

WATTS *Current*

January 2021

For Our Members

2020 Is In The Books, Finally

By Jeremy Richert, CEO

It has been a year that most of us will never forget for many different reasons. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Derecho storm presented your Cooperative with several new challenges from an operating perspective. While we review our emergency response plan on a regular basis, it can never compare to the speed at which things move when we encounter the various challenges in real time. Where there are challenges there are also opportunities for growth. I am proud of your MVEC employee team for embracing the challenges of the last 12 months to ensure we were able to continue providing the safe and reliable service you expect from us no matter what the outside world threw our way.



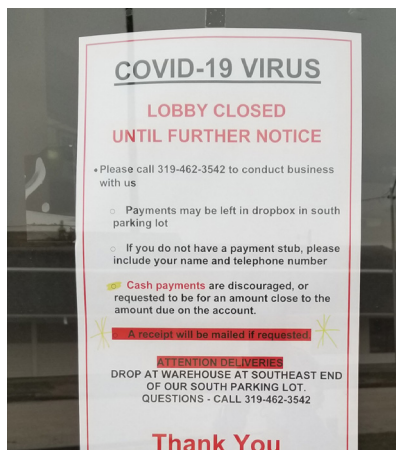
Like many companies, COVID-19 drastically changed the way we looked and operated during 2020. Thanks to our very talented IT staff we were able to convert just under half of our employee team from office employees to remote employees in a matter of a few days. Despite not being in the office, our remote team didn't miss a beat in getting the work done and communicating with our members. Our lobby has been closed to the general public for a portion of the year and there was a brief period of time where we cancelled one on one meetings with members to ensure the safety of all involved. While this created a few challenges, we would like to thank the membership for being flexible on how you communicated with us whether by phone, email, mail, or online. One of the things that makes MVEC unique in terms of operating in a pandemic is that the electric and internet services we provide don't allow for remote work. Our lineman, electric technicians, and fiber technicians must report to work every day in order to not only maintain our electric grid and fiber network but also complete new construction and upgrade projects for the continued growth of both new and existing members. Staggered shifts and crew separation by outpost became the new normal and our outside crews have worked diligently to follow the protocols to make sure we have a healthy team available to keep



Bookkeeper Tami Recker working remotely

our grid running smoothly. We were fortunate to return to a more normal looking means of operating in the late summer and early fall months, but as the community spread increased over the last couple months of the year we returned back to our alternate look. COVID-19 has taught us many things and allowed us to prove to ourselves that we can meet the needs of our members in ways that don't look the same as what we have always done.

In August we encountered our next big challenge of 2020 when the southern portion of our system was battered by the 130 mph winds from the Derecho. What had been a calm Monday in the office quickly pivoted to operating through the largest outage event MVEC has experienced in over 30 years. The Derecho impacted 25% of MVEC's members and restoration



Lobby remains closed (as of press time)

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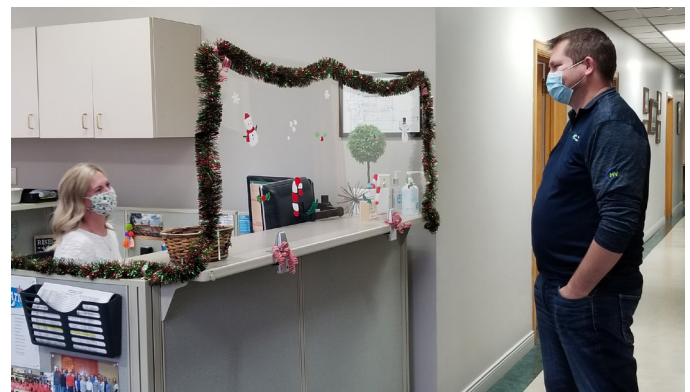


