

WATTS *Current*

September
2024

Annual Meeting Held

MVEC's Annual Meeting of the members was held in Peosta on August 15th. Through mail-in ballots and in-person attendance, 785 members participated in the governance of the Cooperative they own. Voting members were entered into a drawing for cash prizes totaling \$2,000 and those who attended in-person were treated to a roasted pork meal. During the meeting, CEO Jeremy Richert discussed how the Cooperative works behind the scenes to deliver affordable and reliable electricity, as well as the cooperative's commitment to safety. Richert also provided members an update on the MVlink broadband efforts and its impact on service reliability while continuing to maintain affordable rates for both electricity and internet services. During the program, Christie Remley, Manager of Communications and Public Relations, interviewed Journeyman Lineman, Bailey Bautsch, about his experience bringing power to a remote village in Guatemala (see story on page 2).



President Ron Thielen reported on the results of the director election indicating Scott Minzenmeyer was re-elected to Region 1; that Todd Wiedenman was elected to Region 3 and Brett Nagel was elected to Region 4. During the Board of Directors re-organizational meeting, the following directors were elected to officer positions as follows: President, Ron Thielen; Vice President, Tom Stewart; Secretary, Charlie Peters and Treasurer, Judy Gotto. Billie Zumbach was elected to be the Assistant Secretary. A list of cash prize winners can be found at mvec.coop/annual-meeting.



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NEWLY ELECTED DIRECTORS



REGION 1
(Jones, Cedar & Linn Counties)
Scott Minzenmeyer



REGION 3
(Dubuque County)
Todd Wiedenman



REGION 4
(Delaware, Buchanan & Clayton Counties)
Brett Nagel



MVEC Lineman Among 14 Who Helped Electrify Guatemalan Village

In mid-June, 14 lineworkers from Minnesota and Iowa traveled about 2,800 miles to transform a rural village. The trip was part of the NRECA International Program, which has been providing volunteers to illuminate villages in impoverished countries around the world since 1962.



MVEC was pleased to be able to send journeyman lineworker Bailey Bautsch down to Guatemala for two weeks to help with this life-changing work. The village of Las Peñas, at an elevation of around 6,000 feet, is made up of about 35 homes scattered on the crests and flat areas of the mountainside, near the larger community of Jalapa in eastern Guatemala. Crews helped build more than three miles of powerlines and wired the homes for electric service.

The lineworkers who volunteered are used to working hard in some rough conditions, but this two-week trip in June pressed them to new limits. The ride to the village, after the staging area at a local ranch, was grueling. To get to the village, the team spent more than an hour bouncing over rocks, splashing through puddles, straddling washouts, spinning through ruts and sliding on the wet, red clay road that hadn't even existed four weeks earlier. The rain, coming in sheets at times or as a lingering gray mist, kept the road slick and travel slow, and caused the team to walk the last mile into the village on a couple of days.

"The terrain was much more challenging than I thought it was going to be," Bautsch, MVEC Lineman said. "It rained every night which, towards the end of the project, made it impossible to drive so we had to walk to the job site."

All the work had to be done by hand without bucket trucks and other large equipment. However, they did have willing local residents. "The local residents were eager to help and pitched in any way they could," Bautsch said of the Guatemalans. The crews were amazed at how the locals did the work that would be done by equipment back home, running the line down one side of the mountain and back up the other.

The local municipality will now manage the lines and serve the village. The introduction of electricity will bring meaningful change to the community. In rural villages, boys often attend school while girls are kept home to do housework and food preparation. With electricity, girls can join the boys attending school. Additionally, electricity brings numerous other benefits including: better health, improved safety with fewer open fires in kitchens, refrigeration of food, economic growth and more.

"Seeing the looks on their faces when the lights came on made the effort completely worth it. I am proud to have been part of something that will have a lasting impact on those families and the generations that come after them," said Bautsch.



Along with building the line, the crews wired the houses with a couple of outlets and light bulbs and provided water filtration systems for each home.

The leader of the village spoke on behalf of the community, expressing their gratitude to the team. "Thank you to everyone who helped," he said. "You bring happiness for the hope that we can do more now with electricity." This work echoes of the time in the U.S. about 80-90 years ago when rural areas received power for the first time thanks to rural electric cooperatives. Life in America is significantly better today thanks to rural electrification.

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Our Energy Working For You: Seasonal Home Preparation

By Al Reiter, Energy Advisor

As we leave summer behind, and one that was wetter than any in recent memory, we look to cooler weather and shorter days. I sometimes hear from energy efficiency experts that maintaining your house is like sailing. You make adjustments to the home based on the weather conditions. Some are small like programming the thermostat differently or closing the drapes; while some are large, like upgrading the heating and cooling equipment to a more efficient system or adding insulation. Regardless of the size of adjustment, now is the time to take care of these annual chores to prepare your home for the winter ahead.



