

WATTS *Current*

January
2025

MVEC to Ramp Up Vegetation Management Program in 2025

While we have all heard that trees and power lines don't mix, did you know that trees and brush account for 40% to 50% of MVEC's power outages? Each year, MVEC invests in tree trimming and vegetation management across our service territory. After reviewing outage causes over the last several years, MVEC is planning to increase our vegetation management budget significantly in 2025. In order to keep up with tree trimming needs, we plan to hire two outside contractors that will assist with line clearing over the course of 2025. The increased investment in vegetation management will decrease the number of tree-related outages and help maintain the reliability that you have come to expect from our electric grid.

For 2025, we plan to focus on the following substation areas:

- Maquoketa
- Spragueville
- Van Buren
- Sherrill
- Holy Cross



To provide electric reliability and personal safety, it is important that crews for MVEC periodically trim trees and underbrush around power lines in your area. Tree limbs and power lines are a bad combination, especially with storms involving high winds and/or ice. Time spent clearing trees from power lines can result in extended periods of outage time. The average tree outage takes around three hours to restore service. Clearing underbrush is equally important for efficient power restoral when power lines are on the ground.

Trained crews will trim trees and underbrush around primary transmission and distribution lines. Many factors are considered when trimming, such as the effect of ice on the limbs, how fast-growing the tree or underbrush is and how many repeat trips will be needed. Fast-growing trees may need to be trimmed back more than slow-growing trees.

What to Expect

MVEC crews and contractors trim trees with electric grid safety and reliability in mind, not aesthetics. The goal is to trim no more than what is necessary (generally 20 ft on either side of the power line) for safety and electric service reliability.

Tree stumps and logs are the property and responsibility of the landowner. In maintained yard areas, branches and small debris are generally left piled together, in other areas they are left to decompose where they are cut. Larger limbs will be left on the member's property in a contained area when possible.

"MVEC continually strives to maintain and improve the reliability of the service we provide," said Dan Schulte, Operations Director. *"Vegetation management is a big factor when it comes to reliability and outage restoration. This year, MVEC management and the Board of Directors are making a significant investment in our system's integrity that will allow us to continue to provide the level of superior service our members deserve and expect."*

For more information or for our right of way brochure, visit: mvec.coop/tree-trimming

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Our Energy Working for You: Taking Advantage of MVEC's Heat Plus Rate

By Al Reiter, Energy Advisor

One of the most popular and effective tools MVEC has to encourage energy efficiency and savings for members is the Heat Plus program. The Heat Plus program features a reduced rate for members who have approved electric heating systems, typically a geothermal or air source heat pump, during the heating season from October 1st through May 31st. Currently, over 1,600 MVEC members enjoy the advantages of the Heat Plus rate.

Common question as members are evaluating different heating systems, is how to predict the savings from the Heat Plus rate? Will the savings be worth the initial investment in the heating system equipment? To get a measure of savings from the Heat Plus rate to assist with making that decision, the member will need to have an understanding of their home or business' annual heating requirements. A local heating and cooling contractor will be the most useful resource in helping determine this cost. Typically, the contractor will perform a heating load calculation, sometimes referred to as a Manual J calculation. A reasonable savings estimate can be determined by knowing the average annual power usage for the equipment as well as the electric rates. Currently, the Heat Plus rate is \$0.044/kWh.

Once the decision is made to proceed with the Heat Plus rate, the member, or their contractor, contacts MVEC to get the necessary metering equipment. There is a one-time \$325.00 charge plus tax for the equipment and installation (plus a monthly recurring service charge of \$4.00 plus tax). The second sub-meter that is installed is associated with the Heat Plus loads. That metered amount is subtracted from the main meter's total and billed at the Heat Plus rate during the heating season mentioned above. For a new installation, the main requirement is that a heat pump, either geothermal or air source heat pump, is the structure's main heating system. Additional approved electric heating loads may also be added, for example, an electric space heater in the garage.

A potential added savings on the initial installation of heat pumps are tax credits that may apply. Consult with your tax advisor to determine tax credits that may be available. The following link can also be a resource: <https://www.energystar.gov/about/federal-tax-credits>

One other thing to note is that MVEC's power supplier, Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO), supplies heat pumps and other electric loads with nearly 50% renewable energy. This is a powerful resource in reducing the need to burn fossil fuels for heat, and provides savings to members throughout the winter season.

