

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

July 2026

OCONTO ELECTRIC
CEC
COOPERATIVE

FOREFRONT OF FUSION

HOW TO HELP
DURING PEAK DEMAND

READER RECIPE CONTEST

KIDS AND CRITTERS

A SAFE HAVEN FOR OSPREYS

and reliable power for members

Ospreys—often called “fish hawks”—are magnificent raptors that return to Wisconsin each spring, typically arriving in mid-April after wintering in warmer southern regions. These birds are almost entirely dependent on live fish for food, so they are most commonly found near inland lakes, large reservoirs, and large river systems.

Perfectly adapted for their aquatic diet, ospreys possess specialized features that set them apart from other birds of prey. Their feet are equipped with unique, velcro-like barbed pads that help them grip slippery fish, while a reversible outer toe allows them to grasp their catch with two toes facing forward and two backward. Once a fish is caught, the osprey cleverly repositions it mid-flight so the head faces forward, creating a more streamlined shape for efficient transport through the air.

With a wingspan ranging from four-and-a-half to six feet and a body length of 22 to 25 inches, ospreys are both powerful and graceful in flight. Their striking appearance includes dark brown plumage on their upper bodies, bright white undersides, and a white head marked by a distinct black eye stripe. Females can often be identified by a dark, speckled “necklace” across their chest.

At around three to four years of age, ospreys begin to mate and establish nesting territories. They are highly territorial birds, preferring not to share their space with other ospreys. Nesting sites are typically selected close to water and may be located atop tall trees or, increasingly, on man-made

structures such as power poles. In fact, nearly 75 percent of Wisconsin’s ospreys rely on these human-built platforms. Many pairs return to the same nesting site year after year, adding to their nests each season. Over time, these nests can grow to more than three feet in diameter, constructed of large sticks and lined with grasses and weeds.

During the breeding season, the female typically lays three buff-colored eggs speckled with brown. She incubates them for about 28 days, remaining on the nest nearly constantly. During this time, the male takes on the role of provider, delivering fish to sustain her until the eggs hatch.

In 2015, Oconto Electric Cooperative took steps to balance reliability and wildlife stewardship when an osprey nest built directly on power lines posed a fire risk and the potential for service outages. The nest was carefully removed, and in its place, the co-op installed a dedicated nesting platform atop a nearby power pole—providing a safer, more sustainable home for the birds. Today, that platform continues to support returning ospreys each spring, serving as a visible reminder of how thoughtful planning can protect both essential infrastructure and the natural beauty that defines our community.



In 2015, osprey built a nest on our power lines. For safety reasons, the nest was removed and OEC put up a platform for the birds.



Two osprey use the nest that was placed on a platform in 2015. The faint sounds of their chicks calling could be heard from below.

Beat the Summer Peak: Small Changes, Big Impact

Take a look around your home—chances are, it's more connected than ever before. From smart TVs and devices to everyday appliances, electricity powers nearly every part of our daily lives. As our use of electricity keeps increasing—especially during the heat of summer—so does the demand on the electric grid.

At Oconto Electric Cooperative, we work around the clock to deliver safe, reliable power, no matter the conditions. But keeping up with peak demand isn't just our job—it's something we can all help with. By making a few simple adjustments to when and how we use electricity, you can help keep energy costs in check.

What Is "Beat the Peak"?

"Beat the peak" encourages members to use less electricity—or shift their usage—during times when demand is highest. When many households use energy at the same time—like hot summer afternoons or early evenings—the strain on the grid increases and wholesale power costs rise.

By reducing or spreading out energy use during these peak times, you help lower overall demand, reduce costs for the cooperative, and ultimately help keep rates affordable for everyone. Members can also explore tools like load management and time-of-use programs at www.ocontoelectric.com for additional savings.

When Does Peak Demand Occur?

In the summer months, peak demand tends to happen:

Early morning as households start the day—turning on lights, brewing coffee, and adjusting thermostats.

Late afternoon and evening when families return home, cook meals, run laundry, and cool down their homes.

During extreme heat waves, demand spikes even higher as air conditioners and cooling systems run longer and harder to keep homes comfortable.

Simple Ways to Shift Your Load

The goal of beating the peak is simple: avoid running multiple high-energy appliances at the same time and shift usage to off-peak hours when possible. Here are a few easy ways to make a difference:

Delay the dishwasher: Use the delay-start feature to run it after bedtime.

Spread out chores: Avoid running laundry, cooking, and dish-washing all at once.

