



By Mike Wade,
President & CEO

STORMS DON'T TAKE A BREAK IN THE WINTER MONTHS

Mother Nature has thrown us quite a few curveballs over the last several years. High winds and tornadoes have caused damage to our electric system that has resulted in extended outages. Winter snow and ice can also cause damage and make it difficult for our line crews to access rights-of-way because of the downed trees and limbs. You may notice our line crews in the field performing a visual inspection of our overhead lines, looking for trouble spots. They are identifying hazards that have the potential to cause an outage in the future. Winter is the perfect time for us to perform this type of work before the leaves are back on the trees and the busy summer construction schedule has begun.

The December winter storms created quite a few outages for us, but our line crews did an excellent job of safely and efficiently restoring power. We know outages are frustrating, but our linemen appreciate your support and understanding as they work to restore power. We also appreciate the positive feedback that you send to us and we share that

feedback with all of our employees. Your opinion is very important to us and we thank you for sharing it.

As you see our crews in the field, I encourage all of our members to be courteous and respectful to our employees and contractors as they work on our system. If you have any questions about the work being done, do not hesitate to contact our office to get answers. Safety is our number one priority, so let's all do our part to keep our employees safe on the job.

Our Toys for Tots campaign concluded for 2022 and I cannot thank you enough for your tremendous support. We appreciate the help of our community businesses that participated and the support of our members who donated toys. This was one of our best years yet. Cooperatives support their communities and it is a pleasure for CWEC to support our members in the communities in which they live.

At their December meeting, the Board of Directors approved our capital and operating budget for the new year. As always, our focus will be to replace poles and wires that have exceeded their life spans. In particular, we are focused on

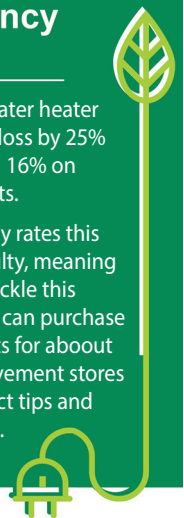
replacing some of the underground cable and copper conductor that is beginning to show signs of failure. These upgrades will help improve reliability to our electric grid. In addition, we will be installing a new metering system this year which will give us even more capabilities than we had before. As always, our focus will be to make improvements that enable us to better serve our membership and provide you with safe and reliable electric energy.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Insulating your electric water heater can reduce standby heat loss by 25% to 45%, saving you 7% to 16% on annual water heating costs.

The Department of Energy rates this project as medium difficulty, meaning most homeowners can tackle this project on their own. You can purchase pre-cut jackets or blankets for about \$20 at most home improvement stores. Visit energy.gov for project tips and additional considerations.

Source: energy.gov



BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

The November regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative was held on November 30, 2022 at 8:03 a.m. The following is a summary of the meeting activities. The agenda, minutes of the October 27, 2022 meeting, new and terminated memberships, monthly safety and compliance report, and estate capital credit retirements were approved.

Action Items

- a. Monthly Financial Statements and Reports were approved. Finance Committee reviewed checks written and the board and CEO expenses.
- b. The board approved revisions to Board Policy 106 – Director Education and Training as presented by the Governance Committee following their November 29th meeting.
- c. The board reviewed Board Policy 502 – Member Attendance at Board Meetings and made no changes.
- d. The board approved the following member replacements on the Member Advisory Group (MAG) committee:
 - Becky Herb – Sub District 1A
 - Mary Jo Reed – Sub District 3A
 - Laurie Aicher – Sub District 1C
- e. The board approved a Christmas gift for all employees.
- f. The board approved the following 2023 WECA Committee representatives:
 - Education Committee – Lee Lehrner
 - JT&S Committee – Tom Smith
 - Legislative and Regulatory Committee – Sue Rombalski

- JT&S Apprenticeship Sub-Committee – Kevin Kurtzweil
- JT&S Rules Sub-Committee – Kevin Kurtzweil
- g. The board approved a \$40,000 Revolving Loan to a local community organization.
- h. Brenda Mazemke, manager of member relations, gave a presentation to the board on the findings of the Residential Member Satisfaction Survey that was conducted earlier this fall.
- i. Mike Wade, CEO, gave an overview to the board of the 2023 Annual Budget and Goals document for them to review for further discussion at the December 29th board meeting. Staff will be reviewing options to reduce controllable expenses based on the 2022 budget.
 - Operations – Kevin Kurtzweil reported new connects are winding down. Crews are continuing to work on UG unjacketed projects on Pioneer Road, Carper Road and Valley Lane. Progress is being made on the construction of our hotline demo unit that will be used at our member events, training for EMT and Fire Depts., demos at schools, etc.
 - Accounting and Finance – Lila Shower reviewed the load control information provided in her report.
 - Member Services – Brenda Mazemke gave an update on the Member Appreciation Breakfast final numbers. Toys for Tots is in full swing with 35 sites collecting toys this year.
 - Administrative Services – Lori Patoka gave an update to the board following a recent discussion with Marco Technologies regarding the phishing email test reports.
 - President and CEO – Mike Wade, CEO, reported on his submitted report. Meeting adjourned at 1:31 p.m.



