

WATTS Current

December 2019

For Our Members

A Name You Can Trust

By *Jeremy Richert, CEO*

This past weekend a MVEC member approached one of our employees at the store. Small talk turned into something more serious. They could tell by the sound of his voice that he was concerned about a third-party vendor contacting him about a solar installation. Unsure of what this was all about, he came to us for answers.

I share this story because even before the Internet and the power of Google and Siri, our members often reached out directly to people who were experts in their field, local and very responsive. MVEC has been your energy partner for years, and we continue to pride ourselves on being your source of information on all things energy-related.

- *For advice on how to make your home more energy efficient, contact us.*
- *For information on your energy use or how to understand your bill, contact us.*
- *If you have questions about solar or renewable energy options, generators or home energy management systems, contact us first.*

Our team has been trained to answer your questions, make sure distributed energy systems you are considering integrate well with the cooperative's systems and can help ensure efficiency comparisons are "apples to apples."

Last year, close to 20,000 electric cooperative members across the country were asked what image attribute best described their electric cooperative. "My co-op is a name I can trust" is the answer that rose above all others.

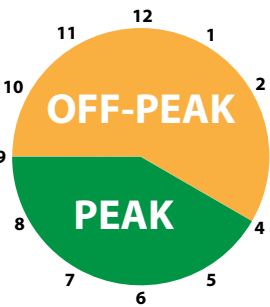
Trust is earned, not given freely, and here at MVEC, we work day in and day out to be the co-op you can trust – not only for power but for fiber internet service and other information.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Trim your holiday energy costs by choosing energy efficient LED lights! LED holiday lights use less energy and can last up to 40 seasons. They're also easier to install - you can connect up to 25 LED strings without overloading a wall socket!

Source: energy.gov





CHECK THE HOUR BEFORE USING POWER

The **Time-of-Use (Peak Pricing 4 pm-9 pm Every Day)** rate plan has two periods:

Lowest price (OFF-PEAK):
19 hours each day

Highest price (PEAK HOURS):
5 hours each day



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How Old Is Your Heating System?

As winter surrounds us it is normal to wonder if your heating system will make it through another winter. Don't be caught off guard! Know how old your system is and its expected lifespan. Do your homework and have a plan for the day it doesn't kick in.

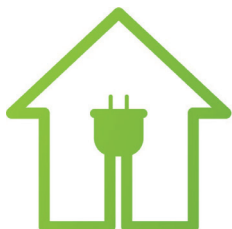
We are here to help you make the most energy efficient decisions with regard to your heating and cooling system, and we may even have energy efficiency incentives to help offset associated costs. While we must send you an electric bill each month, we don't want that bill to be higher than necessary and energy education is a big part of that.



We have seen an explosion of geothermal systems since they became popular as the most energy efficient way to heat and cool your home. While the loop buried in the yard may last for 50 years, the geothermal unit may not hold out that long. Be sure you practice normal maintenance procedures and recognize you can replace the geo unit while continuing to utilize the loop and further extend your long-range energy savings.

Air Source Heat Pumps are also a popular option. These heat pumps can work in combination with an existing gas furnace to create a hybrid system. The gas furnace acts as back-up to the heat pump during the coldest winter days and ensures a warm and efficient home. Heat pumps that use electric resistance heat for back-up are also in use but members need to understand the impact on their electric bill and whether it comparably offsets the cost of gas heat.

Learn more about these options at www.savingswithstayingpower.com. Let us be your trusted, free resource for HVAC discussions.



SAVINGS
WITH
**STAYING
POWER**

EFFICIENT | CLEAN | SAFE | ELECTRIC

Director Education

MVEC is governed by nine directors who are elected by fellow Cooperative members to serve three year terms. In order to best serve the membership, the directors attend training sessions to learn about their roles and responsibilities, cooperative governance and industry issues through a director certification program offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

The three part education series takes directors from a Credentialed Cooperative Director, to earning a Board Leadership Certificate and finally becoming Director Gold Certified. All nine of MVEC's directors have passed or are enrolled in the initial Credentialed Cooperative Director course. Six directors have earned the Board Leadership Certificate and four are Director Gold Certified. Gold Certified Directors can enroll in continuing education courses to retain their certification.

