

Since 1940

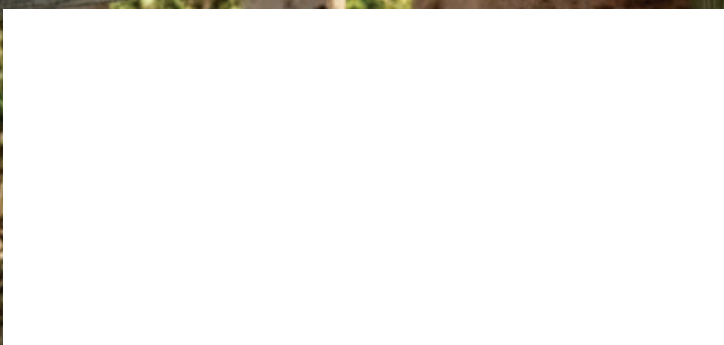
WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

July 2026



PIERCE PEPIN
COOPERATIVE SERVICES
Live Better[®]

**CELEBRATING
FIVE YEARS
OF CONNECTIVITY!**





BUILT TOGETHER:

250 YEARS OF SERVICE, SACRIFICE, AND UNITY

Nate Boettcher, President and CEO

As we prepare to celebrate America's 250th birthday, I've found myself thinking a lot about how far our country has come and the people who helped build it along the way.

Life in 1776 looked nothing like the world we live in today. There was no electrical grid, no internet, no phones, and no modern conveniences that we now take for granted. Most people spent their days simply working to provide for their families and communities.

Candlemakers provided light. Farmers worked the land and sold their crops at local markets. Printers helped spread news and ideas that educated and connected people across a growing nation. And through it all, our founders laid the groundwork for what would become the United States of America.

Over the last 250 years, generations of hardworking Americans have continued building on that foundation. They built factories, farms, businesses, schools, electric systems, and eventually communication networks that connected rural communities like ours to the rest of the world. Opportunity in America has always been rooted in hard work, determination, sacrifice, and sometimes a little luck.

I know that because I've lived it myself. I grew up watching my mom work hard to make ends meet, sometimes working two jobs. My grandparents taught me early on that nothing worthwhile simply gets handed to you. They taught me that through hard work, you earn your reward.

When I was 10 or 11 years old, I delivered the *Dunn County News* twice a week. I spent mornings working in my grandparents' garden after swimming practice, and my grandpa had me mowing what felt like an endless amount of grass on a city lot. Looking back, I'm grateful for those lessons because they shaped who I am today.

Those same values are alive and well here at PPCS. Every day, our linemen, electricians, metering technicians, fiber technicians, office staff, and management team work hard to serve our members and communities. Whether it's restoring power after a storm, helping a member with a question, or expanding fiber service to rural areas, the work matters because the people we serve matter.

That spirit of service and commitment is part of what has made this country strong for 250 years. As we look ahead to the next 250 years, I believe what matters most is how we treat one another. We won't always agree. In fact, healthy disagreement has always been part of America's story. But our willingness to listen, to understand different perspectives, and to work together despite those differences is what moves communities and countries forward.

The next time someone sees the world differently than you do, take a moment to listen. Ask questions. Try to understand where they're coming from. We may not always change each other's minds, but we can still respect one another and move forward together. That's what strong communities do.

As you celebrate the Fourth of July with family and friends, I hope you have the opportunity to relax, reflect, and appreciate the freedoms and opportunities we enjoy as Americans. I truly believe the best chapters of our country's story are still ahead of us.

Happy Fourth of July and Happy 250th Birthday, America!

SAFETY POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

Congratulations to our Safety Poster Contest Winners: Andi Molberg from Ellsworth, Wis., Bryar Ennenga from Prescott, Wis., and Audrey Koplos also from Prescott, Wis. First-place winner Andi received a \$40 Visa gift card from PPCS and a \$25 Visa gift card from WECA. Second-place winner Bryar received a \$30 Visa gift card from PPCS. Third-place winner Audrey received a \$25 Visa gift card from PPCS. Teachers Mrs. Thayer and Ms. Rohl each received \$50 for their classrooms for each winning student.

Congratulations again to our winners! Your creativity will inspire other students going forward!



Left to right: First-place winner Andi Molberg shows off her winning poster with her teacher, Mrs. Thayer. Second-place winner Bryar Ennenga and third-place winner Audrey Koplos show off their posters with teacher Ms. Rohl.


