

# WATTS Current

December 2022

For Our Members

## Wishing you a Joyous Holiday Season and a Bright 2023

By Jeremy Richert, CEO

As the holiday season approaches, it is a great time to reflect on accomplishments from this past year and look forward to opportunities the New Year holds. While higher costs and continued supply chain issues certainly challenged the cooperative this year, our dedicated team of employees worked diligently to provide reliable and affordable services to our members. The Board and I continue to be grateful for the MVEC team’s commitment and hard work. Below are just a few examples of the progress made in 2022:

### Electric Plant Upgrades

This year, MVEC connected 188 new electric services, bringing our total meters connected to 16,859. We also constructed 15 physical miles of new electric line in 2022. Additionally, we rebuilt 16 (physical) miles of electric line and are currently working to rebuild and expand our Table Mound substation to prepare for expected future load growth near the Dubuque area. We also upgraded aging substations in Jackson County over the summer months.



### Power Resiliency and Diversification

In 2022, there was a lot of media attention given to the potential for energy generation shortfalls with the term ‘rolling blackouts’ making the headlines. Despite these reports, our region of the country successfully navigated the summer cooling season with no interruptions in power due to energy shortfalls. The fact that we did not see issues this summer doesn’t mean there could not be issues as we move further down the road. Contributing factors to the potential shortage of generation include coal and nuclear plants being retired early and faster than new generation resources are being installed, new generation sources have been mostly wind and solar which have intermittent availability, and transmission bottlenecks due to maintenance, storm damage, or conductor capacity limitations. MVEC and our power supplier, CIPCO, feel it is critical that an “All of the Above” approach be used to ensure a balanced mix of base load and renewable generation sources are in place to allow for utilities to continue providing reliable services at affordable prices. CIPCO is committed to meeting the energy needs of MVEC’s members through a diverse mix of wind, hydro, solar, landfill gas, natural gas and coal energy resources. *continued to page 2*

## MVEC Billing Envelope Update

Watch your mailbox for your December electric bill which will arrive in a white envelope once again. As a reminder, MVEC electric bills are sent out around the 8th day of each month, so please be on the lookout for the white envelope that contains your latest MVEC bill.

## Watts Inside:

Wishing you a Joyous Holiday Season and a Bright 2023 Continued  
Page 2

November MVEC Board Meeting Updates  
Page 2

Local Artist Shares Her Gift  
Page 3

Our Energy Working for You: Energy Star Rating  
Page 4

Appliances That Use the Most Energy  
Page 5

TechLink - 10 Tips - for Safe Online Shopping this Holiday Season  
Page 6

Maquoketa Valley Holds Fiber Line Crew Safety Training  
Page 7



*continued from front page*

As members evaluate energy costs and ways to increase efficiency, they may be considering their own plans to install solar or wind at their residence or business. If this is something you are considering, please make sure to include MVEC as part of your planning process. Our Energy Advisor can provide usage analysis on the front end to help you determine if solar is a fit for your situation and our engineering department can assist in helping determine the appropriate size of system needed and, most importantly, how to safely connect it to MVEC’s system once it is installed.

### MVEC in the Community

In addition to providing the essential services of electricity, internet, and phone to members in our service area, MVEC also supports the communities we serve through involvement in economic development projects, donations to fire departments, school organizations, libraries, local food pantries and other community organizations. We look forward to continuing to support the organizations and projects our members care about.

### MVlink Milestones

Interest in MVlink continues to be high; we have added around 800 new MVlink members over the last year and are approaching 6,000 total MVlink members! MVlink stepped up to the plate once again for both members and the Major League Baseball game at the Field of Dreams in Dyersville. Our fiber team provided flawless service for this year’s big game - the same flawless service our residential and business members have come to expect from MVlink. An MVlink member satisfaction survey completed earlier this year found that 95% of MVlink users say it meets or exceeds their expectations and 97% would recommend MVlink to their neighbors, family, and friends.

