

WATTS *Current*

March
2024

CEO Insight: Forging Relationships with Our Legislators

By *Jeremy Richert, CEO*



By the time you receive this newsletter in your mailbox, there will be just over a month until the 2024 legislative session comes to a close. MVEC and our fellow RECs keep a close eye on the issues and laws being discussed in Des Moines and Washington D.C. We are concerned about any measures that would affect our ability to provide members with safe, affordable and reliable power as well as any issues that affect our ability to take care of our employees. Throughout the year, we invite local lawmakers to visit the co-op and keep the lines of communication open.

This extends both ways—there are times when we want to be sure they understand our perspective and then, there are times when we can lend our utility and energy industry expertise to conversations they are navigating on state and national levels.

MVEC belongs to a statewide organization, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), which has staff dedicated to monitoring legislation and working with lawmakers to ensure the voices of rural electric co-ops and our members are heard. For example, we’re monitoring the potential establishment of Integrated Resource Plans (IRPs) in Iowa Code. IRPs could lead to the early retirement of carbon-based electric generation facilities, resulting in stranded costs and reliability concerns for the member-consumers we serve. Iowa’s locally owned and governed electric cooperatives continue to support an “all-of-the-above” power generation strategy that ensures reliable and affordable electricity for our members.

Similarly, on the Federal level, MVEC belongs to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) which closely monitors EPA regulations, Broadband related topics, distribution transformer efficiency requirements and other initiatives that affect cooperatives’ way of doing business and the ability to effectively serve our members. We have also hosted several of our federal legislators in recent years to specifically discuss rural broadband, the Farm Bill, and other issues that impact our members.

On March 12th, MVEC will make a trip to the State Capitol to greet our lawmakers and reinforce the issues we care about. We are appreciative of the lawmaking process and the work that lawmakers put into evaluating each bill. It is important

that we advocate for our members in the most rural pockets of Iowa to ensure you have access to affordable, reliable electricity and fast, reliable internet. Iowa electric cooperatives are important advocates for a balanced approach in addressing energy issues as we work to power lives and empower the communities we serve.



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Board Approves Rate Increase

The Cooperative’s Board of Directors approved a rate increase to take effect on April 1, 2024, which will be reflected on the energy bill you receive in May. This increase is intended to generate approximately \$1,800,000 in additional revenue, approximately 5% above the existing rates.

The increase will be applied to both the basic service charge portion of the energy bill as well as to the energy rate. The basic service charge is a charge paid by all members and reflects the minimum distribution plant costs that are necessary to ensure each location is able to be served with electricity, whether or not any electricity is actually used. The energy costs include the cost for the cooperative to provide the energy our members consume on a month-to-month basis. MVEC’s time of use rate further splits out the energy component into on peak and off peak periods based on the cost for the Cooperative to provide energy at different times of the day. The Board chose to split the rate increase between the Basic Service Charge and the energy rate in an effort to accurately recover the costs of having service available to a member while also recognizing the day-to-day costs of providing energy to our membership has increased in recent years.

As we have explained in previous communication, the Cooperative has faced increased costs for power, materials, equipment, labor, and general overhead costs over the last several years. One of the largest cost increases we have seen has been in electric line materials, with our engineering department estimating that material prices have doubled on average across the board over the last two years.

The majority of our membership utilizes either our residential single phase rate, or a farm/commercial three phase rate. The single phase rate will see a \$2.50 monthly increase as the Basic Service Charge moves to \$42.00 per month. The three phase rate will see a \$5.00 monthly increase as that Basic Service Charge becomes \$80.00 per month. The Cooperative’s goal is to reach a Basic Service Charge that more closely reflects the true costs to provide service to individual meters, recognizing different services have different requirements to meet.

Additionally, the single and three phase energy rate for on peak usage will be \$0.172/ kWh and the single phase energy rate for off peak usage will be \$0.084/kWh.

The Heat Plus rate will also be adjusted. The Heat Plus Basic Service Charge will increase \$0.50 to \$4.00 per month. The new Heat Plus energy rate will be \$0.044/ kWh for both on and off peak.

Being a member of a Cooperative like ours is of great value, especially when rate changes are needed. That’s because the people making the decision to change rates are not only your Cooperative’s board members, but they are also members who pay their own energy bills each month. The board and MVEC staff work hard to ensure your Cooperative is operated efficiently and that any rate increases provide the least impact possible to members. Raising rates to our members is never pleasant. We continually work to balance preparing our Cooperative for growth while also keeping in sight our mission of providing our members with reliable and cost-effective service.

