

Updates and Anniversaries



By Michael P. McMahon

New Building Update

I am announcing a couple anniversaries with this October issue of the *WEC News*. First, it has already been one full year since the announcement of plans to start working on a new headquarters for Vernon Electric Cooperative.

Though there had been talk for quite awhile about the need for a new building, it wasn't until October of 2007 that we decided we couldn't put it off any longer.

The Vernon Electric Cooperative Board of Directors and Building Committee celebrated the ground breaking for the new facility on August 27, 2008. Dirt moving and ground leveling is being accomplished in earnest as contractors take advantage of good weather when they can to get the building up and enclosed as soon as possible. Part of the excavation for the new building will include trenches for a super-efficient geothermal heat pump to heat and cool the building using the solar energy stored by the earth. We hope to have pictures of the process for you in upcoming issues and on our website.

E-Bill & AutoPay

Second, it has now been one full year since we began offering the option of receiving your electric bill electronically through our E-Bill program. Every day we get new members signing up for the program. Already we have over 500 members receiving their electric bill electronically, saving the co-op hundreds of dollars a month in processing and postage fees. If all the members of the co-op took advantage of E-Bill, we could save thousands of dollars a month, which would go directly back to our members since Vernon Electric Cooperative operates as a not-for-profit organization.

You can sign up quickly for E-Bill by visiting our homepage at www.vernonelectric.org. Simply follow the directions after clicking on the E-Bill link. We will give you a \$5 credit on your next electric bill for signing up! Combine it with the Automatic Payment Plan and receive another \$5 off.

E-Bill provides a paper-free billing statement while the Automatic Payment Plan provides paper-free payment of your electric bill. The combination of both makes life a whole lot easier.



Vernon Electric's Board of Directors break ground for the construction of a new headquarters building (pictured below). L to R: Bud Nemecek, Dan Korn, Orlan Bakkum, Bernie Hornby, Jim Goodman, Richard Nemecek, Dave Dregne, Dave Olson, Herb Kramer, and Dennis Kelbel.



Our Energy, Our Future

Lately, you have been hearing information about "Our Energy, Our Future." This is a grass-roots campaign to get our legislators to start thinking about how their energy decisions affect our rural communities. I want you to start the conversation now with our elected officials by going to the website www.ourenergy.coop. Here are the questions that need to be asked:

- Experts say that our nation's growing electricity needs will soon go well beyond what renewable, conservation, and efficiency can provide; what is your plan to make sure we have the electricity we'll need in the future?
- What are you doing to fully fund the research required to make emissions-free electric plants an affordable reality?
- Balancing electricity needs and environmental goals will be difficult. How much is all this going to increase my electric bill, and what will you do to make it affordable? ▶



Open House

I hope you all get a chance to come to our Open House on October 10 to help us celebrate October as National Co-op Month. As you may know, our area is ripe with vibrant cooperatives, and now we come together to celebrate a form of business that provides services and products at an affordable price—even in rural areas. This should be the last Open House we ever have in our present building. By this time next year we should be hosting our Open House in our new building just on the edge of town in Westby. ■

VEC OPEN HOUSE

Friday, October 10

Come help us celebrate Co-op Month at the Vernon Electric Cooperative office in Westby from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Displays and Activities:

- Electric/gas hybrid cars on display from International Motorwerks
- Rural well water screening for nitrates by the Vernon County Land & Water Conservation Department (*Bring in about a pint of fresh water in a clean glass or plastic container.*)
- Blood pressure (free) and cholesterol (\$10) screening by Vernon Memorial Health Care
- Electric grills
- Surge protection equipment
- Uninterruptible battery backup units for computers
- Compact fluorescent lighting (CFL) and light emitting diode (LED) display and free CFL bulbs to attendees
- Door prizes
- Refreshments

Co-opportunities!

Dairyland Procures Major Biomass Energy Contract

Dairyland Power Cooperative has executed a power purchase agreement with a subsidiary of DTE Energy Services, Inc. to purchase the full 40 mw expected electrical output of a proposed new biomass power plant located in Cassville. The facility will burn wood waste to generate renewable energy for the members of the Dairyland system.