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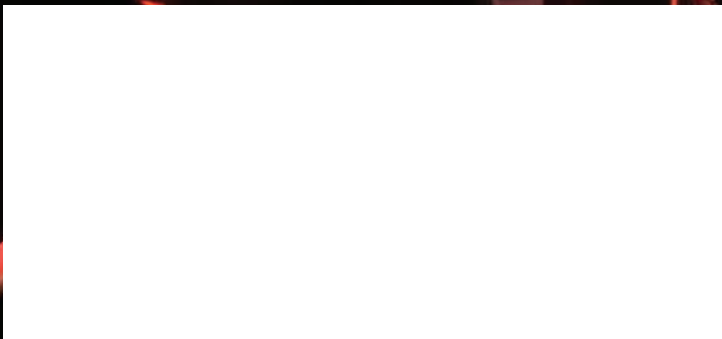
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

FOREFRONT OF FUSION

**HOW TO HELP
DURING PEAK DEMAND**

READER RECIPE CONTEST

KIDS AND CRITTERS





HAVE YOU MISPLACED SOME TREASURE?

PPCS is seeking members with unclaimed funds from capital credits and accounts payable checks. Capital credits are a member's share of the cooperative's margins (profits) for a year in which revenues exceeded expenses. Capital credit refunds are proportionate to the member's share of electrical costs and purchases for that year. The PPCS board of directors approves capital credit refunds based on the cooperative's financial health. Notifying PPCS of changes to your mailing address is important.

A list of members we hope to locate is available on our website at www.piercepepin.coop under My Co-op > Capital Credits. A notice of forfeiture of funds was also published in the June 4, 2026, edition of The Journal in Ellsworth, Wis. A

current address is needed to locate these members and refund their capital credits or accounts payable. If your capital credit retirement was \$100 or less, it was applied to your energy bill, and no check was issued.

Is your name on this list? Do you know where we can locate these people or their heirs if they are deceased? If you recognize anyone on the list, please contact us at 715-273-4355, 800-924-2133, or info@pierceppepin.coop and provide the member's name and current address.

The unclaimed funds will be forfeited to the Federated Youth Foundation and used by the cooperative for educational or charitable purposes as directed by our bylaws if these members are not located by August 31, 2026.

School Supply Drive

Now through Aug. 3

Accepting all school supplies, including backpacks and calculators, or cash donations.

Let's help all kids get a great start to the 2026-27 school year!



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



HIGH-SPEED FIBER BOOSTS EFFICIENCY FOR LOCAL RURAL LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR

by Dave French

Life runs on connections. Operational efficiency starts with reliable connectivity. As digital tools become central to daily workflows, businesses need fast, resilient, and future-ready infrastructure to stay productive. For one local landscape contractor, fiber internet is delivering the performance and dependability needed to run leaner today — and scale for tomorrow. For years, connectivity challenges were just part of doing business for Pro’s Touch Landscaping, now in its 25th year of operation. Owner John McNamara had grown accustomed to slow speeds, lagging performance, and intermittent service outages — issues that weren’t just inconveniences but daily disruptions affecting both his office and home operations.

“It wasn’t just frustrating — it was costing time and keeping us from providing the experience we wanted our customers to have,” McNamara said. “When your internet goes down, productivity is definitely impacted.”

From security system interruptions to delays in QuickBooks and other cloud-based platforms, the problems added up quickly. Tasks that should have taken minutes stretched into hours. Ordering materials, invoicing customers, completing design work, and managing accounting all became more

complicated than necessary. Even at home, unreliable service made it difficult to stay connected after hours and keep the business moving.

That changed just a few months ago. After upgrading to high-speed fiber broadband at both his business and home, McNamara has seen what he feels are signs of a transformation in how consistent, reliable connectivity will impact how Pro’s Touch Landscaping operates. What was once unpredictable and frustrating is now consistent, fast, and dependable — unlocking new levels of efficiency across the entire organization over time.

A Foundation Built on Reliability

At the core of the improvement is one key factor: fiber network reliability. Unlike his previous provider, where service interruptions could happen without warning, fiber connectivity has delivered stable, uninterrupted performance. Systems that once faltered during critical moments now run seamlessly in the background.

The difference is immediate and measurable. Security systems stay connected. Operating systems and software operate without lag. Communication tools function as intended. Instead of working around



Owner John McNamara says SwiftCurrent Connect’s high-speed Internet is giving him a competitive advantage.

technology limitations, McNamara and his team can now focus more on the work itself.

“From an operations standpoint, we’re happy with how everything just works now,” he said. “It’s only been a few months, but we don’t think about our internet anymore — and that’s exactly how it should be.”

