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July 2025

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POWER COST ADJUSTMENTS A NECESSARY TOOL

by Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager



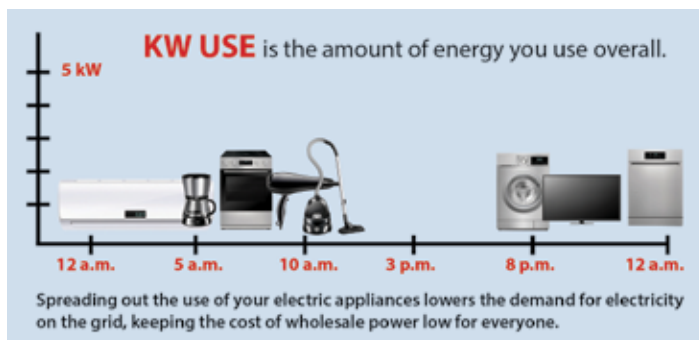
In today's world, nearly every aspect of our daily lives depends on electricity. From powering our homes and businesses to charging electric vehicles and keeping our food fresh, we often take for granted the invisible flow of electrons that make it all happen. However, the way we use electricity — especially when we use it — plays a critical role in keeping energy affordable and reliable.

We're committed to providing safe and reliable power to our members at the lowest possible cost. But what many members may not realize is that our collective energy habits directly affect the cost of electricity, particularly through something called the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA). By better understanding when energy is most expensive and how load management programs can help, we all have the power to make a meaningful difference.

Understanding Demand and Its Cost

Electricity is unique among commodities — it must be generated at the exact moment it is used. Unlike water in a reservoir or gasoline in a tank, electricity can't easily be stored at scale, unless you invest in expensive battery technology. Because of this, utilities must plan for and meet the highest levels of demand at any given time, even if those peaks only occur for a short period each day.

These short windows of high demand—often in the early evening when people return home from work and begin using appliances, air conditioning, and lighting—are costly. Why? Because during these periods, power providers must either activate more expensive “peaking” generation plants or purchase power at premium rates from the market. These increased costs trickle down to local electric cooperatives like Vernon Electric and ultimately to you, the member, through a PCA.

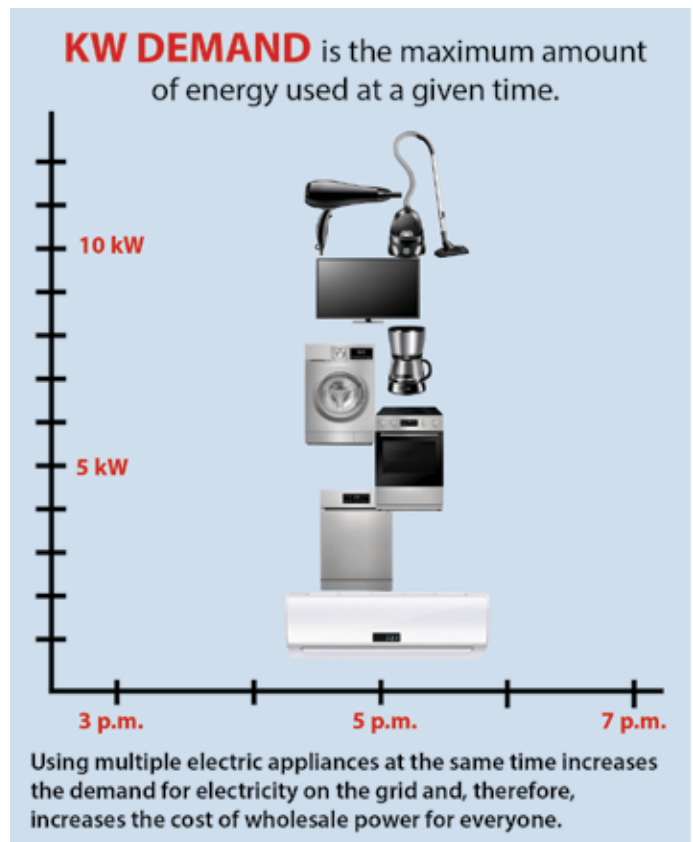


The PCA : What It Means for You

A PCA is a line item on your electric bill that reflects fluctuations in the cost Vernon Electric Cooperative pays for wholesale power. It is a financial mechanism used by utilities to recover increases—or return decreases—in the actual cost of electricity that falls outside of the base rate.

