

Supply Chain Delays Complicate Beneficial Electrification Efforts

WEC asks for patience and communication in a time of high demand and low supply

You've been on the list for 18 months, and you're finally about to pick up your electric vehicle. There's just one hitch. You learned from WEC's operations staff that you don't have enough electric capacity to install a Level 2 EV charger, and you need a larger transformer. And right now, there's a shortage of electric distribution equipment.

First of all: thank you for calling the Co-op to check your capacity. You saved time, money, and supplies by contacting WEC first.

The truth is, this is a tough situation. In his recent notice to members, Director of Engineering & Operations Dave Kresock predicted the equipment shortage, exacerbated by storms, could stretch into 2024. [See wec.coop for Kresock's notice to members.]

For members transitioning their energy use from fossil to electric, it's frustrating to have the message suddenly change from "act now" to "wait." "We've been pushing for beneficial electrification for several years now. The last thing we want is to miss opportunities for our members to switch to electric. From a climate standpoint, we need to keep moving away from oil," said General Manager Louis Porter. "But right now the equipment we need to meet demand is tied up in the supply chain, and our primary responsibility

is to keep the power on."

Members are also likely to run into supply chain issues on the retail side, pointed out Kresock, "such as meter sockets and breaker panels. Electricians are also having difficulty finding equipment for making electrical upgrades within members' homes."

You don't need a Level 2 charger unless your daily mileage exceeds what a Level 1 can do overnight.

— Bill Powell

Bill Powell, WEC's Energy Coach, advises keeping the long view.

A Level 1 (120 volt) charger is enough to power an EV, he suggests, when it's used for commuting and can be plugged in overnight. "You don't need a Level 2 charger unless your daily mileage exceeds what a Level 1 can do overnight," he said.

In the meantime, WEC is collecting information from members who wish to make elective service upgrades. To signal your interest, contact the Co-op.

Overloaded transformers

Members drawing more power without adding more capacity is a persistent and avoidable problem, said Kresock. It damages the system, and that gets expensive. Members may already know they need a licensed electrician to determine if upgrades are needed for internal wiring or circuit breakers. But members also need to call WEC to make sure they have enough capacity to add devices that add to

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An all-electric Chevy Bolt outside WEC's warehouse. Supply chain tie-ups mean members wishing to add to their load – for instance, to add a Level 2 EV charger – need to wait for elective services. These will be resolved as inventory becomes available. But, according to Energy Coach Bill Powell, you may be just fine charging your EV without a Level 2 charger.

2023 Annual Meeting Scheduled for May 4

Board Candidacy and Bylaws Petition Deadlines Due Feb/March

The 2023 Annual Meeting will be held on **Thursday, May 4**. For the first time since 2019, the Annual Meeting will be in-person at WEC's warehouse. More event details will follow in future issues of *Co-op Currents*.

Every year, the Annual Meeting marks the election of three members to WEC's Board of Directors. Any member of the Co-op is eligible to run for election.

Considering running for a seat on WEC's Board of Directors? Contact Administrative Assistant Rosie Casciero at 802-224-2322 or rosie.casciero@wec.coop to request more information. All deadlines and details

are included in the packet.

Candidates have the opportunity to introduce themselves and their positions to the general membership through biographical and policy statements published in *Co-op Currents* and online.

The deadline to submit candidate biographies for inclusion in the February-March print issue of *Co-op Currents* is **Friday, February 3**.

The deadline to submit all candidacy materials, including a petition signed by a minimum of 25 WEC members, is **Sunday, March 5**. All candidates' policy statements will

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Washington Electric Cooperative

East Montpelier, VT 05651

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At the last in-person Annual Meeting, WEC turned 80 and there were beach balls! Save the date for the next in-person Annual Meeting: May 4, 2023, at the Operations Center.

President's and General Manager's Message

Evolution and Alignment

More on net metering; updates on rate increase, supply chain, and changes to incentive program

Time to evolve net metering

Steve: We continue to hear from our members in response to our net metering theme issue (September 2022). It's worth reminding our members that we are not faulting those homeowners who have already chosen to net meter, nor are we suggesting that the state eliminate their financial compensation for the excess power they export. This is about policy going forward, not individuals. Net metering homeowners were able to respond to a government incentive program. And we recognize that net metering, as it was implemented 25 years ago, was a way of incentivizing solar developers as a way of giving them the business of homeowners so residential solar arrays could be built cheaper as time went on.

What WEC is raising concerns

about is not what's happened in the past. It's about the shape of things to come. As a result of net metering and other means of support, the cost of installing solar arrays has come down substantially, which we believe is a good result. Solar power has become cheaper, and if WEC or any other utility chooses or is required by regulators to buy solar power to distribute to its members, it can do so at prices that are coming closer to those of other renewables and closer to wholesale prices. Net metering, while an incentive to solar installers, represents to a utility a very expensive source of solar power, because of compensation set in statute that does not reflect market conditions as the solar industry has evolved. In a nutshell, the incentive has done its job. Going forward, we agree

with a number of members who have responded to point out the state, and/or the Co-op, should be looking ahead to new strategies, like coupling solar with energy storage, including batteries. We believe the state policy on intermittent renewables must evolve to facilitate the progress we as a cooperative utility and as a state are making.

So, going forward, we need to initiate a dialogue in the state among all concerned parties about what should come next. Some say that should happen sometime later once net metering has expanded further. We don't agree. Solar generation without storage isn't enough. People who live off-grid have known this for decades, and have made the investment and lifestyle choice to make it work for them. Having a weather-dependent renewable resource that can only produce expensive electricity for several hours a day mostly between mid-spring and mid-fall here in Vermont is not transformative to a utility's mandate to deliver power reliably and as inexpensively as possible to Vermont ratepayers at any time and in any season. Solar electricity is a great resource, and we need to implement improvements that are not incentivized by current net metering policy.

