



# CLEARING THE WAY FOR SAFETY

By Mark See, Director of Operations

## Ensuring safety and electric reliability

Vernon Electric Cooperative owns and operates more than 1,300 miles of distribution lines, providing power to approximately 10,000 members. We know that electric reliability is important to you. By keeping the right-of-way free of trees and vegetation, we help ensure the safety and reliability of our power system.

## What are Rights-of-Way?

A right-of-way is a corridor or pathway of land that Vernon Electric's lines follow. These rights-of-way provide Vernon Electric an operational safety zone between the wire and trees, buildings, or other objects. When they are kept clear they also provide safe access for line crews to maintain, repair, or improve the lines and poles.

## Why vegetation is removed

Vegetation is cleared to maintain reliability and shorten the length of outages, and provide for public safety and the safety of the workers who need to work on utility lines.

## Who does the clearing?

Vernon Electric has a right-of-way clearing crew that works year-round. This year, as in past years, we have contracted Zielies Tree Service Inc. to help clear some areas in the Towns of Forest, Hillsboro, and Union (Hillsboro Substation North, East, and South circuits).



## How we work with you

Vernon Electric generally tries to give landowners advance notice that right-of-way maintenance is scheduled in their area. Zielies is also contacting some members.

## How is the right-of-way cleared?

The right-of-way is cleared by removing trees, side trimming, mowing, and applying herbicides.

## What happens to the cut wood?

Logs are the property of the landowner. Branches and small debris in wooded areas will be ground up using mechanical means (i.e., mowing, chipping) and are left to decompose and return nutrients to the soil. In maintained yard areas, branches and small debris are chipped and removed unless otherwise requested by the member.