Be mindful of hot water use: Excessive hot water use increases energy demand on your water heater.

Adjust your thermostat: Even raising it a degree or two during peak hours can help reduce strain on the grid.

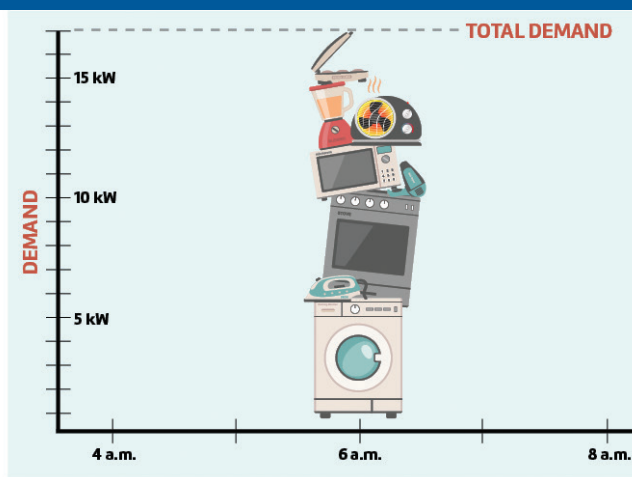
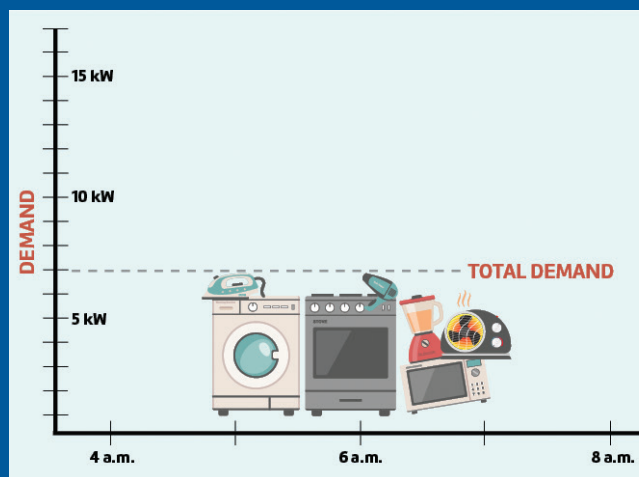
Why It Matters

Shifting your electric load is a small change that adds up to big benefits: lower costs, improved reliability, and a stronger, more efficient energy system for our community.

So this season, take the challenge. Shift your usage, save energy, and help us beat the peak—together.

WHAT IS DEMAND?

Demand is the amount of power needed to supply every electrical device running in your home or business at a specific point in time.



Using multiple electric appliances at the same time increases the demand for electricity on the grid and, therefore, increases the cost of the wholesale power for everyone. (57301)



RETURNING VALUE TO YOU

THE POWER OF MEMBERSHIP AT OCONTO ELECTRIC CO-OP

One of the many benefits of being a member of Oconto Electric Cooperative is sharing in the success of your cooperative. As a not-for-profit, member-owned organization, Oconto Electric operates differently than investor-owned utilities—putting members first and returning value directly back to you.

Each time you pay your electric bill, you're doing more than keeping the lights on—you're helping support the operation, maintenance, and growth of a safe and reliable electric system. When Oconto Electric's revenues exceed the cost of doing business, those excess funds are called margins. Instead of going to outside investors, these margins are allocated back to members in the form of capital credits.

What Are Capital Credits?

Capital credits represent your share of ownership in the cooperative. They are similar to dividends paid by investor-owned utilities, but with one important difference: at Oconto Electric, those returns go right back to the members who use the service.

At the end of each year, the cooperative determines its margins and calculates an allocation factor based on total revenue. This factor is then applied to each member's annual electric purchases to determine their share of the margins—your capital credit allocation.

Allocated vs. Retired Capital Credits

When capital credits are first assigned to you, they are considered allocated. This means they are recorded in your name as part of your ownership share in the cooperative. These funds are retained for a period of time to help finance infrastructure improvements, maintain the system, and provide financial stability in case of emergencies.

Over time, as the cooperative's financial condition allows,

those credits are retired—meaning they are paid back to members. When a retirement occurs, you'll receive your portion either as a check or as a credit on your electric bill, and your equity balance is reduced accordingly.

The Oconto Electric Board of Directors reviews the cooperative's financial standing each year and makes the decision to retire capital credits. Their goal is to maintain a steady 20-year rotation, returning the oldest credits first.