Louis: I have another angle to add. According to the Energy Action Network, the electric sector now produces only 2% of the total statewide carbon load. That's down significantly from the past few years; specifically, it's down since the Renewable Energy Standard took effect. The energy sector has gone from being a big part of Vermont's carbon load to 2% or less. WEC of course is below that, given our all-renewable portfolio.

I think it's important because electric utilities and elected policymakers need to focus on electrifying other sectors that are producing the bulk of the carbon from Vermonters' activities: mainly, home heating and transportation. That matters in regard to net metering, because rising electric rates will make it more difficult for people to transition to electricity for heating and driving and transportation. I want to reiterate what Steve said, which is we're trying diligently to separate the activities of our net metering members, who are doing things allowed under Vermont laws and regulations, from our efforts and others' efforts to modernize

the regulatory structure around net metering. We need to be clear those are two different things.

Steve: In reviewing responses from our members, we find that some complain WEC discourages net metering, and others complain we encourage net metering. In practice, we do neither. We don't discourage it; it's the law, and we follow the law when it comes to hooking up net metered solar arrays on our grid. As we've said before, this is not a complaint against solar electricity; it's a recognition that net metering has its problems as an effective incentive.

Rate increases at WEC and elsewhere

Louis: We're working with the Department of Public Service on our rate case since we filed for a 14.19% increase this fall. The way it works for co-ops in Vermont is: we put the requested rate into place, and if the case results in a lower rate than we requested, we refund the money above the final rate that we collected from members in the meantime. The case likely won't be resolved for the next couple of months.

As readers may have seen, there are a number of other electric utilities in Vermont coming in for rate cases. None have been in the circumstances Washington Electric has been in the last year or so, so theirs are a bit lower than ours. Stowe came in at 13%, VEC at 8.19%. We expect other utilities to request rate increases as well.

At the risk of repetition, the reduction in production at Coventry coincided with record high prices in the New England energy market the last year and a half, and that's why Washington Electric's case is as high as it is. The market factor is a phenomenon across Vermont. In fact, in the unregulated New England states, the power portion of bills is going up many times what WEC's is. You can't compare regulated and unregulated markets apples to apples, but we've seen increases as high as 60-100% in some other New England states.

Steve: It's important to add that as a not-for-profit utility, WEC charges the rates it needs to operate without loss. There's no profit motive. There's no planning of rate increases going forward. We're regulated strictly by the

Co-op Currents

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WEC is part of the alliance working to advance and support the principles of cooperatives in Vermont.

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The Board of Directors' regularly scheduled meetings are on the last Wednesday of each month, in the evening. Members are welcome to attend. Members who wish to discuss a matter with the Board should contact the president through WEC's office. Meeting dates and times are subject to change. For information about times and/or agenda, or to receive a copy of the minutes of past meetings, contact Administrative Assistant Rosie Casciero, at 224-2322, or visit wec.coop/board.

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Got something to say?

Letter to the editor, comment, or a story tip? Drop us a line at currents@wec.coop or Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 8, East Montpelier, VT 05651, Attn: *Co-op Currents*.



Public Utility Commission; we can't charge for what we don't provide. Rate increases are a consequence and not a strategy.

Louis: That's a great point, Steve, and I would add even further: Washington Electric is owned by its members who pay its rates. It's not owned by investors. Money raised over operating costs is returned to members over time in the form of capital credits. Since 1998, the Co-op has returned more than \$9 million to members and former members.

Supply chain update

Louis: Utilities all across the US are facing shortages of key supplies and materials. Washington Electric is seeing the same. We've been very lucky so far in our planning and purchasing ahead of materials and the shortage has not, until recently, impacted our ability to do work.

Now, particularly with work that requires transformers, we need to be very careful about which jobs we take on and when, to ensure we have enough transformers in stock to restore a major power outage. It's a balancing act to meet members' desires to have system upgrades, to do the work for Communications Union Districts [CUDs] so they can string fiber, but we need to maintain enough materials, including transformers and poles, to restore power if we need to. We're hopeful in the next month or so we'll get another shipment of transformers, but a lot of those have been delayed recently. The hurricanes and restoration of power in Florida made it more difficult for us because equipment was needed to restore the system there. So we're hoping for some relief, but we haven't seen it yet. And we are concerned, given the number of delays we've had in supplies.

Steve: Sooner or later this supply chain issue will improve. In the meantime we need to keep our chins up and do the best we can.

Louis: Something that goes beyond the current supply chain issue is that for many years, as Washington Electric worked to reduce electric use and



You achieve the greatest carbon reduction when each individual incentive for each member for each activity is just enough to help them undertake that activity. That leaves more money for more members, and requires you collect less money from members to provide those incentives.

– Louis Porter

promoted conserving electricity, WEC had a standard of 5 kVA transformers as our standard transformer size. That was a good and smart thing to do at the time, because it meant we wasted less electricity through transformer losses, and those small transformers suited our members' needs. Now we are making the effort to increase beneficial electrification, because we know it's better for our climate to use clean electricity to power our lives instead of fossil fuels. As a result, we and other utilities are finding those small transformers are simply not big enough for member households that may have electric vehicles and heat pumps, and while beneficial and a good thing to install, use more electricity. While a 5 kVA transformer may have been fine for most households in the past, we really need to have

larger transformers there if people are going to transition to beneficial electrification technology.

Steve: One often assumes one will need to install a Level 2 charger right away. As Bill Powell points out elsewhere in this issue, that's only true if your daily mileage exceeds what a Level 1 [120 volt] can provide by charging overnight. I say this as an EV driver who has only ever charged my vehicle at home with a 120-volt charger with a 20 Amp circuit breaker. It provides my small sedan around four to six miles worth of driving for every hour of charging.

