

WATTS *Current*

April 2023

For Our Members

MVEC Director Elections

Did you know that as a member of Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative you have the opportunity to serve on its governing Board of Directors? Since 1935, MVEC has been owned by its members and governed by a Board of Directors who are members themselves. The Board of Directors is responsible for representing the members and overseeing the company they own. Nine directors serve on the board, each for a three-year term. Each director is nominated by a nominating committee and elected by the Cooperative's members at the annual meeting (scheduled for Thursday, August 17, 2023). MVEC's service territory is divided into four regions (visit our website for a map). Two directors represent each region and one director serves At-Large.

To serve as a Director, an individual must be a member of the Cooperative and reside within the region they are elected to represent. Director candidates must not have been employed by the Cooperative in the previous two years or be closely related to an employee or incumbent director; nor be employed by or have a material financial interest in any competing enterprise or entity selling supplies or services to the Cooperative.

Directors must be willing to devote time and effort to attend and actively participate in monthly board meetings, training classes and/or meetings sponsored by Cooperative-affiliated organizations. Directors are encouraged to attain National Rural Electric Cooperative's (NRECA) Credentialed Cooperative Director and/or Board Leadership Certificate upon election to the Board.

Look for more details on this year's director election in the May issue of Watts Current. If you are interested in learning more about the requirements for serving on the Board of Directors, please contact MVEC's office at 800-927-6068.

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*Drawing for
Gift Cards*

OPEN HOUSE

Learn about MVEC's High-Speed Fiber Internet

Thunder Hills Country Club

16682 Thunder Hills Dr., Peosta

Thursday, April 27th 5pm - 7pm

*Join
Us!
FREE Event*



MVEC.COOP/MVLINK-INTERNET



Weeds Got You? Think Goats.

As spring arrives at MVEC, one of the challenges we face is ditch burns that damage our power poles and fiber internet. While we understand the annoyance of thick overgrowth and the desire to clear it out, ditch burning can be very dangerous and costly. Since you can't fence fire, MVEC members, Tim and Peg Harbaugh, have a great alternative – fence goats!



Example from Peg Harbaugh on effect goats can have.

Harbaugh's Cox Springs Farm is located outside Peosta, where they manage a herd of nearly 200 meat goats. Tim and Peg purchased their farm in 2014 with the goal of providing their children the opportunity to enjoy farm life and learn the value of hard work.

With all four children involved in FFA and 4-H, the Harbaughs began to accumulate goats and wanted a plan for the animals. A friend from Washington State suggested renting out the goats to graze, something the Harbaughs had never heard of. Out west, goats are used for wildfire mitigation, clearing flammable underbrush. This has been common practice for many years.

Peg did some research and found Ames, IA-headquartered Goats On The Go® (GOTG), a network of independent, local, targeted grazing affiliates. The goats are used for "targeted" or "prescribed" grazing, to help customers knock out brush and manage invasive plants and overgrowth – like poison ivy, wild parsnip, honeysuckle, thistle and multiflora rose – by doing what they love and do best, eating.

The Harbaughs signed on in the fall of 2017 and became Goats On The Go® Dubuque, the licensed affiliate for Dubuque, Delaware and Jackson counties. Cox Springs Farm's herd, their company and opportunities have grown exponentially since then. They were the 5th affiliate of GOTG, which now boasts more than 60 affiliates across the US and internationally.

While goats are cute, Peg is quick to point out they are more than just pretty faces – they are extremely hard and efficient workers. Since they are agile, and can navigate any terrain, goats are able to clear areas not accessible by large machinery or people. Additionally, using goats is safer for humans and better for the environment, than using machines, harsh chemicals or fire.



New "kid" born earlier in the week

"Before getting into this business, I didn't know what goats could do and how underutilized they truly are," Peg Harbaugh said. "Now, when we are driving, all I see is goat 'food' in ditches, side hills, bluffs and woods. I want people to know they can use goats to clean up their properties. The work they do is amazing in so many ways. It's really a vegetative solution you can be excited – instead of worried – about."

Don't feel bad for the goats having to eat noxious weeds – they actually prefer them and they're ideal for their diet! To settle their own minds and curiosity, the Harbaughs have had several plant species tested for nutritional value. Much to their delight, most plants the goats are eating – while at work – are better for them than the best hay money can buy!

Did you know goats are the only animal species on the planet that doesn't "pass" a viable seed?

Unlike other grazing animals, goats' digestive process destroys the seeds they ingest. So, unlike other animals, they don't redeposit a seed that will grow again. This makes goats a unique and wonderful solution to virtually eliminating unwanted, invasive plants.



