



OEC JOINS REGIONAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES TO CREATE CHARGE EV, LLC

Oconto Electric Cooperative (OEC), along with a group of 28 other electric co-ops, have joined together to create a regional electric vehicle (EV) charging network across Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota named CHARGE EV, LLC. The network includes over 30 Level 2 and Level 3 charging stations and that number is growing.

The group of co-ops is planning for future growth in EVs, and wants to alleviate “range anxiety,” which is the concern some people have about traveling in an EV without a place to charge their vehicle.

The objective is to provide EV owners peace of mind driving from Iowa to northern Wisconsin, or from Minnesota to Illinois, knowing there are co-op-powered chargers along their route. This will give people confidence to consider an EV and encourage growth in the EV market. (78201)

The CHARGE EV infrastructure is just the start as the group plans for additional investments in the EV market including member education on installing home chargers and encouraging members to test drive EVs.

OEC’s support of electric vehicles began in 2020 when we leased a Chevrolet Bolt (100% electric) to help educate our employees, members, and surrounding communities about electric vehicles.

“Looking to the future is something OEC and other co-operatives have always done. The board at OEC knows that electric vehicles will be a big part of our load growth in the future, and by cooperatives banding together we will have a say in how that future will look. We look forward to offering choices to our members on how and when they charge their

vehicles at home, in order to give them the lowest cost available. Also, by being a part of the regional group and establishing a network of chargers across the region you, our members, can drive your electric vehicle knowing that there will be a place to charge your vehicle when the need arises,” said Byron

Nolde, CEO of Oconto Electric Cooperative.

Charger locations and other information can be found at www.charge.coop.

After the creation of CHARGE EV, it was announced that the company had invested in ZEF Energy Inc. ZEF Energy has successfully worked with electric co-ops and municipalities since 2014.

It has a ZEFNET utility platform. The ZEFNET platform is a turn-key approach to managing residential and commercial charger load, and allows utilities to gather revenue grade metering and conduct precision load control.

CHARGE EV’s founding co-ops are located throughout the Midwest in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Together they are working to build a national electric vehicle (EV) charging brand powered by co-ops.

“CHARGE EV’s investment is not only important for growing our business, but it also demonstrates their belief in the ZEF Energy’s ZEFNET utility platform and ZEFNET-enabled Level 2 and Level 3 chargers,” said Matthew Blackler, CEO of ZEF Energy. “The EV market is taking off, and having our chargers easily accessible will create a better EV driver experience. We believe connecting drivers with their serving utility is essential to achieving the beneficial load growth dream.”

CHARGE

POWERED BY CO-OPS





RESPECT THE ORANGE SIGNS: MOVE OVER AND SLOW DOWN IN WORK ZONES

Think of every roadside crew member as someone you know and love

Every state has laws that require drivers to slow down or switch lanes if possible when they pass emergency vehicles and, in many states, transportation maintenance, work trucks, and other authorized vehicles as well. These are often referred to as “move over” laws. Failing to comply can result in fines and, in some states, jail time.

For many people, there aren’t enough hours in the day. Because of that, many people use drive time to be productive. They might call their boss, text their best friend, or apply mascara.

Multitasking can be an effective use of time, but not while driving.

WisDOT reports, there were more than 2,400 crashes in Wisconsin work zones in 2019.

Although this reflects incidents that took place in road construction zones, know that accidents, injuries, and deaths can happen in any roadside work zone, including utility work zones. (76801)

That is why we ask you to help keep our crews safe by slowing down and following any other instructions—including moving over to give them space—anytime you see orange warning signs and cones that lead up to a work zone.

Cars or trucks that speed through a work zone not only endanger workers on the ground, driving too fast or not moving over can also put an elevated lineworker in danger by causing



the bucket he or she is in to move or sway.

Lineworkers already have enough to contend with by working way high up on power lines while out in the elements. Their profession consistently places on the Bureau of Labor Statistics most dangerous jobs. Do your part; please don’t add noncompliant drivers to the mix.

For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME REMINDER

Don’t forget to spring forward on March 14! Set your clocks forward by one hour.



If you know of a charitable or service organization, civic group, or individual with unusual financial needs, you can encourage them to apply for a Community Change grant. Applications can be found at www.ocontoelectric.com. Applications for the March board meeting must be submitted by March 5.