This year also saw the growth of our MVlink footprint with construction to additional areas of Anamosa as well as the community of Ryan. To support this expansion as well as the maintenance of our fiber smart grid facilities, we recently added two fiber linemen to the MVEC family.



### Safety Matters

Safety is MVEC’s top priority—for our employees, for our members and for the public. This year, MVEC achieved accreditation from the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP), a program that reviews our safety efforts on an annual basis and every three years with a more detailed and in depth review as was the case this year. I am pleased to report that Maquoketa Valley had a strong or satisfactory performance for 15 of the 17 areas reviewed and was generally satisfactory for the requirements of the remaining 2 areas. At MVEC, we know that safety is more than just a ranking and in reality is a continuous improvement effort.

As you can see, 2022 was another busy year at MVEC and we look forward to sharing more progress in 2023. The Board of Directors and employees of Maquoketa Valley wish each of you and your families a safe and happy holiday season and a prosperous 2023.

**Holiday LIGHTING Safety**

- Use holiday lights that are **certified by a safety testing lab such as UL.**
- Before using, **check each strand** for broken sockets, frayed cords or faulty plugs.
- Always **unplug lights** before leaving your home or going to bed.
- **Do not string** more strands together than recommended by the manufacturer.

### November MVEC Board Meeting Update

- Received an update on the status of MVlink projects
- Discussed revised and amended wholesale power contract agreement
- Approved Resolution 2022-7 to execute revised wholesale power contract with CIPCO
- Reviewed a draft version of the proposed 2023 Capital and Project budgets
- Approved Resolution 2022-8 regarding the Cooperative’s debt limit
- Approved recommended staff updates to employment policies



## Local Artist Shares Her Gift

By Christie Remley, Manager of Communications & Public Relations

On a snowy afternoon, I made my way over to MVEC member Donna Jelmeland's beautiful home in rural Jones County to talk about her second act as a watercolor artist. Donna, a retired interior designer, has been painting in watercolor since 2011. One wall of her living room is a gallery of black and white prints of some of her work with one special (and colorful) addition - while Donna paints realistic portraits and landscapes, her grandson Drew created an abstract water color which Donna proudly displays in the middle of the wall.

Donna's husband Kermit encouraged her to pick up a paint brush eleven years ago. While Donna admits that some may find watercolor to be a difficult medium, she likes the challenge. Creativity and a love of learning/challenging oneself are engrained in Donna's DNA - her father made ceramics and her mother started doing one day of RAGBRAI at the age of 85. Of course Donna documented that achievement with a painting of her mom dipping a bike tire in the Mississippi River.



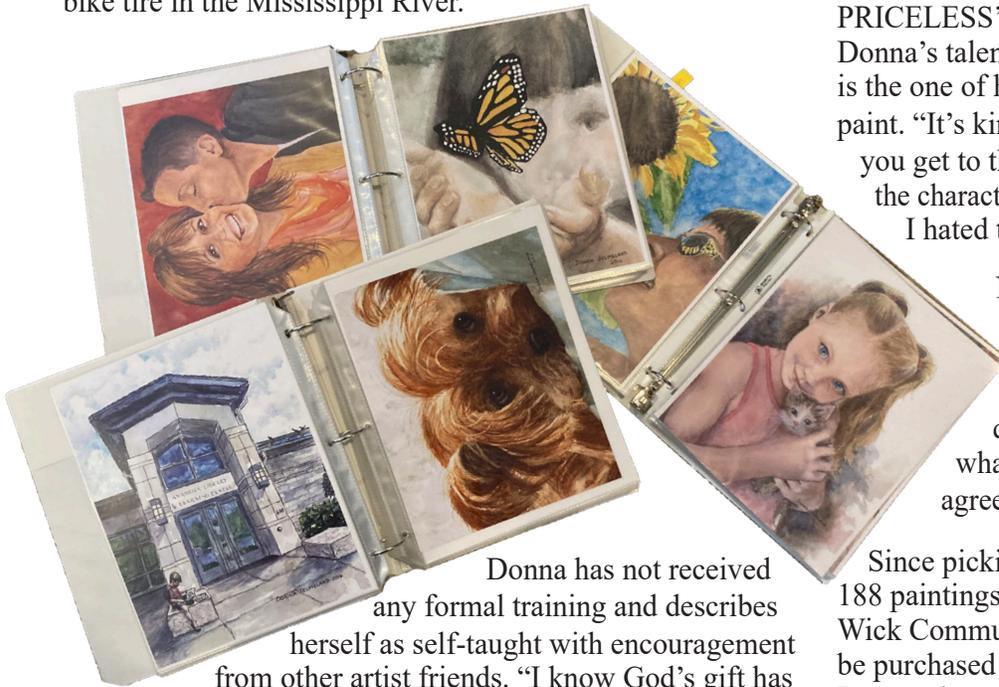
compelled to paint her and the next thing I knew, it was after five in the morning."