Goat at "work"



Most of Cox Springs Farm’s customers are private landowners but they also service area businesses and government organizations. They want to work with municipalities and utility companies, as well. The Harbaughs use 2-3 herds, of 40 goats each, to graze. On average, it takes 40 goats just 5-7 days to “clear” an acre of land. “Targeted” grazing offers a lot of flexibility. It can occur in nearly any space – large or small – with the fence defining what will or will not be eaten. Grazing season begins about May 15 and goes to October 15.

While goats’ playful personalities might make them seem like a novelty, targeted goat grazing is a viable weed mitigation solution and a serious business. “We saw an opportunity for our family and for the environment with targeted goat grazing. If this method wasn’t legitimate and truly good for this earth, we wouldn’t do it,” Peg said.


The vision Tim and Peg had for their family has come to fruition with the kids working alongside them to care for the goats, chickens and show cattle on the farm. While they are working livestock, the goats are well cared for and close to their human caretakers. Every goat has a name. Yes, every single one. The Harbaughs watch over their herd carefully and use cameras to monitor the does (goat mothers) who are “kidding” (giving birth), to ensure things go smoothly. The kids – the human kind – are able to help with delivery, if needed, which Peg says is a great experience for them.

After years of helping, the Harbaugh's eldest son, Eli, now manages much of the grazing business in the summer months with the help of the younger children. In the fall, he will go to ISU to study Ag Business; a perfect fit to carry on what Tim and Peg have started.

Cox Springs Farm is currently booking for the 2023 grazing season. If you are interested in learning more about their operation, or how goats might help you, go to: **CoxSpringsFarm.com** or **GoatsOnTheGo.com**, email **Goats@CoxSpringsFarm.com** or call Tim at 563-580-1212. Follow them on Facebook (**@coxspringsfarm**) for updates and videos of the goats hard at work (and play)!



The Harbaugh family



RECare

You Care, We Care, RECare, a way for members to help members

MVEC’s RECare program allows members to contribute to a fund that assists low-income members with weatherization to help improve their heating and cooling costs or supplement energy assistance. Funds collected are distributed by local community action agencies.

Yes, I care and want to contribute.

I will make a one-time contribution to RECare. My check is closed.

I will contribute \$_____ per month to RECare.

I understand that this amount will be automatically added to my monthly electric bill. (Even one dollar shows you care.) Monthly pledges may be cancelled at any time by notifying MVEC in writing.

Name: _____

Address: _____


City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Account Number: _____

Email: _____

Please mail to MVEC or include with your electric bill payment.



Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative

109 N. Huber Street, Anamosa IA 52205



Member Owned – Patronage Dividends

One of the benefits of membership in a cooperative is that you, as both a customer and a member, own a portion of the business. That ownership has value, not only in reliable services and affordable rates, but also in patronage dividend earnings. As not-for-profit entities, cooperatives return margins to their members in excess of those needed for daily operations in the form of patronage dividends. Calculating the dividend amount starts when your Board of Directors reviews the year-end financials and determines the amount of revenue collected that was not needed to cover the costs of providing services during the year. Excess revenues (or margins) are divided among the members based on the total dollar amount of each member’s electric bill during the year. The resulting figure is the allocation earned by each member as a percentage of their business during the year. At their March board meeting, the Board of Directors approved allocating \$1,113,625 of the 2022 margins back to the membership. Each member’s individual share of the allocated margin will appear as a message on the April energy bill. This is only a notice of allocation and cannot be treated as cash or deducted from your bill. The Cooperative retains these allocated margins to operate the Cooperative until such time as they can be retired (or paid) in cash to the members. Some members may recall receiving a dividend payment or bill credit last fall when MVEC retired \$800,000 from allocations made for the years 2007 and 2012.

Please note that it is the policy of the Cooperative to refund patronage dividends to estates of deceased persons who were patrons of the Cooperative. Notify us if you know of a member or former member who has passed away. Also, keep the Cooperative informed of your current address to assure notification of margin allocations and patronage dividend payments. If you feel you are owed a dividend please call 1-800-927-6068.

Bylaws Available

Copies of the Bylaws of Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative are available on our website and at the Cooperative’s office. If you would like a copy of the Bylaws, please pick one up, or contact us to have one mailed to you.

March MVEC Board Meeting Update

- Eide Bailly staff presented an overview of the 2022 financial audit.
- Directors accepted and approved the 2022 audit report.
- Discussed level of participation in local and state economic development groups.
- Approved the allocation of 2022 margins to reserves and member patronage.
- Discussed plans for the 2023 Annual Meeting and July Member Appreciation night.
- Discussed and reviewed the solar buyback rate for excess energy generation by member owned solar.

Heat Plus Rate Reminder

The Heat Plus rate ends with energy used through May 31, 2023. It is important that you do not turn off power to these meters because the Cooperative still needs to be able to read them each month. The Heat Plus rate will begin again October 1, 2023.

