

WATTS Current

January 2023

For Our Members

Member Survey Results

Periodically, Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative conducts surveys to help us learn how the co-op is performing to member expectations. These surveys can be all-encompassing about our services and performance, or more strategic around electric usage and energy efficiency. Last year, MVEC contracted with Touchstone Energy and Cooperative Insights to conduct surveys with our membership.

Our member satisfaction surveys include an American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). This index is our nation's only multi-industry measure of customer satisfaction, rating industries from airlines to banking, healthcare, utilities and more. MVEC scored an 87 on the survey completed in 2022. In comparison, the average ACSI score for energy utilities in 2022 was 72 and the average score for Internet providers was 64. We believe our score of 87 demonstrates that our great team of employees is fulfilling our mission statement of providing reliable, high-quality services that benefit our members' quality of life and promote the success of our local communities.

This survey also assessed member engagement, telling us if our members are true advocates of MVEC and supportive of the cooperative business model. MVEC was pleased to surpass the National benchmark with a score of 84.4, however we know we still have work to do to educate our newer members on the value of cooperative membership, letting them know that we are working on their behalf. We learned a great deal from this survey and we are already focusing on ways to improve the level of service we provide at Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative.

A few of the key take-aways include:

- Our members generally view MVEC in a positive light and trust us
- MVEC scored significantly better than the benchmark for providing reliable service, handling complaints properly, giving advice on energy related matters, and giving money back to our members through patronage retirements.
- Members recognize the importance and appreciate that we are meeting a broadband need for members and communities in our service area.
- We must remain focused on controlling members' costs and help them become as energy efficient as possible
- Continue to educate members about renewable energy; illustrating the impact to individual users as well as the cooperative as a whole
- Increase awareness of the ways we support our local communities



Thank you to all of the members who responded to this telephone or email survey. While we want to hear from our members regularly, these surveys help ensure your voices are heard, allow us to get a baseline reading on MVEC performance and provide actionable suggestions for continued improvement.

Want to save paper?

Receive your Watts Current by email mvec.coop/newsletter to update your preferences

Watts Inside:

Rising Costs Affect MVEC
Page 2

Celebrating Our Team 2022
Page 3

2023 Rebates
Page 4

Our Energy Working for You: Air Infiltration and Insulation
Page 5

TechLink - Making the Most of Managed Wi-Fi: Unified Network Name (SSID)
Page 6

Member Portal for Tax Prep
Page 7

December MVEC Board Meeting Update
Page 7

Iowa Builders and Contractors:

Earn CEUs / Network / Learn New Techniques



February 16-17 in Altoona at The Meadows Events Center
MomentumIsBuilding.com





Rising Costs Affect MVEC

By Jeremy Richert, CEO

As consumers, all of us have faced rising costs in virtually every category over the last couple of years. As a Cooperative, we have also faced similar challenges to those that we are seeing in our personal lives. Rest assured that MVEC Directors, management and staff have been working diligently to keep costs as low as possible as we balance having adequate materials, tools, equipment, and staffing on hand to provide the services you need at affordable prices.

In recent months, staff and the Board of Directors have been going through the process of putting the 2023 budget together. We have evaluated each line item and project in detail to assure our plans will allow us to complete the needed work in a cost-effective manner. One of the bigger cost increases we have seen has been in electric line materials. One of our material providers has estimated that material prices have increased 23% on average across the board over the last 18 months. Some of the more critical items like poles, wire, and transformers have more than doubled in price compared to what they were three years ago. Given that we must have materials on hand in order to complete the required work, our purchasing team has put a significant amount of effort into ensuring that we were getting the best pricing available while also maintaining inventory at reasonable levels given the extended lead times that have accompanied the price increases. In addition to construction material pricing, we have also seen increased pressure on the day-to-day costs of the Cooperative for operating facilities, vehicle fleets, and employee costs.

Another area that we have limited control over is in the cost of wholesale power for energy purchased from our energy provider (CIPCO). As the price of energy generation fluctuates on a month-to-month basis it is reflected in the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) on your bill. For several years, this had been a negative adjustment to reduce the amount of your total bill, but in the summer of 2022, the PCA flipped from negative to positive. CIPCO continues to work to stabilize the cost of energy and has estimated that power costs for 2023 should remain at a level similar to what they ended at in 2022. As a result of these increases over the last year, the typical MVEC member has seen an increase of \$6.00 per month on average reflected in the PCA.