The full details and requirements for MVEC's Heat Plus rate can be found at <https://www.mvec.coop/heat-plus-program>. If you or your contractor have any questions, or would like to request an on-site visit, contact 319-462-3542 or 800-927-6068, or email memberservices@mvec.com.

MVEC Celebrates 90 Years: How it All Began

MVEC is celebrating its 90th anniversary in 2025. To commemorate this milestone, in each Watts Current newsletter, we will share a fun fact, throwback photo or bit of co-op history.



In today's increasingly digital and electrified world, it is hard to imagine life without power at the flip of a switch. But, until the mid-1930s, rural eastern Iowa functioned without electricity. Did you know that MVEC came about because of a local county agent, Carl Smith, who pulled together 16 farmers from each of the Jones County townships to form what is now Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative? According to an article by late MVEC freelance writer, Grace Zimmerman, each person was tasked with contacting their neighbors to join them in 'throwing in \$10.00' to start a Jones County rural electric cooperative. The goal was to use the funds to attract a loan from the Rural Electrification Administration. While \$10 does not seem like a lot today, in 1935, farmers were just coming off the Great Depression where cattle was selling for \$15 and hogs for \$9 a head. The cooperative was formed in 1935, and in April 1936, Edgar Beach was hired as the first manager. Per Zimmerman's article, W.B. Meeks was elected as the Board's first president in 1937.

MVEC's Board of Directors called a special Board meeting on April 3, 1937 to vote on applying for a loan of \$305,000 from the federal government to kick off construction of MVEC's initial power lines. The cost to build a mile of line in 1937 was \$959/mile compared to \$140,000/mile today. MVEC's initial electric rate was \$.04 cents per kWh up to 119 kWh used per month (today's rate is \$.172 kWh for on-peak and \$.084 for off peak usage). The average member bill in 1938 was \$4.07. The first MVEC member to receive power was E.M. Scott who lived about a mile south of Baldwin in Jackson County. MVEC originally got its power from Maquoketa Municipal power plant, hence the name Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative.



Safety Matters: Carbon Monoxide, Space Heater and Radon Safety

By Jenna Curtis, Safety Director

Cold Iowa winters pose many safety hazards—both in and outside the home. January is also National Radon Action Month which makes it a great opportunity to get radon levels tested and evaluate mitigation options. Read below for some tips to keep your family safe and healthy this month and all year long.

Carbon Monoxide Safety

Carbon monoxide (or CO) is a colorless and odorless gas. CO poisoning can occur when a fuel-burning appliance, such as a furnace, heater or generator, is not working or vented properly. Breathing in CO at high levels can be fatal. Take these precautions to protect your family from the dangers of CO:

- ✓ Install and maintain CO alarms inside your home to provide early warning of CO.
 - o Install CO alarms in a central location outside each separate sleeping area and on every level of your home. Make sure to routinely test them and replace backup batteries.
- ✓ Use portable generators outdoors in well-ventilated areas away from all doors, windows and vents.
- ✓ Make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace are clear of snow and other debris.

Space Heater Safety

The bitter Iowa cold can prompt us to add space heating devices for those hard to heat or drafty areas of our homes. Follow these safety tips to use space heaters safely:

- ✓ Read all instructions and use space heaters only as recommended.
- ✓ Do not leave space heaters unattended.
- ✓ Plug them directly into an outlet; do not use power strips or extension cords as they are not equipped to handle the energy spikes caused by space heaters cycling on and off.
- ✓ Unplug any other items from the outlet you are using and try to use a dedicated circuit to avoid overload.
- ✓ Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- ✓ Turn the heaters off and unplug them before you leave the room or go to sleep.
- ✓ Do not use heaters that are in disrepair or have frayed cords or damaged plugs.
- ✓ Place them on flat, level surfaces and never on furniture, counters or carpet, which can overheat.

Radon Action Month

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that can cause lung cancer. It is found in the soil and can enter your home through cracks and openings in the foundation or basement. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that one in 15 homes in the United States have radon levels that are not safe. Any home can have radon and the only way to know if you have a radon problem is to test for it. Both short-term (2-7 days) and long-term (90+ days) radon test kits can be used to measure levels of radon present in your home. Both options are low-cost – typically under \$30 – and easy to do yourself. (Because home radon levels can fluctuate, long-term tests that give you an average reading over time tend to show more accurate results).