Committing to these educational opportunities requires additional time outside of monthly cooperative board meetings. Training is offered in conjunction with industry conferences and often takes several years to complete as budgets allow.

The cooperative business model is unique and the utility industry is complex, but you can be assured your directors take their roles seriously and are well prepared to meet the opportunities and challenges ahead.



Front Row L-R: Charlie McCullough, Billie Zumbach, CEO Jeremy Richert, Judy Gotto, Gene Manternach; Back Row L-R: Charlie Peters, Larry Swanson, Tom Stewart, Jan Null and President Ron Thielen



What Is Your Disaster Plan?

The results of our membership survey indicate our members want us to support and respond to natural disasters. While we are fortunate wildfires and hurricanes are not the normal Iowa disaster, MVEC does plan for many other types of disasters that could impact our members and our service to them.



MVEC has a formal disaster plan in place that is reviewed and updated annually by all department managers and supervisors. If our headquarters was destroyed, if there was a cyberattack, if a tornado demolished multiple substations and a myriad of other situations are addressed in great detail and well-documented for the most efficient response. We know you trust us to keep the lights on and the Internet/VoIP service live 24/7, and we want you to know we work hard to continually earn that trust.

Our affiliations with the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association provide additional lines of disaster assistance including coordination of mutual aid agreements with other Iowa electric cooperatives, or nationwide if needed. If a disaster hits, we know we can count on our fellow cooperatives to come to our aid, and we are willing to do the same. We utilized this aid following the June 30th thunderstorm that created significant outages across our system when linemen from Linn County REC in Marion assisted in our restoration efforts. We reciprocated with assistance to Heartland Power in St. Ansgar. At the national level, we had linemen on standby to help with Hurricane Dorian restorations if needed.

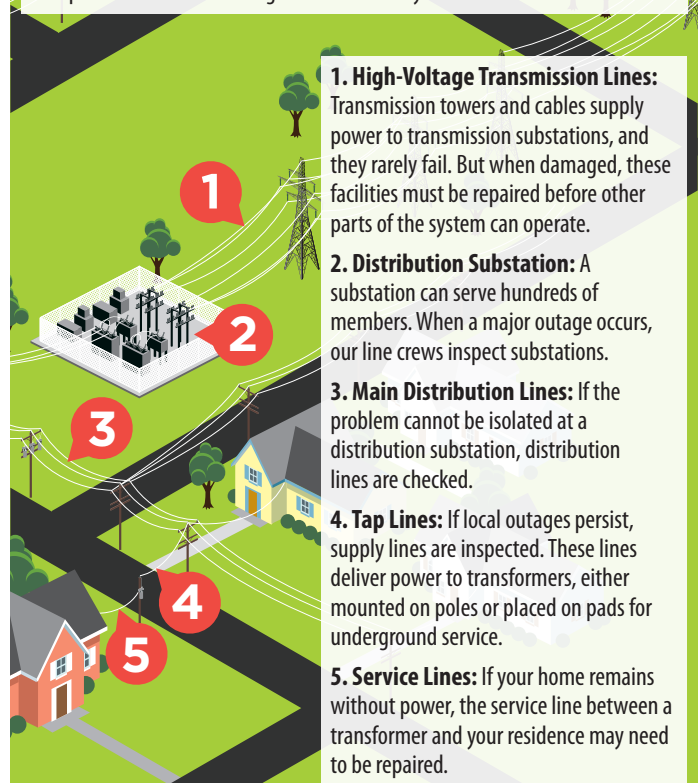
We also want our members to be prepared for extended power outages. What is your plan if your home is without electric service for several days? If you have medical needs requiring electricity for oxygen or a lift chair, do you have an alternative

site to relocate to? Do you have a generator to allow cows to be milked or cattle waterers to operate? Do you have a regular generator testing plan in place so you are comfortable it will work when needed? Members should even consider things like access to your home if your automatic garage door can't operate, or heating baby formula without a stove or microwave. Can you form your own mutual aid agreement with family, friends and neighbors?

We hope neither of us needs to implement our disaster plans, but as we see nationwide disasters, and our own impacts from Mother Nature, being prepared can't be ignored.