Unfortunately, there is no magic bullet to completely avoid the overall increase in costs your Cooperative has seen and is expecting to see moving forward. As a result, the budget approved by the Board of Directors

at the December meeting included a rate increase that will most likely be implemented in the spring of 2023. Staff will continue to review revenue and financial forecast requirements in the coming months to finalize the amount of increase needed and more information will be shared as it becomes available. We don't anticipate that it will be a substantial increase but we do understand that any increase in expenses can potentially create challenges for our members. As mentioned previously, the Cooperative works very hard to make sure we are using our member's dollars in the best manner possible. Proof of that is that this will only be the second rate increase implemented since 2017.

We would like to remind our members that there are a number of ways you can reduce your electricity bill in the coming months, some of which include:

- **Request an energy audit.** This free service allows a trained professional from MVEC to come into your home or business and evaluate your energy use. We'll look for ways you may be able to save money!
- **Implement energy-efficiency improvements.** Often, relatively simple things like putting plastic over your windows in the winter, purchasing an energy-efficient furnace, if you're in the market for a new one, and turning the thermostat down a degree or two during the heating season and up a degree or two during the cooling season, can add up to significant savings. Check out www.mvec.coop for a complete list of cost-effective energy efficiency programs and services.
- **Switch to budget billing and/or automatic payment options.** You can remove the fear of the unknown highest electricity bill of the year by participating in budget billing. Here's how it works. Your monthly electricity bill is calculated by dividing your annual electricity bill by 12, and that's what you pay per month. This is not a discounted electricity program. You still pay for the electricity you use, but the cost is spread out evenly over 12 months.
- **Use the electric billing portal** (green My Electric Account tab at the top of every mvec.coop page) to monitor your energy consumption. From this easy to use portal, you can identify trends and analyze your electric usage.

These are just a few ways you can save energy and money. If you're interested in talking about these examples or others, please call us at 800-927-6068. Over the next few months, there will be more detailed information about the proposed rate increase communicated in mailings, bill inserts, Watts Current and on MVEC's website.



2022
Celebrating Our Team

NEW EMPLOYEES IN 2022

- Carter Benn** - Apprentice Lineman-Peosta
- Will Dulaney** - Distribution Engineer
- Steven Clemmons** - Network Support CSR
- Abby Fischer** - Senior Accountant
- James Fuhrmeister** - Fiber Communications Lead Lineman
- Bill Luehring** - Fiber Communications Lineman
- Melissa Pepmeyer** - Receptionist
- Alan Reiter** - Member Advocate
- Taylor Stair** - Apprentice Lineman – Anamosa
- Tyler Stanley** - Staking Technician

5 YEARS



Hunter Beatty Staking Technician **Bennett Cole** Journeyman Lineman **Kim Edwards** CSR - Fiber **Jessica Eiben** CSR - Electric **Mike Gudenauf** Lead Lineman Construction-Anamosa



Jenna Kruser Safety Director **Sonya Payne** CSR - Fiber **Andrew Recker** Engineering Technician **Nik Schulte** Distribution Engineering Manager **Cory Wenger** Network Support Specialist

5 YEARS



Brian Westhoff
Fiber Technician

10 YEARS



Suzanne Gilkerson HR Manager **Tony Marbach** Foreman - Construction **Megan Ruley** Fiber Clerk **Marcia Schwandt** Member Accounts Representative

15 YEARS



Erica Robertson
Member Accounts Representative

20 YEARS



Jared Howard Foreman - Construction **Tami Recker** Bookkeeper **Brent Wegmann** Director of IT **Chad Wieser** Engineering Technician Foreman



2023 MAQUOKETA VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE REBATES

Contact the cooperative for the complete list of rebates and qualifications



APPLIANCE RECYCLING

Geothermal Heat Pumps New closed loop \$400/ton
Unit replacement with existing loop \$150/ton

Air Conditioner Energy Star qualified \$100

Water Heaters Air Source Heat Pump water heater \$650
Electric storage water heater \$75
Storage water heater with desuperheater \$150
Electric storage water heater with first time Heat Plus* \$125

Level II EV Charger \$500

Heat Recovery Ventilator Energy Star qualified \$250

Air Source Heat Pump Energy Star heat pump \$200/ton +\$250 bonus
Hybrid heat pump bonus \$100/ton
Cold Climate heat pump \$450/ton
Standard heat pump \$150/ton

Clothes Washer Electric water heater required \$40
Energy Star qualified

Electric Clothes Dryer Energy Star qualified \$20

Weatherization Insulation and air sealing for homes built prior to 2000 Up to \$2200

