

# Watt's New February 2025

## 89th Annual Meeting

Vernon Electric Cooperative Headquarters

110 Saugstad Road

Westby, WI 54667

**Thursday, February 27**

Registration: 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Business Meeting: 5:30 p.m.

Spaghetti Dinner: 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Attendance gift and a chance for more door prizes, including a Milwaukee M18 Chainsaw.



**Vernon Electric Cooperative**

*"Information for our member-owners."*

## Your Vote Counts!

**M**embers in Divisions 3, 6, 9, and 10 will soon receive their ballots for the upcoming director elections. The ballots will be delivered to your mailbox, and your vote is an essential task in the democratic process. The importance of this cannot be overstated, as it is a direct invitation for members to engage in selecting your Division representative. Elected directors will serve a three-year term.

As a member of Vernon Electric Cooperative, the privilege to vote extends beyond personal choice; it is a commitment to the cooperative principles and a demonstration of community. When submitting your ballot, a crucial step is to sign the outside of the ballot envelope. By signing the ballot envelope, you validate

your identity and ensure the integrity of the vote. If an envelope is received without a signature, it will not be opened or counted.



**Division 3:** Towns of Sterling, Franklin, Jefferson (Vernon County)

**Division 6:** Towns of Sheldon, Clinton, Whitestown, Jefferson (Monroe County)

**Division 9:** Towns of Hillsboro, Greenwood-Henrietta, Woodland, La Valle, Wonewoc, Westford-Ironton

**Division 10:** Village of Readstown

## Understanding Factors That Impact Your Energy Bill

**F**ebruary brings some of the coldest weather of the year, and as our home heating systems work harder and longer to keep us warm, we typically see higher energy bills.

There are a few key factors that affect electricity prices, as well as a few ways you can make a meaningful impact on home energy savings.

When you receive your monthly bill from Vernon Electric Cooperative (VEC), you're provided with a summary of how much electricity you used during the billing cycle.

If you are enrolled in SmartHub you can even see how electricity use may have spiked on days when you used more electricity, such as a particularly chilly day or when relatives were staying with you.

But you might be surprised to learn that beyond your monthly energy consumption, there are external factors that can impact the cost of electricity.

### Fuel Prices

VEC purchases electricity from our power generation partner, Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC), at a wholesale cost, then we deliver that power to our local communities. The cost of generating and transmitting electricity from our generation partner accounts for a significant portion of the cost to provide electric service to local homes and businesses—and the cost of generating electricity from sources such as natural gas, wind, solar, hydro, and coal, fluctuate based on supply and demand.

While these fluctuations can impact the cost of electricity, we work closely with DPC to plan ahead and help stabilize electricity prices for our members.

### Extreme Weather

While we can't control the weather, we can review weather patterns and forecasts to prepare for times of extreme cold or heat, when we know the demand for electricity will increase. But when temperatures become extremely cold or warm, and the demand for electricity spikes, the wholesale price of electricity can also increase.

### Infrastructure and Equipment

To ensure the reliable service you expect and deserve, we must maintain the local grid, including power lines, substations and other essential equipment. The costs associated with providing electricity to your home or business are covered by a monthly Facility Charge. This flat monthly fee ensures the cost of constructing and maintaining the distribution grid is shared by all members in VEC's service territory.

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# Wisconsin's Home Energy Rebates and IRA Opportunities for Upgrades

Through the Inflation Reduction Act, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is overseeing a nationwide, \$8.8 billion Home Energy Rebates program to help homeowners invest in energy-efficient upgrades that will save energy and create more comfortable living conditions. Home Energy Rebates includes the Home Efficiency Rebates (HOMES) program and Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates (HEAR) program. Members who qualify for these programs can also submit an ElectricSense® rebate form for qualifying measures offered by Vernon Electric.



States and territories will be allocated \$4.3 billion for the HOMES program to discount the price of energy-saving retrofits in single-family and multi-family buildings. HEAR will provide \$4.5 billion for high-efficiency electricity upgrades in homes. These rebates are administered by states, territories and Tribes.

Wisconsin was among the first states to make both the HOMES and HEAR programs available to residents, and received nearly \$150 million from the DOE for the programs. More information on how to find and secure residential rebates is available at <https://focusonenergy.com/home-energy-rebates>. Co-op members can utilize the site to find an IRA Trade Ally contractor, as well as available incentives and services they qualify for based on household income.

Wisconsin's HEAR program offers



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lower- and middle-income homeowners up to \$14,000 in rebates to upgrade equipment and appliances. Lower-income families (earning up to 80% of the area median income [AMI]) can have up to 100% of costs covered, whereas moderate-income families (earning 80% to 150% of the AMI) can receive coverage of up to 50% of costs. Savings will max out at:

- **\$8,000** for an ENERGY STAR-certified electric heat pump for space heating and cooling
- **\$4,000** for an electrical panel
- **\$2,500** for electrical wiring
- **\$1,750** for an ENERGY STAR-certified electric heat pump water heater.

Wisconsin's HOMES program requires homeowners to have a home energy assessment performed by a licensed energy auditor to determine the home's upgrade needs and establish the estimated energy savings each upgrade would provide. Rebate amounts are based on household income and the amount of estimated energy savings. For single-family homes, rebates will range up to:

- **\$10,000** for those making less than 80% of their area median income (AMI).
- **\$4,000** for those making between 80% to 150% AMI.
- **\$3,000** for those making at or above 150% AMI.

## continued. . . Understanding Factors That Impact Your Energy Bill

### Energy Policy and Regulations

Federal energy policies and regulations can have a profound impact on electricity costs. As energy generation shifts to the use of more renewable sources and stricter regulations for traditional, always-available fuel sources, such as natural gas and coal plants, costly upgrades and technologies must be constructed and deployed. These additional costs are ultimately passed to consumers.

U.S. power consumption is expected to double by 2050. Across the country, electric cooperatives are working with members of Congress to advocate for smart energy policies that reliably power our local communities.

### You Have Control

While many of these external factors that impact electricity costs are out of our control, we all have the power to manage our energy use at home. The most effective way to lower use is thermostat management. Since heating and cooling account for a major portion of home energy use, adjusting the thermostat to the



lowest comfortable setting can help you save energy and money. Remember to service your heating and cooling system annually and replace dirty filters as needed.

You can also help reduce energy cost by taking advantage of off-peak periods, when the demand for electricity is lower. Reserve energy-intensive chores for off-peak times, such as early in the morning or later in the evening (after 8 p.m.), to help keep rates low. Be sure to seal air leaks around windows, doors and other areas where gaps are possible. This will help your heating and cooling system work less and improve the overall comfort of your home.



VEC is your local energy partner, and we're here to help. As always, we will continue working diligently to provide you with reliable power at an affordable cost.



**Watt's New**

The information in this newsletter has been prepared for you by Trevor B. Clark, Manager of Communications & Member Relations. Comments or questions regarding information contained here should be directed to:  
VERNON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
110 Saugstad Rd; Westby, WI 54667  
Call (608) 634-3121 or 1-800-447-5051.

[www.vernonelectric.org](http://www.vernonelectric.org) • E-mail: [info@vernonelectric.org](mailto:info@vernonelectric.org)  
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