First and foremost, ensure that the outside envelope is sealed. Any holes or loose siding are paths for cold air to infiltrate the inside space. When performing energy assessments in homes, the outside doors and the door to the garage are frequently where cold air enters. Think back to last winter, did windows have moisture between the glass panes indicating a problem with the seal? Now is the time to add insulation, and for homes built before 2000, MVEC has rebates for insulation or house wraps. Federal tax credits can also apply for many energy efficiency upgrades.

Remember that it is easier to maintain systems now versus the middle of winter. Change out the furnace filter if needed and an annual service check by your local heating and air contractor can save costly repairs down the road. If you use a humidifier in the winter, check that the filter/screen is clean and there is no lime build up inside the unit.

Compared to summer, you spend more time inside and indoor air quality contributes to your overall health. If you notice mold inside or on the siding outside your home, now is the time to address the source of this irritant. Also, this is the time to check the batteries in the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and thermostats. If you have a fireplace or a wood burning stove, have these inspected by a professional to ensure they are working safely.

From a safety perspective, the days are shorter. Is the outdoor lighting working as it should with lamps and any photo eyes lighting driveways and walkways? If any branches are hanging low or near power lines, now is the time to have these addressed by a qualified person. As much as we would like to get a pass, winter ice and snow storms take their toll on our homes. If you have a generator, make sure it has been recently serviced or tested to ensure it runs when needed, along with a fresh fuel supply to operate it.

I realize that this is becoming quite a chore list, but much like the sailing ship, preparing now and making adjustments will reduce problems and keep energy costs lower during the colder weather.

July MVEC Board Meeting Update

- Reviewed outage data that was collected by the Iowa Utility Board for 2023. Maquoketa Valley's average outage time over the last five years is 46% lower than the average Iowa rural resident experiences.
- Approved the annual wage adjustment for Cooperative employees.
- Approved resolutions recognizing Larry Swanson and Charles McCullough for their years of service as Directors. Both retired from the Board in August, Larry served as a Director for 33 years and Charles for 27 years.

August MVEC Board Meeting Update

- Board officer election held after conclusion of Annual Meeting. The following officers were appointed:
 - President – Ron Thielen
 - Vice President – Tom Stewart
 - Secretary – Charlie Peters
 - Treasurer – Judy Gotto
 - Assistant Secretary – Billie Zumbach
- Provided a cooperative introduction to newly elected Directors, Brett Nagel and Todd Wiedenman on board processes and procedures.
- Approved renewal of Federated Insurance Policy
- Reviewed rate schedules for large users



Watt's Up: The Role of the Staking Department at Your Co-op

By Matt Kurt, Senior Staking Technician

MVEC's staking department plays a critical role in the design, management and maintenance of the distribution lines for the co-op as well as providing member support. MVEC's staking department currently consists of three staking technicians who support distribution plans by designing and inspecting MVEC's electrical system so that it will serve our members now and into the future.

Our department's responsibilities include fieldwork, estimating, and design of improvements of MVEC's electric plant. I feel that the staking department is the face of the co-op as we probably interface most with members out in the field. For some new members, we are the first co-op employees they meet and it is important that we establish a good working relationship while clearly communicating to make sure goals and objectives are met.



A typical day for our department begins with a phone call from a member who may be building a home that needs electricity brought to the property or they may want to upgrade their property by performing a line rebuild or relocate of facilities (upgrading service size or moving from overhead line to underground). We also work on large construction work plan projects (projects identified and prioritized by engineering, management and MVEC's Board). This year, one of those larger projects includes installing 30 breaker re-closers to improve grid reliability. These re-closers will allow our operations team to address outages remotely and shift members to another substation that is unaffected - decreasing outage duration.

When asked to describe the role of the staking department, MVEC Staking Technician Hunter Beatty said, "We are building for the future. We work with our members to understand their current and future needs to understand the power required to accomplish their goals."

We utilize special equipment and software to do our jobs. Survey grade GPS units and iPads for precise pole locations as well as multiple mapping software programs to do our daily work. Additionally, we use lasers to measure our lines.

We strongly encourage members to contact MVEC as early as possible to ensure that electrical costs and timelines are accurately figured into your project plans. For example, on new builds, reach out to MVEC when you are working with your bank on financing or are in the early planning stages.

A typical timeline from the initial call is:

- 2-3 weeks to schedule the first meeting in the field
- 2-5 weeks for construction work (from beginning to end depending on schedules and complexity of the job)

When calling the staking department to discuss a project, the following is helpful to have ready:

- Parcel ID number from Beacon
- Meter number (if applicable)
- Service address (if one exists)



For grain bin work on your farm in the fall, it is best to contact MVEC in early summer before our schedule is booked and to ensure your bin upgrades are ready for harvest.