Each month, Vernon Electric pays Dairyland Power Cooperative (our wholesale power provider) for the electricity we deliver to our members. The price we pay for that electricity can vary month to month due to several factors, including:

- Fuel prices (natural gas, coal, etc.)
- Weather-driven demand (heat waves or cold snaps)
- Market purchases during high demand
- Generation costs (e.g., outages at power plants, wind/solar variability)



When electric demand spikes and wholesale power prices surge, the PCA can increase. Conversely, if demand is low and wholesale costs remain stable, the PCA will be zero or even show as a credit. This is why spreading out our demand — instead of everyone using electricity all at once — is so important. If we all avoid high-usage periods, particularly from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM, we can help reduce overall demand charges, which helps control or even lower the PCA component of our bill.

Vernon Electric's Load Management Program: A Win-Win

To help manage demand and avoid peak costs, Vernon Electric offers a voluntary Load Management Program that empowers members to make a difference without sacrificing comfort. The program is designed to temporarily reduce electric use during peak times—typically on the hottest or coldest days of the year when demand is highest, or at times when generation availability is low.

Participating members allow Vernon Electric to install a load management receiver on specific appliances or equipment, such as electric water heaters and HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) units. During peak alert events, these devices automatically cycle off for a few hours.

For large commercial and industrial members, Vernon Electric also offers Peak Alert Rates, which encourage participation in load reduction efforts using stand-by generators. These programs are essential in managing high electric demand events and are especially important as more variable distributed energy resources (DERs), like solar and wind energy systems, replace always available baseload generation systems.

Shift and Save: The Value of Off-Peak Usage

In addition to load management devices, members can help reduce demand simply by adjusting their usage habits. This means doing energy-intensive tasks, like laundry, dishwashing, and vehicle charging, during off-peak hours—typically before 7:00 AM or after 8:00 PM.

This approach, known as “load shifting”, spreads demand throughout the day, which helps flatten the demand curve. When fewer people are using electricity at once, we reduce the need for expensive peak generation—and that keeps costs down for everyone.

Plus, using energy during cooler nighttime hours is often more efficient. Air conditioning units, for example, don't have to work as hard when outside temperatures drop, which saves both energy and money.

Practical Tips for Smarter Energy Use

Small changes can make a big impact. Here are some practical ways to use energy wisely:

- Run appliances like dishwashers and clothes dryers after 8 PM.
- Charge electric vehicles or electronics overnight.
- Use programmable thermostats to reduce heating or cooling when you're not home.
- Take advantage of natural light during the day instead of artificial lighting.
- Sign up for Vernon Electric's load management program and enroll in text or email peak alerts.

Even better, talk to your family, neighbors, and co-workers about smart energy use. The more people who participate, the greater the impact.

Looking Ahead

As our energy needs continue to grow, managing when we use electricity becomes even more important. Using energy wisely doesn't necessarily mean using less—it means using it smarter. Together, we can help make our electric system more efficient, more reliable, and more affordable.

So next time you start a load of laundry or plug in your EV, consider doing it a little later in the evening. It may seem like a small gesture, but when we all do our part, the impact is powerful.



Powering Connection— DAVE MAXWELL BIDS FAREWELL AFTER 34 YEARS

By Leah Call

The way we communicate has changed dramatically over the past 30 years. Print media and direct mail have evolved into real-time digital access and instant notifications. Vernon Electric Cooperative's Dave Maxwell has had a front-row seat to this transformation. As he wraps up a 34-year career, he reflects on the evolution of communications at VEC—and the impact of his work on the co-op and its members.

When Maxwell joined VEC in 1991, there was no email, no website, no social media. Member communications happened by mail, phone, or in person. Over three decades, Maxwell guided a shift in how VEC communicated with its members, from print to digital to a mix of both – always focused on keeping members informed and connected.

Maxwell came to VEC with a background in biology, education, and environmental work. He first worked in data entry, transitioned into member services and load management, and eventually led VEC's marketing and communications efforts.



