

# WATTS *Current*

December 2021

For Our Members

## Season's Greetings from MVEC

The holiday season is once again upon us and it seems like it arrives faster each and every year. The holidays are a time for us to reflect on the many blessings in our life as we spend time with our family and friends and enjoy many long-standing holiday traditions. For your Cooperative, the holiday season signifies the end of another busy year as we wrap up ongoing projects and carry on the tradition of planning and budgeting for the New Year. I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on events of the last year at MVEC.

### Relentless Efforts to Provide Safe, Reliable Electric Service

Upgrading our electric system to handle new and future loads is an ongoing project for our operations and engineering teams. This summer and fall our engineering staff completed a 10-year long-range engineering study. The results of this plan will help guide our shorter 2-3 year plans over the next several years. On the construction side of things, we have spent a significant amount of time this year working on line improvement projects in the Dubuque area as we accommodate current growth while also preparing for future expansion around the southwest arterial in Dubuque. We have also completed substation projects in Jackson and Jones Counties that modernized and upgraded existing substations to increase their capacities while also making it safer to maintain and operate equipment within the substations.



One of our major goals every year is to provide reliable service and after the Derecho greatly impacted outage time in 2020, our outage numbers have rebounded nicely year-to-date for 2021 and are back to where you expect them to be.

### MVlink Continues to be a Home Run

Our MVlink smart grid project continues to be a success story for both our members and the Cooperative. The initial fiber smart grid build-out that was started in November of 2016, is now considered completed. Over the last five years, we have constructed over 2,200 miles of fiber and created a robust and reliable fiber network that connects and communicates with over 18,000 pieces of electrical equipment located in our substations and on our distribution feeders, while also providing first-in-class internet services to our membership.

We celebrated our 5,000th MVlink connected member this fall and that number continues to grow each week as we connect new members to the fastest internet speeds available in our area. Member feedback and response has been great and the importance of quality broadband services has certainly been reinforced over the last 18 months as we have responded and adjusted to the impact COVID-19 placed on our work, home, and school activities. If you are interested in MVlink and haven't yet reached out to make the switch, please call the office or go to [www.mvec.coop/mvlink-internet](http://www.mvec.coop/mvlink-internet)

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## Season's Greeting from MVEC Continued

for more information. Packages start at \$59.95 and gigabit internet is available at the great low price of only \$89.95 per month.

Another milestone for MVlink in 2021, was providing internet services to the historic Field of Dreams game between the New York Yankees and Chicago White Sox. The game was a wonderful event to showcase Iowa to the rest of the country and we were proud to be a part of the project. The service requirements were a little more complicated and the stakes a little higher than our typical internet install, but our team came together and our network performed as expected and MVlink received positive feedback from event organizers.



### Connecting with You, Our Members

After not being able to hold our normal in-person member events in 2020, it was great to get back to in person in 2021. In July, we held a fun member night at the Jackson County Fair in Maquoketa where our Board of Directors and members of our leadership team were able to visit with and answer questions of our members. In August,



we were back to an in-person Annual Meeting at the Berndes Center in Monticello and this was the first year in Cooperative history where the membership was able to participate in the Director election either in

person or by mail-in ballot. We were pleased that over 1,100 members participated in the election and took an active role in the governance of their Cooperative.

### Improving Access to Your Co-Op

We recently launched a newly revised member portal for electric services that is available on our website. Some members have indicated a desire to communicate and conduct business with the Cooperative on their own

schedules. We feel that the upgraded portal will help as it allows members to pay their bill, setup reminders and auto payments, monitor electric usage, and submit maintenance requests all online at their own convenience. Please check the upgraded portal out (found at the top of any mvec.coop page) if you have not already done so.