Save the Date: New Location for MVEC’s Annual Meeting

MVEC’s Annual Meeting will be held at the Peosta Community Centre (7896 Burds Rd. Peosta) on Thursday, August 15th. MVEC’s Annual Meeting is a great opportunity to learn more about the issues affecting your local communities. Annual meetings provide a forum for staff members to gather feedback and learn how we can better serve you and your family. It’s also an opportunity to exercise one of the greatest benefits of being a member of a cooperative; voting for the upcoming year’s board of directors. MVEC’s directors are members of your community and are concerned with the issues you face every day because they face them too. Remember, all members of MVEC are eligible to run for the board, including you. Make it a point to participate in MVEC’s next Annual Meeting Thursday, August 15, 2024.

SAVE	Annual Meeting of Members
August 15th 2024	THE
DATE	NEW LOCATION PEOSTA COMMUNITY CENTRE 7896 BURDS RD. PEOSTA



Our Energy Working For You: EV Charger Types and Rebates

By Al Reiter, Energy Advisor

We are seeing an increase in MVEC members applying for electric vehicle (EV) charger rebates. In this month's Our Energy Working for You, we will explain the charger types and applications for each. The rates shared are averages for the charger types covered in this article. Consult your EV specifications to get actual charging times and capacities for each vehicle type.

Level 1 Charger: A Level 1 charger provides the lowest level of charging and is connected to a 120 Volt circuit. Charging capacities for these are 1 kilowatt (kW) and charging rates can take 40-50 hours to charge a vehicle. If you think of a comparison to a gas engine, kW is the horsepower capacity, and charging rates are how much you step on the accelerator. While Level 1 charging is not commonly used, this could be where a higher level charger is not available, or you simply need to top off the battery in a vehicle that is normally used for short daily trips.

Level 2 Chargers: Level 2 chargers are most commonly used in a residential setting. Charging rates for these units are 7-10 kW and take 5-6 hours to charge a vehicle. This type of charger qualifies for MVEC's rebate. The complete rebate requirements can be found on our website at www.mvec.coop/rebates



Level 3 Chargers: Level 3 chargers are used for quick charging in a commercial or business setting serving the public. They are also sometimes called direct current chargers. Charging rates for these units are 50-350 kW and take 20-60 minutes to charge a vehicle. They will also typically have a transaction interface for paying to charge the vehicle (much like pay at the pump).



When shopping for an EV, be aware of what type of charging rates the vehicle is capable of, and the type of cord connector that your vehicle will match up to at the various charging stations. Except for Tesla, most EVs use a J1772 cord



connector. To keep costs as low as possible when charging your EV at home, always try to do so during off-peak hours when energy rates are lowest. MVEC's off-peak hours are from 9:00 pm to 4:00 pm daily.

If you are constructing a new home or remodeling, and considering an EV at some point in the future, MVEC also has an Electric Vehicle Ready rebate to prewire your garage with a Level 2 electrical circuit. This will simplify adding a Level 2 charger down the road when you get an EV. Also, if you decide to purchase an EV, please let MVEC know, either by submitting the Level 2 charger rebate or contacting MVEC. This information helps with future capacity planning for our distribution system.

Ready To Re-Connect Your Meter?

When you are ready to have your meter re-connected this spring, MVEC will need two weeks notice. Please contact Erica at 800-927-6068, extension 299.

February MVEC Board Meeting Update

- Reviewed the 2023 Safety Report.
- Approved 2024 construction costs for new services, service rebuilds, pole moves, and metering equipment.
- Discussed and approved the implementation of a 5% rate increase to the membership that will take effect April 1, 2024. This rate adjustment was part of the 2024 budget that was approved in December.
- Were provided an update on potential projects for USDA New ERA grant program.
- Approved changes to Board Policies as recommended by the Policy Committee.



Little Hop Farm

By Christie Remley, Manager of Communications & Public Relations

Last summer, I stopped by Brew & Brew in Dyersville (if you know me, you know I'm always game to support a local coffee shop) and noticed a small standalone freezer with locally-raised chicken for sale. On top of the freezer, there was a card of a sweet family and a cute business name, Little Hop. When I saw the same flyer at a local Monticello farm-to-table eatery, Market at the Tap, I knew I had to reach out to MVEC members, Mike and Susan Freeze to learn more about their business.