Maxwell joined Vernon Electric Cooperative in 1991.

“Because VEC is a small co-op with only 30 employees, we all wear a lot of hats,” Maxwell said. “Even though my title was Marketing and Communications, I spent half my time on a number of other things.”

He even wore a detective hat, helping members with energy audits. “I spent a lot of time going to people's homes and helping them try to lower their electric bills,” he recalled. “It was kind of fun. I was an investigator sleuthing around trying to find the little menace that was causing their high electric bills.”

Communication Evolution

When Maxwell took the reins of VEC's communications, he handled the in-house newsletter and center pages of *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News (WECN)* magazine. In the mid-1990s, as email and online communications gained traction, VEC's board dropped the magazine to cut costs.

“But as people became inundated with email, it was easy for them to pass over our emailed communications,” recalled Maxwell. “We realized members were often not reading digital newsletters.”

WECN magazine eventually returned. “We found that when people get a nice looking magazine in the mail – something that isn't a political ad – they often read it,” Maxwell said. “My goal as the center page editor was to continue the tradition of providing information



Dave Maxwell with his wife, Brenda, and the N.F. Leifer Memorial Journalism Award he received in 2022. The Leifer Award acknowledges excellence in rural electric cooperative journalism and is presented to individuals who demonstrate outstanding reporting and storytelling within the industry. Maxwell received the award three times in his career.

that our members found helpful. That included updates from leadership and information on national issues that impact electric consumers locally.”

Maxwell also prioritized human interest stories in the center pages. “We wanted people to learn about their neighbors and the businesses that Vernon Electric serves.”

During the magazine's hiatus, Maxwell created a printed billing insert to keep members informed. That insert remains today, mailed to members receiving paper bills, available digitally through emailed billing statements, and through SmartHub. Members can also access digital editions of *WECN* and manage their accounts there.

SmartHub was one of the many communications tools added under



Maxwell receives the N.F. Liefer Journalism Award in 1999—his first time earning the prestigious honor.

Maxwell's and other staffs' guidance.

"Our members biggest concerns are energy usage and keeping the lights on," he said. "SmartHub lets them track their energy usage and billing. Launching that was a major milestone, which really improved our services, and it has been well received by our members."

Maxwell also helped launch VEC's website and the live outage map. "That was something I always wanted," said Maxwell. "Now, when the power goes out, members can check the outage map on their cell phones and see how many people are affected and where the outage is happening."

Cooperative Spirit

Serving people drew Maxwell to VEC. "I liked the fact that I was working for a not-for-profit co-op that was improving the lives of our rural electric cooperative members and not existing to make a profit for a few, far-away, private investors."

He stayed 34 years for the people – the members and the dedicated coworkers he has worked alongside. Over the years, he collaborated with four different CEOs and multiple departments to keep members informed. The addition of the IT department, about 15 years ago,

was particularly memorable.

"We didn't have an IT department when I started, so I wore the hat of the go-to guy when someone was having problems with their computer," Maxwell recalled. "Now we couldn't function without an IT department, especially since cyber security is now one of our top priorities."

The IT department was pivotal in transitioning VEC employees to work remotely during COVID. "I remember thinking 'how is this going to work?' But we made it work. It was sink or swim, and we swam."

Looking Back—and Ahead

Though VEC is saying goodbye to Maxwell, his impact lives on through the communication tools members use, the stories they read, and the connection they feel to their local cooperative. "I'm especially proud of the stories we did on our members and the awards we won for the magazine," he noted.

Now he looks forward to spending more time outdoors – biking, backpacking and exploring the Driftless

region and beyond. A family retirement trip to Copenhagen, Denmark, is already planned, and he's eager to simply have time – to garden, read, play guitar, and watch a movie from start to finish.

He leaves VEC knowing future communications are in capable hands. "The team here is great," he said. "I'm really going to miss them."



Maxwell poses with a milk donation in 2018, supporting Vernon Electric Cooperative's efforts to give back to the local community.



Maxwell strikes a playful pose on a picnic table during the 2016 Youth Leadership Conference, an event he was involved in for several years during his time at Vernon Electric.

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