Dig Smart. Dig Safe.

Before you dig, call 811 or visit call811.com to mark underground utility lines. 811 is a free service that helps keep our community safe.



April is National Safe Digging Month.

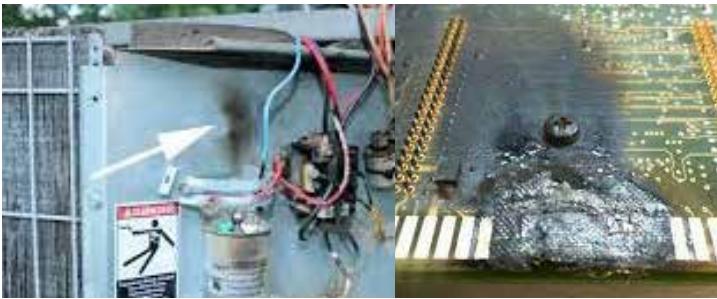


Our Energy Working for You: Power Surge Mitigation

By Al Reiter, Energy Advisor

With our increased usage of appliances and equipment that contain sensitive electronics, it is more important than ever to protect that investment. Power surges can be caused by a variety of sources, including vehicle accidents affecting power lines, storms, large equipment turning on and off, and probably the most frequent culprit--lightning strikes. A lightning bolt can contain up to several billion joules of energy.

Some examples of damage from power surges:



This month, MVEC will focus on two key methods to reduce damage that may occur to electronic equipment due to power surges.

1. Proper grounding. The majority of the electric systems at your home, farm or business are grounded systems which means that part of the circuits are intentionally grounded to earth for safety. You may have noticed a ground rod near where an electrical service enters your home or building. The 3rd prong on a receptacle outlet is also part of that safety grounding system.

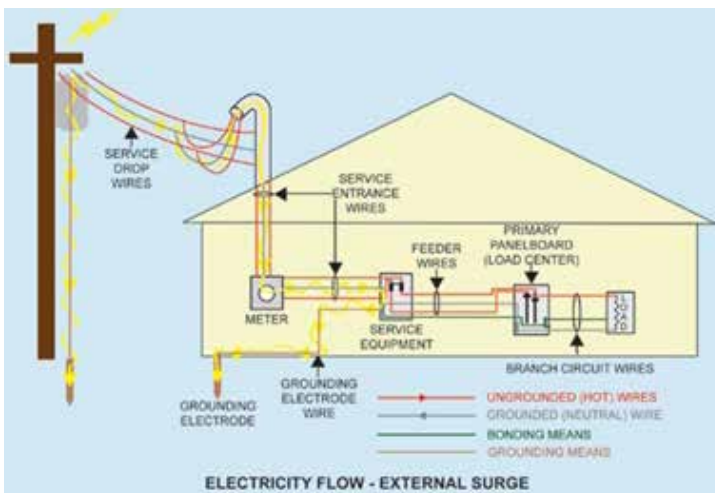


Image source, Dream Home Consultants, LLC

The ground rod, a copper water main line coming into your home, and the re-rod in your concrete can all be part of

that grounding system and it, along with other ground points throughout your neighborhood and the electric grid work together to reduce problems caused by power surges. Having a good grounding system with multiple paths to safely dissipate that energy is the first line of defense.

2. Surge Suppression Another way to protect your appliances and electronics against power surges is Surge Suppression which is a device installed in your electric system to absorb and send power surges to ground. There are several types of surge suppression. One example you may be using is a multi-outlet power strip that has surge suppression built into it.

A whole house surge suppressor is usually installed at the main service for the home. This is now required by the National Electric Code on new homes since 2020. This requirement was put in place to address the increased electronics in our homes. Similar to the power strips, the more expensive units have a higher capacity to absorb surges.



Whole house surge suppressor

Larger or critical safety appliances like medical equipment may have surge suppression built into them.

As you may have noted throughout this article, the goal is to reduce the likelihood of damage from surges. There is no guarantee that these measures will prevent all potential damage. As part of absorbing the surge and protecting sensitive electronics, the grounding system or surge suppressor itself may be damaged.

By taking these steps, your home, business or farm is better positioned to minimize the damage from this type of occurrence. If you are thinking of adding a whole house surge suppressor, contact your electrician for recommendations and installation of the equipment. Your electrician can also inspect your ground system to ensure there are no problems.



TECH LINK

Protect Your Pets and Your Fiber Internet

As a pet owner, you likely know that pets are experts at finding and chewing on things they should not. However, one risk is often overlooked: the dangers that household cables can present to animals. Chewing cables can send an electric shock through your pet, which can cause burns, shutdown of vital organs, and eventual death. Damaged cords can also be quite expensive to replace! This danger and expense applies to cables, cords and fiber both inside and outside the home. Animals and cables just don't mix. Consider these pet-proofing suggestions to help them safely co-exist in your home:

1. Block Access

Any sturdy object in your home can act as a barrier between your pet and cords. Use bookcases, TV stands, cabinets, and dressers to keep your pet out of harm's way (and your cables safe!). Keep in mind that smaller pets can squeeze into small spaces which may make this method less effective. You can also run cords under rugs or floor mats.