When Will You Receive Yours?

This year, Oconto Electric is retiring capital credits earned in 2006. If your retirement amount exceeds \$100, you'll receive a check in early August, mailed to your last known address. If your amount is less than \$100 and you are still an active member, it will appear as a credit on your July electric bill.

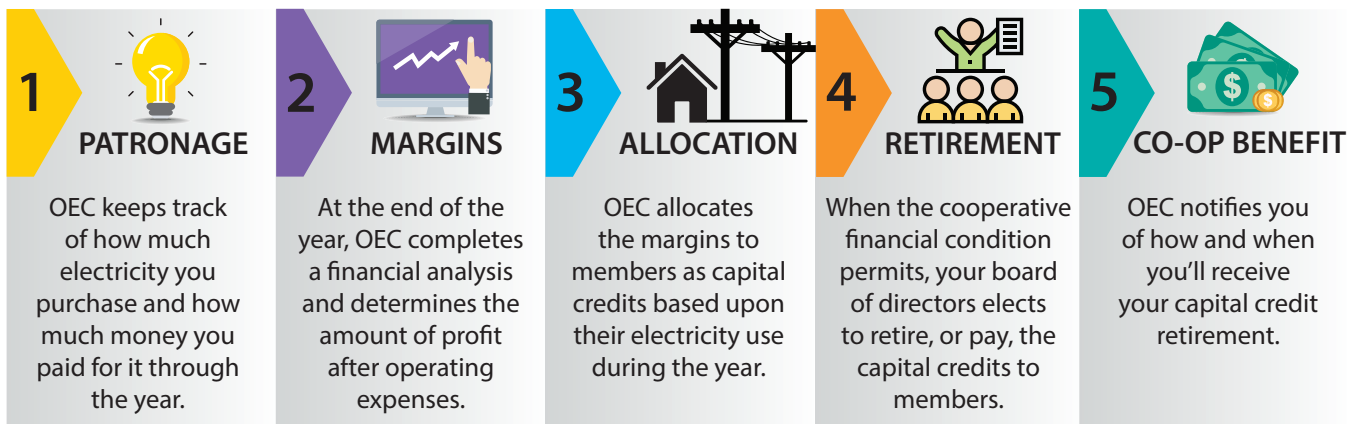
Unclaimed Capital Credits: Giving Back to the Community

In some cases, capital credits go unclaimed when a member cannot be located after several years. When this happens, and as allowed by state law, those funds are redirected to the Federated Youth Foundation. These dollars are then used to support educational and charitable initiatives—including scholarships for local students pursuing higher education.

A Cooperative Advantage

Capital credits are one of the most meaningful ways Oconto Electric demonstrates its commitment to members. They reflect the cooperative difference—where your participation not only powers your home or business but also earns you a return on your investment in the cooperative.

If you have questions about your capital credits or would like more information, Oconto Electric's team is always happy to help. Contact the office at 1-800-472-8410.





Happy Birthday America

Hello, and happy Fourth of July from Oconto Electric! As we get ready to celebrate America's 250th birthday, communities everywhere are looking forward to fireworks, backyard barbecues, and time spent with family and friends. It's one of the most special times of the summer—and a great reminder that a little extra care goes a long way in keeping those celebrations safe. We're here to share a few simple tips to help you enjoy a fun, worry-free holiday.

With all the added lights, appliances, and outdoor fun, it's easy to put extra strain on your home's electrical system. Try to spread out your power usage to avoid overloading circuits, and always use outdoor-rated lights and extension cords when decorating. Keep cords dry and away from pools, sprinklers, and high-traffic areas, and check for frayed wires before plugging anything in.

When it's time for fireworks, be sure to keep them well clear of power lines and electrical equipment. By taking a few extra precautions, you can focus on what matters most—celebrating safely with the people you love. From all of us at Oconto Electric, happy birthday, America, and have a safe and joyful Fourth of July!

Our office will be closed on Friday, July 3.

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Scammers are increasingly using “smishing” — fake text messages designed to look like they're from legitimate businesses, including your electric utility. (907601) These texts may claim your bill is overdue, your service will be disconnected or you're owed a refund. They often include a link that directs you to a fake payment site or asks for personal information. Never click suspicious links or respond to unexpected texts, even if the message appears urgent. Instead, log in to your utility account through the official website or mobile app to verify any claims. We will never ask for sensitive information like passwords or banking details through text messages.



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.



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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