

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* July 2025 NEWS

OCNTO ELECTRIC
OEE
COOPERATIVE

WECN CELEBRATES 85 YEARS!

**EFFICIENCY TIPS
FOR OLDER HOMES**

COOPERATIVE YOUTH

MACARONI RECIPES





POWER OUTAGES AND COMMUNICATION DISRUPTION FROM THE CELLCOM OUTAGE LEFT PEOPLE FEELING POWERLESS

How to be prepared when the lights go out

Cellcom, a regional wireless provider in Wisconsin, experienced a significant service outage beginning on the evening of Wednesday, May 14, 2025. The disruption primarily affected voice and basic text messaging called SMS services, including customer care lines, while data services remained operational. The company later attributed the issue was caused by a cyber incident.

Nsight, Cellcom's parent company, who is OEC's phone provider for the office, was also affected by the outage. The office was without phones for a day and a half.

What did this mean for our members? Members were unable to call and ask questions, pay their bill over the phone, or report power outages.

A strong storm went through on the evening of Friday, May 16. We tried to prepare members prior to the severe weather by promoting SmartHub.

SmartHub delivers accurate and timely information regarding your electric account. It is a free application that can be accessed through our website or by downloading the application on a compatible mobile device. (1387600) SmartHub can be used to view bills, make payments in a secure environment with the touch of button, view your daily usage, report an outage and you are able to contact us.

During the storm SmartHub was the best way to report your outage. Many members used Facebook to report their outages. We strongly advise against this. Our social media channels aren't monitored around the clock, and it's frequently difficult for us to locate your account based solely on a Facebook profile name, especially if it's not your real name or the account is registered under someone else's.

If you don't have SmartHub, we highly recommend that you download it today. It's convenient, free, and very simple to use.



HOW TO REGISTER FOR SMARTHUB ON YOUR SMARTPHONE

- Step 1: On your mobile device, open your app store.
- Step 2: Search for SmartHub and look for the SmartHub icon.
- Step 3: Once the app installs, tap the **SmartHub icon** on your device to open the app.
- Step 4: After SmartHub opens to the initial launch screen, tap the appropriate button to search by Name.
- Step 5: Enter the name (Oconto Electric Cooperative) in the search bar and tap the Search button. Next, tap on our name in the search results.
- Step 6: Tap the **Confirm** button to confirm your choice.
- Step 7: From the SmartHub login screen, tap the link that says **Don't have an account? Register now.**
- Step 8: Fill out the registration form completely. Tap the **Continue** button.
- Step 9: On the security check screen, answer all of the security questions. Tap the **Register** button.
- Step 10: You will receive a notification telling you that a verification email has been sent.
- Step 11: Open the email and tap the **Verify Account** link to continue.
- Step 12: Next you will set your **new password** on your account. Type your new password in twice and tap **Save**.
- Step 13: Return to the log in screen on the app and use your email address and new password to log in for the first time.
- Step 14: During the first log in, you may be asked to accept our Terms and Conditions. Tap the **Accept** button.
- Step 15: If you would like to activate Paperless Billing move the **Activate Paperless Billing slider** to the right and tap **Save**.
- Step 16: **Congratulations!** You have successfully installed the app and registered your SmartHub account!

RETURNING MONEY BACK TO YOU

BENEFIT OF BEING A COOPERATIVE MEMBER

Oconto Electric is a not-for-profit cooperative with members who share in the ownership, maintenance, construction and success of the cooperative. A benefit of being a cooperative member/owner is the share in the earnings/margins Oconto Electric earns each year.

As you pay for your energy, OEC utilizes the revenue to grow, operate, and maintain a safe and reliable energy system. Any money that is earned over and above the costs of doing business is called margins. Your portion of allocated margins is then returned to you in the form of capital credits.

Capital credits are the most significant source of equity for most cooperatives. They are similar to the dividends that investor-owned utilities pay to their shareholders except that OEC “dividends” go back to the members/owners.

How do you determine how much in capital credits I receive?