Like other utilities, WEC has to plan for the future, and like other utilities, our equipment, whether small or large, has multi-decade lifespans. We're investing our members' money in those improvements. To say we're cautious may be too strong, but we're cognizant that the investments we make on behalf of members are paid for by members, and we have to be thoughtful about how useful they'll be to most members, and how long until electric distribution technology is likely to advance and become more affordable to usher in the need and opportunity for new investments.

Louis: Washington Electric provides

a base transformer size, and if a member needs to upgrade their transformer above that, it's at that member's expense. The prices of transformers have increased so quickly and radically that the price that we charge members hasn't kept up, so it's not the full cost that members are bearing. Theoretically, our policy is, and this also goes for other co-ops, that if you create the increase in load, you pay for the upgrades demanded by that increase in load, whether that's a new house or new devices that cause the increase. We try to stick to that, but the prices we charge haven't kept up.

Steve: I expect in the future as the multiple benefits of batteries become more apparent and they become less costly, we'll have a similar conversation about who pays for batteries. They don't just cover the intermittency and unreliability of solar or wind, they have other uses as well, but it's always an issue of who benefits and who pays. It's in the figurative DNA of a co-op, that with every investment we take, we ask, "Is the intent to provide equitable benefits to all?" Sometimes it doesn't work out that way especially during times of change in the utility world, but that's the long-term direction.

Realigning incentives

Louis: My goal as the General Manager at Washington Electric is to encourage and help people move to beneficial electrification, with the goal of decreasing members' use of fossil fuels, meeting the regulatorily required standards put in place by the state for doing that, and doing it at the least cost to members. I want to provide incentives that encourage people to do those things, and help do those things, at the least cost for each deployment, because that means more money for beneficial electrification and members are paying least for those things.

I asked Bill [Powell, Director of Products & Services] to align our incentives with that goal. We have enough banked regulatory credits to meet our goal for next year even if we didn't have an incentive program at all. But rather than pause the program for a year, we're using the space we have to align our incentives and figure out what incentives we need to offer to deploy these technologies. We're working on this now and will have more information in 2023.

Steve: I agree this is a priority item for us. We've exceeded the regulatory requirements for our Tier III performance according to Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard. We've found we're obliged to have a rate increase, so to connect Louis's dots,



As a not-for-profit utility, WEC charges the rates it needs to operate without loss. Rate increases are a consequence and not a strategy.

– Stephen Knowlton

we have to be concerned about how much we offer in incentives at the same time we have a rate increase that will fall on everybody. It's about balancing incentives that have a good purpose with what our members have to pay for electricity.

Louis: We're also seeing significant increase in federal money for incentives. If we weren't seeing those, we might take a different approach. You achieve the greatest carbon reduction when each individual incentive for each member for each activity is just enough to help them undertake that activity. That leaves more

money for more members, and requires you collect less money from members to provide those incentives.

Steve: It speaks to what we talked about earlier, trying to benefit as many members as possible with the least overall cost per member. We're at a point in this effort where we're figuring out what's more effective and what's less effective for our members in the context of the Comprehensive Energy Plan that drives the state's policy and regulation.

Winter preparation and support

Louis: We encourage our members to prepare for the possibility of outages. In a rural territory like ours with relatively few line crew per mile of line, we will have outages, we will do our absolute best to restore them as quickly as possible, and our crew members are incredible. But we live in rural Vermont. There will be storms that put members out of power. I encourage members to have a plan in place, whether that means backup power, reliance on woodstoves, extra supplies.

I and others at Washington Electric, including on the Board, and people involved in the electric industry in Vermont and New England at higher levels than we are, understand that beneficial electrification relies on increased investment and continued reliability in the grid to allow for increased heating and transportation with electricity. Some of the federal spending coming down the pike is geared for that. There'll need to be investment in utilities by investors, or in our case, member-owners, geared toward a modernized and hardened grid. It's probably the most significant issue facing utilities over the next few years. Supply of power is essentially a market system. But making sure the wires and poles are there to deliver that electricity will be increasingly important and, in some ways, increasingly difficult.

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High Winds, Heavy Snow: Be Prepared For Winter Storms

We live in a territory that has a lot of severe winter storms, and we have a lot of trees. Some of those trees come down on power lines,” said General Manager Louis Porter. Already, high winds have caused outages. Because of the rural, heavily forested nature of WEC’s territory – and all those north-south mountain ranges that create natural wind tunnels – the Co-op asks all members to please be prepared for the possibility of outages.

“We’re investing in making our grid more resilient. Our line crews are amazing, but they have 1,300 rural miles of line to cover to reach everyone. We need members to have what they need to get through an outage, especially when we get a big storm,” said Porter.

Preparedness is taking responsibility for the safety and comfort of yourself and those around you. That means staying informed, having the supplies you need, and making wise choices.

Be aware:

- Pay attention to local weather reports
- Sign up for school closings, road alerts, and weather alerts on electronic devices
- Follow travel precautions
- Charge phones, tablets, computers, and other devices
- Address potential storm hazards on your property, like a chimney that needs cleaning or a dead tree limb hanging over the driveway

Check your supplies:

- 3-5 days of nonperishable food for each family member, including pets
- Extra medication, oxygen, or other health essentials
- Buckets or containers of water for drinking and household use
- Portable radio
- Flashlights
- Spare batteries
- Candles
- Matches or lighter
- Wind up or battery alarm clock
- Safety pins
- Zip-top plastic bags
- Moist towelettes or baby wipes
- Frozen ice packs
- Large cooler or ice chest
- Sleeping bags or blankets
- Warm, dry clothing
- Duct tape
- First Aid kit
- Personal hygiene supplies
- Diapers and other baby supplies
- Hand-crank can opener
- Disposable plates, cups, and eating utensils
- A fire extinguisher
- Charged phone and car charger
- Charged EV or full tank in gas car
- Masks or face coverings and hand sanitizer



- Shovels and/or tuned up snowblower
- Whatever else you may need! Wood supply, camp stove, etc.

