

Watt's New

April 2018

Vernon Electric Cooperative

"Information for our member-owners."

Making It Easy with SmartHub



SmartHub is an online tool that enables you to either make a one-time payment or manage your electric account by computer, tablet or smartphone.

To make a one-time payment by credit card

(MasterCard, VISA, or Discover) or a savings or checking account simply click "Pay Online" on the home page of our website, and then click "Pay Now" and enter your account number and last name or business name to make a secure payment. There is no registration required. This option does not provide access to account information and your banking information is not stored.

Enrolling in SmartHub makes it simple and quick to manage your account online. You can set up automatic payments, view payment and billing history, check your electric usage, receive email or text alerts, compare bills and notify our office of account issues.

You can sign up two ways, either through www.vernonelectric.org or through the SmartHub app. Members with smartphones or tablet devices can download the SmartHub app from iTunes, the Apple Store or the Android Marketplace for free. When searching for the SmartHub name, note that it must be one word. If duplicates appear, the correct app is provided by National Information Solutions Cooperative. The app is free to download and install.

By signing up for SmartHub, you'll be notified when your bill is due, and you can pay securely with just a few clicks through stored payment information in the mobile app or on the Web. Save time and avoid late fees or service disruptions by signing up for automatic payments. Set up your preferred payment method and take care of your bills quickly and conveniently.

Make bill payment easy with SmartHub.

Available on Apple and Android devices and on the Web.

SmartHub allows you to check your electrical usage daily and monthly, taking the guesswork out of managing your utility bill.

Set up SmartHub today and begin managing your electric account from anywhere! Go to www.VernonElectric.org, click on "Pay Online" in the menu or "Access My Account" on the homepage.

Sign up for Paperless Billing by Arbor Day for a Chance to Win

Members who sign up for Paperless Billing through SmartHub will be entered for a chance to win a \$50 gift certificate to Second Nature at Reads Creek (Readstown) or the Hosta Hut & Greenhouse (Hillsboro). The signup window is April 5 – 27, 2018.

Arbor Day is Friday, April 27 and we will be celebrating by trying to save a few trees through paperless billing.

Sign up by Friday, April 27!



DoWATT'S Right!

Rebates Available –

Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

- ENERGY STAR Window Air Conditioners..... \$25 per Unit
- Air-Source Heat Pumps \$250 per Ton
- Geothermal Heat Pumps \$500 per Ton
- Variable-Speed Furnace Blower motor..... \$125 per System
- Electric Thermal Storage (ETS) Heaters..... up to \$450
- Electric Boilers up to \$450
- Electric Plenum Heaters.....\$5 per KW

- Electric plenum heaters must be enrolled in Off-Peak Dual Fuel Program
- Other conditions apply. See rebate forms online at www.vernonelectric.org or request a rebate form by calling our office at 608-634-3121 or 1-800-447-5051.

To see all rebates available for water heating, appliances, lighting, agriculture, commercial, water conservation, solar energy, electric vehicle charging stations, and energy audits, visit our website or request information by mail.

Eligibility:

- ETS heaters and boilers must be enrolled in Off-Peak Storage Heat Program



The homes and businesses of Vernon Electric Co-op members are powered with more wind and solar renewable energy in 2017 than ever before. And we're not done yet. Dairyland Power Cooperative, our wholesale power provider, is implementing a long-term plan that includes more sustainable energy.

Diversifying resources: Solar energy was a highlight in 2017, as 15 solar projects came online throughout the Dairyland system, including two in Vernon Electric's service area. Together, these facilities can produce enough renewable energy to power over 3,000 homes. Pollinator gardens around the panels also provide bee and butterfly habitat.

Wind generation is growing, too. In 2017, Dairyland agreed to purchase energy from the 80 MW Barton Wind Farm in Kensett, Iowa and the 98 MW Quilt Block Wind Farm in Lafayette County, near Platteville, Wis. Together they will power more than 44,000 households. Dairyland's involvement in Quilt Block earned regional recognition recently as RENEW Wisconsin's 2017 Renewable Energy Project of the Year.

Last June, Dairyland and Minnesota Power/ALLETE (Duluth, Minn.) announced plans for a natural gas facility near Superior, Wis. We consider the Nemadji Trail Energy Center to be renewable-enabling by providing power when the sun doesn't shine, or the wind doesn't blow. It will be an economic and efficient long-term resource.

Stronger Together: Dairyland member cooperative directors, management and staff gathered together in early 2018 to discuss the extension of the Wholesale Power Contract (WPC). The contract began with the formation of Dairyland in 1941 and runs through 2055. It is a long-term commitment among Dairyland's 24-member cooperatives to meet mutual energy needs.