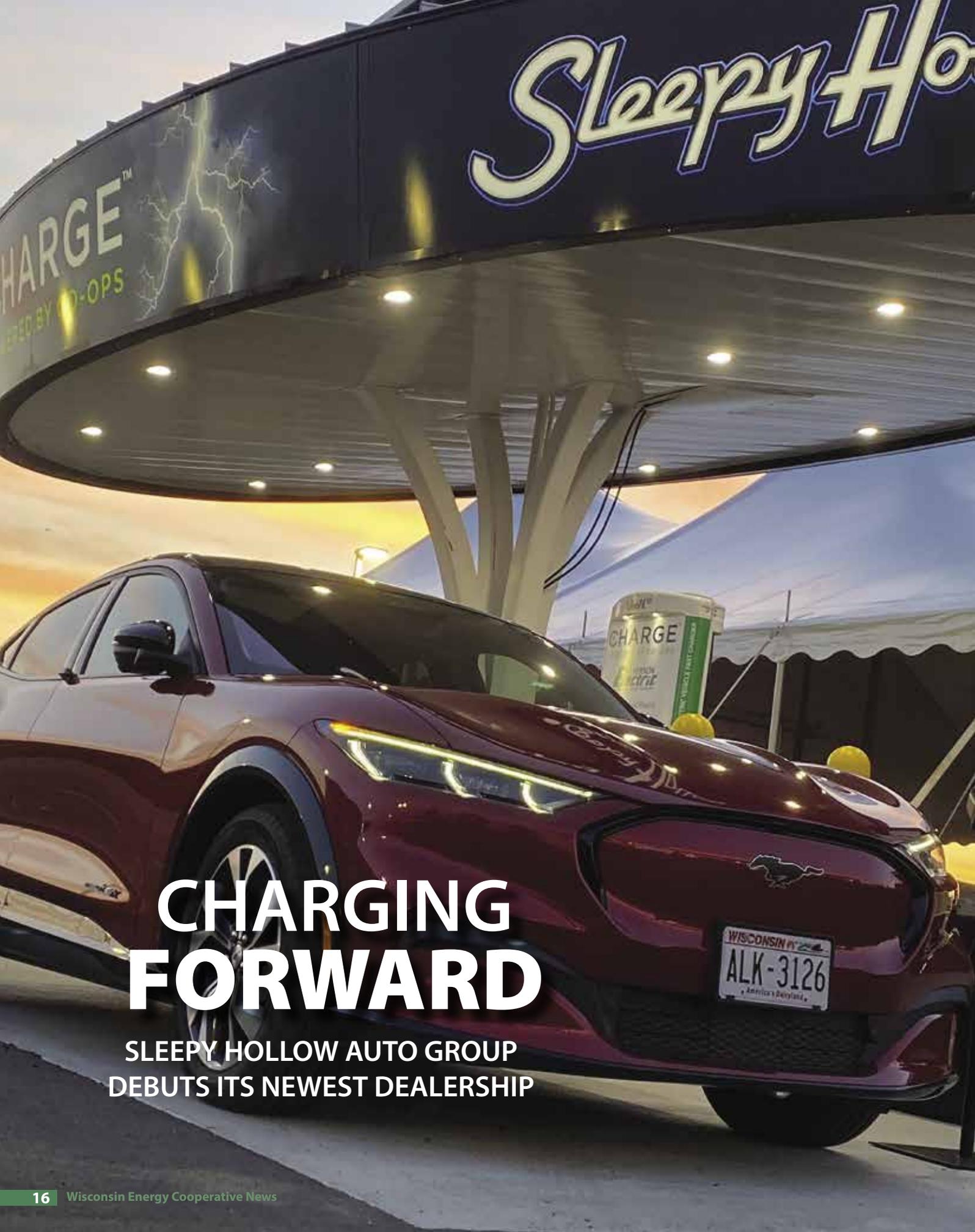
## Cleared lines = better service

When you see crews clearing trees and brush near power lines, know that we are doing so because:

- Tree and foliage overgrowth can interfere with power distribution
- Power lines can give off a spark or arc that may ignite a touching or close branch
- The lights in your house may flicker when tree branches brush power lines during high winds
- Stormy weather can cause nearby limbs to break off and land on power lines
- Unobstructed power lines make it quicker and safer for line workers to maintain equipment and restore power

Badgerland Utility Solutions will be inspecting VEC's underground electric utility enclosures ("green boxes") around the Liberty Pole Substation feeder-circuits during the month of June. Once the Liberty Pole Sub is complete, they will move on to the Viola Substation feeder-circuits. They may need to access our rights-of-way on private property. Badgerland employees drive marked vehicles and carry employee identification.





# CHARGING FORWARD

SLEEPY HOLLOW AUTO GROUP  
DEBUTS ITS NEWEST DEALERSHIP



By Leah Call

There was a lot to celebrate at the May 6 grand opening of the new Sleepy Hollow Ford dealership in Viroqua. It was a celebration of one of the community’s key employers, now an anchor tenant in the new Viroqua Business Park off Highway 14 on the city’s north side. It also heralded the successful collaboration between Vernon Electric Cooperative and Sleepy Hollow, along with city, county, and state organizations.

“This really is about the partnerships between a lot of people to make great things happen,” noted Sleepy Hollow founder and owner LaVon “Spanky” Felton.

Those partnerships resulted in not only the development of the 50-acre

business park, but also the innovative energy-sustainable design of Sleepy Hollow’s newest structure. Included in that design are rooftop solar panels that can annually offset up to 100% of the energy needs for the dealership and an electric vehicle charging station.

Under a canopy with the words “CHARGE Powered by Co-ops,” the charging station is the first of its kind in the state. The 50-kilowatt DC, Level 3 charging units can charge a car in 30-45 minutes at a cost of approximately \$10-\$20 per charge. Vernon Electric Cooperative is a founding member of CHARGE EV, LLC, a Midwestern charging network made up of 29 electric cooperatives with a goal of advancing electric vehicle charging capability throughout the Midwest with a focus on rural areas. Currently CHARGE EV



Michelle and Spanky Felton at the new Sleepy Hollow Ford dealership on the north side of Viroqua.



L to R: Shannon Clark, Richland Electric CEO; Spanky Felton, Sleepy Hollow Ford owner; Dana Bolwerk, Dairyland communications & marketing specialist, and Craig Buros, Vernon Electric CEO, celebrate the grand opening of the CHARGE EV fast chargers at Sleepy Hollow Ford.

has grown to nearly 100 electric cooperatives across the country.