Water

If you know a storm with the potential to cause outages is coming, fill containers with water, including bathtubs. Separate water for drinking from that for other uses. Flush toilets sparingly with a bucket of water. Have the means to purify water without electricity.

Have a plan

- Do you have backup heat that does

not rely on electricity?

- If you have special health needs, do you have ice packs to keep medication cold, backup oxygen, or a generator?
- Do you have someone you can call if you need assistance?
- Do you have neighbors who may need special assistance? If you can assume responsibility to check on them, do their family members have your contact info?
- Does your town have an emergency action plan?

- Do you have a place you can go if you need to leave for a few days?

In case of longer outages:

If your power is going to be off for hours or even days, here are some additional precautions you and your family can take:

- Turn off and unplug electrical equipment. Leave one light on inside so you can tell when power is turned back on.
- Turn on an outside light that is visible from the road so that Co-op crews can see that your power has been restored.
- Close all doors, windows, and curtains, even doors between rooms. This will help your home retain heat in cold weather.
- Keep the refrigerator and freezer closed tightly. If you’re not sure food is safe to eat, use the old rule of thumb: “When in doubt, throw it out.”
- Know how to override your electric garage door opener.
- Conserve water. Water will keep hot in your water heater’s tank for up to 3 days.
- Keep warm in layers of clothing and blankets. Wool is especially warm.
- Keep active.
- Use the fireplace wisely and safely. Do not leave the damper open when not in use.
- Pets like tropical fish and birds are very sensitive to temperature changes. They will require special care.
- Your phone will probably work – the telephone company uses a separate, low voltage power supply. Use it to keep in touch and stay informed. 🐭

Pres. and GM’s Msg

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Steve: Overall, WEC and other utilities will be tasked to provide electricity under severe conditions and in an increasingly unstable climate with a greater eye toward resilience and reliability than we do at the present, because we understand people will be more and more dependent on electricity if the move toward full-scale beneficial electrification takes place.

Louis: The end of the year is approaching, and winter can be a challenging and expensive season here in Vermont. In keeping with the cooperative spirit and tenet of Concern for Community, Washington Electric participates in several efforts to spread some cheer and support to those who need it. We support local anti-hunger initiatives and many other worthy programs through the Community Fund, which is funded by the capital credit donations of about 1,500 of our members. Separately, our staff, Board,

contractors, and vendors collaborate to support veteran families in our service area.

I’d like to invite any members who are able to help out to contact Member Services. You can contribute to WARMTH, which provides emergency home heating assistance, distributed in our region by Capstone and NEKCA,

by rounding up your electric bill. You can also choose to donate your capital credit refunds to WEC’s Community Fund. Finally, if you need assistance with paying your electric bill, Member Services can help you, and also help connect you to other resources. Call them at 802-223-5245 or 1-800-932-5245. 🐭

Adding new electric devices? Follow the Energy Coach’s checklist

**Buying an EV? Installing a new heat pump water heater?
Before you plug in, follow these steps:**

1. Look at your circuit breaker box. Is it a 100 or 200 amp box? How many remaining slots are there? Take a photo.
2. Call the Energy Coach to inquire about adding an EV to your peak load. What’s your historic peak load? If you email, attach the photo.
3. WEC’s teams will assess your service. You’ll learn what, if any, work needs to be done to prepare your home electrically for EV load, about how long it will take, and how much it will cost. Service upgrades typically involve separately hiring a qualified contractor, and coordinating with WEC to make electrical improvements to increase capacity of the member’s equipment. WEC will begin performing elective service upgrades again as supply chain issues are resolved.



Supply Chain

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their electric load. Because if there isn't enough capacity, blowing a transformer is a bigger problem than blowing a fuse.

Most of the transformers on WEC's lines are five kilovolt ampere (kVA) transformers. That's relatively small these days. "They were put in decades ago," said Kresock.

At that time, Vermont mandated distribution utilities to "right-size" transformers and other equipment, explained Powell, to support energy and cost conservation.

Now, WEC and other distribution utilities are mandated to help customers switch from fossil fuel devices to electric devices as Vermont tries to meet goals to reduce emissions in home heating and transportation outlined in its Renewable Energy Standard. When supply is adequate, this is good for the environment and the Co-op's members. But when the system is made up of transformers smaller than can handle an increase in load, Kresock said, "we have to go out in the middle of the night to address a blown transformer."

It's easy to imagine how this happens. WEC is a winter-peaking utility, meaning members use the most electricity in wintertime. Nights are colder than days; EVs charge during off-peak hours. Even with the lights off and most of your electronics powered down, your heat pump and water heater are working. So when the EV charger kicks on at 2 a.m., you and your neighbors might hear the pop as your transformer explodes.

And while line crews are always on call, unexpected outage restoration in the middle of the night is more expensive than fixes made during daytime working hours. The membership as a whole absorbs those labor costs.

So if you want to add to your electric capacity, now that transformers and other service equipment are in short supply, Kresock and Powell recommend calling WEC now. And be aware there are costs involved: there's the incremental cost of the larger transformer, and the household upgrades an electrician will need to make in order to increase your capacity