### Diversifying Our Power Mix

On the generation side of things, there are a couple of exciting projects in the works within MVEC's service territory. Our power provider, CIPCO, has entered into purchase agreements to buy the energy output of the 54 megawatt Independence Wind Farm located in Delaware County as well as the 100 megawatt Coggon Solar Project near Coggon. Independence Wind is currently testing and is scheduled to be fully operational yet in 2021 and Coggon Solar is still in the permitting process with hopes to be online by the end of 2022. Our members want us to provide diverse and environmentally friendly energy and we have worked closely with CIPCO to make that happen. CIPCO's energy portfolio in 2010 consisted of 58% of the needed generation being provided by coal assets. In 2020, coal assets were only 21% of the energy mix. During that same 10 year period, wind and solar projects have been added to the energy portfolio. There has been a lot of talk lately about when America will transition to a 100% renewable electric grid. As we have conversations about a clean energy economy, it is important to set realistic expectations about the timeline. Wind and solar are intermittent resources and cannot support a system's power needs on their own. Technical advancements in battery storage will help wind and solar become a reliable source, but it will be important to continue to have solid baseload generation as a part of the mix to meet the 24/7 needs of our members.

As you can see, it has been a productive and busy year for the Cooperative. If you see any of our employees out and about in the community, please thank them for all their efforts to keep the lights on and the internet traffic flowing. As a provider of services that don't allow for working remotely, the last 20 months have been very challenging, and at times, tested our limits. However, our employees have not missed a beat in terms of providing the reliable services you count on being available every hour of every day.

The Board of Directors and employees of Maquoketa Valley wish each of you and your families a joyous holiday season and a prosperous 2022.



## November MVEC Board Update

- Reviewed and discussed plans for the 2022 energy efficiency rebate program.
- Viewed a demonstration of the newly updated online member portal that is now available to electric members through the Cooperative’s website.
- Discussed items of interest to the Cooperative as we approach the 2022 legislative session.
- Reviewed and discussed draft versions of the 2022 Capital and Expense budgets.
- Received a monthly update on the status of the MVlink fiber smart grid project.
- Discussed and approved changes recommended by the Board Policy Committee on remote attendance for Directors at board meetings.
- Designated voting delegates for the upcoming annual meetings for affiliate organizations.



## What Speed Do You Need?

As your family does more online, how do you know if you have the best internet package for your household? Keep these things in mind:

- How many wireless devices does my family typically use at any given time (or during peak times of the day/evening)?
- What is being done on these devices (for instance, online gaming and streaming movies use far more bandwidth than web browsing and checking email)?
- What other smart/wireless devices are in use in my home (smart thermostats, smart appliances, doorbell cameras, security system or home assistant device (Alexa or Google Home))?

MVlink provides several packages to give you the speed you need. If your internet connection needs an upgrade, contact us today at 800-927-6068 or [fiber@mvlink.com](mailto:fiber@mvlink.com) to discuss the right plan for you.

### What Your Connection Can Do For You

Activity	85 Mbps (\$59.95/mo.)	250 Mbps (\$69.95/mo.)	500 Mbps (\$79.95/mo.)	1 Gig (1,000 Mbps) (\$89.95/mo.)
# of Connected Devices	1 to 4	3 to 6	6 to 10	More than 10
Download 8 songs	3.5 seconds	1.2 seconds	.6 seconds	.3 seconds
Download 50 photos	9.4 seconds	3.2 seconds	1.6 seconds	.8 seconds
Download online video games	1,247 seconds	212 seconds	106 seconds	53 seconds
Download a 2-hr HD movie	294 seconds	100 seconds	50 seconds	25 seconds

\*Times are approximate and will vary with file size

## Treat Your Family To Faster Internet

Whether you’re video chatting with family or cozying up to stream your favorite holiday movies, memories are made when connections are strengthened. *Give your family an internet upgrade this holiday season!*

Upgrade Your Internet  
or Sign Up For NEW!