If you discover high radon levels in your home, a radon mitigation system should be installed (by a reputable contractor) to reduce the amount of radon to a safer level. A typical radon mitigation system consists of a vent pipe and fan. It works by continuously collecting radon gas from beneath the house's foundation and venting it outdoors. Installation of a radon mitigation system typically does not require major changes or renovations to the home. Sealing cracks in the basement floor and foundation is usually required because it makes the radon mitigation system more effective. The cost to install a radon mitigation system is comparable to other home repairs and upgrade projects, depending on the complexity of the system. Prices can start at around \$1,200.

December MVEC Board Meeting Update

- Reviewed projected year-end financials. Sales are down significantly year-to-date in 2024 however, overall margins are projected to meet budget requirements due to corresponding decrease in power costs and overall expenses being below budget.
- Received an update on activity at CIPCO. CIPCO is MVEC's power provider.
- Discussed the status of potential new large loads within MVEC's service territory. There have been many inquiries in regards to potential bitcoin mining loads.
- Approved the 2025 Capital and Operating budgets.
- Reviewed and discussed Part 2 of the CFC cooperative financial ratio report. This compares many different financial metrics to other cooperatives both locally and nationally.
- Discussed items of interest to the Cooperative for the 2025 Iowa Legislative session.
- Approved 2025 Board Meeting dates.



Residential

2025 MAQUOKETA VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE REBATES

Contact the cooperative for the complete list of rebates and qualifications

Geothermal Heat Pumps	New closed loop	\$400/ton
	Unit replacement with existing loop	\$200/ton
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/max
Electric Vehicle Ready		\$200/home
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 Energy Star qualified	\$40
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>



Agriculture

2025 MVEC REBATES

Contact the cooperative for the complete list of rebates and qualifications

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

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

Livestock Ventilation - Varied
BESS Labs listed

For more informations on Agriculture and Commercial rebates visit:
mvec.coop/rebates

Geistkemper Graduates from Leadership Program

Last month, MVEC’s Fiber Plant Manager, Jeff Geistkemper, was one of 17 to graduate from the Cooperative Leadership in Iowa Program (CLIP) put on by Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC). CLIP participants committed to a yearlong calendar of in-person, virtual and on-demand training sessions where they gained leadership skills and learned about various co-op roles. Congratulations, Jeff, and thank you for your commitment to MVEC and our members!





Watt's Up at MVEC? Finance at Your Co-op

By Kelly Gibbs, MVEC CFO

In this edition of Watt's Up at MVEC, we sat down with MVEC Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Kelly Gibbs, to learn about the vital role the finance department plays at your co-op. The finance team, led by Gibbs, includes a senior accountant, two bookkeepers (for accounts payable and receivable), as well as member billing and service representatives. Beyond handling the day-to-day financial operations, the finance department is integral to the co-op's long-term planning and strategic decision-making.

"I joined MVEC 17 years ago as an accountant and became CFO in 2015," said Gibbs. "What I enjoy most about my job is working with numbers—whether it's developing budgets and forecasts, evaluating different financial scenarios, monitoring industry trends, or handling year-end reporting to ensure compliance and smooth operations."

Key Responsibilities of the Finance Department

The finance department's primary responsibility is to maintain the cooperative's financial health. This includes not only recording daily transactions, such as cash flow and bill payments, but also ensuring that management and the board are kept informed about financial trends and any potential issues.

Planning for the Future

A critical part of maintaining financial health is developing a budget and financial forecast. The budgeting process begins each August, when the team reviews historical data and collaborates with department heads to anticipate changes, new programs, and needs that align with the co-op's goals. Once the budget is finalized, it is translated into a financial forecast, allowing the team to model different scenarios for the coming years. This proactive approach ensures the co-op can remain financially stable and prepared for future opportunities.

A Changing Landscape

When Gibbs started at MVEC, the finance department relied on paper ledgers and Lotus spreadsheets. *"Things were simpler in 2008," Gibbs recalls. "Since then, we've added \$140 million in infrastructure and launched an entire fiber internet division. Today, with much more data to work with, we have to constantly evaluate the best ways to leverage that information to support our operations."* The monthly closing process has evolved from five basic Excel spreadsheets to a much more complex system that tracks and analyzes a wide array of data points.