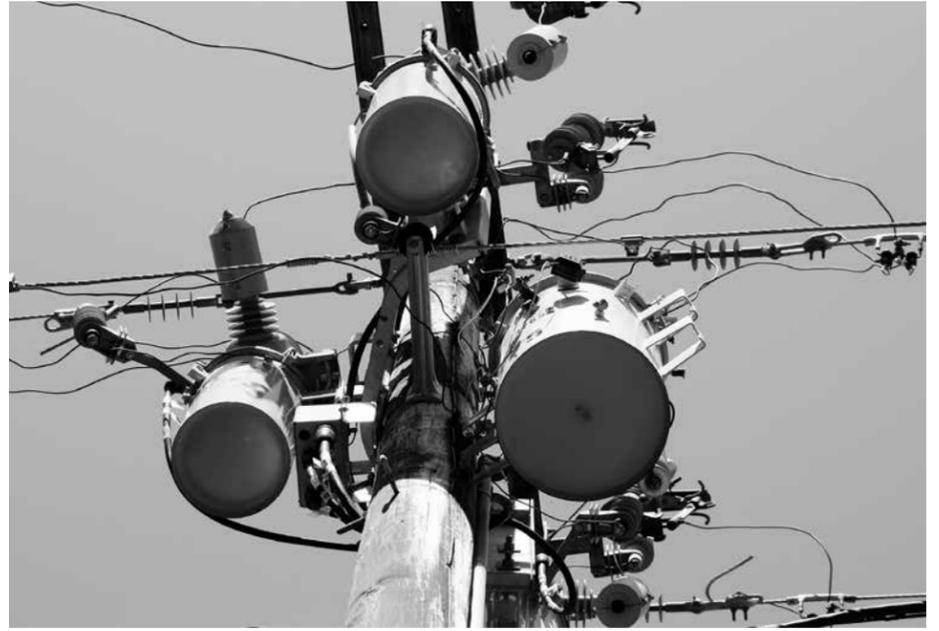
Until equipment like transformers becomes easier to access, WEC needs to reserve some inventory for emergencies — like restoring power after a storm.

from, in most cases, 100 to 200 amps.

This is frustrating for members, Kresock acknowledged. "People don't necessarily want to pay for upgrades. But it's not fair to the membership to cover it," said Kresock.

If all things were equal, it might make sense for the Co-op to raise money through a surcharge to replace everyone's transformer. But the Co-op's decision-making is rooted in equity as much as it is in equality. Those members who can afford to purchase new electric vehicles and heat pumps, reasoned Kresock, Powell, and others in WEC leadership, are more likely to be able to afford the system upgrades needed to power those new devices — and that's fairer than asking fellow members to subsidize those upgrades on their behalf.

WEC is actively engaged with the question of how a cooperative should balance its commitment to equality (everyone has the same access to the same assets) with its commitment to equity (each according to their need.) "It's something that's always in front of us as we're making decisions," said Board member Betsy Allen. 



An ant's eye view of transformers on a pole. These can-shaped devices "step down" power lines' high voltage for our everyday electricity use. They come in different sizes. WEC lines have mostly 5 kVA transformers.

Beware of scams

Scammers use high-pressure tactics, including threats that you're about to be disconnected for not paying your bill. Don't provide any account numbers to anyone over the phone unless you are certain of the caller's authenticity.

If someone claiming to be from WEC calls you and you are not sure it's true, hang up and call WEC back at the main office number at 1-800-932-5245.

ASK THE ENERGY COACH

Ask the Energy Coach: When will incentives resume?



Dear Energy Coach: I just installed a hot water heat pump and want to take advantage of WEC's incentives. When will they be available again?

You can submit the invoices for any eligible equipment upgrades now — in fact, WEC hopes you will. All eligible equipment upgrades dated from September through December 31, 2022 will be honored in the first quarter of 2023.

The reason we paused incentives is to resolve a cash flow issue while the Co-op faces a rate increase. But, because of our membership's interest in upgrading to efficient devices, our Co-op already met the state's Renewable Energy Standard (Tier III) targets.

We will introduce a new slate of incentives to help members transition from fossil fuel to WEC's 100% renewable electricity in 2023. In the meantime, submit your invoices for any eligible upgrades made in 2022. Call the Coach if you have any questions.

Have an energy question? Ask the Energy Coach: energycoach@wec.coop

Why does WEC have mostly 5 kVA transformers?

In the late twentieth century, Vermont was focused on conserving electricity. This led distribution utilities to "right-size" their service components. When it came to transformer capacity in relation to metered load, WEC was looking for a snug fit — not a roomy fit.

Why? "You may only use the full capacity 20-30% of the time," explained Bill Powell. "The rest of the time, it's idling, and that juice is on the Co-op's dime. To lower that amount of loss, right-sizing the transformer saves all members money," as well as reducing needless use of electricity.

That's sensible when electric load is stable. But today, with ever-increasing urgency to move away from fossil fuels, electric loads are projected to keep growing.

In addition, WEC is rural, and most Co-op transformers are "one to one," or connect to only one meter each. In densely populated areas, transformers connect to multiple meters, and are sized larger as a result.

Today, it makes sense that a one to one transformer should have somewhat larger capacity than is currently needed, to allow members to seamlessly add more electric load over time: a Level 2 charger, a heat pump water heater. Installing electric service components, like transformers and wires, with increased capacity is called "future-proofing" for that reason.

Run for WEC's Board of Directors

Serving on WEC's Board of Directors is about poles and wires and so much more. It's also about learning, community, advocacy, systems thinking, and making informed and sometimes difficult decisions. It's about helping shape the future for Central Vermont.

Start thinking about running for WEC's Board of Directors. We could use your expertise.

Call Rosie to request a candidate packet: 802-224-2322.

Annual Meeting

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be printed in the April-May issue.

Members of the Co-op have the right to petition for changes to the Co-op's bylaws. The bylaws are available on

wec.coop, or you may contact WEC for a hard copy. To petition for a change, members are required to collect signatures in support from a minimum of 50 fellow members of WEC. Petitions for bylaws changes are due **Friday, February 10**. 

Concern for Community

WEC Maintains Winter Holiday and Relief Programs During an Expensive Winter

In 2022, inflation and high fuel costs combine to pose another challenging winter. Households are aware their dollars don't cover as much. Just as worrying, the nonprofit programs that help people access basic needs – like food shelves and pantries – are finding donations are down, and their buying power is eroded.

“From a service delivery standpoint, our first principles are safety and reliability,” said General Manager Louis Porter. “But we're a cooperative, so those principles apply beyond just electricity.