**CALL 800-927-6068**



Tech the Halls With a Whole  
Home Wi-Fi Network *ask us how*



## Irish Meadows Alpaca Farm

By Christie Remley, MVEC Manager of Communications & Public Relations

On a beautiful, unseasonably warm November day, I made the short drive to Irish Meadows Farm near La Motte in rural Jackson County. The farm is owned by MVEC members, Mike and Julie Delaney. The picturesque farm might look similar to many Iowa farmsteads but the fluffy alpacas dotting the rolling fields are anything but typical. As I parked in front of the carefully restored red barn that houses the farm’s store, I knew I was in for a treat.



Julie and Mike purchased the 382-acre farm in 1991 and they grow corn, soybeans, hay and run a beef cattle operation. Shortly after purchasing the farm, Julie was looking for some livestock that wouldn’t destroy the historic buildings. “We had this farm and loved the old buildings and knew that if we didn’t use them, they would fall into ruin. I was looking for some kind of animal to showcase the farm—an animal that wouldn’t be too hard on the buildings. This farm was too unique not to share it. The people who homesteaded it in 1850, owned it until 1985. The farm was their life and I wanted to honor that legacy.”

Julie discovered alpacas when flipping through a Country Living magazine at her sister’s home during a visit to Colorado in 2000. She was immediately taken with the furry animals and started to do some research. Initially, it seemed like an alpaca venture was going to be too expensive to undertake. However, Julie couldn’t let the idea go, so she continued to do online research and make several alpaca



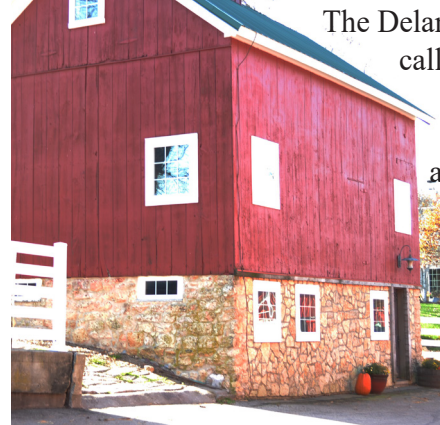
farm visits. In 2004, the Delaneys purchased their first pair of Huacaya (wa-kaya) alpacas and in quick succession, added two more. As Mike said, “we became addicted” to the gentle, inquisitive animals and Irish Meadows now has 125 alpacas in its herd.

Where does the name Irish Meadows come from? According to Julie, all alpaca farms must have a name. After some back and forth, she and Mike landed on Irish Meadows because of their Irish heritage and because the farm is situated between two meadows. Irish Meadows is known across the world for breeding show-quality alpacas. The Delaneys attend 10 shows a year across the United States with their alpacas garnering many awards including the highest honors of Judge’s Choice and National Supreme Champion. However, Julie believes the highest accomplishment and compliment to their alpacas is sending the animals to other countries such as Germany and Canada.



A baby alpaca is called a ‘cria’ and Irish Meadows had 30 babies this year. During my visit, I was able to pet a 3-day-old dark brown cria - the beautiful alpaca was warm and soft to the touch. I admit, I may have become smitten with these docile creatures.

After I tore myself away from the animals, Mike gave me a tour of the beautifully restored ‘guest barn,’ unique because it was built in 1860 into the side of a bank.



The Delaneys used a process called soda blasting to clean the exposed wood and remove any livestock smell. The guest house is charming and well-appointed with a stunning view of the farm.

Currently, the



Delaneys offer the barn to those visiting the farm to purchase alpacas. They also use it for meeting space and Julie teaches knitting and felting classes there as well. The barn originally housed the store but 10 years ago, Julie moved the store across the driveway to the larger 1940-built grainery (also restored using the soda blasting process).

Irish Meadows shears the alpacas the first week of May. Julie uses mini mills to create the yarn and products she sells in the store all year long. In the shop, Julie sells beautiful rugs, yarn and roving, dryer balls, socks, hats, comforters, shoe inserts, and throws. She also has some trendy non-alpaca clothing to round out her offering plus novelties featuring alpacas. According to Julie, the store's busiest time is fall through the holiday season. Irish Meadows hosts a fall open house the last weekend of September that thousands of people attend. Mark your calendars for next year!