Replacing broken poles in southern Jones County

efforts were different than other major storms due to the extent of the damage. In addition to the typical tree-caused outages associated with a windstorm, crews dealt with outbuildings, grain bins, and trampolines tangled up with

our poles and wires as well as miles of downed transmission lines for our power provider. We also had approximately 200 poles that were broken off and needed to be replaced. Despite all the damage, crews went right to work and after four long, grueling days there were only four meters that could take service that were out of power. Two of the Cooperative principles are “Cooperation Among Cooperative” and “Concern for Community”. We are very thankful for the restoration assistance we and the communities we serve were provided by crews from other electric cooperatives across the state. Those that helped us out included Allamakee Clayton REC (Postville), MiEnergy (Cresco), Franklin REC (Hampton), and Heartland Power (Thompson). Your MVEC employees really stepped up in response to the Derecho and almost all of our employees were involved in one way or another with the restoration efforts, whether they were performing initial damage assessments, taking member phone calls, repairing damaged line, working in the operations center, making hotel accommodations for outside crews, repairing broken-down trucks, providing IT support, ordering and delivering food and snacks, communicating with our members and local media, identifying locations that had available fuel, or delivering materials to the crews. It was all hands on deck. In typical Co-op fashion and in line with the Cooperative principles mentioned above, once we had power restored to our membership MVEC crews assisted other Co-ops in Iowa with their Derecho repairs as well as a Cooperative in Louisiana with repairs from Hurricane Laura.

In August we were also unfortunately forced to cancel the Cooperative’s in person annual meeting due to COVID-19. Our directors and employees always look forward to annual meeting as it is a great opportunity to visit with our members and communicate the activities of the Cooperative. In typical 2020 fashion, our communications team quickly transitioned from an in person meeting to an annual meeting and director election handled via mail. The response was incredible as just under 2,000 members participated in the annual meeting and election of directors. We hope to combine the in person and meeting by mail scenarios into our 2021 annual meeting in an effort to maximize member participation in the governance activities of your Cooperative. We were also looking forward to a new member appreciation event in coordination with the Jackson County Fair, but that event also needed to be cancelled and can hopefully be re-visited in 2021.



Megan Ruley and Jeff Geistkemper safely discuss MVlink progress

Despite the different working conditions, it has still been a very productive year. Significant upgrades to substations and distribution lines have been completed in the Dubuque area and are ongoing around Maquoketa. These improvements will strengthen the grid and increase capacity in two areas of the system where we are seeing growth. Projects in the Dubuque area were done to accommodate the construction of the new Southwest arterial and growth along the Highway 20 corridor. The Maquoketa project includes an entire rebuild of the Maquoketa substation to increase capacity and allow for an upcoming conversion to 69 kV on the incoming transmission line feeding the substation. In addition to these larger projects, crews have also completed system upgrades or installed new services at approximately 500 member locations. We have also continued to expand our smart grid network and increase the areas of our system where we can remotely control and gather information on a real time basis.



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MVlink also experienced a very successful 2020. Despite halting installs for a two-month period in the spring in response to COVID-19, the fiber team rebounded and was still able to install over 1,000 new connections over the course of the year. Since the fiber smart grid project started in late 2016, MVlink has constructed over 2,000 miles of fiber backbone across our service territory and we have passed the 5,000 sign-ups mark. Install schedules are full weeks in advance and we have another busy year planned for 2021. We appreciate your patience as we work hard to connect our new MVlink subscribers. Member response to MVlink has been overwhelmingly positive as many of our members were forced to work remotely, attend school, and entertain themselves online over the last 12 months. We were able to assist with bandwidth needs during COVID-19 by temporarily increasing package speeds at no charge before making permanent changes to our MVlink internet packages that resulted in more options and higher speeds at the same low prices. Packages start at \$59.95 and gigabit internet is available at the great low price of only \$89.95 per month. If you are interested in MVlink and haven't yet reached out to make the switch please call the office or go to www.mvec.coop/mvlink-internet for more information.

As we transition into 2021, we will never be able to truly put 2020 behind us. We hope your families and businesses have survived the challenges of 2020 in a healthy manner and with limited disruption. If you are having trouble paying your utility bills due to the events of the last 12 months please make sure to reach out to our customer service team to determine if there are ways in which we can assist you. While we are hoping the obstacles will not be as significant in the coming year, we at Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative are looking forward to the challenges and opportunities 2021 will present as we continue to provide our members with high quality, safe, and affordable electric and internet services.