While summer is the busiest time of year for staking, we continue working through the winter months spending a lot of time designing, planning and scheduling for the next construction season.

Thank you for adding a special touch to our annual meeting!

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CEO Insights: Federal Energy Policy Threatens Electric Reliability

By Jeremy Richert, CEO

After last month's Annual Meeting and Director election, I would like to thank our retiring Directors, Larry Swanson and Charlie McCullough, for their years of service and dedication to MVEC and our members. We welcome our newly elected Directors, Scott Minzenmeyer (Region 1), Todd Wiedenman (Region 3) and Brett Nagel (Region 4) and look forward to working with them to navigate the challenging landscape of the utility industry.

Those of us who work in the electric utility sector are deeply concerned with how federal energy policy is threatening electric reliability for those we serve. It's time to raise awareness of how these misguided mandates will negatively impact our country.

In April, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its final Power Plant Rule, which includes four major environmental regulations. One regulation under Section 111 of the Clean Air Act will limit emissions from existing coal and new natural gas power plants. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) stands with the Iowa Attorney General, the Iowa Utilities Commission (IUC) and the Iowa Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA) in opposing these regulations on the grounds that they are unlawful, unrealistic and unachievable.

The EPA's Power Plant Rule requires existing coal and natural gas generation facilities to deploy carbon capture and sequestration at a level that is not yet achievable or commercially viable. The other three regulations in the rule tighten already stringent standards for mercury and air toxins and wastewater and impose additional burdensome requirements on legacy coal ash sites.

Specifically, the Power Plant Rule will force the early closure of "always available" electric generation sources and limit the construction of new natural gas plants as our nation's economy will require more electric generation in the years ahead. Existing coal-fired units that plan to operate past 2032 and until 2039 must co-fire with natural gas at a 40% rate starting in 2030. To operate past 2039, existing coal-fired plants must capture or avoid 90% of their carbon emissions by 2032. The Power Plant Rule also requires the same 90% carbon capture or avoidance for new natural gas plants operating at baseload (above a 40% capacity factor). These new standards will impact electric utilities' ability to economically and reliably replace lost coal generation.

These new mandates jeopardize affordable and reliable electricity by forcing the premature closure of "always

available" power plants while also making it harder to permit, site and build critical new generation facilities. As electric demand increases each year, replacing dispatchable electric generation sources like coal and natural gas with intermittent power sources like solar and wind is a recipe for disaster. We support an "all of the above" electric generation strategy that prioritizes reliability and we look forward to working with our new Board of Directors to promote this strategy to legislators and policymakers.

Energy Use Survey

Please be aware that MVEC, in conjunction with our power supplier (CIPCO), is conducting a survey of a random sample of our residential members this fall. This survey asks about your home, your appliances, energy efficiency measures, and your opinions about energy use and related topics. Only a small portion of our residential members will receive a copy of the survey in the mail. If you receive a survey, we ask that you take 10 minutes to complete it and return in the postage-paid envelope provided or complete it online at the web address found on the questionnaire. We appreciate your time and feedback!



Director Gene Manternach Recognized for 25 Years on MVEC Board

Gene Manternach is serving his 25th year on the Maquoketa

Valley Electric Cooperative Board of Directors in 2024. Manternach was elected to the board in 1999 to represent Region 1 (Jones County and portions of Cedar and Linn Counties). During his tenure on the board, Manternach has completed many hours of training and leadership courses through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association including achieving the Director Gold Credential. Manternach has also served on the board of MVEC's power supplier, Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO) since February 8, 2005.



Thank you, Gene, for your loyal service to the members of Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative.



TECH LINK

FAQs from MVlink Fiber Reps

In this month's TechLink, we share some questions our MVlink employees are frequently asked.

1. What is the difference between your MVlink fiber service and what I have now?

Our MVlink service brings fiber all the way to the home. Other service providers use fiber to go from city to city but then will use copper wires (Ethernet) to the home to provide internet. Competitors in our area use DSL to the home, Coaxial Cable (round cable used for Cable TV in the past) or wireless point-to-point service (and then Ethernet cable is run into the home from the radio outside). Fiber is the backbone of the internet and that is what MVlink uses to serve our members to provide quality, high-speed connections for streaming, gaming, schooling and working from home.

2. What is the benefit of being a co-op member?

By being a member of a co-op vs. a customer with other internet providers, you are actually an owner of your internet company. You have a stake in the company you own--you can vote for the Board of Directors or even run for a seat yourself. You also earn dividends (money back) based on what you spend on your internet and VoIP phone service.

3. Why does it take longer for MVlink to be installed compared to cable/satellite options?

Since MVlink is a fiber to the home service, each new area we expand to requires construction (either boring underground or overhead on electric poles) from the nearest MVlink feeder. Speed of construction is dependent on weather and consistency (sand, dirt, rock, etc.) of the ground we are boring through.