It started a little over four years ago with Mike suggesting to Susan that they raise pasture-fed chickens on their farm perched on a hill outside of Hopkinton. This was met with surprise on Susan's part because in the 16 years she has been married to Mike, she has not known him to be a fan of eating chicken. But, she was open to going along with his plan to bring pasture-raised chicken to the local market. Their son Collin, now 9 years old, has been involved with the business from the get-go. When he was just four years old, he named the farm. Because of its proximity to Hopkinton, he called the farm Little Hopkinton, hence the name Little Hop Farm was born.



Collin Freeze

Susan proudly lists the benefits of pasture-raised chicken: there are no GMOs used in feeding the poultry—the birds eat naturally, feasting on bugs and grasses, and are exposed to plenty of fresh air, i.e. the chickens are not cooped up (pun intended) in a building. Additionally, the Freezes do not use any hormones nor preservatives in the processing. Little Hop uses a USDA-certified processing facility. The

chicken is then vacuum-sealed and frozen, ready to be delivered to local businesses and individual customers.



Raising the chickens is a labor of love for Mike who spends the bulk of the time caring for them (with Susan concentrating on sales and marketing of the end product). Mike (with some help from Collin) moves them daily with a hand-built chicken "tractor" that Mike fashioned to encourage the chickens to graze in various locations on their property. "It's a lot of work but we are proud to provide quality meat that is a healthier alternative to what you might find in large grocery stores," said Mike Freeze, Co-Owner of Little Hop Farm.

Currently, you can pick up Little Hop chicken (in various sized cuts and packages) at the farm itself or find it at the following: Tada Meats in Maquoketa; Bushel & A Peck in Manchester; Brew & Brew in Dyersville; Market at the Tap in Monticello; West Forty Market in Ankeny and Savor the Barn between Anamosa and Monticello. "I've been really pleased with the warm reception we've received from local stores and establishments trying to offer locally-sourced meat. We are grateful to work with our small business outlets to expand Little Hop's reach," said Susan Freeze, Co-Owner.

It's not just all about chicken at Little Hop, the Freeze family also raises Berkshire hogs, Dexter cattle and hair sheep. The beef is pasture-raised as well (and grain finished).

If you are looking for a local source for naturally raised poultry (or beef or pork), contact Little Hop on Facebook at www.facebook.com/LittleHopFarm, email susanfreeze85@gmail.com, or give Susan a call at 563-608-6623 or Mike a call at 563-920-5239. This delicious, locally produced meat will be a great addition to grilling season!



Watt's Up at MVEC? An Update from the Fiber Department

This is the first installment in a monthly blog that will provide an update from a different department at MVEC. This month's update is from Jeff Geistkemper, Fiber Plant Manager.

I'm excited to share some of insights into the Cooperative's initiative to construct a fiber network for our members. It's been a wild and rewarding eight years since we kicked off the project.

First, let's talk about what started us down this path to providing our membership with fiber internet. Interestingly, it was a need on the electric side of the business that got us into fiber: Our need for better communications to our Electric SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) equipment in the field led us to develop smart grid infrastructure. MVEC has made substantial investments in our electric SCADA network to improve reliability and resiliency. We use SCADA to control switches between substations, operate breakers in the field, monitor and control regulators, and monitor and control our substations. All these tools combined allow MVEC to react more quickly to electric transmission outages that knock out entire substations, restore line outages from the office when our field crews give us the all clear, and generally monitor the system to find signs of impending issues that may be small now, but if not addressed, will become an outage in the future.

ALL of that is great progress, IF you can communicate to the equipment. Over time, we realized that the weak link in the communication chain was the wireless communication paths from the equipment to the office, oftentimes when it was snowing, icing, or pounding rain, the equipment we needed to communicate with the most went "dark" as the wireless communication network went down. Think of it like this, you all know how irritating it is when you drop a phone call when driving, now imagine MVEC engineering staff in the office watching the storm roll through on radar, working on the plans to restore power, and suddenly some of the tools we have to help restore power just stop working. They felt that same sort of dropping a call irritation that we have all experienced in our day-to-day lives when relying on wireless to keep us connected. The weakness of the wireless network was the reason MVEC started down the path of building

the MVlink smart grid fiber network. MVEC needed a communication path that was weather resistant, resilient and future-proof to be able to communicate with our electric SCADA network 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The answer to that problem was to build a fiber network with a backbone strong enough to serve our electrical equipment AND supply our members with a 100% fiber-to-the-home network that they had been asking for.