Streamlining Daily Operations

Beyond reliability, the speed and





consistency of fiber internet are driving real operational efficiencies for Pro’s Touch Landscaping. With symmetrical download and upload speeds, the business has eliminated bottlenecks that once slowed critical processes. Uploading design files, syncing accounting data, and processing invoices now happen in real time — and open the door for even greater productivity in the future.

Ordering materials is faster. Billing cycles are shorter. Design revisions move quickly from concept to client approval. Routine administrative tasks that once felt cumbersome are now smooth and predictable, which keeps the focus where it should be — on their customers.

“When everything is faster, you get more done without adding more hours,” McNamara explained. “We’ll be able to use the speed and reliability of fiber to make the whole operation more efficient.”

Extending Connectivity Beyond the Office

Installing fiber at both the business and McNamara’s home has further amplified the benefits. For many contractors, the workday doesn’t end when they leave the job site. Evenings are often spent reviewing designs, catching up on messages, managing finances, or preparing the team for the next day. And now that John has reliable, high-speed connectivity at his home, those tasks are no longer slowed by poor performance or dropped connections. The transition between office and home is seamless — creating a continuous, always-ready environment for small business owners like McNamara.

“It’s made a difference at both ends of the day,” McNamara said. “You’re not losing time anywhere. And the kids love it for gaming as well.”

Building for the Future

While the immediate improvements are clear, the long-term value may be even greater. As landscaping businesses continue to adopt more digital tools

— from advanced design platforms to cloud-based project management and connected systems - the need for fast, reliable infrastructure will only grow. Fiber connectivity provides a future-ready foundation to support these evolving demands. With this internet upgrade, Pro’s Touch Landscaping is positioned to scale, adapt, and continue improving its operations without worrying about whether its technology can keep up.

“SwiftCurrent Connect set us up for what’s next,” McNamara said. “We’re not just fixing a problem — we’re getting ahead and positioning the business for the next 25 years of service.”

A Competitive Edge Through Connectivity

In an industry where efficiency, responsiveness, and reliability define success, technology plays an increasingly important role. For John McNamara and Pro’s Touch Landscaping, upgrading to fiber internet has done more than solve connectivity issues - it is transforming how the



business operates. From improved uptime and faster workflows to increased productivity and future readiness, the benefits are clear. And after just a few months, one thing stands out: reliable, high-speed connectivity isn’t just a utility — it’s shaping up to be a competitive advantage.

SMITH JOINS PPCS AS COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) is happy to welcome Madilyn (Maddi) Smith as its new Communications Specialist. Smith graduated from Winona State University in 2023 with a degree in Elementary Education and a minor in Reading Instruction. She began teaching at St. Joseph Catholic School in the fall of 2023, working with second and fourth-grade students.

She’s looking forward to working at the cooperative, an organization that she’s heard has a great reputation in the community. She believes her background in education will serve her very well as the new communications person.

Smith enjoys reading, traveling, and boating. She’s looking forward to a long and successful career with the cooperative.

Welcome, Maddi!





THE GROWING DEMAND ON OUR POWER GRID AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

The power grid keeps our homes comfortable and our modern world running. As climate patterns shift and extreme weather events increase, the grid faces new pressures to meet

our growing energy demands. From heatwaves to hurricanes, today's changing conditions test the limits of an infrastructure first built in the late 1800s.

The first power grid, developed in 1882 in New York City, laid the foundation for the modern grid that powers our world. The systems we depend on today were built for past and current weather conditions. However, these conditions are changing. Extreme weather is now the number one cause of blackouts in the U.S., accounting for 80% of major power outages.

How does extreme weather impact the grid?

Regions across the U.S. face extreme weather that strains infrastructure not built for extreme conditions. In Texas, limited winterization led to power outages and frozen pipes during the 2021 winter storm. The Pacific Northwest's record heat dome in 2021 increased electricity demand to record highs, causing grid equipment to overheat. In California, utilities implement public safety shutoffs during dry, windy conditions to prevent wildfires.

Extreme weather impacts the grid in several ways. Sometimes, power is still being produced, but it can't reach homes because power lines are downed or damaged by fallen trees and debris during storms. During hurricanes, substations — facilities that control and distribute electricity — can flood, causing widespread outages. Other times, when demand spikes during heatwaves or winter storms, the grid can become overwhelmed, leading to rolling blackouts or outages as supply struggles to meet the increased demand.

What is causing the increased demand for electricity?

While extreme weather is one source of growing energy demand, development and technology are also increasing it. This demand is projected to rise 15-20% in the U.S. over the next decade, according to the Department of Energy. Significant factors driving this growth include the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and the expansion of data centers, cloud storage, communication tools, and more.