10 Safety Tips for Winter Power Outages

Winter weather calls for additional safety measures if a power outage occurs. Here are a few tips to follow if the power is out:

1. Call us, or report your outage at www.mvec.coop – don't assume that your neighbor has already called it in. The outage may be isolated to your home only.
2. Be aware that in cold weather, water pipes may freeze. Drain the water supply lines if possible, but if they must remain operational, insulate the lines or allow a small flow of water to continually run through the system.
3. If you have an unvented, fuel-burning space heater, place it on a level, hard and nonflammable surface – not on rugs or carpets or near bedding or drapes. Cross-ventilate by opening a window an inch on each side of the room; it's better to let some cold air in than to run the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Also, never leave a space heater unattended or within the reach of children or pets – and turn it off when you leave the room or go to bed.
4. Keep curtains and exterior doors closed.
5. Use your fireplace if you have one. Otherwise, make sure the flue is closed.
6. Do not use your stove, oven, cooktop, outdoor grill, camping stove or any other fuel-, charcoal- or wood-burning cooking equipment to try to produce usable heat inside your home. The carbon monoxide these devices produce could be fatal within in a matter of minutes.
7. Don't use candles for lighting; they can cause a fire. Use a flashlight or battery-powered camping lantern instead.
8. Do not use generators unless they are connected to an isolated circuit. Generators connected directly to a home's electric circuit may create a life-threatening situation for crews working on the line. If you are not certain that a generator is isolated, do not use it.
9. Stay away from down power lines and poles. Always assume the lines are energized and report any damage to MVEC.
10. Avoid riding snowmobiles in ditches and other areas where power lines are down. Downed lines and broken poles represent significant safety issues.



New Year, New You! Technology And Your Health

As the future of medicine and healthcare is closely connected to the empowerment of people taking care of their own health through technologies, these devices help us know more about ourselves and retake control over our own lives. Here are a few ways technology and health are coming together.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

Access To Recipes - Smartphones and tablets are changing the way we prepare and cook food. Recipe sites have well surpassed cookbooks and magazine recipes in usage. From gluten-free to vegan to paleo, we can find guidelines for just about any type of diet or lifestyle on the internet today. With blogs, Pinterest, food-centric Twitter accounts, and Facebook groups, sharing recipes across borders has never been easier.

Nutritional Research - A quick search can connect us to the American Society for Nutrition and their vision for a healthier world through evidence-based nutrition. Apps like Fooducate display nutritional information in real-time when you're grocery shopping or ordering food at a restaurant.

Count Your Calories - Knowing what you're supposed to eat is one thing. Understanding what you've already eaten is another and that's where nutritional tracking apps come into play. Apps like MyFitnessPal lets you scan food labels and search its expansive restaurant database (home-cooked meals can be entered manually) to keep track of your food choices.

TECH-FIT GADGETS

Wearables and Fitness Trackers - Find multiple options for wristbands and smartwatches from familiar companies like Fitbit, Jawbone, Nike, Apple, and more. Initially promoted as enhanced step counters, they now incorporate movement data as well as heart rate and even blood oxygen measurement to estimate sleep status. Trackers like FitBit comes equipped with a 24/7 heart-rate monitor, sleep tracking capabilities, and goal-based exercises. Stay connected while you exercise with smartphone notifications and personalize your workouts with goal-based exercise.



Interactive Home Gym - Check out the Mirror Home Gym. This home gym looks like a regular mirror until you turn it on and connect with professional trainers. Choose from over 50 live workouts, including cardio, yoga, and strength training.

Smart Socks - These socks work with a mobile app that guides you with the help of real-time audio cues as you run. These socks collect real-time data, including steps, calories burned, speed, and distance.



Smart Scale - These scales go beyond weight and often provide body mass index, fat, muscle and bone mass, heart rate and more. Some models like iHealth Core Smart Scale can sync your results with an easy-to read graphic website to track your results. Guide your health in the right direction and make adjustments to your lifestyle habits with a smart scale purchase.