Co-op vs. Investor-Owned Utility

Working at a cooperative is quite different from working at an investor-owned utility or a for-profit business. *"The most significant difference is that MVEC is member-owned and not-for-profit," Gibbs explains. "We don't have shareholders expecting returns; our focus is on providing the best and most reliable service at the lowest possible rate. Any excess revenue is returned to our members as patronage dividends."* This member-centric model guides every financial decision, from budgeting to forecasting, ensuring the co-op remains financially healthy while keeping rates as low as possible.

Challenges and Growth

One of the biggest challenges for the finance department is staying ahead of evolving regulations. With the addition of the fiber internet business alongside the traditional electric side, compliance has become more complex. *"We also have to prioritize cybersecurity to protect the co-op's assets," Gibbs adds. "This is something we are continually working on, not just within the finance department, but across the entire co-op."*

MVEC has experienced rapid growth, especially with the fiber project, and steady growth in the electric business. *"Now is the time to make sure we are spending wisely and planning for the future," Gibbs says. "We must look at multiple scenarios to ensure we can continue providing top-notch service at the lowest rates possible for our members."*

A Few Reminders for Members

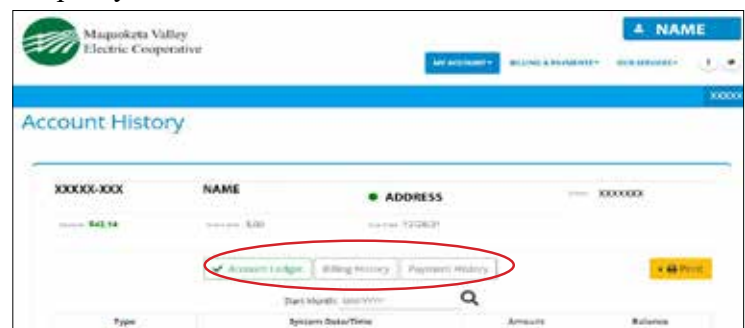
As an MVEC member, you have easy access to your account information through the Member Portal. In the portal, you can:

- View your electric usage
- Make or schedule payments
- Sign up for auto-pay to save time and reduce mailing costs

And remember, it's essential to keep your contact information up-to-date with MVEC. This ensures accurate billing and ensures you receive your patronage dividend when it's distributed.

Member Portal for Tax Prep

Make your tax preparation easier by using MVEC's member portal to access your billing/payment history for the past year.





TECH LINK

New Year's Tech Resolutions

Typically when we make New Year's resolutions, they often center on our health or organizational goals. This year, also consider your tech and digital wellbeing as you are committing to making some improvements in 2025.

Boost Your Cybersecurity

With cyber breaches and phishing attempts on the rise, make cybersecurity a focus in 2025.

- Update old or weak passwords. If you haven't changed a password in awhile, take a moment to create a new one. Using the same password for multiple sites or programs? Make each password unique and strong. Consider using a password manager to help.
- Invest in malware and antivirus tools (and make sure they are up to date). Use trusted antivirus software to protect your laptop or PC from viruses and cyber hackers.
- Enable multi-factor authentication (MFA). Add an extra layer of security by enabling MFA on every account that offers it. MFA pairs your password with a unique code typically delivered via text, email, or a dedicated authenticator app.
- Review app permissions and settings. Worried that an application on your phone might be sharing too much of your private information? Check the permissions associated with every app by visiting Settings or System Preferences on your mobile device. Keep an eye out for location services, activity tracking, and access to your camera or microphone—turn off any unnecessary permissions to enhance your digital privacy.



Protect Your Identity

- Assess your digital footprint by monitoring your social media accounts. Regularly review your social media accounts for anything unusual while double-checking security settings to make sure they flag or prevent DMs and friend/follow requests from unknown contacts. Be mindful of the information you share online to minimize the risk of identity theft.
- Monitor your credit by pulling periodic credit reports. Enable alerts or notifications on your banking and credit accounts. Consider freezing your credit until you need to make a large purchase.
- Secure your Wi-Fi network. Check the password on your modem and router—if they're still using the original factory settings, update and strengthen them. Regularly update your router's firmware to patch vulnerabilities. Better yet, make sure you have MVlink's router and our IT experts will take care of that for you.