All Star Home Bonus Eligible for additional rebate \$500

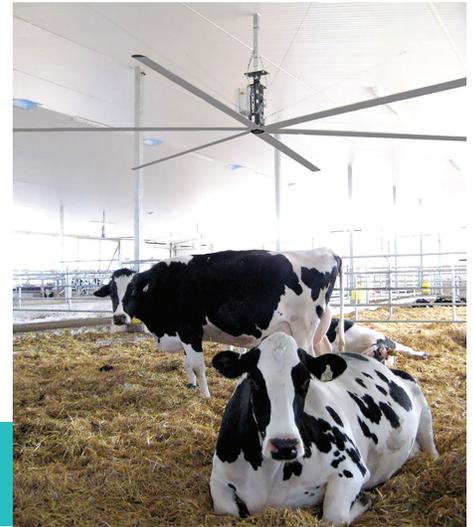
Premier Electric Home Bonus Eligible for additional rebate \$200

* Heat Plus rate is a promotional residential rate for electric heating equipment. For more details, requirements and Terms and conditions go here: http://www.mvec.coop/rebates



Call our toll-free Pull the Plug hotline at (855) 838-7817 to request collection and recycling of your old, working refrigerator, freezer or window air conditioner; up to three operable units per address. Pick up and recycling is done by the cooperative's contractor.

Table with 2 columns: Appliance Type and Rebate Amount. Rows include Refrigerator (\$35/unit), Freezer (\$25/unit), and Window Air Conditioner (\$25/unit).



MacroAir



2023 MAQUOKETA VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE REBATES

Contact the cooperative for the complete list of rebates and qualifications

Livestock Equipment Waterers, heating, lamps, pads, controllers Varied

Dairy Equipment Reclaimers, pre-coolers, pumps, compressors Varied

Livestock Ventilation BESS Labs listed Varied

Research has shown that a cool cow is a productive cow and that milk production increases up to two pounds per cow when they are in a comfortable environment.

Energy-efficient HVLS fans keep cows cool by moving air more efficiently through barns and open-air sheds while keeping bugs, birds and dust under control.





Our Energy Working for You: Air Infiltration and Insulation

By Al Reiter, Energy Advisor

As we move into the winter months, you may notice drafts, cold spots, or problems with the heating system in your home. While the cool temperatures magnify these issues, it also gives us an opportunity to determine the source of these concerns. In this month's article, we are going to focus on two key factors in the comfort of a home: air infiltration and insulation.

In your home, heat is going to move and try to equalize. When there is a large temperature difference between the inside and outside temperature that is when the greatest loss can occur.

The heat movement occurs in three main ways:

1. Convection is usually air movement through what is called the stack effect in a home. This is when air naturally rises and escapes through the top of the home, it naturally draws in outside cold air. This is what causes the feeling of draftiness. Cold air may come in through multiple routes such as windows, doors, sill plates, electrical outlets and lights, or HVAC penetrations in the outside walls. A windy day will increase convective heat losses.



2. Conduction occurs by the passage of heat through materials like metal, wood, or wallboard and siding materials.

3. Radiation occurs by heat radiating through items like windows.

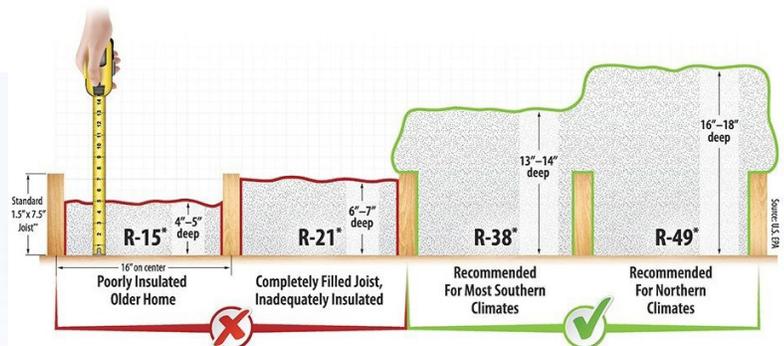
Controlling air infiltration is effective in reducing convection heat losses. In a new home or addition, the most common air infiltration control is going to be a good quality house wrap and attention to properly sealing all openings in the outside envelope of the home. For an existing home, it is more challenging to

reduce the air movement, unless you are replacing the outside house finish. The primary goal for an existing home will be to identify the various sources of leakage and take steps to reduce them.