In a proactive initiative to secure safe, reliable and affordable electricity for future generations, a WPC Task Force was formed. Comprised of board members and co-op managers, with staff support, the Task Force recommended a five-year extension of the WPC, with two-year automatic extensions unless notice is provided.

Competitive and Financially Strong: Ensuring rates and services are competitive is critical to the economic well-being of the region. The Board approved an increase to the average wholesale rate, effective May 1 – which is below the consumer price index and the rate of inflation, reflective of the priorities of efficiency improvements and wise management of controllable costs and risks.

Maintaining financial strength and competitive access to capital are critical. Dairyland is working with members to support economic development opportunities that will help communities grow by adding businesses and jobs that benefit the entire system.

Safe and Reliable: The safety of employees, members and the public is a foundational value in all operations. Dairyland continues to educate, promote and maintain

a safety focus as they strive for a goal of "zero incidents." These efforts are resulting in improved safety metrics.

Dairyland addressed some operational challenges in 2017. A planned maintenance outage was extended for the coal-fired Genoa Station #3 (G-3) early in the year due to damage that occurred to the turbine while a contractor transported it to the plant. Thankfully, there were no injuries during a coal mill explosion at the John P. Madgett Station (JPM) in July. The damage caused a 10-day plant outage, and reduced the plant's maximum capability by 25 percent until late Fall when repairs could be made.

Despite these challenges, both G-3 and JPM achieved "World Class Status" for their minimal forced outage rates due to boiler tube failures in 2017. As Dairyland tracks operational performance at its plants, lowering forced outage rates is a key objective. Safety is also enhanced, as a reduction in forced outage rates minimizes potential hazards.

Each year, Dairyland constructs, upgrades or rebuilds approximately 50 miles of 69-kilovolt (kV) transmission lines to improve service and reliability. Dairyland works closely with the local member cooperative, landowners, local officials and state departments of natural resources to meet their expectations during the construction of these projects.

In April 2017, Dairyland completed rebuilding the final segment of a transmission line that extends 71 miles from Genoa, through La Crosse, to Alma, Wis. Wood structures built in the 1950s were replaced by steel poles that carry a life expectancy of 100 years.

Working jointly with other utilities in regional transmission projects supports Dairyland's business strategies for operational excellence, as well as growth. Dairyland is an 11 percent owner of the CapX2020 Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345 kV line, which was completed in 2016. Dairyland is also participating in two additional regional 345 kV transmission projects. One is 5 percent ownership in a portion of the Badger-Coulee Project (La Crosse to Madison), scheduled to be in service in 2018. The other is 9 percent ownership in the Cardinal-Hickory Creek project (Madison, Wis. to Dubuque, Iowa), which is going through the permitting process, with anticipated decisions from regulators in 2019-2020.

Decommissioning of the La Crosse Boiling Water Reactor (LACBWR), Alma Station and Seven Mile Creek landfill gas-to-energy facility is underway in a manner that ensures public safety and compliance with all regulatory requirements, while minimizing the cost impact on Dairyland's members and reducing future liabilities.

Exceeding members' expectations is Dairyland's vision. As your director, I am pleased to share that Dairyland is financially and operationally sound. Dairyland's goal is to provide Vernon Electric Co-op **safe, reliable, sustainable** and **affordable** electricity today and in the future.

Geothermal Heat Pump Tax Credits Are Back!

Recently federal legislation was passed to extend federal tax credits for residential and commercial installations of geothermal heat pumps. The measure was included in the Continuing Resolution spending bill recently approved by Congress and signed by the President.

The reinstated geothermal heat pump tax credits are retroactive to January 1, 2017 and extended to January 1, 2022. This is a change from 2016 legislation that extended the tax credit for solar panel installations, but left tax credits for geothermal heat pumps, to expire.

If you installed a geothermal heat pump in 2017 or planning on installing one in the next few years, you

likely qualify for the 30% tax credit. However, keep in mind the tax credit begins to decline starting in 2020. More information is available at <http://www.energystar.gov/taxcredits>.

In addition to the federal tax credit, Vernon Electric Co-op members may be eligible for a \$500 per ton energy efficiency incentive through its Do Watt\$ Right program. Geothermal heat pumps also qualify for a lower rate, on a separate, controlled meter, when enrolled in the Dual Fuel Program.

Please contact our office and speak with Dave Maxwell, Dir. Marketing & Communications, if you need more information or have questions.