The EV (Electric Vehicle) charging infrastructure at Sleepy Hollow came about after Vernon Electric Cooperative CEO & General Manager Craig Buros connected with Felton and discussions evolved on the future of electric vehicles and infrastructure needed to support it. Combining the expertise of the cooperatives on EV charging and the ingenuity of Felton, this partnership has developed one of the most innovative charging stations you will find anywhere.

“I have to give Craig Buros all the credit in the world,” said Felton. “He has great vision.”

Sleepy Hollow is also visionary when it comes to electric vehicles. The auto dealer sells and services electric vehicles and has 12 electric cars in its rental program. The addition of the charging station goes one step further for Felton, expanding access to electric vehicle charging for his customers and others.

“If it wasn’t for electric cooperatives coming together to pool their resources to create and develop CHARGE EV, LLC, and local business partners like Felton, our rural areas would get left behind as the electric vehicle infrastructure and network grows. If we want folks to be able to come

through, or visit our area in their electric vehicles, we're going to have to have the infrastructure to accommodate them, or they won't come", Buros said. "Now, if folks want to drive their EV from Madison to La Crosse, they can come through Viroqua instead of taking the longer route using the interstate

"Now, if folks want to drive their EV from Madison to La Crosse, they can come through Viroqua instead of taking the longer route using the interstate, and still feel comfortable having places to charge their EV if they need to."

—Craig Buros, VEC CEO & General Manager

and feel comfortable knowing that they have places to charge their EV if they need to. I would like to give a big thank you to Sleepy Hollow, Dairyland Power, and our cooperative partnership with Richland Electric and their CEO, Shannon Clark, who made this project a huge success."

## Humble Beginnings

Sleepy Hollow Auto Sales began in 1987 at the end of a driveway near Viola. That driveway led to Felton's home farm, Sleepy Hollow Dairy Farm, where he milked cows with his father and brother.

"It was in the middle of nowhere, but it worked," said Felton, the brains behind that first venture. "Then in 1992, my dad and my brother sold the dairy cows, bought beef, and kept the little car lot on the farm. They ran that until five or six years ago."

After college, Felton built the first Sleepy Hollow used car facility



in Viroqua in 1995. The business accelerated, adding a Chevrolet/Buick/GMC dealership in 2007; Dodge in 2009; and purchasing an existing Ford dealership in Viroqua in 2013.

Today Sleepy Hollow employs 130 people at its dealerships in Viroqua and one dealership in Caledonia, Minnesota. "We have been able to bring on talented people and keep that talent," said Felton. "That has allowed us to grow and flourish."

Felton runs the business with his wife, Michelle, who handles the books and payroll. Their son Sawyer, currently studying electrical engineering at Western Technical College, shares his father's drive to innovate. "He is very interested in electric cars and battery technology," said Felton. "He was influential in making me really want to jump into this."

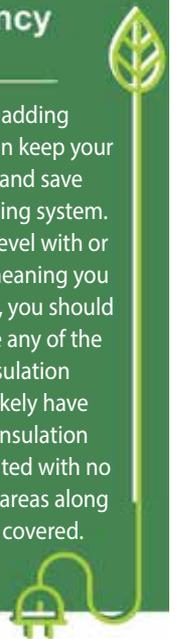
Not afraid to jump into the electric vehicle trend, Felton's Sleepy Hollow crew often advises other dealerships wanting to replicate their efforts. "As a

rule, you are better off being proactive than reactive," said Felton. "You can't be afraid to move on the cutting edge...with electric vehicles, we're keeping our foot on the accelerator."

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Even in summer months, adding insulation to your attic can keep your home more comfortable and save energy used by your cooling system. If your attic insulation is level with or below your floor joists (meaning you can easily see your joists), you should add more. If you can't see any of the floor joist because the insulation is well above them, you likely have enough insulation. Attic insulation should be evenly distributed with no low spots. Make sure the areas along the eaves are adequately covered.

Source: [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov)



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