A subsidiary of DTE Energy Services will own and operate the facility, which is the former E.J. Stoneman Power Plant. The plant will be converted from burning coal to instead utilizing wood-waste biomass for fuel. The power purchase agreement has been submitted to the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for approval.

The proposed plant is scheduled to come on-line June 1, 2010. Its 40 mw of biomass renewable generation will be enough to power 28,000 residential homes in the Dairyland system.

“We are very pleased to be part of an alliance with DTE Energy Services that benefits both our members and the environment. This renewable resource is a winner on all levels, as it recycles waste wood for use as fuel to generate electricity for a very significant number of energy users in our cooperative system,” said Bill Berg, Dairyland president and CEO.

DTE Energy Services, Inc., headquartered in Ann Arbor, Michigan, acquires, develops, builds, owns, and operates projects for large, energy-intensive industrial customers. The company is a subsidiary of DTE Energy Company, a diversified energy company involved in the development and management of energy-related businesses and services nationwide. Visit www.dtees.com for more information.

With headquarters in La Crosse, Dairyland provides wholesale electricity to 25 member distribution cooperatives and 19 municipal utilities. A Touchstone Energy Cooperative, Dairyland’s service area encompasses 62 counties and four states (Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois). Dairyland’s generation resources include coal, natural gas, hydro, wind, landfill gas, and animal waste. For more information, please visit www.dairyland.com. ■

Take the **ENERGY STAR** Change a Light Pledge

Vernon Electric has continued to promote energy conservation by joining the new ENERGY STAR® Change the World, Start with Energy Star campaign this year.

“After meeting our goal for the 2007/08 Change a Light program, we have joined a growing community of corporations, utilities, manufacturers, individuals, and countless others who have made a firm commitment to change the world one energy-saving step at a time,” said Dave Maxwell, director of marketing & communications.

As part of this national movement, Vernon Electric Co-op has again volunteered to encourage 100 individuals to pledge to replace at least one incandescent bulb or fixture at home with one that has earned the government’s



ENERGY STAR label as a first step to preserve our energy resources and environment. One hundred pledges could save up to \$3,000 over the lifetime of the bulbs and prevent 450,000 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions. And to make it easier to take the pledge, Vernon Electric is offering up to a \$2 rebate on CFL (12 max.) and LED (exp. 11/30/08) lights.

“Like many organizations, we want to do our part to create a better environment,” said Maxwell. “Participating in this national campaign is both easy and effective. We are proud to spread the word about the simple steps individuals in our communities can take to make a difference.”

Vernon Electric will take an active role in encouraging individuals to make a simple, yet meaningful commitment by taking the ENERGY STAR Change a Light Pledge. With lighting accounting for about 20 percent of the typical home’s electricity use, switching to energy-efficient options is a significant way to reduce greenhouse gases, save energy, and protect the environment for future generations. To be part of Vernon Electric’s efforts, take the pledge online at www.energystar.gov. You can also track on this website how our members did the last several years in taking the pledge.

“Committing to change the world takes less time and energy than you might think. In fact, it can start with simply changing a light,” said Wendy Reed of the Environmental Protection Agency. “Organizations like Vernon Electric Cooperative are an important part of the ENERGY STAR Change a Light community who have committed their time to help us spread the word about the ENERGY STAR Change a Light Pledge. We are proud to work with them and with the thousands of Americans who’ve already taken the pledge to make a difference for this generation and those to come.”

The ENERGY STAR Change the World Pledge is already having a dramatic impact. Individuals who pledged to change a light in 2008 alone have the potential to save millions in energy costs and prevent many millions of pounds of greenhouse gas emissions.

The ENERGY STAR Change the World, Start with Energy Star campaign is a national challenge sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy to encourage Americans to consider their energy use and switch to light bulbs that have earned the government’s ENERGY STAR for energy efficiency. ■

Get Paid to be Energy Efficient

Use the form below to get rebates on Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs) and Light Emitting Diode (LED) holiday lights.