Powering Up After An Outage - Our line crews work long, hard hours to restore service safely to the greatest number of members in the shortest time possible. Here's how we get to work when you find yourself in the dark:



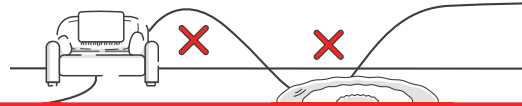


TWELVE HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

1 Keep decorations at least three feet away from heat sources – especially those with an open flame, like fireplaces and candles.



2 The best decorations are safe decorations, so when you're decorating, make sure not to run cords under rugs or furniture.



3 If you have a natural Christmas tree water it to keep it fresh and safe.



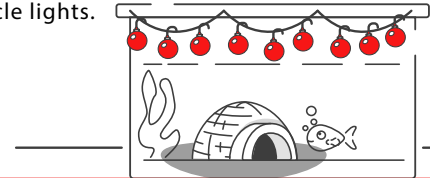
4 Always turn off your decorations when you leave your home and when you're sleeping.



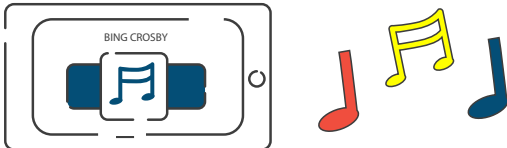
5 If you're using extension cords or adapters that add receptacles, consider having a qualified electrician add more outlets to your home.



6 Only use electronics in dry areas. As tempting as it is, you just can't decorate your aquarium with icicle lights.



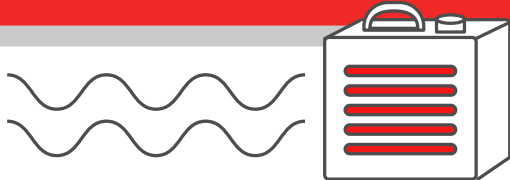
7 Remember that phones and tablets should stay on your nightstand.



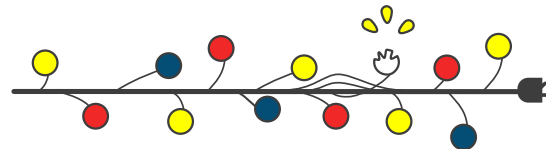
8 Every home needs a working smoke alarm in each bedroom, outside sleeping areas and on every level, including the basement.



9 If you're using a space heater, switch it off before leaving the room.



10 Inspect your decorations and discard any that are damaged or worn out.



11 Keep batteries stored safely in their packaging and out of reach from small children and pets.



12 The best gift for your family is an Arc-Fault Circuit Interrupter breaker or outlet. Many electrical fires could be prevented by AFCIs.





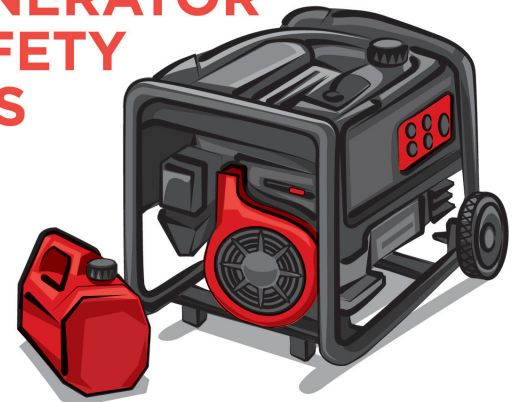
Make Your Winter Energy Dollars Work Harder

Will you be naughty or nice when it comes to controlling energy costs during the holidays?