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\$3,000 IN STEAM GRANTS AWARDED TO THREE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Three school districts in the Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative (CWEC) service area each received \$1,000 in STEAM grants to be used for projects and initiatives related to science, technology, engineering, art, and math.

The STEAM grants were introduced by CWEC in the second half of 2022 because the co-op values education and training and understands that classrooms may have limited funding to pursue the projects needed to educate students in local communities.

School districts that received the initial grants are as follows.

BOWLER SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Bowler School District received two STEAM grants, for a total of \$1,000.

Morning Tubs – The first-grade class taught by Amy Firnstahl at Bowler Elementary School received \$448.16 to purchase materials needed to build STEAM Morning Tubs. According to Firnstahl, the tubs will provide her first-grade students the opportunity to explore, while practicing STEAM principles.

“It’s giving students an opportunity to explore and create with different materials, so building things, creating and using their imagination,” Firnstahl said. “Just giving them something extra to do besides an ordinary morning worksheet.”

Firnstahl added that receiving the

STEAM grant was important for the project to move forward.

“With technology today, a lot of times imagination falls to the wayside, so using their imagination, their building skills, teamwork, it will have a lot of skills built into it,” she said.

The morning tubs would be introduced slowly to the students, Firnstahl said.

“Maybe by March we can have all of them out and they can independently grab what they like,” Firnstahl added.

Super-Mileage Vehicle – The district also received \$551.84 for a super-mileage vehicle project. The project is a student activity that provides various educational venues in and outside the classroom, said Timothy Ploeger,

project supervisor and Tech. Ed. teacher at Bowler High School. The project has students designing, fabricating, and testing a small one-person vehicle with a focus on high mileage during various challenge events around Wisconsin.

The challenge events are part of Challenge USA, which began in the early 2000s. Ploeger estimated that 25–30 schools currently participate in the events, and that number is growing. Ploeger said the project is funded by soliciting sponsorships from area businesses, so the STEAM grant is appreciated.

“It will really help us out a lot. We can maybe get some new engines or batteries that need to be replaced, so that will go a long ways towards that,” Ploeger said.

There are currently 18 students involved in the project this year. They are building four vehicles.

“We started as a club back when we first started it,” Ploeger said. “It was an after-school thing. Some of those nights we’d be here pretty close to midnight. Now it’s a class we’re trying to develop as we go. We design, we do the engineer’s design which is the process where we develop a prototype and build a car out of PVC so we can see any errors before we get to metal.”

Ploeger said the most useful skill students will learn from the project is problem-solving.

“No matter what career a person goes into they will have to problem-solve,” Ploeger said. “In the course of this project, there will be loads of



Left: Amy Firnstahl (back row, far right), a teacher at Bowler Elementary School, with her first-grade class after receiving STEAM grant funds of \$448. Above: Bowler High School students Braydon Pukall, Tristan Thieux, Brady Strassburg, and Beau Brunner, who participate in Challenge USA, along with their advisor Timothy Ploeger, with a chassis they built for the Super-Mileage Vehicle competitions they compete in.



problem-solving and with that the frustration of things not working out as planned. The students will learn to plan, learn from their mistakes, and make improvements to the vehicle. After the last event students will learn to reflect and determine what went well and where improvements could be made.”

TIGERTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Tigerton School District received \$1,000 for the construction of an energy bike. The energy bike, which will consist of a pedal bike to power a generator, will provide students in the district a concrete example of how electricity is produced.

Chad Pritzl, high school science teacher at Tigerton High School who is also overseeing the energy bike project, said he originally got the idea for the energy bike while he worked for a different school district.

“We brought it to school as a demonstration and I thought it was a really neat experience for the students to see the work required to produce electricity,” Pritzl said. “That connection is lost I think. And this really brings it home.”

To complete the project, Pritzl said a variety of things will need to be purchased, such as a generator, so the grant will help pay for those costs.

In addition to learning about how electricity is generated, Pritzl said students will also learn about energy efficiency and energy storage in batteries.

Pritzl said he will use his science background and team with Tim Schmidt, who teaches Tech. Ed. at Tigerton High School, to complete the project with students.

“Hopefully we can have a few students lead with the project and we’ll build it right in the classroom,” Pritzl said.

Pritzl added that he believes the project will engage some of the students who are reluctant learners in the learning process, especially during the design and fabrication process. It will also provide more advanced learners an opportunity to explore electrical engineering.

