

EAU CLAIRE ENERGY COOPERATIVE RETURNS OVER \$861,000 TO MEMBERS DURING CO-OP MONTH!

**Eau Claire Energy
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

October is co-op month! We are here to celebrate you! Returning capital credit retirements to our members is one way we like to celebrate. This year, Eau Claire Energy Cooperative will return over \$861,000 to more than 15,400 members. In fact, ECEC has returned over \$20 million to our members since our inception in 1938. Capital credits are a unique benefit of your cooperative membership. Keep an eye out on your October bill for your bill credit!

Capital Credit FAQs:

How does the process work?

As you pay your monthly electric bills, Eau Claire Energy Cooperative uses the income to grow, operate, and maintain a safe and reliable electrical system. Any money received over and above the cost of doing business is called margins. Your portion of the margins is then returned to you in the form of credits. In co-op utilities the profits are returned to you, the member. In other types of utilities, the profits go to a select group called stockholders.

How will I get my capital credit retirement?

Credits accumulate in an account in your name. When the board of directors approves a retirement of capital credits each year, they are approving the return of a specific percentage to be distributed to you. Capital credits are then issued to qualifying members as a

bill credit on their October bill. It can be seen in the upper right-hand corner on your billing on your October bill. This year, those bills will be sent out on October 7, 2022.

What happens if I move off ECEC lines?

If you move from one ECEC address to another, your capital credits will follow you. If you move from an ECEC address to a non-ECEC address, you will no longer accumulate new capital credits, but you will still receive any allocated credits from the time you did live on Eau Claire Energy Cooperative lines. Please be sure to update your address with us to ensure you continue to receive your retirement. You can update your address on your SmartHub account, on our website, or you may call our office.

HOW CAPITAL CREDITS WORK



Members use electricity provided by Eau Claire Energy Cooperative. Then ECEC tracks member usage and payments.



Year-end accounting and audit are completed. Financial obligations to the cooperative are met.



Board approves the portion of the margins to be distributed to members as credits.



Capital credits are applied to bill.



IT'S A MATTER OF (CO-OP!) PRINCIPLES

ACE Hardware, State Farm, REI, Land O'Lakes, and Eau Claire Energy Cooperative all share something in common: we're all cooperatives.

We may be in different industries, but we all share a passion for serving our members and helping our communities to thrive. In fact, all cooperatives adhere to the same set of seven principles that reflect our core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness, and service to the greater community good. October is National Co-op Month, so this is the perfect time to reflect on these principles that have stood the test of time but also provide a framework for the future. Let's talk about the seven cooperative principles.



Voluntary and Open Membership

Just like all co-ops, ECEC was created out of necessity—to meet a need that would have been otherwise unmet in our community. So, in 1938, a group of neighbors banded together and organized our electric co-op so everyone in our community could benefit. Today, key parts of that heritage remain—the focus on our mission and serving the greater good. In this, we include everyone to improve the quality of life and economic opportunity for the entire community. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender identity, language, political perspective, or socioeconomic status.



Democratic Member Control

Our co-op is well suited to meet the needs of our members because we are locally governed. Each member gets a voice and a vote in how the co-op is run, and each voice and vote are equal. Eau Claire Energy Cooperative's leadership team and employees live right here in the community. Our board of directors, who helps set long-term priorities for the co-op, also live locally on co-op lines. These board members have been elected by neighbors just like you. We know our members have a valuable perspective, and that's why we are continually seeking your input and encourage you to weigh in on important co-op issues and participate in co-op elections.

Our close connection to this community ensures we get a first-hand perspective on members' priorities, thereby enabling us to make more informed decisions on long-term investments, such as member solar programs, equipment and technology upgrades, and our SmartCHARGE electric vehicle program.



Members' Economic Participation

As a utility, our mission is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable energy to our members. But as a co-op, we are also motivated by service to the community, rather than profits. Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, ECEC's capital. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for co-op programs, initiatives, capital investments and supporting other activities approved by the membership.