- Be fashionable and add a second layer of clothing, instead of turning up the thermostat.
- To stop heated air from escaping into the attic, caulk the gap around bathroom exhaust fan and trim where it meets the ceilings to prevent leaks.
- Tightly close the fireplace damper whenever you don't have a fire burning, to prevent heat escaping up the chimney.
- Computers, printers and other office devices consume power in standby mode, so unplug them.
- Install a programmable thermostat, customize the program to match your family's needs.
- Replace damaged or missing weather stripping to stop air leaks around door and window frames.
- Find out how much insulation you have in your attic. A small investment there can pay off in cutting your power bills and keeping your home more comfortable this winter.
- Vacuum air registers, baseboard heaters or radiators. This will help efficiently distribute heat throughout your home.
- Install draft-blocking foam insulating pads behind outlet and switch plates on outside walls.
- Adjust the threshold under each exterior door to eliminate cold air leaks.
- With the family in and out of the refrigerator it's good to keep that appliance running at efficiency by cleaning the condenser coils and other parts.
- Make sure all the heat you're paying for reaches its destination! Move furniture that's blocking air registers or baseboard heaters, preventing warmed air from being distributed throughout the room.
- Use a programmable timer to control exterior lights and other decorations and for safety's sake, turn them all off when you're away from home.
- A forced-air furnace or heat pump will run longer than necessary to warm your home if it has to fight to push air through a dirty filter, so check and change the filter regularly during the heating season.

- Electric water heaters often have two thermostats one for the upper heating element and one for the lower heating element. Make sure both thermostats are set to 120 degrees, which most people find satisfactory.
- Install motion-sensing outdoor light fixtures that keep security lights off until they're needed.
- Allow cooked foods to cool before putting them in the refrigerator. Adding hot foods will make the compressor run overtime to compensate for the higher temperature in the refrigerated compartment.
- Leaky window? Install an inexpensive plastic film window insulating kit. You'll be surprised at how much more comfortable you'll be in that room!

GENERATOR SAFETY TIPS



Never connect a standby generator into your home's electrical system. There are only two safe ways to connect a standby generator to your equipment.

Stationary Generator:

An approved generator transfer switch, which keeps your house circuits separate from the electric co-op, should be installed by a professional.

Portable Generator:

Plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator.

Set up and run your generator in a well-ventilated area outside the home. Make sure it's out and away from your garage, doors, windows and vents. The carbon monoxide generated is **deadly**.

Use a heavy-duty extension cord to connect electric appliances to the outlet on the generator.

Start the generator first **before** connecting appliances.

Source: SafeElectricity.org



The Fiber Download

Three Year Update - 3,000 MVLINK MEMBERS!

We started constructing the MVlink fiber network in November, 2016 and in November, 2019 we celebrated 3000 MVlink members! We are sharing a few wonderful testimonials and wish to thank our members for placing their trust in us. If you haven't explored this unprecedented Internet service yet, you can learn more at www.mvlink.coop or call us today.

"I just have to say that Maquoketa Valley Internet has been the most reliable internet in the area! We have never experienced any downtime or any issues with them as a provider. After seeing multiple friends without Internet tonight, I was still able to do my work from home and my husband was able to watch the football game over live stream! Thank you for everything you do!"

- Allison from Epworth

"We love how we can all be on our devices at the same time and nobody is lagging and how fast a game downloads; we don't have to wait days and days till it's done or pause it so someone else can use Internet! The cost is very reasonable; well worth it and there are three different packages to choose from! Also everyone's so friendly and helpful! Thanks MVlink!"

- Vicki from Manchester

"We love MVlink, but our kids especially love it when they come home to visit. Our daughter says our service is better than she has in St. Louis."

- Anna from Monticello

"Some of my co-workers mentioned they struggle with their cable/broadband service. They experience frequent outages, plus deal with major slowdowns during peak-use periods in the evenings. These are issues you just don't see with MVlink's fiber service. It's no surprise customers who are looking for a new service want it 'yesterday!'"

- Jason from Durango

Sites to See

Watch this section for new or popular internet sites you may want to explore.

- www.liferantings.com/lp/gifts/20-tech-gift-ideas-b/
20 Insanely Cool Products That You Probably Haven't Heard About That Make Great Gifts!
- www.today.com/shop/gift-guide
Our 2019 holiday gift guide has a gift idea for everyone on your list. Use our interactive gift guide finder to discover the best presents for him and her, or the perfect toys for kids.
- editorial.rottentomatoes.com/guide/best-christmas-movies/
THE 50 BEST CHRISTMAS MOVIES OF ALL TIME

And The Answer Is.....

Megabits: Megabits per second (Mbps) are a unit of measurement for bandwidth and throughput on a network. Each megabit is equal to 1 million bits. Mbps are used to measure the speed of data transfer.