2. Lift Cords Out of Reach

Getting cables/cords off the floor and attaching them to walls and furniture with adhesive-backed cord clips (or zip ties) covers all the bases, because pets can't hurt themselves with something they don't have access to!

3. Run Cables through Walls

Depending on your home's layout, construction materials and the location of your router, this may or may not be an option for you. However, if you have drywall, it can be relatively easy to drill two small holes through which you can thread your cords. Use a tool such as fish tape or a cable puller to feed the cord through the wall. Remember that cords can also be threaded through the attic or basement.

4. Wind Up Excess Cord

Excess cord and cable can be strangulation hazards to cats and dogs, so use a cord winder to get the extra length under control. Excess cables that stick out make them more attractive to pets.



5. Cover Cords or Camouflage Them

Wrapping cords is the easiest and least expensive approach. Use corrugated wire loom tubing or plastic spiral wrap, which are available from many office supply and other stores. Remember that some tubing and wrap may not be strong enough to protect cords from persistent pets. PVC piping is a sturdier option, but is also less flexible.

You could even consider a homemade solution such as a garden hose or camouflaging your cables so that they blend in with their surroundings. Choose cords or cable-covering supplies that are a close color match to your floors and walls. If your cords don't stand out, your pet will be much less likely to play with or chew on them.

6. Deter Pets

Apply an anti-chewing spray made of lemon juice, hot sauce, or pepper mixed in water to deter your pet. Important Note: Make sure to observe electrical safety for yourself! Water conducts electricity, so make sure you're not touching the electrical wires or appliances while applying the spray. Remember that these substances will dissipate over time, so you'll have to reapply them.

Provide an alternative to your attractive cords/cables. Pets who chew are often bored or frightened. Addressing the core problem by providing appropriate chew toys, playtime, and other activities may decrease chewing in general.



Lineworker Appreciation

Not all heroes wear capes. Our heroes wear hard hats! Lineworkers' top priority is ensuring our members have reliable electricity for everyday life. Linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on. Linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric and fiber infrastructure. Linemen are the first responders of the electric cooperative family, getting power back on and making things safe for all members after storms and accidents. MVEC is proud to recognize our local line and fiber crews and all utility lineworkers. We say thank you and celebrate the amazing lineworkers who power our members' lives.

LINEWORKER APPRECIATION

LINEWORKERS GO ABOVE AND BEYOND TO POWER OUR LIVES.

TODAY AND EVERY DAY, REMEMBER TO #THANKALINEWORKER

Winter Moratorium Ends April 1

The following information is an excerpt from a press release issued on March 22, 2023, by the Iowa Utilities Board: Iowa's annual winter home heating moratorium ends April 1, 2023. The Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) reminds energy assistance customers currently protected from service disconnection through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), to contact their local utility company immediately to discuss payment options and avoid disconnection that could begin as soon as April 3.

LIHEAP is a federally funded program administered by the Iowa Department of Human Rights, Division of Community Action Agencies, and is designed to assist qualified homeowners and renters pay a portion of their primary home heating costs through a one-time payment made directly to the utility or heating fuel vendor. Under Iowa's winter moratorium law, customers who qualify for LIHEAP or the federal Weatherization Assistance Program are protected from the shutoff of natural gas or electric service annually from November 1 to April 1.

The end of winter moratorium period can be stressful. Please remember:

- Consumers can still apply for LIHEAP through April 30, 2023.
- Visit mvec.coop/iowa-liheap-guidelines for local community action agencies that may have additional resources.
- www.211iowa.org is a resource for assistance with utility payments, housing, and other information that may provide financial relief.

Watts The Answer?

1. To serve as a Director, an individual must be a _____ of the Cooperative and reside within the region they are elected to represent.
2. That ownership has _____, not only in reliable services and affordable rates, but also in patronage dividend earnings.
3. This danger and expense applies to cables, cords and fiber _____ inside and outside the home.

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

February winners:

JoAnn Heber, Dubuque

Melissa Reed, Bellevue



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

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Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

This planting season, include energy efficiency in your landscaping plans. Adding shade trees around your home can reduce surrounding air temperatures as much as 6 degrees. To block heat from the sun plant deciduous trees around the south side of your home. Deciduous trees provide excellent shade during the summer and lose their leaves in the fall and winter months, allowing sunlight to warm your home.

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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Internet/Phone Service: fiber@mvec.coop

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