With watercolor painting, materials matter. Donna uses a professional grade paper made of cotton, as well as the best pigment and brushes. When asked to share her favorite painting, Donna selects the piece she just finished that is titled 'GOD'S GIFT... PRICELESS', which one might also say applies to Donna's talent. Her second favorite painting is the one of her father which her mom asked her to paint. "It's kind of like reading a good novel - when you get to the end, you don't want to say goodbye to the characters - I felt this way with my dad's painting. I hated to say goodbye," said Jelmeland.

Not afraid of critique and always open to learn, when Donna does a piece, she will post it to a watercolor group to which she belongs and pose the question, 'If you could change one thing, what would it be?' Donna said she usually agrees with the feedback.

Since picking up a paintbrush, Donna has created 188 paintings so far. Some are on display at Meth-Wick Community in Cedar Rapids and others can be purchased at Thou Art in downtown Anamosa. Donna also posts her work on her Facebook page ([facebook.com/donnajelmeland](https://facebook.com/donnajelmeland)) and website ([artistdonnajelmeland.com](http://artistdonnajelmeland.com)). Price is determined by size of painting and number of subjects in the piece.

Looking ahead to 2023, Donna would like to hear from you and if have a special person, pet, place or precious moment that you would like to have painted, feel free to contact her. Donna looks forward to continuing to find inspiration in family and nature, always ready to learn and share her God-given talent.



Donna has not received any formal training and describes herself as self-taught with encouragement from other artist friends. "I know God's gift has been loaned to me. It's a real privilege - I feel I get younger with every painting. I am fortunate to have found a passion and feel I am never done learning."

Over the years, people have commissioned Donna to paint their children, parents, pets and favorite buildings and places. Typically, a portrait will take one week to complete although as Donna said, it depends on her mindset at the time. "There is an element of being in a creative mode - I can't really control it. About a year ago, a high school classmate lost her daughter to cancer and I felt



# Our Energy Working for You: Energy Star Rating

By Al Reiter, Energy Advisor

MVEC has a wide range of rebates available to encourage members to move towards more efficient energy usage. This holiday season may bring new appliances, technology or equipment to your home or business so you will want to note that some MVEC rebates require an Energy Star rating. The Energy Star rating is a designation for products that are the same or better than standard products but use less energy. Since these products use less energy to operate, they will save you money on your electric bill and reduce your carbon footprint.