WITTENBERG-BIRNAMWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Wittenberg-Birnamwood School District received \$1,000 for an Urban Search and Rescue Robot that will be used by students in Skills USA competitions that are held throughout the state of Wisconsin. District competitions are held at high schools, while regional competitions are held at universities or technical colleges. From state competitions, there is an opportunity to qualify for Nationals.

Caleb McPhail, Technology Education and Woodshop teacher at Wittenberg-Birnamwood High School who oversees the students participating in Skills USA, said the robot used in competitions throughout the state will be operated by a student who must perform specific tasks with the robot that are already pre-established.

“There’s a course you have to go through, and in this course, you have two mailboxes,” said Marli Novy, a student who will be operating the robot in competitions. “In some of the mailboxes there is going to be a cube you pick up with the claw and then put it back in a bucket outside of the course. There’s two or three of them. Those have to go inside a house that is built and also go up and down some ramps in a certain amount of time. And there is also a written test to demonstrate your



Members of the student Skills USA group at Wittenberg/Birnamwood High School, Kalene Rasmussen, Sabine Yaeger, Chekotey Horachek, Dustin Yaeger, and Marli Novy, with group advisor Caleb McPhail, accept STEAM grant funds from Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative.

knowledge of different robotic laws and how everything is built.”

When driving the robot in competitions, Novy said she will need to drive it without looking at the robot. An iPhone is mounted on the robot, and the robot must be maneuvered by the view provided by the iPhone.

McPhail said this year is the first year the Wittenberg-Birnamwood School District has competed in the robotic challenge.

“Marli (Novy) saw it last year when we were doing other competitions and she really wanted to get into that,” McPhail said.

Novy, a sophomore, said she is interested in engineering.

“This looked like a good opportunity to learn more and be able to create something that actually creates something that’s used,” Novy said. “And it’s something that should help me with whatever I decide to do.”

McPhail said all the work done associated with Skills USA events is done during the students’ free time, which includes time after school.

“All these different competitions, the things they prep for, we don’t have time throughout the day, our normal day periods for them to come in,” he said.

McPhail added that primarily two to three students helped build the robot for competition.

“The nice thing about this is we can disassemble it at the end of the year,” McPhail said. “It packages all back up and we can start from scratch the following year. So, we can reuse it over multiple years with different students having to go through and basically redesign it.”



Tigerton High School Science teacher Chad Pritzl, high school student Loghan Wanta, Tech. Ed. teacher Tim Schmidt, and Tigerton High School/Middle School Principal Nate Johnson with the exercise bike that will be used to build an energy bike for students to learn about electricity.



Above left: Students from Wittenberg Elementary School help unload the toys that were to be distributed to families in the Wittenberg and Birnamwood areas.

Above right: Employees at Banner Bank in Birnamwood with the toys collected at their branch.

Left: Employees at Fleet Farm in Waupaca who helped with the CWEC Toys for Tots shopping spree for toys.

2022 TOYS FOR TOTS CAMPAIGN HELPS MORE THAN 1,000 AREA CHILDREN

With the help of local businesses and residents, the 2022 Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative (CWEC) Toys for Tots campaign helped bring joy this Christmas to more than 1,000 area children.

For more than 15 years CWEC has partnered with the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve to organize a Toys for Tots campaign in the CWEC service area. Through the campaign, CWEC provides help to area families in need by supplying donated toys to the families, so they can give their children Christmas gifts.

Toy donations were collected at more than 30 area businesses in the CWEC service area. Monetary donations were also collected, which were used to purchase toys. With those donations, roughly 2,500 toys, 150 books, and 650 stocking stuffers were distributed to area children.

“Once again area residents and businesses

were generous with their donations to our Toys for Tots campaign,” said Bert Lehman, Toys for Tots coordinator and member relations specialist for CWEC. “The success of the campaign wouldn’t be possible without that generosity.”

Children in need in western Waupaca County (including Iola-Scandinavia and Manawa school districts), northern Portage County (including Rosholt School District), southern Marathon County (including Wittenberg-Birnamwood School District), and western Shawano County (including Tigerton and Bowler school districts) were part of the campaign.

The campaign’s success was also aided by the involvement of departments at the co-op.

“It is a privilege and very rewarding to be able to bring a little more joy to area families during the Christmas holiday,” Lehman said.



Left: Employees at RE/MAX Lyons Real Estate with the toys collected at their office.

Right: Employees at Premier Community Bank in Manawa with the toys collected at their branch.





**Central Wisconsin
Electric Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

10401 Lystul Rd., P.O. Box 100,
Rosholt, WI 54473
715-677-2211 • 800-377-2932

www.cwecoop.com

Follow us on Twitter  
and Facebook

Mike Wade, President & CEO
Bert Lehman, Editor

Board of Directors

District 1

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Tom Smith
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