Smart Water Bottles - Explore smart water bottles such as, Sportline HydraCoach or Ozmo's Active Smart Cup where you can sync it with Fitbit or Apple Health. Or try the Hidrate Spark 2.0 and its smartphone app that personalizes your hydration goals based on individual physiology, activity, and even location. This concept ensures you stay hydrated by holding you accountable and reminding you to take a sip.

Replace Your Personal Trainer - Providing all the perks of a trainer without the hefty price tag, the Nike+ Training Club is for those who need some guidance at the gym but prefer to work at their own pace. Just enter the body area you want to focus on and how much time you can commit to the workout and the app will present you with an exercise plan, complete with quick how-to videos for each move.

Give Back Or Get Paid To Work Out - Do good and feel good with the Charity Miles app, which lets you



generate money for deserving charities with every mile you run (or bike). Maybe you'd be more motivated to break a sweat if doing so put money in your own pocket. Sweatcoin lets you do just that. A fitness app that tracks your steps and exercise then pays in rewards. You can use the app's currency to redeem products, services, or experiences.

Affordable Healthy Lifestyle - If you're not sure you're ready to commit to a pricey wearable yet, Argus and Pacer are free apps that track your steps anytime you have your phone with you. And be honest, when don't you have your phone with you? A one-stop-shop for all your fitness needs, Argus also tracks your meals, weight, and sleep quality.

PLUG-IN TO GREAT SLEEP

Sleep Apps - Sleep-related apps exist for smartphones that use movement to track sleep and wakefulness. There are apps to teach relaxation techniques, play soothing sounds and even offer sleep advice.

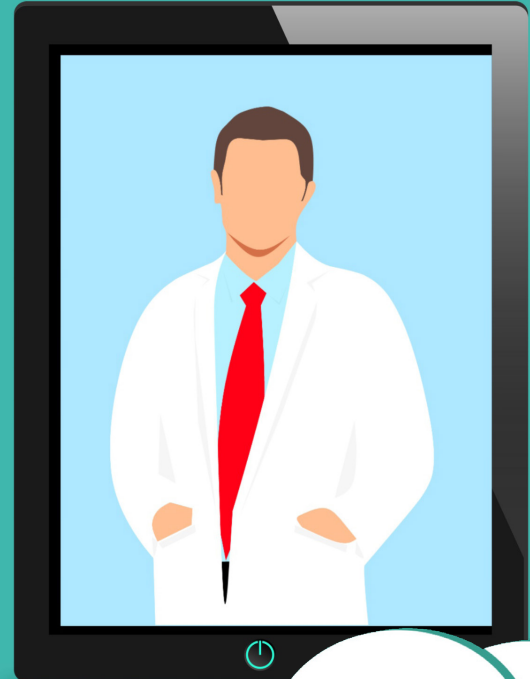
Devices - iFit Sleep HR will track the quality of your rest by monitoring your heart rate, respiratory rate, and nightly sleeping patterns. It also has a 'FreshWake' smart alarm system that will wake you up at the ideal part of your sleep cycle.



Smart Beds and Mattresses - These can record the same information that would be captured by a wearable, either with a pad (such as Nokia Sleep or Beddit) or integrated into the mattress itself (such as Sleep Number 360). The bed may be able to raise the head to alleviate snoring (like via the Smart Nora) or reduce the risk of sleep apnea.

External Bedside Monitoring - External monitoring devices are meant to be placed on the nightstand. These survey the sleep environment, collecting information about sleep and potentially extending interventions. For example the SleepScore Max or sonar technology on your smartphone can be used to monitor breathing patterns from up to one meter away.

Get The Most From Your Telehealth Appointments



1. Have Questions

Written Down In Advance

List your symptoms, medicines and questions. Be ready with as much detail about your current condition as possible.

2. Set Up The Technology

Test the telemedicine service on your mobile device or computer before your visit. If possible, log on the day before the telemedicine appointment begins to be sure technology is working properly.

3. Eliminate Distractions

Go to a quiet, well-lit place away from people who don't need to be with you during the visit. Turn off the radio, TV or any noisy appliance.