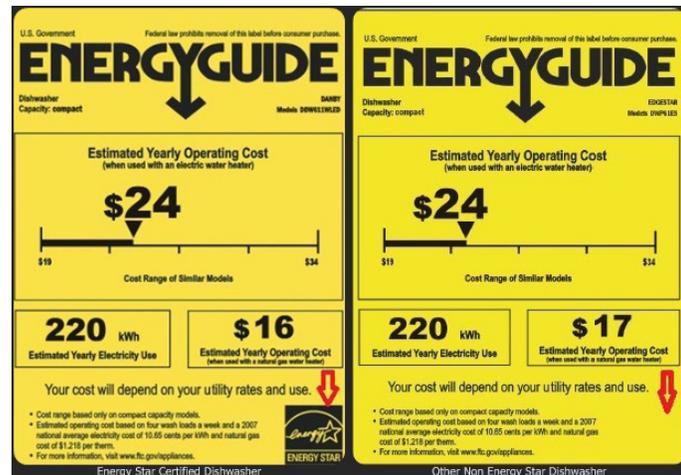
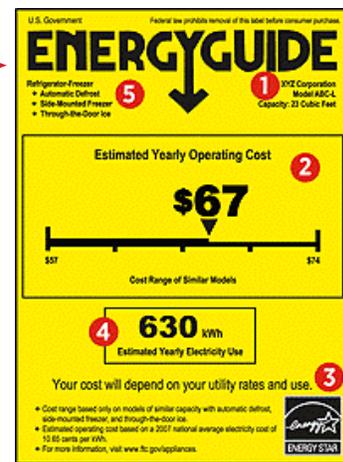
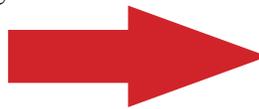
When selecting an appliance that meets the Energy Star requirement, pay close attention to the specifications. While it may have an Energy Guide (usually a yellow document affixed to the item or included with the appliance), it may not have an Energy Star rating. Look for the Energy Star logo on the appliance sticker or in the owner's manual/specifications.



You can also visit the Energy Star website at [www.energystar.gov/products](http://www.energystar.gov/products) to look up a specific appliance or equipment to verify that it meets the rating.

## The Anatomy of an Energy Guide

1. Make, model number, and size of the appliance.
2. Estimated yearly operating cost (based on the national average cost of electricity), and the range of operating costs for similar models.
3. The ENERGY STAR® logo indicates that this model meets strict criteria for energy efficiency.
4. Estimated yearly electricity consumption.
5. Key features of the appliance and the similar models that make up the cost comparison range.



This illustration shows appliances with similar Energy Guides but only the one on the left is Energy Star rated.

If you have any questions about MVEC rebates or their requirements, you can find specifics on our website at [mvec.coop/rebates](http://mvec.coop/rebates) or contact me. I encourage members to share the rebate form with the appliance or equipment vendors to help in selecting a product that meets your needs and energy efficiency goals.

MVEC's 2022 rebate program will end on January 31st, 2023 for purchases made in 2022 (note: members must apply for rebates within 6 months of the purchase date). Look for information on our 2023 rebate program in the January edition of Watts Current.

**Don't forget** to send in your **2022 REBATES**



## Appliances That Use the Most Energy

By Tolu Omotoso, National Rural Electric Association

Have you ever received your energy bill and thought, “I wonder which appliances in my home are using the most energy?”

According to Energy Information Administration (EIA), a typical U.S. home spends more than \$2,000 annually on energy bills, and on average, more than half of household energy consumption is for just two energy end uses: space heating and air conditioning. This shows the importance of adjusting the thermostat when you're away because it truly makes a difference on monthly bills.

Water heaters tend to be the third largest energy user at 13%, followed by lighting, which usually accounts for about 12.5% of the average energy bill.

These insights can help you better understand and control your energy consumption. You can save money by using helpful devices like smart thermostats, water heater controllers and smart power strips to control energy consumption.

Six tips to save energy and money:

1. **Use ENERGY STAR®-rated appliances and devices.**
2. **Replace old, inefficient equipment.** If your air conditioner, furnace or water heater is more than 10 years old, it is likely using a lot more energy than necessary.
3. **Use appliances with efficiency in mind.** Only wash full loads of clothes or dishes, and when possible, cook with smaller, countertop appliances instead of the oven.
4. **Set your thermostat.** When you're in the home and active, the Department of Energy recommends setting it to 78 degrees in the summer and 68 degrees in the winter.
5. **Use energy efficient LED bulbs.** They use 75% less energy than incandescent bulbs and last 25 times longer.
6. **Plug electronics into a smart power strip.** This allows you to designate “always on” for devices that need to maintain network connection, while cutting power from devices like speakers and TVs when they are not in use.

