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# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

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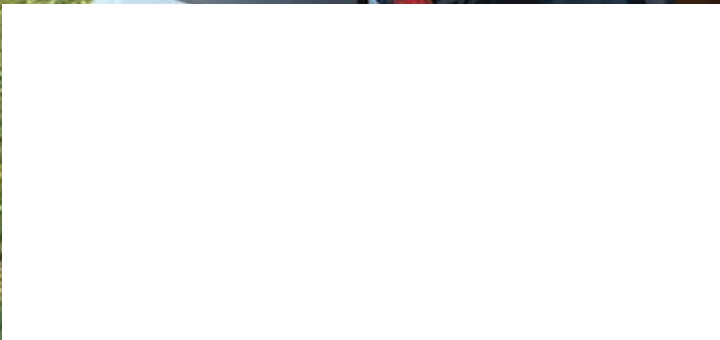


## CELEBRATING LINEWORKERS

**COOPERATIVES BUILD A BETTER WORLD**

**PREP NOW FOR SUMMER SAVINGS**

**BANANA RECIPES**





# IF THE LIGHTS GO OUT, THEY WILL COME

by Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager



Every day, Vernon Electric Cooperative (VEC) lineworkers rise to the challenge of keeping the lights on for thousands of members across our service area. Their work is essential yet often unseen—powering homes, farms, and businesses through extreme weather, rough terrain, and unexpected outages. Without their dedication, the safe and reliable electricity that our members depend on would not be possible.

Being a lineworker is not a typical 9-to-5 job. It's a career that requires immense skill, physical endurance, and a deep commitment to serving the community. They are responsible for constructing, maintaining, and repairing over 2,000 miles of the electric distribution system that delivers essential power to homes and businesses. They climb poles, navigate rugged terrain, and operate high-voltage equipment—all while prioritizing safety and efficiency. The job requires extensive training, often beginning with an apprenticeship where lineworkers learn the trade through a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on experience. This includes understanding electrical systems, safety protocols, and the latest advancements in grid technology. VEC lineworkers continually train to stay prepared for any situation, from routine maintenance to emergency response.

Safety is the top priority for lineworkers. Every day, they follow strict protocols to ensure their own well-being and that of the communities they serve. This includes wearing specialized protective gear, using insulated tools, and following rigorous safety procedures. They work in teams to support one another, communicate effectively, and prevent accidents. Members can also help keep lineworkers safe by slowing



down and moving over when passing utility crews working on the roadside, and reporting downed power lines while staying far away from them.

Weather plays a major role in a lineworker's day-to-day responsibilities. Our line crews are on call 24/7 to ensure members have the electricity

they need, whether it's scorching summer heat, frigid winter storms, or severe thunderstorms. Winter in Wisconsin brings heavy snow, ice storms, and freezing temperatures. Ice accumulation on power lines and tree limbs can lead to widespread outages. During these times, our

lineworkers must work in subzero temperatures, navigating icy roads and deep snowdrifts to reach affected areas. Climbing poles in frigid conditions while dealing with high-voltage electricity requires precision, focus, and endurance.

Spring and summer bring their own challenges, including severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, floods, and high winds. Lightning strikes and fallen trees are common causes of power outages. Lineworkers must assess damage quickly, remove hazards, and restore power as safely as possible. Working in unpredictable weather conditions, sometimes late into the night, is a testament to their resilience and dedication. While winter storms present one set of challenges, the high heat of summer is another. Lineworkers must endure soaring temperatures and high humidity while repairing power lines and maintaining equipment. Wearing heavy protective gear and working under the intense sun can be physically exhausting. Hydration, teamwork, and a strong work ethic help our crews power through the toughest conditions.

When the power goes out, members rely on VEC lineworkers to restore service as quickly as possible. The process begins with assessing the outage—determining whether

the problem is at the substation, along the main power lines, or affecting individual service connections. Crews must locate and repair damaged infrastructure, which can sometimes mean replacing poles, transformers, or entire sections of power lines. Restoring power is not as simple as

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Every year, Lineworker Appreciation Day is a chance to recognize and celebrate the hard work, dedication, and sacrifices of the men and women who keep our power flowing.

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flipping a switch. It requires strategic coordination, specialized equipment, and a deep understanding of electrical distribution. The goal is always to bring power back safely while minimizing a lengthy disruption for members.

