. At the end of every sled run, kids (and even some adults) determine if it's worth the climb back up the hill to seek another few moments of fun going back down. Metaphorically, this is how I feel this time of year in our cooperative.

Over the past 11 months, we've operated at breakneck speed—hurrying to get projects completed, install nearly 60 new services, prepare for large loads, and complete projects like our load controller swap-out. Why do we do this? Are we running out of time? Are we worried the proverbial snow might melt before we get that last sled ride down the hill?

The truth is, it's part of our culture, it's part of who we have become as a cooperative. I don't take lightly the impact an electric cooperative can have on its community. Let me give you a few examples. Over the past several years, we've replaced nearly 5,000 load controllers with newer, modern versions that will last us for the next 20–25 years. This saves the cooperative—and, in turn, our members—over \$625,000 in annual power costs. That's real money put back into the pockets of our members by lowering our costs. Members can continue to help save money by reducing energy use during high-peak periods.

We've now built over 1,200 miles of fiber optic cable, passing by 8,300 locations. Next year, SwiftCurrent is expected to generate \$6.2 million in revenue and return more than half of this amount to the cooperative to repay its investment. Importantly, this has generated millions of dollars in economic development through

construction jobs, materials, lodging, and permanent employment opportunities. Our team is growing with cooperative employees who care about our members and are willing to take time to help them Live Better. It hasn't always been easy climbing back up the hill, but wow—is it exciting when we see the impact that rural broadband has had.

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Cooperative culture has always been an essential part of how we move forward, but over the past year, it's become more critical than ever. Last summer, we brought someone I consider a thought leader from another co-op into our boardroom to discuss our industry. I enjoyed doing this because it serves

as a fresh reminder to our team and board of directors that we are not alone in our pursuit of a better future. A few weeks ago, a team of us visited another co-op to learn about their broadband operation. Last spring, we had several phone conversations with co-ops that are market leaders in member satisfaction. Throughout these conversations, two recurring themes have stood out: we believe in our culture, and we do this because of our members.

Lastly, I will leave you with this as we head into the holiday season—an excerpt from a letter we received from a member moving from our lines:

"Please share with the board my gratitude for the work they do and for the role they continue to play in the support of our community. It seems odd to say it, but we will miss our power company."

This is why we climb the hill. It's why we get up each day to help make our communities a better place to live, to work, and to grow. Enjoy every minute of it. Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and Happy New Year. We hope you have a wonderful holiday season.



Holiday Open House

December 8-12 & 15-19, 2025
8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Stop in and enjoy Christmas cookies and beverages.
Pick up your 2026 calendar*, too!

*while supplies last



CELEBRATING COMMUNITY DURING NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH

October was filled with gratitude, good company, and plenty of sweet treats as we celebrated National Cooperative Month and the International Year of Cooperatives!

We kicked things off with our Pie & Ice Cream Social on October 10, where members enjoyed delicious desserts and time to visit with friends and neighbors. The following week, we welcomed members for Coffee at the Co-op on October 17, a cozy morning of conversation, fresh coffee, and delicious muffins and donuts. We wrapped up the month with our Annual Member Appreciation Pancake Breakfast on October 25 as a small way to say thank you to our incredible members.

Each event was a wonderful reminder of what makes our cooperative so special — people coming together to share, connect, and support one another.

A heartfelt “thank you!” to everyone who joined us throughout Co-op Month, and an extra shout-out to our amazing volunteers and staff who made each event possible. Your support and enthusiasm continue to make our co-op a great place to belong!





PLUG IN FOR ADVENTURE

By Liz Gunderson

Once our kids left the nest, my husband Tom and I began taking wonderful motorcycle trips throughout the United States. Our goal is to visit every U.S. National Park, and so far, we've successfully visited 54 National Parks and Monuments. For summer 2025, we planned to travel to the West Coast and visit another eight. As often happens, though, life intervened to derail those plans.

Still craving adventure, we decided to pivot. This time, instead of two wheels, we'd go four—and electric. Enter our 2023 Volkswagen ID.4, a fully electric SUV that had, until now, only taken us as far as Eau Claire and the Twin Cities. Tom was a bit hesitant about a long-distance EV road trip, but we were ready to put it to the test. Destination: Colorado.

We mapped out our route with help from EV charging apps, sticking mostly to interstates where charging stations are more common. Tom dove into PlugShare.com to scout out charging stops, and we packed a cooler for roadside picnics while the car juiced up—usually about 45 minutes at a fast charger.



Driving in “braking mode” turned out to be a game-changer. This regenerative feature recharges the battery every time you lift your foot off the accelerator. When we drove up Pike's Peak—yes, all 14,115 feet of it—we used about 30% of our charge. But on the way down, braking mode regenerated more than half of that. Bonus: no need to pull over and cool the brakes like the gas-powered cars around us. Driving through Rocky Mountain National Park, we actually regenerated more charge than when we started up into the mountains.

We were also pleasantly surprised by how EV-friendly our accommodations were. Three of our hotels had charging

stations, and two offered complimentary charging for guests. With the Electrify America and PlugShare apps on our phones, we could easily find stations, check availability, and read reviews. At one stop in Albert Lea, we saw four chargers available—and within 10 minutes, two were already in use. The apps kept us one step ahead.

One of the unexpected joys of EV travel? The people. At charging stations, we met fellow adventurers, like a young couple from Russia who had rented an ID.4 simply because it was the cheapest option. They were new to EVs, so we swapped tips, shared laughs, and even showed them the hidden button for the back massage feature. The husband apologized for his English, but we assured him it was far better than our Russian!

In the end, our electric road trip was a total success. With a little extra planning and a spirit of adventure, we discovered that EV travel isn't just doable—it's delightful. We don't have any qualms about taking our ID.4 for another big adventure.



REMINDER: Energy Sense rebate forms are due December 22, 2025

Any qualifying products or services purchased and/or installed from January 1 through December 22, 2025, are eligible if the required documentation is submitted with the proper forms by the due date. For information and rebate forms, visit www.piercepepin.coop or contact Member Relations.



DECK THE HALLS SAFELY

There's nothing like putting up lights and decorations to get you in the holiday spirit. It's something that many do each and every year without incident, yet the holidays are also one of the most hazardous times of the year when it comes to electrical fires and accidents.

Safe Electricity offers several tips as you deck the halls this season:

- When decorating outside, look up and around for power lines. Never throw lights or other decorations into trees near power lines.
- Keep ladders, equipment, and yourself at least ten feet from power lines.
- Match plugs with outlets. Do not force a three-pronged plug into a two-pronged outlet or extension cord.
- Outside, use only lights, cords, animated displays, and decorations rated for outdoor use. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use them. Ensure outdoor outlets or extension cords are equipped with Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI's).
- Never string more strands of lights together than recommended by the manufacturer.
- Do not staple or nail through light strings or electrical cords. Use plastic or insulated hooks to hang lights.
- Do not attach cords to utility poles.



The outside of your home is not the only place where you need to be cautious of electrical dangers. Use care when placing and decorating trees inside your home. Place fresh-cut and artificial trees away from heat sources such as registers, fireplaces, and radiators; water fresh-cut trees frequently. Turn lights off before you go to sleep. Use a timer to help.

We wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday season!

Source: *SafeElectricity.org*

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

PPCS awards three \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors graduating in spring 2026. Applications are due by February 20, 2025. For more information and entry form, go to www.piercepepin.coop under My Community.



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