In addition to the steps shared above, consider using real-time energy monitors to help identify faulty appliances or other problems that might run unnoticed for extended periods of time, leading to high energy bills.

## Give Your Family the Gift of High-Speed Internet



Don't let the Grinch® of slow internet steal your family's holiday joy this season. If your holiday plans include streaming movies, or entertaining guests in your home, not to mention all of those new smart gadgets that will be under the tree, consider making the switch to MVlink high-speed fiber internet or upgrading your MVlink package to accommodate all of the new gear and online activity.

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 this holiday season and beyond. If your internet needs an upgrade, contact us today at **800-927-6068** or **fiber@mvec.com** to discuss the right plan for you.

You can extend your Wi-Fi coverage throughout your home with MVEC's mesh unit. Visit [mvec.coop/mesh-wifi](https://mvec.coop/mesh-wifi) to learn more.



# TECH LINK

## 10 Tips - for Safe Online Shopping this Holiday Season.

*Tips from 2021 Article by Kim Porter for NortonLifeLock and 2022 Norton article, Avoid Cyber Monday Scams: 7 Tips for Safer Online Shopping*

The hustle and bustle of the holiday season is here and if you're like most shoppers these days, you probably plan to save some time by shopping online. While shopping online is convenient, it can also make you vulnerable to cyber scammers. Here are 10 tips to keep yourself, your gift fund, and your personal information safe from these seasonal opportunists while online shopping:



- 1. Shop at reputable stores** - Consider doing online business only with retailers you trust and have shopped with before. Or at least confirm the business is legitimate by checking with the Better Business Bureau, looking at sites like TrustPilot.com, and skimming customer reviews.
- 2. Don't fall for scam holiday shopping ads or messages** - Scammers know a "special offer," often delivered by a phishing email, can stir holiday consumer cravings. So avoid clicking on these messages or ads for seasonal deals. This could infect your computer with malware or take you to a fake shopping site. Delete the emails, navigate away from the ads, and stick with sellers you know.
- 3. Shop secure sites only** - Before you buy, look for the little lock icon in the corner of your URL bar that tells you that the web page you're on has privacy protection. The URL of a secure site will start with "https." These websites mask any data you share, typically on pages that ask for passwords or financial information.
- 4. Never make purchases on public Wi-Fi** - You might be tempted to take your shopping spree to a coffee shop where you can enjoy a peppermint mocha while you browse online. But with a little tech know-how, the person sitting a few tables away can easily intercept the data you send and receive. Shopping online usually means giving out information that an identity thief would love to steal, including your name, address, and credit card information, so never use public Wi-Fi to shop.
- 5. Use strong passwords and a password manager** - If a cybercriminal gets ahold of the password to one of your accounts, they could log in and order items with your stored credit card information.
- 6. Pay with a credit card** - A credit card may be the safest payment tool for shopping online. First, unlike with a debit card,

a thief who gets ahold of your credit card number doesn't have direct access to your actual money. And if a thief racks up unauthorized charges on your credit card, federal law limits your liability, and most major credit cards offer \$0 liability for fraudulent purchases - as long as you spot the fraud and report it in a timely way.

**7. Don't save your credit card information on your accounts** - While it may be convenient to store personal and payment information in your online accounts, it can be risky. Keeping your credit card information on a retailer's website could leave you vulnerable to future data breaches.

**8. Ship to a secure location** - The rise of online shopping has led to an increase of home deliveries - and with it, a rise in the number of "porch pirates," or thieves who steal packages right off doorsteps. If no one will be home to accept your package, consider shipping to your office or another safe place.