“Concern for community means both today and tomorrow,” he said. “The health of our community is directly linked to the health of our not-for-profit cooperative. So whatever we can do to facilitate relief and stability among our membership, we will do.”

These are some WEC programs that provide direct support:

Holiday sponsorship

Veterans, Inc. is a national nonprofit with a mission to end homelessness among military veterans. Through their Bradford, VT office, WEC sponsors Christmas for one veteran family in WEC's service area. This program is not supported through the Community Fund, but is a beloved tradition in the WEC office. Staff, Board, vendors, and consultants contribute to cover the costs of a complete celebration, including food and gifts. “This year, we were able to get everything on the specific family's wish list and more,” said Administrative Assistant Rosie Casciero. In addition, WEC's team sponsored grocery gift cards for

holiday meals for six additional veteran families.

To learn more: veteransinc.org

WARMTH

WARMTH is Vermont's emergency home heating assistance program. It's funded mainly through voluntary contributions from electric utility customers, and operated through local community action agencies. In WEC territory, that's

Capstone and Northeast Kingdom Community Action, or NEKCA.

To donate, initial the Operation Round-Up box on your electric bill to round up each bill to the next dollar and send the change to WARMTH. If you'd like to contribute more each month, write in the amount. If you bill through SmartHub or would prefer to call, contact Member Services to arrange your donation: 802-223-5245

or 1-800-932-5245.

Members can also donate directly to fuel assistance through their community action agencies: visit capstonevt.org or nekca.org

WEC's Community Fund

Co-op members have the option to donate their capital credit refunds.

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Did You Know?

The Vermont Public Utility Commission requires all electric utilities to publish this Herbicide Use Notification. **Washington Electric Cooperative does not use herbicides in its right-of-way management program.**

Important Annual Notice Regarding Herbicide Use in the Maintenance of Electric Utility Rights-of-Way

The Vermont Public Utility Commission has set forth rules under [PUC Rule 3.600](#) pertaining to the use of herbicides in the maintenance of electric utility rights-of-way (ROW). Each spring, herbicide applications may begin on or after April 1st. These rules afford you important rights and duties. Vermont electric utilities maintain electric line rights-of-way with several methods, including the selective use of herbicides on trees and brush. They also encourage low-growing shrubs and trees which will crowd tall-growing species and, thus, minimize the use of herbicides. Methods of herbicide applications may include stump, stem injection, basal, soil, and foliar. **Only electric utility rights-of-way that have tall-growing tree species with the potential of threatening the electric utility system are treated.**

If you reside on or own property in Vermont within 1000' of an electric utility right-of-way:

- Sign up to receive written notification** from your local electric utility of plans to apply herbicide on any ROW within 1000' of your property or the property where you reside. Check nearby poles for tags identifying the utility and/or pole number, complete the form below and submit it to your local electric utility by mail before February 15th, 2023 to be added to the notification list. If determined to be qualified, you will receive notification from the utility at least 30 days prior to scheduled herbicide application.
- You are responsible to make your local electric utility aware** of the location of any potentially affected water supply, and of any other environmentally sensitive area where herbicide application ought to be avoided.
- Watch and listen for public service announcements** in newspapers and radio ads noting upcoming herbicide applications.
- Check with your local electric utility** regarding the vegetation management cycle near your particular line.
- You have the right** to request, in writing, that the utility refrain from applying herbicides in the process of clearing the right-of-way, and the utility may offer alternatives such as herbicide stump treatment or herbicide stem injections.
- You have the right** to refuse, in writing, the use of herbicides whatsoever at no cost to you if the type of lines in the right-of-way are **distribution lines**, bringing electric service directly to individual customers.
- You have the right** to refuse, in writing, the use of herbicides whatsoever by paying a \$30 administration fee if the type of lines in the right-of-way are **transmission lines** or **sub-transmission lines**, bringing electricity to or between substations.

For more details, or to ask additional questions, please contact your local electric utility, or one of the following:

Washington Electric Co-op, Inc. 40 Church Street, PO Box 8 East Montpelier, VT 05651 1-802-223-5245	Agency of Agriculture Public Health & Ag. Resource Mgmt 116 State St., Montpelier, VT 05602 1-802-828-2431	Department of Public Service Consumer Affairs & Public Information 112 State St., Montpelier, VT 05620 1-800-622-4496
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Based on the information above, if you believe you qualify to be notified in advance of pending herbicide applications in the rights-of-way, mail the request below to your local electric company before February 15th, 2023.

Resident/Property Owner Request to be Added to Herbicide Treatment Notification Mailing List			
Name	Town/City of Affected Property		
Street Address	Home Phone Number		
Town	Work Phone Number		
State	Zip Code	O.K. to use work number?	Yes No
Electric Utility Account Number		Best time to contact you	
Affected Property: Year-Round Residence Summer Residence Commercial Property Water Supply Organic Farm Land Other (Circle all that apply)			
Line/Pole Identification: Utility Initials		Pole Numbers	
Please fill out this request completely to help us determine if you qualify for herbicide treatment notification. MAIL THIS REQUEST TO YOUR LOCAL ELECTRIC UTILITY AT THE ADDRESS LISTED ABOVE BEFORE FEBRUARY 15th, 2023			

Where's WEC?

Crews are busy working to keep rights-of-way clear. Right-of-way maintenance is necessary to keep your power safe and reliable.

Where are tree crews trimming WEC's roadside rights-of-way?

Corinth roads:

- Carpenter Place
- Richardson
- Whipporwill Hollow

Bradford roads:

- Fulton
- Upper Plain
- Wayne Hill PVT
- Wrights Mtn

East Montpelier roads:

- County
- Fitch
- Horn of the Moon
- Jacobs
- Sanders Circle

Middlesex:

- Macey Road

For up to date information:
[wec.coop/wec-operations/
right-of-way-notice](http://wec.coop/wec-operations/right-of-way-notice)



Energy Efficiency Charge Rates for 2023

In November, the Public Utility Commission issued its order setting Energy Efficiency Charge (or EEC) rates to take effect on electric bills issued on or after February 1, 2023.