At the end of each year OEC divides the dollar value of that year’s margins by the amount of total revenue collected during the year. This is the “allocation factor.” The allocation factor is then multiplied by the amount of revenue each member contributed during that year. This is your share of the margins – or your capital credit allocation – for that year.

What is the difference between allocated and retired capital credits?

Allocated capital credits are the member’s share of net margins and reflect your equity and ownership in Oconto Electric. Members are allocated capital credits, and will receive an allocation notice on their bill when the cooperative

earns positive margins. This money is set aside to be used as operating capital for improvements and maintenance over a period of years and to have reserves in case of an emergency.

A retirement is the amount a member receives as a refund. It is a portion of your total allocation. When capital credits are retired, a check or electric bill credit is issued and your equity in the cooperative is reduced.

The board of directors reviews OEC’s financial condition annually and then decides whether to retire capital credits. The board’s goal is to keep capital credit retirements on a 20-year rotation, always retiring the oldest year.

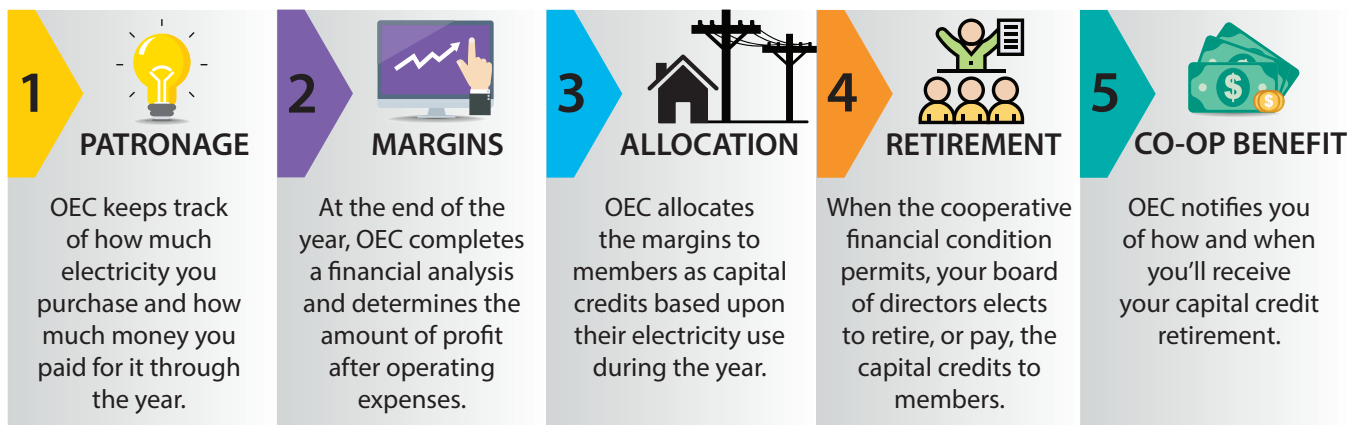
How do I get my capital credits?

This year OEC will be paying out capital credits earned in 2005. If the amount of your retirement in a given year is more than \$100, a check will be sent in late July to the last valid address we have on file. If the amount is less than \$100 and you still purchase electricity from OEC, it will appear as a credit on your July electric bill.

What happens to the money when the member can’t be located?

Capital credits become “unclaimed” when OEC is unable to locate the member after three years. Unclaimed funds, as allowed by state law, are placed in an account with the Federated Youth Foundation. The money in that account can only be used for education or charitable purposes. Annually OEC funds scholarships for member students pursuing higher education.

If you would like to know more about capital credits, contact OEC at 1-800-472-8410.





WELCOME TO THE OEC TEAM!



We are excited to welcome Mikayla McDonald as Oconto Electric Cooperative's new Member Services Representative, joining us in late March. With 16 years of experience in customer service, Mikayla brings a wealth of knowledge and a strong commitment to providing excellent support to our members.

As the first point of contact for most of our members—whether over the phone or in person at the front counter—Mikayla is ready to assist with a friendly face and a helpful attitude.

A lifelong resident of Oconto, Mikayla lives there with her husband and two children. Outside of work, she enjoys traveling, walking, hiking, and supporting her kids in their extracurricular activities.