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Irish Meadows Alpaca Farm and encourage anyone looking for a fun way to spend an afternoon to visit. If you're searching for beautiful, unique holiday gifts, you should stop by the store. My only warning is that your visit might lead to an alpaca addiction!



### Shop Hours:

Thursday, Friday & Saturday 10 to 5

**Month of December:** Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday & Sunday 10 to 5

[www.irishmeadowsalpaca.com](http://www.irishmeadowsalpaca.com)

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[www.facebook.com/Irish-Meadows-Alpaca-Farm](https://www.facebook.com/Irish-Meadows-Alpaca-Farm)

## BE SAFE DURING THE HO·HO·HOLIDAYS 10 TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY JOLLY



Before you plan out your new holiday lighting scheme or repeat last year's festive design, keep these 10 safety tips in mind when decorating outdoors:

- 1 Do not toss light strands up into the air. They could get too close to or come into contact with a power line.
- 2 Before using a ladder, always look up and assess all power line locations.
- 3 Carry a ladder horizontally when transporting it.
- 4 Keep at least 10 feet between yourself (and any item you are holding) and a power line.
- 5 Do not use staples or nails or tacks to secure light strands, cords, wires or extension cords.
- 6 String together no more than the number of strands recommended by the manufacturer.
- 7 Plug all lights and extension cords into GFCI-protected outlets.
- 8 Use lights and extension cords rated for outdoor use.
- 9 Do not use frayed, cracked or otherwise damaged cords, plugs or lights.
- 10 Use only lights and products certified by a reputable testing lab.

Safe LEARN MORE AT:  
Electricity.org®





# TECH LINK

## What Affects Your Wi-Fi Connection?

Getting fast, reliable Wi-Fi in our home networks is essential. We connect more devices than ever to Wi-Fi and use them 24/7 for everything from video streaming and social media sharing to home automation and monitoring. But sometimes it seems like we're not getting the speeds we should be, such as when it takes forever to upload our holiday photos to a photo sharing site, or when Netflix freezes just when we're getting to the best part of the movie. And while it's possible that there's something wrong with your Wi-Fi setup or your Internet connection, there are other factors you should consider first before calling your service provider.

1. The first thing to understand about Internet speeds is that certain minimum speeds are needed to enjoy different types of online activities. Video streaming is the best example of this. The better the video quality, the faster your Internet speed needs to be to enjoy it. Streaming companies typically publish minimum speeds for the different levels of video quality: standard definition (SD), high definition (HD) and ultra-high-definition/4K. Netflix suggests a 3 Mbps service for standard streaming, 5 Mbps for HD and 25 Mbps for 4K.

If you're concerned about your Internet service or speeds, make sure you purchased an Internet package that's fast enough to meet your needs. MVlink users can easily increase their speeds with a simple request - call 800-927-6068 to learn more.



2. Next, make sure the device you're using is capable of supporting the speeds being provided by your service provider. For example, Apple and Android-based smart phones and tablets have maximum Wi-Fi speeds they are capable of supporting. If you connect using a smart phone that's more than three years old, you may not experience the speeds you expect. There are too many devices to provide a comprehensive list here, but the first thing you should do is determine which Wi-Fi standard your device supports. See the list below to compare your device standards with maximum speeds.