LED and CFL Incentive Form

Vernon Electric Cooperative
110 N. Main St. Westby, WI 54667

Attached is copy of my receipt for:

LED holiday light string purchased between 8/1/08 and 11/30/08
Qty. ___ x \$2

CFL bulb (12 bulbs max. Rebate not to exceed lamp cost)
Qty. ___ x \$2

Name _____

Acct. # _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Please attach a copy of your receipt. Once your application is approved, a credit will appear on your next electric statement for the lamps you purchased. Rebate form must be submitted by 12/31/08.

Research Before Buying to Save on Heating

Skyrocketing prices for liquid propane, fuel oil, and natural gas have opened the door for new companies to try and get a piece of your energy dollar. Lately we have been seeing full-page ads taken out in reputable newspapers and magazines (even this one), radio ads from reputable radio talk-show hosts, infomercials on TV, and colorful brochures coming in our mailboxes. Some of these products may be good, especially if used in the right application, but be careful. Do some research and take your time with your purchase. Some of the high-pressure marketing techniques can be very convincing to get you to buy a product you don't really need or at a higher price than what it is worth.

Electric Heaters

A watt is a watt is a watt. 1,000 watts is equal to 1 kilowatt (kw). One kilowatt used for one hour is one kilowatt-hour (kwh). You are billed for electricity based on how many kwhs you use. One kw contains 3,413 British Thermal Units (Btus)—no more, no less.

A common size electric space heater is 1,500 watts. A 1,500-watt space heater will put out 5,120 Btus. Whether you spent \$400 on your space heater or \$40, you will get the same amount of heat out of a 1,500-watt space heater. Now, a \$400 space heater might have a few more bells and whistles, but it will not be more efficient and it will not cost you less to operate. And, it doesn't matter if it is convective, radiant, or conductive. Please keep these facts in mind when purchasing an electric heater.

Radiant Barriers

Radiant barriers are an effective method for reducing radiant heat transfer in the attic and increasing comfort in climates that are dominated by cooling loads, such as in the southern parts of the United States. Since Wisconsin is dominated by heating loads, radiant barriers are less practical here even though there are people out there selling this product who will tell you otherwise.

Numerous field tests have shown that, depending on the amount of existing conventional insulation and other factors, radiant barriers are effective in reducing cooling bills and possibly heating bills as well. However, there is no standardized method for testing the effectiveness of radiant barriers in reducing heating and cooling bills.

All radiant barriers use reflective foil to block radiant heat transfer from the roof. In an attic, a properly installed radiant barrier that faces an air space can block up to 95

percent of the heat radiating down from a hot roof. This helps reduce heat gain in the conditioned space due to solar radiation in the summer (a significant driver for cooling load). The energy and cost savings depend on numerous factors, including the specific application (that is, ceiling or floor-mounted), square footage of attic space, amount of existing insulation and ventilation in the attic, color of the roof, thermostat settings, outdoor temperature, and tightness of the building envelope. The greatest opportunities for energy savings from a radiant barrier are in applications where the existing insulation is minimal. However, the same can be said about adding insulation, which benefits the customer in both hot and cold seasons.

As for placement, radiant barriers may be installed in a couple of different configurations. The easiest installation is on the attic floor, which involves laying the radiant barrier on top of the existing attic insulation. Another way to install a radiant barrier is to attach it near the roof.

Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and the Florida Solar Energy Center (FSEC) tested radiant barriers in the late '80s and early '90s at houses in Tennessee and Florida. ORNL tests showed that in attics with R-19 insulation, radiant barriers reduced the cooling load resulting from heat transfer through the ceiling by 16 to 44 percent. Since ceiling heat gains only represent about 20 percent of a house's total cooling load, a radiant barrier will reduce cooling energy consumption by about 3 to 9 percent (multiply the percentage of the total cooling load by the percentage of the reduced ceiling heat flow). As the FSEC site says, "If your roof accounts for less than 20 % of your cooling load, then an attic radiant barrier can't possibly save more than 20% [as some manufacturers claim] on your bills." The FSEC estimates that a radiant barrier can reduce the total annual cooling load for a house in Florida by 8 to 12 percent. Therefore, it's reasonable to assume that a house in Wisconsin would save even less. ■



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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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