VEC lineworkers don't just serve the community—they are part of it. Our lineworkers live in the areas they serve, meaning they're restoring power to their neighbors, friends, and even their own families during outages. Beyond their technical work, lineworkers also engage with members, answering questions and providing guidance on electrical safety. They

attend community events, visit schools to educate students about electricity, and participate in local initiatives to strengthen relationships with cooperative members.

Every year, Lineworker Appreciation Day is a chance to recognize and celebrate the hard work, dedication, and sacrifices of the men and women who keep our power flowing. This year, Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 14. We take this opportunity to thank our line crews for their service, sharing their stories and highlighting their contributions to the community. Members are encouraged to show their appreciation as well—whether by sending a note of thanks, participating in cooperative events, or simply acknowledging the difficult work that goes into keeping the lights on.

As we celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day and recognize the year-round efforts of our crews, let's take a moment to express our gratitude. Whether in the sweltering heat of summer or the bitter cold of winter, Vernon Electric Cooperative lineworkers are always there, ensuring that our members have the reliable power they need. If the lights go out, they will come. Their hard work and sacrifices make all the difference, and for that, we say—thank you!



# A TRIP TO THE TABOR

By Leah Call

How far would you go for a great burger? Every mile seems worth it after just one bite of a juicy Tabor Burger at the Tabor Bar & Grill in the unincorporated village of Mt. Tabor—about 25 miles from the Vernon Electric Cooperative (VEC) Westby headquarters. And when you leave this family-run bar and restaurant, you’ll feel like you’ve discovered a hidden gem.

The story of this rural Vernon County establishment is one of revival. The original tavern in Mt. Tabor was a longtime local hangout until it shut down in 2011. A decade later, Mt. Tabor native Matt DeFlieger and his wife, Heather, jumped at the chance to bring it back to life.

“We wanted to help out the community and bring something original back,” explained Matt. “We reopened in November 2021, and it has been great for the community ever since.”

## Mt. Tabor History

The village of Mt. Tabor, powered by VEC, is perched on a ridge near Wildcat Mountain State Park. Established in 1855, it was named for one of its earliest settlers, John C. Tabor, according to Huntersville, Mt. Tabor, Burr & Valley, a book documenting the area’s history by Robert Kretche.

Back then, Mt. Tabor consisted of a blacksmith shop, a school and a post office/store run by Tabor himself. Soon a creamery and sawmill joined the mix. In 1933, Emil and Nellie Kopetsky took over the blacksmith shop, living upstairs and converting the downstairs to a tavern and dancehall. “Mt. Tabor had a tavern for about 78 years,” writes Kretche, noting that before the bar opened, prohibition-era bootlegging contributed to the local economy through the Depression years.

Following a series of owners, the tavern ultimately became Rood Awakening in 1989 under the ownership of



Owners, Heather and Matt DeFlieger, opened the Tabor Bar & Grill in 2021.

Linda and Jerry Rood. When it closed in 2011, the community lost its beloved watering hole. Ten years later, the DeFligers revived not just a bar but a piece of Mt. Tabor’s history.

## The Tabor Experience

At first glance, you might mistake the Tabor Bar & Grill for someone’s house—until you step inside. The cozy, rustic interior and warm welcome make it clear: this is an authentic Wisconsin small-town bar.

While the menu offers more than just burgers, it’s the fresh, never-frozen burgers made with a 25% brisket blend that have earned the Tabor its reputation. If burgers aren’t your thing, don’t worry. The menu is packed with sandwiches, appetizers and other comfort food favorites.



## A Community Hub

For locals, the Tabor isn't just a place to eat—it's a gathering place. The bar hosts a variety of activities, including corn hole and pool leagues, euchre tournaments, and other events to bring people together. Visitors come from near and far, some by snowmobile or UTV. The second weekend of September marks the bar's annual car show, and this summer live music performances will take place on a newly built outdoor stage and seating area.

Word of the Tabor is spreading fast. It even received a glowing review from [wiscodivebar.com](http://wiscodivebar.com), scoring "10 out of 10 Busch Lights."

Running a restaurant and bar isn't easy, but it's the people—locals and road-trippers alike—that make it all worthwhile. Matt welcomes everyone to stop by and give it a try. "When you come to the Tabor, you're going to get friendly service, some jokes here and there, and some really great food."



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