3. Another factor that could affect your speed is your router, especially if it is three or more years old. The Wi-Fi industry is constantly updating its technology to provide users with better performance. According to Juniper Networks, below is a list of maximum speeds supported by current W-iFi standards, assuming ideal network conditions:

- 802.11b – 11 Mbps
- 802.11a/g – 54 Mbps
- 802.11n – 150 Mbps
- 802.11ac – 866.7 Mbps
- 802.11ax (Wi-Fi 6) – 2+ Gbps

4. Lastly, Wi-Fi signals are also affected by a device's distance from the Wi-Fi router as well as any obstacles in your home (e.g., cabinets, large mirrors and concrete walls). Signals cannot go around objects. Your connection quality may also be impacted by other devices in your home that transmit wireless signals (e.g., baby monitors, cordless phones, etc.). Every home is unique and members have different devices connecting, so no situation is exactly the same.

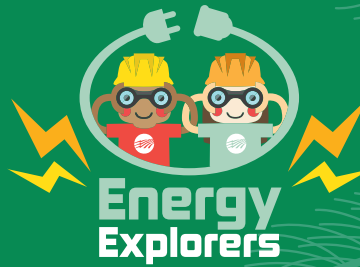




# HOLIDAY SAFETY WORD SEARCH

Remember to keep electrical safety in mind this holiday season!

Read the safety tips below, then find and circle the **bolded** words in the puzzle.



D	T	T	X	M	L	N	L	W	V	B	H	G	P	M
P	E	Y	E	N	H	S	A	G	E	T	Q	W	C	O
D	C	R	A	K	P	T	C	K	J	X	N	C	J	Q
E	X	R	E	I	O	J	I	T	B	S	L	E	Y	I
M	P	W	W	T	W	F	R	V	V	Z	U	U	V	J
X	R	K	Z	Z	A	T	T	L	X	W	L	M	X	Y
D	T	Z	G	P	N	W	C	C	N	L	Z	A	H	Z
I	N	S	P	E	C	T	E	D	P	F	R	R	Z	T
D	P	G	V	B	E	E	L	L	Q	P	H	V	W	F
A	J	K	F	L	B	A	E	S	K	H	I	Z	W	M
N	M	V	D	T	W	V	X	R	I	R	B	H	U	C
C	O	N	B	B	R	W	O	H	O	W	Q	N	Q	P
X	A	W	X	S	N	O	I	T	A	R	O	C	E	D
C	K	L	B	T	K	R	A	J	B	C	M	D	Y	P
X	C	M	A	Y	S	K	B	O	Y	Q	M	Q	K	Q

- Do not overload outlets with too many **decorations** or appliances.
- Make sure your Christmas tree is **watered** daily.
- Turn off all **electrical** decorations before leaving or going to sleep.
- Never leave a **candle** burning if you're not in the room.
- Extension cords used for holiday decorations should always be **inspected** for damage or exposed wires.



# Watts The Answer?

1. As you can see, it has been a productive and \_\_\_\_\_ year for the Cooperative.
2. This farm was too \_\_\_\_\_ not to share it.
3. If you're concerned about your internet service or speeds, make sure you purchased an internet package that's \_\_\_\_\_ enough to meet your needs.

Mail your answers in with your energy bill, or email them to [efletcher@mvec.coop](mailto:efletcher@mvec.coop)

Two winners will each receive a \$10.00 credit on their energy bills.

Please complete the following:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

October winners:  
Mark Drake, Maquoketa  
Terrill Saunders, Spragueville



## Follow us on Twitter and Facebook for the latest MVEC updates and news!

Look for @MVEC\_IA on Twitter and MaquoketaValleyElectricCooperative on Facebook





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Anamosa, Iowa 52205

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## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Heading out of town for the holiday season? Remember to unplug electronics that draw a phantom energy load. Some gadgets like TVs, phone chargers, gaming consoles and toothbrush chargers use energy when plugged into an outlet - even when they're not in use.

Source: [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)



## Understanding Your Electric Bill

**ON-PEAK** hours are 4 p.m. - 9 p.m.

**OFF-PEAK** hours are

**Midnight - 4 p.m. and 9 p.m. - Midnight**

*These times are in effect every day.*

## Watts Current

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Electric Service: [maintenance@mvec.coop](mailto:maintenance@mvec.coop)

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