Per the order, almost all customer classes will see rate reductions in 2023, based on the rule that governs the calculation of EEC rates. Efficiency Vermont put forth that the same calculation has the potential to cause a rate increase

in 2024, and proposed an alternative method that defers 50% of 2023 revenue adjustments to 2024. This maintains a rate decrease to most customer classes and also, per the order, “delivers rates that are likely to be more stable and predictable for customers.”

To view the full order: epuc.vermont.gov/?q=node/64/170342

The table below combines all rate changes affecting WEC members. 

Concern for Community

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This money is pooled and distributed to worthy causes in WEC’s service area. Every year, the fund grants tens of thousands of dollars to small local nonprofits.

To donate your capital credits to the Community Fund, call Rosie Casciero at 802-224-2322.

How you can help

The Co-op’s list of Community Fund grantees is a good resource for local charitable giving. Each organization on this list makes a difference right here in central Vermont. The full list of 2021 recipients is in the July 2022 issue of Co-op Currents, available online at wec.coop.

If you need help

- Call 211 to find any emergency resource you need: food, mental health, fuel, shelter, and anything else.
- If you need help paying your WEC bill, call Member Services: 802-223-5245 or 1-800-932-5245
- If you are in danger of running out of fuel, call the toll-free Emergency Fuel Assistance number: 1-800-479-6151
- For food, housing, weatherization, and other services, contact your local Community Action Agency: either Capstone (capstonevt.org) or Northeast Kingdom Community Action (NEKCA, nekca.org) 

Have Your Finances Taken a Hit?

Don’t let your WEC bill go past due, or grow beyond what you can manage.

Help is available: A Member Services Representative will help you put together a budget that works for you. Plus, there are state programs that may help pay down your bill.

Call us today, and we’ll help you put together a plan: 802-223-5245 or toll free at 1-800-WEC-5245.

PUC: Notice of Proposed Tariff Changes

On September 15, 2022, Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc. filed a request with the Vermont Public Utility Commission (PUC) for an increase in retail rates of 14.19%. The main drivers of this rate increase are increasing costs for purchasing power coupled with a decline in power production at WEC’s primary generating facility, and assuring compliance with lender requirements.

This change will take effect with power sold on and after November 1, 2022 and will be reflected on bills received in November. If the PUC opens a formal investigation of this matter, this increase will be shown as a separate surcharge on bills until the PUC finishes its investigation.

Any interested person may examine the rate increase filing via ePUC at: <https://epuc.vermont.gov/?q=node/86>. The Case No. is 22-4100-TF. The filing is also available at the Washington Electric Cooperative office during normal business hours. Comments regarding the rate filing may be submitted to the Public Utility Commission by October 17, 2022 via mail at 112 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05620-2701, via email at puc.clerk@vermont.gov, or through the e-PUC at <https://epuc.vermont.gov/?q=node/32>.

To determine the impact on your individual bill, use the present and proposed rates column and your average monthly consumption. For example, a residential member using an average of 500 kWh a month would calculate his or her bill as seen in the table below.

Note to members: Although the deadline for comments as stated in the above notice is passed, there is a public hearing at which further comments can be made. Please see the notice on page 8.

Combined Effect of WEC’s Proposed Rate Case and EEC Rate On Member Bills

	Present Rates	Proposed Rates	2023 EEC Rates
Residential			
Customer Charge	\$26.49	\$30.25	0.01087 per kWh
0-100 kWh/month	0.08476	0.09679	
Over 100 kWh/month	0.21149	0.24150	
Small Commercial			
Customer Charge	\$26.49	\$30.25	0.00974 per kWh
Per kWh/month	0.20136	0.22993	
Large Power			
Customer Charge	\$31.79	\$36.30	0.00621 per kWh
Per kWh/month	0.11434	0.13056	\$1.17 per kW
Per kW of demand/month	16.53	18.88	
Time of Day Tariff*			
Customer Charge	\$15.03	\$17.16	
0-60 kWh/month – Peak	0.12025	0.13731	
Over 60 kWh/month – Peak	0.29720	0.33937	
0-140 kWh/month – Off Peak	0.12025	0.13731	
Over 140 kWh/month – Off Peak	0.25273	0.28859	
Security Lights			
Per 100 Watt Light/month	\$23.39	\$26.71	\$3.51 per month
Per 400 Watt Light/month	46.78	53.42	
Per 30-40 Watt – LED	22.04	25.17	
Per 40-50 Watt – LED	22.44	25.62	
Per 50-60 Watt – LED	23.37	26.69	
Per 60-70 Watt – LED	22.30	25.46	

Fixed EEC for net metering without production meter (per month)

Residential Members	\$6.50
Commercial Members	\$.765

*The Time of Day Tariff is only available to members now on this tariff.



Members Write

To *Co-op Currents*:

As a longtime WEC member, I was disappointed by the many negative and one-sided portrayals of solar net metering in the recent *Coop Currents*.

Meeting the challenge that global warming presents to our safety and security requires an increase in new supplies of renewable energy like solar. New solar energy displaces polluting fossil fuels and enables a speedier transition to clean, low-cost energy for home heating, cooling, and transportation. Our electric co-op should enthusiastically support these positive outcomes.

The renewable energy standard is

a companion to net metering. WEC members have long enjoyed the financial benefit of selling the renewable energy credits for the power generated by the Coventry landfill gas facility and purchasing lower cost credits from existing renewable resources to continue to claim the power is 100% renewable. *Co-op Currents*' negative portrayal of net metering failed to acknowledge how the energy credit accounting provides windfall financial benefits to Co-op members from selling these credits without producing any new renewable energy to replace fossil fuels.