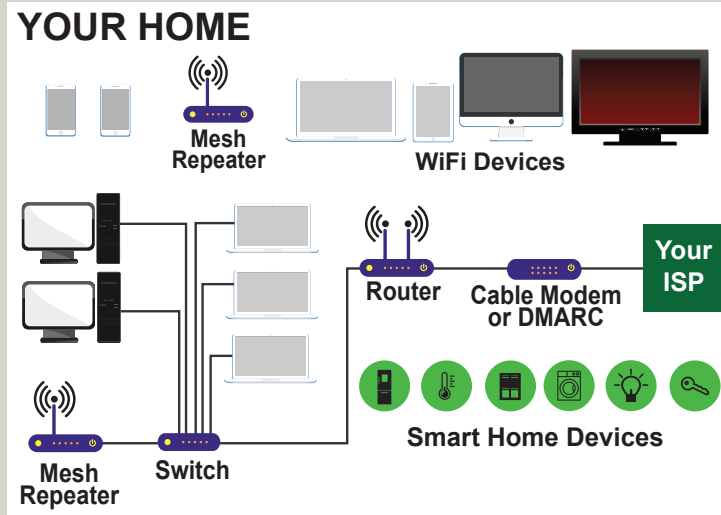


The Fiber Download

Your Home Network

The previous Fiber Download articles focused on bandwidth and connections, however your personal in home network is equally important to successful internet communications. Network performance between your computer/device and your router is up to you.

Pre-pandemic, many home networks were simple: a computer, and maybe a TV, connected directly to the router and then to the ISP connection. Very quickly those networks have evolved into a complex system similar to this diagram. Your home may now have multiple computers and wireless devices connected to a switch, before it heads off to your router. And the growing number of household WiFi enabled devices also requires the need for something known as a Mesh Repeater.



Optimizing your home network often starts with a speed test that measures performance from your machine to the test server that rests between your ISP and the world. There are several sites that can run this test for you such as fast.com or speedtest.net. Keep in mind that your most accurate result will come from a computer that is direct-wired to your router. Testing from a wireless device, or a computer that is competing with other devices in the home that may be downloading updates or backing up data to the cloud can impact the results. If you need to optimize your home's internet productivity, consider running wires from your router to your desk(s). To start, look for gigabit Ethernet devices, and that includes your router. MVlink's routers are designed to manage the bandwidth options we provide, and our team

is ready to help you troubleshoot if problems arise. Purchasing your own router limits the amount of help we can provide simply due to all the variables in each home/business. Normally, a router that is already a few years old should be upgraded simply because older routers can't handle much video throughput.

As you optimize your home's system, don't forget about WiFi performance. As your ISP, we are focused on the connection from your home to the internet. It is your responsibility to set up the WiFi throughout your house, and it can be tricky. WiFi is essentially a radio signal so appliances or several walls can interfere with a signal. MVlink offers something called a Mesh unit that will help you reach the areas in your home that are the farthest from your router. The concept with a Mesh unit is that rather than WiFi radiating from one point, a mesh of router access points creates a blanket of WiFi throughout your home.

As we end this series there are a few key starting points as you build the system that works best for you. Begin by determining the bandwidth you need and compare it against the package you purchase. It's easy to upgrade to MVlink's next greater bandwidth if necessary. If cost is an issue, these tips may help:

- Think of your WiFi router as the hub of your personal network. If you aren't getting good signals in some rooms of your home, set up desks or work areas near your router
- Set allowable times for streaming TV, gaming or using YouTube for recreation. If streaming media isn't allowed, except for school or work, you'll instantly increase your available bandwidth
- Whether you are using MVlink's router, or your own, you might consider purchasing an Ethernet cable. Most computers and routers have an available Ethernet port where you can connect the cable between the two devices
- Turn off all automatic back-ups/updates and schedule them to run after work/learn hours
- Set YouTube to a lower resolution default setting

As a member-owned cooperative, we are always putting our energy to work for you. While we can't troubleshoot every computer every day, we hope these Fiber Download features provide you some understanding and assistance as you adapt to the 'new normal' of working and learning from home.

Sites to Checkout for 2021

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

- www.globotreks.com
45+ best virtual tours around the world.
- www.beebom.com
Cool And Interesting Websites to Kill Time

Glossary of Terms

Ethernet: Cables that are used to connect computers or devices together.