Organize Your Digital World

- Organize your digital space. Don't limit purging to your closet, —the New Year is a great time to declutter your digital life by organizing files and folders on desktops, laptops, and mobile phones. Delete old and redundant files to free up storage space while creating better visibility for pertinent documents you'll need to get 2025 off to a great start.
- Downsize your in-box. Unsubscribe from promotional emails or senders that end up in your 'Junk' folder. This will free up time deleting the emails later.
- Leverage the convenience of digital technology to get organized IRL (in real life). Adopt a digital calendar, set reminders and/or download a time management app to stay on top of important appointments and deadlines.

Get the Internet Speed You Need

- Consider what devices and online services your family is using. Did Santa bring more gadgets and streaming platforms this Christmas? If so, make sure your family has the speed you need. Contact our Fiber department (fiber@mvec.com or call 800-927-6068) to discuss MVlink's lightning fast fiber internet packages.



MVEC RLF Supports New Fitness Facility

Six years ago, Storm and Tessa Rummel, owners of Rummel Properties, chose Anamosa to raise their family. As avid fitness enthusiasts, they noticed a deficit of workout facilities with flexible hours and workout class offerings in Anamosa. Last summer, they were connected with MVEC through their commercial lender, Seth Wedewer of F&M Bank. The Rummels applied for a, MVEC's Revolving Loan to support the construction of a new 5,000 square foot 24x7 fitness facility, named AC's 24/7 Fitness, in Anamosa's Industrial Park. The couple held AC's grand opening and Anamosa Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting on Saturday, December 7.



AC's 24/7 Fitness is a membership-based fitness facility that houses top-of-the-line workout equipment as well as space to host various strength training, cardio, personal training and group classes. Members can use an app that gives them access to the facility any hour of the day, seven days of the week. To learn more about membership, visit acs247fitness.com.

"Our goal with AC's 24/7 Fitness is to offer a premier workout experience at a competitive rate for the Anamosa community," said Storm Rummel, Co-Owner. *"We believe in the power of community. Our gym is more than just a place to work out; it's a hang-out spot for folks striving to become better versions of themselves. Whether you prefer to work out solo or are looking to meet some new friends in one of our group fitness classes, we're here to offer the space for routines that fit your schedule and personality."*

MVEC CEO Jeremy Richert said of the project, *"There are many factors that make up a vibrant community: jobs, schools, healthcare facilities and amenities such as AC's 24/7 Fitness that promote a healthy, active lifestyle for residents. We are pleased to be able to support local entrepreneurs like the Rummels who are invested in improving their community."*

Watts The Answer?

1. Trained crews will trim trees and underbrush around _____ transmission and distribution lines.
2. Make your tax preparation easier by using MVEC's member _____ to access your billing/payment history for the past year.
3. This year, also consider your _____ and _____ wellbeing as you are committing to making some improvements in 2025.

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:

Denise Wubbena, Manchester
Richard Hillard, Peosta



NEW EMPLOYEE IN 2024

Alex Laban - Journeyman Lineman

5 YEARS



Jeff White Engineering Tech Skyler Houseal Fiber Tech Jason Arduser IT Support Specialist Cody Horsfall Journeyman Lineman Spencer Norton Journeyman Lineman Ben Ernst Journeyman Lineman Trevor Koopmann Lead Lineman Maintenance

10 YEARS



Matt Osweiler Journeyman Lineman

20 YEARS



Brent Van Dorn Warehouse Supervisor

25 YEARS



Keith Helmold GIS Dispatch



Jeremy Richert CEO

35 YEARS



Dean Koopmann Tech Service Manager



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

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



From everyone at MVEC/MVlink


HAPPY NEW YEAR

Wishing you a year filled with new hopes,
joys, and beginnings.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

Taking steps to help your home heating system run more efficiently can reduce energy use and lower your winter bills. Check to see if any air vents around your home are blocked by furniture, curtains or other items. Obstructed vents force your heating system to work harder than necessary and can increase pressure in the ductwork, causing cracks and leaks to form. If necessary, consider purchasing a vent extender, which can be placed over a vent to redirect air flow from underneath furniture or other obstructions.



Source: 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.

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Electric Billing: billing@mvec.coop
Electric Service: maintenance@mvec.coop
Internet/Phone Service: fiber@mvec.coop

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