4. Can I take the flags out of my yard once the construction contractors have left my neighborhood?

No, the flags should be kept in the ground until MVlink has met with you to conduct a "drop" meeting. The Fiber drop consists of a fiber cable that connects the fiber cables from our network to the Network Interface Device (NID) on the side of your home.

5. Will I still have internet if my power is out?

MVlink Internet and telephone services require electricity. When power is out at your service location, a battery backup can keep services working for a period of time. Our membership seldom experiences extended power outages.

6. Why is a speed test not showing the speed I pay for?

There is a box (usually some type of modem) that brings Internet into your home from your service provider. In order to run a speed test against what you are paying for, the speed test should be run with an Ethernet cable and capable device. Visit www.speedtest.net to conduct a speed test for your connection.

7. Why are my internet speed tests slower when I'm on Wi-Fi?

Your testing speeds over Wi-Fi are impacted by many things; consider the following:

- What is the type and age of router you are using? An older router may not support the speed to which you subscribe.
- Do you have the latest firmware (software) updated on your router? This is important for performance and security.
- What is the maximum speed the device you're using will support?
- Are you connected to the 2.4Ghz or 5Ghz band with your router? With higher speeds such as those offered by MVlink, conducting a test on the 2.4Ghz will likely not allow you to reach the speed you are paying for. The device as well as the 2.4Ghz band tend to max out around 144Mbps. It is best to use the 5Ghz band for optimal speed.
- Is there a chance you have a virus or malware on your device?
- Do you have other apps or programs running on your device when you're running the speed test?
- And finally - how far are you from the wireless signal?

ATTENTION SNOWBIRDS: Don't Forget MVlink's Seasonal Security Package

As you prepare to escape the Iowa winter or close your summer cabin, don't forget that MVEC offers a seasonal security package for MVlink fiber internet members. Pay just \$19.95/mo. for 3 Mbps upload and 1 Mbps download—just enough bandwidth for your home security devices to continue monitoring your property while you're away. If you are interested in this package, contact our Fiber department today (fiber@mvec.com or 800-927-6068).



MVEC Members Shine the Light on Local Volunteers

The Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa are driven by our commitment to community. To celebrate local volunteers, the statewide Shine the Light contest returned for a fourth year and received 75 entries from 24 co-ops across the state of Iowa during the month of June. Employees and member-consumers of Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives were invited to nominate someone who makes a positive difference in their community. MVEC members and employees submitted four nominees for this year's awards. While none of the four were ultimately selected as winners, MVEC appreciates our nominators' time and efforts to recognize the impact volunteers make in our communities. Please join us in celebrating these nominees for their outstanding commitment to community. Learn more at IowaShineTheLight.com.



Makenna Travis

MVEC employee and member Jackie White nominated Makenna for her tireless work at Animal Welfare Friends, a no-kill animal shelter in Monticello, IA.

Sarah Kumpf

Sarah was nominated by MVEC employee Tara Beasley-Garcia for her work with Inspiration Stables, an adaptive/therapeutic equine program.

Marie Rossman

Marie was nominated by MVEC member Barbara Downey for her volunteer effort with Jackson County Relay for Life that has spanned more than two decades.

Rod Kramer

MVEC member and employee Al Reiter nominated Rod for his leadership and generous volunteer efforts with events in his community of Farley, IA.

Watts The Answer?

1. Only a small portion of our residential _____ will receive a copy of the survey in the mail.
2. Regardless of the size of adjustment, now is the time to take care of these annual chores to prepare your home for the _____ ahead.
3. Since MVlink is a fiber to the home service, each new area we expand to _____ construction (either boring underground or overhead on electric poles) from the nearest MVlink feeder.

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

June winners:

Debbie Heisler, Farley
Larry Coons, Anamosa

We thank retiring directors
Larry Swanson and Charlie McCullough
for your years of service and dedication to
Maquoketa Valley and our members.




THANK YOU



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5 Tips for a Safe Harvest

Electrical safety during harvest season requires vigilance and proactive measures. Follow these tips to reduce the risk of electrical accidents.

1. Maintain at least a 10-foot distance from power lines when operating equipment like grain augers, elevators and other tall machinery.
2. Use a spotter to navigate safely around power lines and other electrical equipment.
3. Ensure all farm workers are trained on electrical safety procedures.
4. Regularly inspect all electrical equipment and machinery for signs of wear and damage.
5. Keep first aid kits and emergency contact numbers in an easily accessible location.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Now is the time to schedule annual maintenance for your home's heating system. During fall months, HVAC technicians are typically less busy, making this an excellent time for maintenance and any necessary repairs before the winter months. A qualified technician can clean filters, check for leaks and ensure all system components are working efficiently to keep your home cozy and warm when the temperatures begin to drop.



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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109 North Huber Street • Anamosa, IA 52205
319-462-3542 or 800-927-6068

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