The grid faces two significant opportunities for growth: adapting to extreme weather conditions and meeting the rising energy demand. The energy industry is working tirelessly to ensure the power grid meets these ever-growing challenges and delivers a more resilient, sustainable energy system that supports affordability and reliability.

Utility companies, government agencies, regulators, and other stakeholders are working to increase grid resilience. Efforts include raising substations that are vulnerable to flooding, deploying battery storage to supplement the grid, expanding renewable energy sources, and connecting regional grids to improve overall stability.

What can we do?

While the challenges facing the power grid are significant, there are steps we can all take to reduce strain and contribute to a more reliable energy system.

- Simple actions like running high-energy appliances during off-peak hours can ease pressure on the grid, especially during peak demand times.
- Conducting a home energy audit can identify ways to improve your home's efficiency, reducing both your energy consumption and utility bills.
- PPCS offers incentives for renewable energy and energy efficiency programs. Contact our Energy Innovation team for helpful resources and savings, or visit our website at www.piercepepin.coop/programs-rebates.
- Investing in battery storage can provide peace of mind

Continued inside back cover



Nate Boettcher, President & CEO
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Follow us on Facebook, X, and Instagram
Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
Power Outages and Emergencies: 800-927-5705

by allowing you to store energy when demand is low to use during peak times. Most importantly, it can be used during power outages. This can help ensure you have electricity when the grid is most vulnerable.

By recognizing challenges such as extreme weather, rising energy demand, and aging infrastructure, we can take action to make the power grid more sustainable. Every action, from reducing energy consumption to supporting new technologies, contributes to a more resilient future.

Source: Safelectricity.org.

Drop That Demand!

From 2 to 8 p.m., this town's electric demand rides higher than a buckin' bronco — and that's one mighty big reason costs keep climbin'!

We're aimin' to wrangle down demand by a whopping 2,000 kW during Summer 2026, and we need all the frontiers folk to lend a hand.

So when the sun's strongest, give those high-energy gadgets a little rest:

- Hold off on runnin' big appliances
- Turn off extra lights
- Keep your cool without overworkin' the A/C

Every little bit helps keep energy costs from ridin' off into the sunset.

Do your part, pardner!

PIERCE PEPIN
COOPERATIVE SERVICES

Happy Fourth of July!

Office closed: July 3

Report electric outages through SmartHub or call 800-927-5705.

Report internet issues by calling 715-350-7033.

250 Years!

REESER ACHIEVES JOURNEYMAN STATUS



Brad Ristow (left) congratulates Chase Reeser on receiving his Journeyman Lineman certificate.

by Madilyn Smith

Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) is proud to announce that lineman apprentice, Chase Reeser, has successfully completed his apprenticeship through Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) and is now officially recognized as a Journeyman Lineman by the State of Wisconsin.

This achievement marks the culmination of more than 8,000 hours of classroom instruction and on-the-job training over a four-year period, though Reeser worked closer to 10,000 before his program finished. The journeyman certification is an important milestone in the career of an electrical line worker, demonstrating extensive technical skills, knowledge, and field expertise.

As a graduating high school senior, Reeser was awarded the Line Worker Scholarship PPCS offers. He completed his Electrical Power Distribution course at Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) and then began a self-study apprenticeship. He transferred to NWTC about halfway through his apprenticeship.

Reflecting on his time as an apprentice, Reeser says, “The last year of book work was the hardest part of the process, but my favorite part of the job is getting to work outside every day.” Linework is one of the most demanding jobs, both physically and in terms of critical responsibility. They are responsible for building and maintaining infrastructure that delivers safe, reliable electricity to homes, farms, and businesses across PPCS’s service areas.

Reeser offers his words of wisdom to those starting their apprenticeships: “If you don’t get the job you are looking for right away, don’t give up and keep trying. It’s not often you can get into a co-op right away, and I was one of the lucky ones.”

PPCS remains committed to workforce development and training programs that equip employees with the skills needed to meet the growing demands of the energy industry.

Congratulations, Chase, on this hard-earned accomplishment!

SWIFTCURRENT[®] CONNECT

Fiber Internet | Voice Service | Security

Powered by:  **PIERCE PEPIN**
COOPERATIVE SERVICES



Your life runs on **CONNECTIONS.**

It's our business to make
those connections a
reality.



24/7 Local
Support



10 Gig Capable
Network



Symmetrical
Speeds

We offer custom internet and voice plans
designed for your online lifestyle.

5
Years
ANNIVERSARY
5,000 CONNECTIONS


4.6 out of 5.0 Stars

Scan to learn
more!