Insulation basically works to slow this movement of heat. Insulation comes in various types and the right product depends on your application, budget, and type of home construction. When working with a reputable insulation contractor or retailer, they can identify the best product for your application and provide a quality installation.

The minimum insulation requirements have increased over the years and currently, the Department of Energy recommends the below insulation in a home.



* Recommended Dept. of Energy attic insulation levels for commonly used fiberglass, mineral wool, and cellulose insulation assuming about R-3 per inch.

** Standard joists are sold as 2" x 8" but usually measure closer to 1.5" x 7.5"

A Home Energy Assessment is a service provided by MVEC to our members that helps to identify sources of heat loss in the home and make recommendations to improve energy efficiency. Contact MVEC's office to learn more.

The process to reduce heat loss is often a combination of small improvements. When considering changes to improve efficiency, air infiltration control and insulation don't often get the most notice, but they do have a large impact on our comfort and wellbeing. You have spent the money on purchasing the energy to heat your home and by making improvements to air infiltration and insulation, it helps to ensure that you get the most out of your investment.



TECH LINK

Making the Most of Managed Wi-Fi: Unified Network Name (SSID)

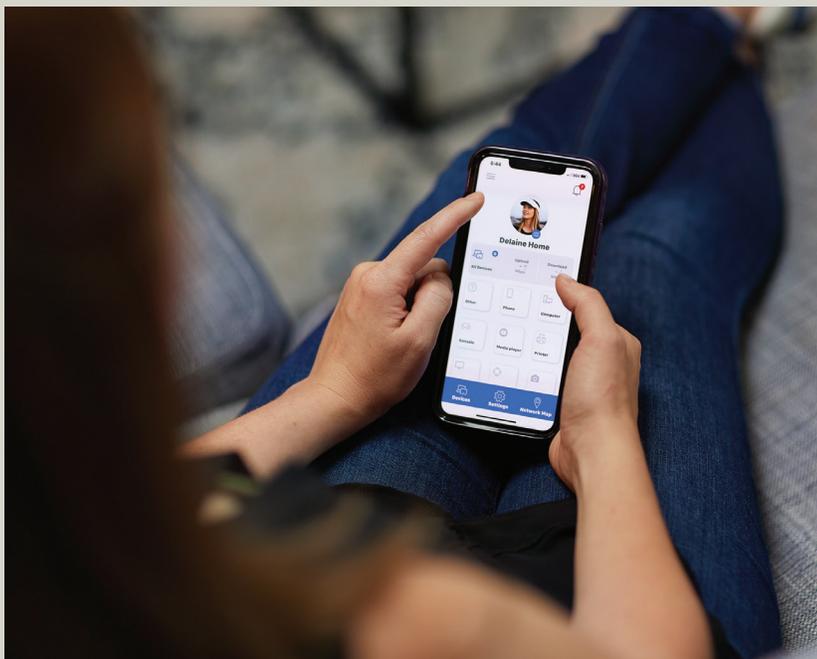
A wireless band, or frequency band, is how your wireless data is transmitted (if you have devices that are not hardwire connected to the internet but operate wirelessly). These are radio waves that carry your data from one device to another. Currently, there are two frequency bands in use: the 2.4 GHz band and the faster 5 GHz band. With today's ever changing landscape of digital devices and advancements in Wi-Fi technology, it is now recommended to use the same network name (or SSID*) for both bands (the 2.4GHz and the 5GHz). This rule of thumb applies to your network connection when using our MVlink router or your own router.

In the past, it was not recommended to have your SSID (Network Name) for the 2.4GHz band be the same as the 5GHz. However, as technology has changed, not only is it possible to have a single (or unified) SSID, it is actually shown to be more beneficial. The benefits include:

- less manual work on your part to determine which devices should be connected to each band.
- smarter connections. While the 5GHz signal is faster, it does not travel as far. So, depending on where the wireless device is inside the home, the 2.4GHz signal might be preferred since it provides a stronger signal at a distance.
- more automation and less wireless congestion now that the router can determine which band is best for which device and more evenly split devices across the Wi-Fi band signals (which also helps to minimize WiFi interference).



One bit of advice: this does NOT mean that routers and devices won't need a reboot occasionally because it will likely always be recommended to reboot equipment as a first step in troubleshooting issues. However, a Unified SSID simplifies the Wi-Fi connection process and the router now takes over managing the devices in terms of which band will work best for that device.