Congratulations, Mikayla! We're very fortunate to have you on our team.



Meet Greg Kuhn our new operations manager. He began his career as a lineman in 2003 after attending a tech school presentation at his high school. The career immediately caught his interest—he liked the idea of working outdoors, being part of a team, and contributing to something hands-on and essential.

In 2008, he earned his journeyman status and later moved into utility management in 2015.

While the municipal business model is very similar with being not for profit and community oriented, OEC is larger in both customer count and service area. He looks forward to the challenge of learning, maintaining, and providing great service to a larger footprint. This also gives him a great opportunity to meet more people in surrounding communities and try to make a positive impact both inside the utility as well as the communities we serve.

In Greg's free time he enjoys working on cars, doing house projects, and traveling with his wife of 19 years and their two daughters.

THANK YOU FOR 26 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE



After 26 years of dedicated service, we honor the retirement of an individual who has played a vital role in powering our communities, Jack Pardy. From the early days as a

lineman—working long hours in every kind of weather—to becoming line superintendent in 2008, your passion for the cooperative and steadfast dedication to doing what's right—no matter the challenge—has left an indelible mark on OEC.

Your love for the cooperative was evident in every decision you made and every step you took. You consistently placed the needs of the members and the success of the cooperative above all else, serving with integrity, wisdom, and a heart full of purpose.

Since 2017, Jack has taken charge during 5 major storms that hit our service territory and we had to call ROPE (Restoration of Power in an Emergency) to send outside crews to help us restore power. During major storms he takes charge, leading crews with confidence to restore power to members quickly and safely. In 2017 he traveled to Florida with volunteer line crews from 18 Wisconsin electric cooperatives where he oversaw crews to help rebuild the shattered electric systems caused by Hurricane Irma.

Jack also served in the Army Reserves as a combat engineer company 15G and all reserve rifle team as instructor coach and shooter. He retired from the reserves in 2009 with 30 years of service.

As you move into retirement, we hope you take pride in all that you've accomplished here at OEC and find joy in the next chapter of life. You will be greatly missed—not only for your expertise and leadership, but for the care, honesty, and your gritty work ethic you brought to work every day.

Thank you for everything, Jack. We wish you nothing but happiness, health, and well-earned relaxation in retirement.

With heartfelt appreciation,
Ryan and the OEC Team



Lena's Fields of Dreams Come True

Last year, a Change Matters grant in the amount of \$4,000 helped construct two baseball diamonds in the Village of Lena—a project that turned a simple idea into a thriving community hub. On a warm June evening, both fields came alive with the sound of bats cracking, children laughing, and families cheering from the sidelines. The atmosphere was electric—neighbors gathered, friendships were formed, and community pride was on full display. It was a reminder that small towns can come together around something as simple—and powerful—as a game of baseball.

The next phase will include the installation of scoreboards on both fields to enhance game-day experiences for players and spectators. It will also involve the construction of a concession stand and pavilion, providing a shaded gathering space, food for attendees, and bathroom facilities.

Thanks to generous donors and grants like Change Matters, the baseball diamonds are a place where community truly comes to play.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

During summer months, run large appliances that emit heat such as clothes dryers and dishwashers during the evening when the outdoor temperature is lower. Running heat-emitting appliances in the evening will reduce indoor heat gain during the day when outdoor temperatures are highest and ultimately keep your air conditioner from working harder than necessary.

Source:
energy.gov
(147500)



HIDDEN ACCOUNT NUMBERS

Oconto Electric Cooperative hides two account numbers in the local pages of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* each month. If you spot your account number, call our office before you receive the next issue, and OEC will give you a \$15 credit on your electric bill or a \$25 credit if you have a load management receiver. The June account numbers belonged to Larry Vaness, Little Suamico and Jerry Hensel, Shawano.



Ryan Miller, CEO

Katie Jagiello, Communications and Marketing

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Hours of Operation: 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Hours of Lobby: 9:00 a.m.–3 p.m. Friday

Non-emergencies: 920-846-2816

Emergencies & outages: Toll FREE 800-472-8410
24 hours a day, 7 days a week