**9. Watch out for fake delivery scams** - During the holiday season, some scammers will send a message, typically an email or text, telling you that there's an issue with delivery for an item you ordered. The message may even look like it's coming from FedEx or UPS.

**10. Check your bank and credit card statements after the holidays** - After purchasing gifts, check in regularly on your bank and credit card accounts to look for fraudulent charges. Or, set up account alerts.

*Knowing you're doing all you can to practice safe holiday online shopping can help you to relax and enjoy the season just a little bit more.*



## CALLING AREA ELECTRICIANS! 2023 NEC CODE UPDATE

January 20th, 2023

Registration deadline is December 20th, 2022.

8:00 am - 2:30 pm (lunch provided) cost is \$85.

For more information or questions contact

Al Reiter, Energy Advisor, at 800-927-6068 areiter@mvec.coop

Approved For  
**6 CEU'S**  
By State Of  
Iowa

## Watts The Answer?

1. This year, MVEC connected 188 new electric services, bringing our total meters \_\_\_\_\_ to 16,859.

2. MVEC has a wide range of rebates available to encourage \_\_\_\_\_ to move towards more efficient energy usage.

3. While shopping online is convenient, it can also make you \_\_\_\_\_ to cyber scammers.

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:

Gail Johnston, Anamosa

Garry Beaman, Hopkinton

## Maquoketa Valley Holds Fiber Line Crew Safety Training

After successfully deploying Smart Grid technology, Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative (MVEC) launched our fiber internet service, MVlink, in 2016. Since then, MVEC has expanded our fiber footprint to cover MVEC's electric service territory and a few nearby rural communities. As adoption of MVlink has increased, MVEC saw a need to hire an in-house fiber line crew for maintenance of the co-op's fiber plant. James Fuhrmeister, Fiber Communications Lead Lineman and Bill Luehring, Fiber Communications Lineman joined MVEC in September.



Recently, Scott Meinecke, Director of Safety & Loss Control for Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) visited MVEC to provide several days of safety training in the classroom and in the field.

“We are excited to bring our own Fiber line crew in-house at Maquoketa Valley,” said Jeff Geistkemper, Fiber Plant Manager. “This crew will allow MVEC to continue to provide unparalleled reliability and prompt service to our fiber members. As with all cooperatives, safety is priority at MVEC. We are grateful to have Scott and IAEC as a safety resource for our new employees. The training is critical to establishing a strong foundation on our mission to provide safe, reliable, affordable electricity and fiber internet.”



Holiday Safety Tip

Turn off your lights when you're away from home or sleeping. Better yet, use a timer to control your holiday lights.



Maquoketa Valley  
Electric Cooperative  
109 North Huber Street  
Anamosa, Iowa 52205

PRSRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Cedar Rapids, IA  
Permit 174



From our co-op family to yours, wishing you a joyous holiday season and a happy and peaceful New Year!

**MVEC will be closed  
Dec. 23 and 26 for Christmas,  
and Monday Jan. 2 for New Year's**

## 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

is published monthly for members of Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Mailing Address:

109 North Huber Street • Anamosa, IA 52205  
**319-462-3542 or 800-927-6068**

Office Hours:

Monday-Friday • 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**After Hours Call Center: 800-582-8998**

**[www.mvec.coop](http://www.mvec.coop)**  

Email direct to the following departments:

Electric Billing: [billing@mvec.coop](mailto:billing@mvec.coop)

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

Internet/Phone Service: [fiber@mvec.coop](mailto:fiber@mvec.coop)

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

Printed by Julin Printing Company  
Monticello, IA



## Energy Efficiency

### Tip of the Month

Blocked air vents force your heating system to work harder than necessary and increase pressure in the ductwork, which can cause cracks and leaks to form.

Make sure all air vents are unobstructed from furniture, drapes or other items to ensure sufficient circulation throughout your home. If necessary, purchase a vent extender, which can be placed over a vent to redirect air flow from underneath furniture.

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