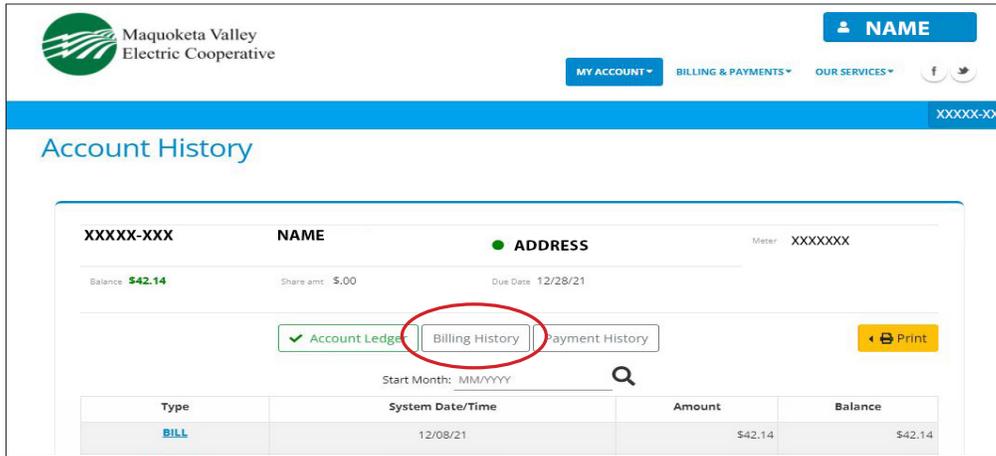
If you are using MVEC equipment, you can simply download the MVlink Managed Wi-Fi App from the Apple or Google Play store, sign up for an account, set up your Wi-Fi SSID setting, and this will automatically create a Unified SSID Network in your home. Keep in mind this will require you to reconnect your devices with the new SSID name and password. Also make sure that the SSID name that you create is more generic--meaning don't put 2.4GHz or 5GHz at the end of the name. You can also reference our website, mvec.coop/mvlink-managed-wifi for 'how-to' documentation and video tutorials on how to use our App.

*SSID stands for Service Set Identifier and is your network's name. If you open the list of Wi-Fi networks on your laptop or phone, you will see a list of SSIDs. Wireless router or access points broadcast SSIDs so nearby devices can find and display any available networks.



Member Portal for Tax Prep

Working on your taxes? Use our member portal to access your billing/payment history for the past year. You can access the member portal by clicking on the green My Electric Account button on the top of any mvec.coop page.



feeling chilled?
HEAT YOUR SPACE SAFELY

1. Keep flammable items at least 3 feet away
2. Place on a flat, level surface
3. Make sure the cord is not frayed or cracked
4. Plug it directly into an outlet
5. Follow all instructions and use models endorsed by a reputable testing lab
6. Do not use an extension cord or power strip, which can overheat
7. Do not use around small children or pets
8. Do not use one with a damaged plug or prongs

December MVEC Board Meeting Update

- Received an update on activities of the Safety Committee
- Reviewed projected year end financials
- Discussed the status of the Cooperative's tariff filing with the Iowa Utility Board
- Discussed items of interest to the Cooperative for the 2023 Legislative session
- Approved the 2023-2025 Engineering Construction Work Plan detailing capital project needs for the next three years
- Approved the 2023 Capital and Operating budgets
- Reviewed the results of the 2022 member satisfaction survey

Watts The Answer?

1. We learned a great deal from this survey and we are already focusing on ways to _____ the level of service we provide at Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative.

2. When there is a large temperature difference between the inside and outside temperature that is when the greatest _____ can occur.

3. These are radio waves that carry your _____ from one device to another.

Mail your answers in with your energy bill, or email them to efletcher@mvec.coop

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

Please complete the following:

Name

Address

November winners:

Elmer Maiers, Manchester
Gilbert Gaul, Farley



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

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



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Insulating your electric water heater can reduce standby heat loss by 25% to 45%, saving you 7% to 16% on annual water heating costs.

The Dept. of Energy rates this project as medium difficulty, meaning most homeowners can tackle this project on their own. You can purchase pre-cut jackets or blankets for about \$20 at most home improvement stores. Visit energy.gov for project tips and additional considerations.



Source: Dept. of Energy

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  

Email direct to the following departments:

Electric Billing: billing@mvec.coop

Electric Service: maintenance@mvec.coop

Internet/Phone Service: fiber@mvec.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Printed by Julin Printing Company
Monticello, IA