More to come in future articles on the "How we got here" topic, but now for more current news:

MVEC fiber crews and contractors have been taking advantage of the weather and continue to work in the town of Anamosa, where we expect our last project area to be complete this spring. At the end of this project, MVEC will have fiber to the premise/home available to the town of Anamosa west of Highway 151, completing our expansion work in that community. Additionally, MVEC crews wrapped up work on a project on the southwest side of the town of Manchester in January. We are excited to be able to offer MVlink to these areas and welcome them to the MVEC family!

Member satisfaction is important to us here at MVEC. In 2023, MVEC gathered member feedback on our MVlink fiber internet product and earned an American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) score of 88. This score is 22 points higher than the average Internet Service Provider (ISP) and 13 points higher than the average fiber ISP. Our entire team at MVEC and MVlink is dedicated to providing our members with reliable and affordable internet backed by superior customer support.

One last thing to consider: As the weather starts to warm and we begin spring cleaning outside, please don't burn ditches. Over the years, we have had several costly fires that have damaged not only electric poles but our fiber as well. This damage causes downtime for members and extra work for our crews. Thank you for working with MVEC to be safe and respectful to our co-op family!





TECH LINK

Avoid Spring Scams

As we flip the calendar to spring, many of us are finishing up taxes and looking ahead to spring break or summer getaways. Stay alert and be wary of scams this spring by considering the following:



Tax Scams

- Be wary of any emails supposedly from the IRS (asking for personal information or credit card payment). Also know that the IRS does not send text messages.
- Don't be fooled by threats of any kind. The IRS will not threaten you with jail time or fines via phone, email or text.
- Protect your Social Security Number (SSN) and file for your tax return early. Once a scammer has your SSN, they have everything they need to create a tax return and have your tax refund sent to them. These scams often occur early on in tax season before most people have filed, so the scammer's tax return in your name and with your social security number gets filed first.
- Promises of a larger refund than you are entitled to - as with many scams, if it seems too good to be true, it likely is.

Travel Scams from KnowBe4 Security

If you're planning a trip soon, there are some things you should consider. For starters, is that dirt cheap flight to Tokyo too good to be true? Probably so, especially when the booking site also offers a boatload of other deals at shocking, unbeatable prices - who does that? A scam artist looking to take your money, that's who. For this reason, you need to learn how to sniff out these "too good to be true" offers. To help you out, here are some tips:

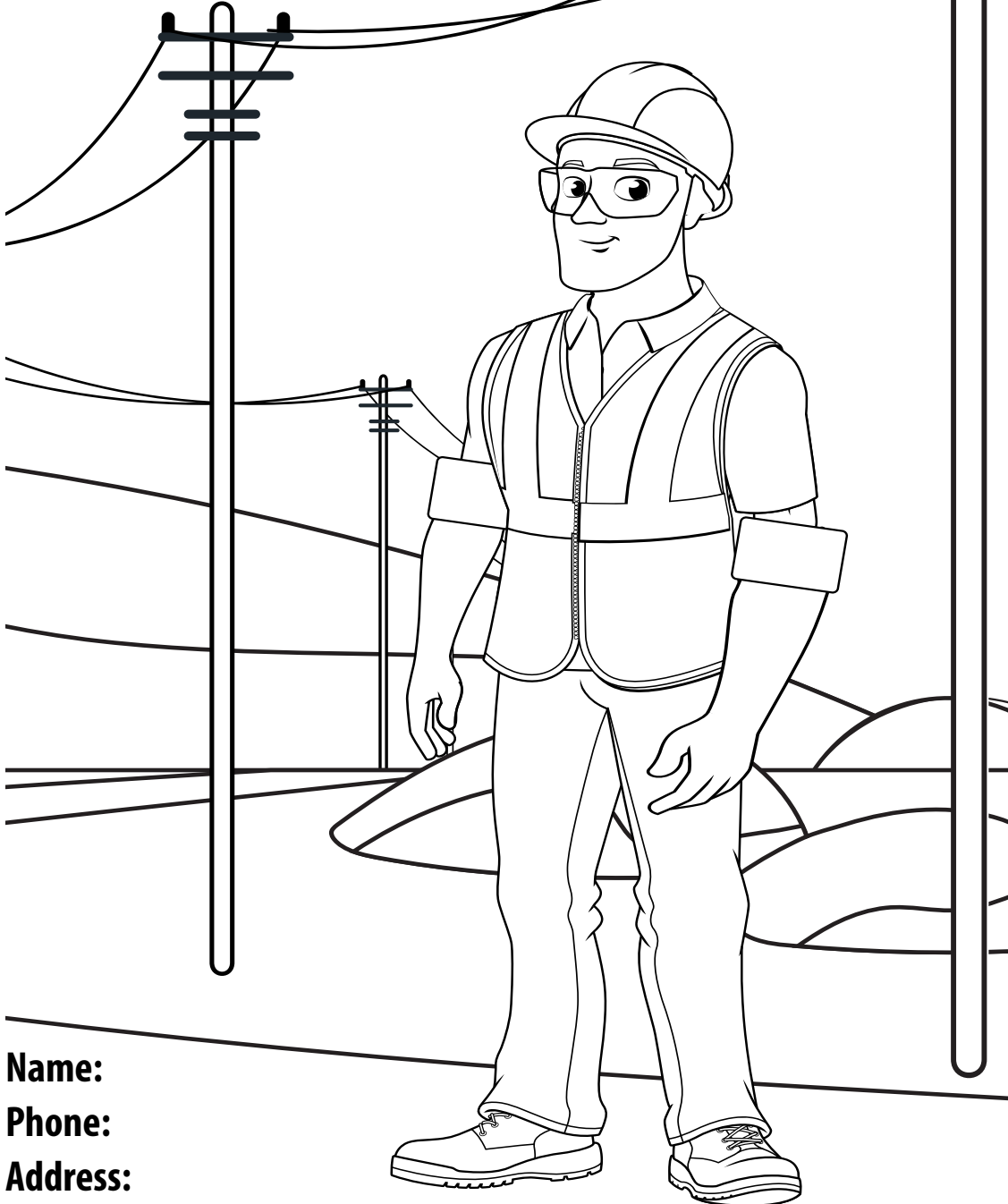
- **Go official:** Book a trip directly with an airline or hotel, or through a reputable agent/tour operator.
- **Do your research:** Do a thorough online search to ensure the company is legitimate. Are there very few pictures of the business' property, or unfavorable reviews? If they're suspect, other people may have posted their negative experience to warn others.
- **Stay safe online:** If sent a deal via social media or email, be very cautious and think before you click! The link may direct you to a malicious site. Make sure to pay special attention to the website name and domain. You may notice small changes in the name or domain – such as going from .com to .ru, which can direct you to a completely different company.
- **Pay safe:** Don't pay in cash, via bank transfer (MoneyWise, Western Union), or virtual currencies like Bitcoin. These payment methods are hard to trace and are non-refundable! Instead, pay with a credit card. Also, check that the website uses a padlock icon (https) on the address bar, indicating it's secure.
- **Check the small print:** Check that the website offers terms and conditions, refund policy, and a privacy policy.
- **Use your instincts:** If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- **Report it:** Keep all of the evidence and report it to your local authorities right away.



Regardless of the time of year, you should always monitor your credit closely and consider locking your credit down until needed.

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU! FOR POWERING OUR LIVES!



Name:

Phone:

Address:

Line Worker Appreciation Coloring Contest

April is Line Worker Appreciation Month and to show our support, members and mini members are invited to color and submit a picture. Entries are due by April 12th. They can be dropped off or mailed to MVEC's office (109 N. Huber St. Anamosa, IA 52205) or scanned and emailed to efletcher@mvec.com. Use this sheet or download the sheet at mvec.coop/coloring-contest. One winner will be selected to have their page featured in Watts Current and receive a \$50 gift card. Please include name, phone number and address.

Watts The Answer?

1. MVEC's Annual Meeting will be held at the _____

Community Centre (7896 Burds Rd. Peosta) on Thursday, August 15th.

2. As the weather starts to warm and we begin spring cleaning outside, please don't _____ ditches.

3. Don't be fooled by threats of any kind. The IRS will not _____ you with jail time or fines via phone, email or text.

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

January winners:

Steven Foust, Zwingle

Wayne Buchholtz, Dubuque



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

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



*Our Office
Will Be Closed
Friday, March 29th
In Observance Of
Good Friday*

ENERGY EFFICIENCY
TIP OF THE MONTH

Lengthen the life of your clothes dryer with regular cleaning. Clean the lint filter after every load, which improves air circulation and safety. Check the lint trap opening to ensure it's clean. Use a vacuum to remove any lint that's fallen inside the opening.

If you use dryer sheets, check the lint filter for residue buildup. Remove any residue with hot water and a nylon brush or toothbrush. Over time, dryer sheets can leave a film on the filter, which can affect the performance of the motor.

Source: energystar.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.

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