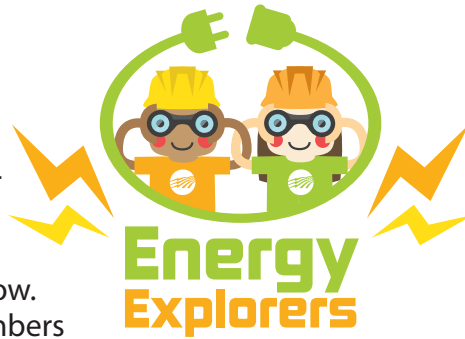
ONT(Optical Network Termination): A device that converts the optical fiber signal to a digital signal and passes it through to a router.

Router: Connect multiple devices to the Internet, and connect the devices to each other.



2021 Energy Efficiency Calendar

There are so many ways you can save energy! Saving energy helps reduce your family's monthly bills – and it helps our environment. Change your energy use habits by following the monthly tips below. Keep this calendar to remind family members to be energy efficient throughout the year.



JANUARY

Turn off ceiling fans when you leave room.



FEBRUARY

Instead of turning up the heat, put on an extra layer of clothing or stay cozy under a blanket.

MARCH

Turn off lights when you leave a room.



APRIL

Ask an adult to help you plant a tree to help shade your home in the summer.

MAY

Decorate your backyard or porch with solar-powered lights.

JUNE

Take short showers instead of baths.



JULY

Dry heavy linens outside on a clothesline instead of using the dryer.

AUGUST

Ask an adult to help you schedule a reminder to change the A/C filter every 60-90 days.

SEPTEMBER

Turn off running water while brushing your teeth.



OCTOBER

Unplug energy vampires, like chargers, gaming consoles and cable/satellite boxes.

NOVEMBER

Remind family members to use cold water when washing clothes.



DECEMBER

Decorate your home with energy-saving LED holiday lights.

Watts The Answer?

- COVID-19 has taught us many things and allowed us to prove to ourselves that we can meet the needs of our _____ in ways that don't look the same as what we have always done.
- Here are a few ways _____ and health are coming together.
- As your ISP, we are focused on the _____ from your home to the internet.

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

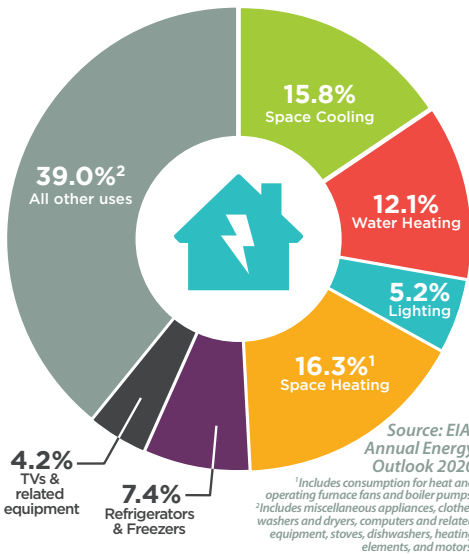
Address

November winners:
Betty Wurst, Wyoming
Steve Rutz, Farley



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Anamosa, Iowa 52205

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How Americans Use Electricity

The latest data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows the combined use of clothes washers and dryers, computers, dishwashers, small appliances and other electrical equipment (noted as “all other uses” below) accounts for nearly 40% of electricity consumption in American homes.

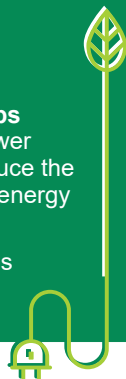
Source: EIA, Annual Energy Outlook 2020
¹Includes consumption for heat and operating furnace fans and boiler pumps.
²Includes miscellaneous appliances, clothes washers and dryers, computers and related equipment, stoves, dishwashers, heating elements, and motors.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Replace standard power strips with advanced power strips to save energy. Advanced power strips look like ordinary power strips, but they have built-in features that are designed to reduce the amount of energy used by standby electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use (also known as phantom load).

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) estimates that the average home loses \$200 annually to energy wasted by phantom load.

Source: www.nrel.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.

Watts Current

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