Financial impacts are not the only impacts of energy policies and decisions. WEC members have

benefited from the relatively low-cost power and sales of renewable credits from the Coventry landfill gas facility. This has come at a high cost to the local communities that bear the burdens of pollution from hosting the landfill and disposing of the toxic sludge the landfill generates. These local burdens are far greater than the local impacts of net metered solar energy. I was disappointed that accounting for these impacts to others and benefits to WEC members was not also included in the portrayal of solar net metering.

I look forward to future *Co-op Currents* providing more accurate information about how WEC and its members support the needed transition to renewable energy.

— Sandra Levine, Middlesex

To *Co-op Currents*:

I am dismayed by the repeated finger-pointing of net metering (see September's newsletter) as the reason for WEC's high utility charges. The October newsletter highlighted the contradiction in this approach.

WEC is requesting a 14% increase in rates because landfill gas production is down and expensive electricity must

be purchased on the open market. At the same time each kWh generated by on-site solar reduces the amount of expensive power WEC must purchase.

What will happen as more households increase their electrical consumption with heat pumps and electric vehicles? Will WEC need to purchase even more high-priced electricity? Will there be even more rate hikes?

I must ask what is WEC's business model of the future? Will WEC continue to rely on larger and more frequent rate hikes? Alternatively, will WEC embrace on-site solar paired with battery storage? Batteries open up a way to reduce high-priced power purchases during peak demand periods.

With expanding electrification, the high and every-increasing cost of electricity and federal solar incentives, more and more members are bound to choose on-site solar. How is WEC positioned to respond?

— Larry Rogacki, Barre

Co-op Currents publishes letters from WEC members representing a variety of viewpoints. The Board of Directors encourages and appreciates comments from the membership on issues of importance to the Co-op.

CVFIBER CVFiber Update

By Jerry Diamantides

WEC's General Manager, Louis Porter, and CVFiber Governing Board Chair, Jerry Diamantides, have signed a 49-year lease for a 500-square-foot plot adjacent to WEC's Calais substation. This location will contain CVFiber's hub for fiber Internet service along 135 miles in parts of Calais, Woodbury, Worcester, and East Montpelier. Weather permitting, Eustis Cable Enterprises will be pouring the concrete for the hub pad in December.

CVFiber has announced its subscription fees for home internet service for symmetrical speeds of 100 Mbps at \$79, 500 Mbps at \$99, 1 Gig at \$129, and 2 Gigs at \$199 a month. Commercial service fees for speeds up to 10 Gigabits symmetrical will be determined on an individual basis depending on the service needs of the user.

CVFiber is a nonprofit municipality governed by delegates appointed by each of its twenty-member communities. While grant funds are expected to cover 50% of the estimated \$60 million to construct a 1,200-mile fiber-to-the-home network, subscription revenues will be necessary to cover the debt service on the remaining construction costs, as well as operations and maintenance costs. The subscription fees have been set to meet those anticipated costs and operate a sustainable business. The cost to design, purchase materials, make utility poles ready for fiber, and then construct these first 135 miles is approximately \$7 million.

CVFiber will be participating in the federal Affordability Connectivity Program (ACP), which will provide those who qualify with \$30/month in support of monthly subscription fees. Our website, cvfiber.net, will provide information and links to help subscribers check their eligibility and sign up for available support.

In addition, CVFiber will be working with the Equal Access to Broadband initiative that will help our subscribers access the federal ACP program and potentially other programs to further lower the monthly costs to our subscribers.

So, when is the CVFiber Community Network coming to your neighborhood? CVFiber's website, cvfiber.net, is building capabilities to allow potential subscribers to input their address to check on fiber service availability, and when ready, select service level, and pre-subscribe. The website will describe service levels and fees, allow you to schedule installation date and time, and provide information and links to ACP and other access-support programs that may be available.

Construction is starting in December. You'll see Eustis' trucks working on poles in parts of Calais, Worcester, Woodbury, and East Montpelier. You'll also see the vehicles of our construction manager, NRTC performing design inspections. CVFiber gives a giant "THANK YOU" to the folks at WEC who have worked hard to get their poles ready for our fiber installation. And WEC, like us, is waiting for Santa to deliver the next load of poles to keep our crews working and bring reliable broadband to Central Vermont. A safe and happy holiday season to all.

Jerry Diamantides is the Governing Board Chair of CVFiber. Learn more at cvfiber.net.



State of Vermont
Public Utility Commission
November 28, 2022

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING & INFORMATION SESSION

You are hereby notified that the Vermont Public Utility Commission will hold a PUBLIC HEARING, pursuant to 30 V.S.A. Sections 10, 225 & 226, in PUC Case No. 22-4100-TF, Tariff filing of Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc. for approval of a 14.19% rate increase effective on a service-rendered basis commencing November 1, 2022.

On January 4, 2023 via Go To Meeting videoconference. The Public Hearing will commence at 7:00 P.M., or immediately following a presentation at 6:45 P.M. hosted by the Vermont Department of Public Service where Washington Electric Cooperative Inc. will describe and answer questions about the rate request.

Participants and members of the public may access the public hearing and information session online at <https://meet.goto.com/307402773> or call in by telephone using the following information: phone number: +1 (571) 317-3116 ; access code: 307-402-773. Participants may wish to download the GoToMeeting software application in advance of the hearing at <https://meet.goto.com/install>. Guidance on how to join the meeting and system requirements may be found at <https://www.gotomeeting.com/meeting/online-meeting-support>.

Persons without access to GoToMeeting may participate in the public hearing using the toll-free option for calling in which can be provided by contacting the Clerk of the Commission.

Pursuant to 30 V.S.A. §§20 and 21, the Petitioner will be responsible for court reporter costs incurred by the Commission as a result of this public hearing. Invoices for these costs will be mailed to the attorney(s) of record or the official representative(s) for the Petitioner.

VERMONT PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Holly R. Anderson Clerk of the Commission