Autonomy and Independence

The fourth principal, Autonomy and Independence, means that the co-op operates in an autonomous way that is solely directed and guided by its members, reflecting the values and needs of our local community. This means the co-op is not being influenced by leaders or shareholders several states away. Instead, the co-op is led by the local members it serves.



Education and Training

Education and Training focuses on enhancing the knowledge of co-op employees and board members, which enables them to contribute to the development of the co-op. By investing in continuous learning for our employees and board members, our co-op is making a commitment not just to individual professional and personal growth, but to the future of the co-op and the high quality of service our members expect and deserve. It's a win-win situation.

We also strive to inform our members (that's you!) and the public

about the mission and operations of the co-op. In fact, that's why you receive this magazine every month, so we can share the latest co-op news and updates, as well as energy efficiency and safety tips.



Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Cooperation among cooperatives fosters the way that co-ops work together to address bigger challenges. While this principle applies to all types of cooperatives, it is especially relevant in the energy industry. In our case, we put this principle in action after major storms and disasters that cause widespread power outages. When this happens, we call on nearby co-ops to come to our aid and assist with restoration efforts—and we of course extend the same help to them when they need us. We can't think of a better example of cooperation among cooperatives.

In addition, because we are part of the national electric co-op network, we can connect and collaborate with other electric co-ops to tackle industry-related challenges, like

cybersecurity and an everchanging energy landscape.



Concern for Community

Concern for Community is essential to who we are as cooperatives. We serve our community not only by being an essential service, but by helping to power our local economy. Whether through economic development, volunteerism, or donations to local causes, we invest in this community because it's our home too.

Because we are guided by seven cooperative principles, it's not just about dollars—it's about opportunity for all and being fair when engaging with our members. The cooperative way is a values-based business model.

ECEC is a reflection of our local community and its evolving needs. We view our role as a catalyst for good and making our corner of the world a better place.

You will find that most cooperatives bring good people together to make good things happen in the community.

On behalf of everyone at Eau Claire Energy Cooperative, we're thankful for your membership.

Dress up with care for HALLOWEEN



Safe Electricity.org

When dressing your little ones (or yourself), keep these safety tips in mind:

-  Always wear costumes that are labeled flame resistant.
-  Wear bright, reflective costumes or add strips of reflective tape to improve visibility.
-  Do not wear decorative (colored) contact lenses unless you have seen an eyecare professional.
-  Wear makeup and hats rather than costume masks that can obscure or obstruct your vision.
-  Test the makeup you plan to use in advance for a possible allergy.

In addition, inspect any plug-in decorations for signs of wear and tear (fraying or bare wires or broken plugs) and replace them if damaged.

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS MONTH

We all share responsibility for our own cyber security, and YOU are your first line of defense.



Think Before You Click

- Always hover over a link first to be sure it is safe.
- Report suspicious emails or emails from an unknown sender to your spam filter and delete them from your inbox.



Defend Your Computer

- The best defense against viruses, malware and other online threats is keeping your equipment up to date.
- Work with your IT staff (or provider) to keep your software, including your web browser, and operating systems current.



Lockdown Your Log-in

- Create long and unique passwords. Use familiar phrases or song lyrics you'll remember.
- When possible, use 2-factor authentication as a second layer of defense.
- Change passwords regularly, and do not share them.



Protect Sensitive Information

- Use encryption to protect sensitive data.
- Limit the spread of any attack by only accessing files and folders you need.
- Do not put confidential information in emails, or instant and text messages.



Watch for Red Flags to Identify Potential Phish Attacks

- Phishing attempts seek to steal or compromise data and will often mimic a known sender.

Look for red flags:

1. the email is unexpected;
2. there is a sense of urgency conveyed;
3. there is an offer that seems too good to be true; and/or
4. there are typos and misspellings.



Practice Good Cyber Hygiene On the Go

- Treat all public Wi-Fi networks as a security risk, and don't make financial or other sensitive transactions over public networks.



Want more tips to improve your cyber hygiene?
Visit www.staysafeonline.org.

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