Modem VS Router: The router sits in between your Internet connection and your local network. But you can't connect directly to the Internet with just a router. Instead, your router must be plugged into a device that can transmit your digital traffic over whatever type of Internet connection you have, and that device is a modem.

Our Gigacenter Router VS Your Router: With our router we have the ability to help troubleshoot issues with Wi-Fi connection. Scan for 2.4GHz and 5GHz signals that could be causing interference, help with forgotten passwords and secure recovery. Support with any special needs, like parental controls, port forwarding, etc. and provide support without having to take the day off of work or away from things you want to do.



Streaming Guilt-Free Shows For Kids

By Jess Wygle, Cedar Rapids Moms Blog

Our days of carefree outdoor time with our little ones are over. Some winter days will allow for us to shoo our kids outside to play. Those days will, unfortunately, be less frequent than our spring and summer days. And with that, parents are scrambling to find ways to keep their kids busy and occupied. I don't fully endorse using screens or the television to distract children. However, I'll be one of the first to admit those things can be a godsend on the hardest and coldest of days.

For those of us who rely on streaming services, there are dozens of family-friendly, worthwhile viewing options for children.

Noggin and PBS Kids - Both of these platforms offer nothing but educational content wrapped in bright colors and upbeat music. PBS Kids is a free provider that can easily be installed on a smart TV or Roku. Our favorite shows offered by PBS Kids are Daniel Tiger, Pinkalicious, Curious George, and Sesame Street. Noggin has dozens of titles, and they've all proven to be crowd-pleasers. The only downfall of this platform is shows are geared more towards toddlers and preschoolers.

Netflix - This is our go-to. We frequent the kid's section of Netflix more often than not and are well-versed in the best of the best. For starters, Story Bots is great for all ages. Honestly, I've gotten fun factoids from the show and chuckled at the comedic aspect. If you've never seen Story Bots, it's incredibly educational, and each episode centers around a question that needs to be answered—questions like, “How many animals are there?”, “How do eyes work?” and “Why do I have to brush my teeth?” Other much-loved titles are Llama Llama, Kate and Mim-Mim, and True and the Rainbow Kingdom.

Hulu - The nice thing about Hulu is you don't have to rely only on the shows. Hulu is home to a number of educational movies, including a few of the Curious George full-length features. They also offer a number of Disney Junior titles such as Henry Hugglemonster, Doc McStuffins, and Chuggington, all without having to download another platform or register another membership.

Amazon Prime Video - Our most favorite rainy-day show is Blippi. Yes, the YouTube sensation has a number of episodes available to Amazon Prime subscribers. They're bound to turn your little one into an unblinking zombie. Blippi also does a lot of educational topics, like exploring rescue machines, discovering buoyancy, or finding items for each letter of the alphabet. Prime also has a few original titles for the younger kids. You may want to check out Pete the Cat, Creative Galaxy, and Tumble Leaf.

For the Older Viewers - Some of the more educational shows I've found are The Hollow, Inestigators, The Last Kids on Earth, and Carmen Sandiego, all on Netflix. These shows aren't strictly teaching school-aged children the type of stuff they'd learn in the classroom. They're teaching problem solving, teamwork, and perseverance. They also throw some mysteries and issues at the viewers to make them think, see what's not there, and to read between the lines.

I wish all parents the best of luck during the shut-in season. I hope these titles help bring you some guilt-free comfort in your kids' viewing.

[Jess Wygle @ Cedar Rapids MomsSM www.cedarrapids.momcollective.com]

Watts The Answer?

1. MVEC has been your energy partner for years, and we continue to pride ourselves on being your source of _____ on all things energy-related.

2. Be fashionable and add a _____ layer of clothing, instead of turning up the thermostat.

3. For those of us who rely on streaming services, there are dozens of _____, worthwhile viewing options for children.

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

October winners:

Howard House, Manchester

Steve Hermiston, Maquoketa



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

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

Happy Holidays
from everyone here at
Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative

**Our office will be closed
December 24 & 25
January 1**



Watts Current by Email
If you would prefer to have the Watts Current emailed to you, please sign up by emailing efletcher@mvec.coop

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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