Four Electrifying Kitchen Appliances to Save Time and Energy

Whether your oven and stove top are powered by gas or electricity, it's no secret that they consume more energy than smaller countertop appliances, like slow cookers and toaster ovens. In addition to efficiency, smaller kitchen appliances can provide faster cooking times and less hassle with cleanup.

If you're looking for convenient cooking methods with the added bonus of energy efficiency, here are four electrifying appliances for your kitchen:

1. Air fryers are becoming increasingly popular, and consumers have a lot of good things to say about these handy little appliances. Air fryers use convection to circulate hot air and cook the food—this means little to no oil is required, resulting in healthier meals than those from traditional fryers. Air fryers are fairly small, so they won't take up much of your counter space, and with everything cooked in the fryer, cleanup will be a breeze. Air fryers are available in a variety of sizes, and prices range from \$40 to \$200+. I have an air fryer and I use it multiple times a week for my family of four. My go-to favorites are steaks, salmon, brats, hamburgers, zucchini fries, and French fries.



Air fryers circulate hot air (convection) to cook the food. This means little to no oil is required, resulting in healthier meals than those from traditional fryers. Photo courtesy of Hamilton Beach

2. Electric griddles have certainly been around for a while, and they offer several benefits for any home chef (beyond bacon and eggs!). Griddles are convenient because you can cook everything at once—like a “one-pan” meal, and the possibilities are endless. From fajitas to sandwiches to French toast, griddles can help satisfy any taste buds. They consume small amounts of energy and provide quick cooking times, so your energy bill will thank you. Prices and sizes for griddles vary, but you can typically find one for about \$30 at your local retail stores.

3. Pizza brings people together, so why not consider a pizza maker for your kitchen? These compact, countertop machines are an inexpensive alternative to a costly brick oven, and they use less energy than your traditional oven. Having two little kids, I love that I don't have to wait for it to preheat like a large oven. Choose your own fresh ingredients to whip up a faster, healthier pizza at home. Plus, most pizza makers are multifunctional and can be used to cook flatbreads, quesadillas, garlic bread and more. You can purchase a pizza maker for about \$30 to \$150+ online or at your local retailer.

4. The instant pot is one of my household favorites. Don't let all of the buttons and controls scare you. It took me a little while to get used to it, but once I did I started using it a couple nights a week. I love that I can put frozen chicken breasts in it, set the cook time for 20 minutes, and make the rest of my dish. In 30 minutes I have a meal. It's also great for making pulled pork, stew, and pork ribs (I finish them under the broiler with BBQ sauce). Prices and sizes vary, but you can get them for \$30 to \$180 online and at your local retailer.

These are just a few electrifying appliance options for your kitchen. Remember, when you're cooking a smaller meal, countertop appliances can save time and energy.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

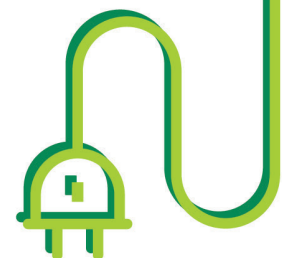
Don't keep your refrigerator too cold. The Department of Energy recommends a temperature setting of 35 to 38 degrees for the fresh food compartment and zero degrees for the freezer.

Make sure the refrigerator doors are sealed airtight to maximize efficiency.

Source:
www.energy.gov



MY CO-OP





BUSINESS SHOWCASE

THE COTTAGES AT MEADOWLANDS

The Cottages purchased The Meadowlands Assisted Living complex in 2014. That same year, a memory care facility was built on the same property to serve those living with dementia, specifically Alzheimer's disease. The assisted living apartment complex originally opened in 2000 as The Meadowlands, and celebrated 20 years of serving Oconto County seniors this last year.

The assisted living facility houses 25 private studio and one-bedroom apartments, as well as one two-bedroom apartment. After one addition, the Memory Care facility now has 20 private suites with private baths. They offer several private areas for relaxation, dining, hair salon, spa bath rooms, and areas for socialization and community groups, as well as a full commercial kitchen that serves both facilities on the campus.

Meals are served three times daily, where residents can gather to enjoy each other's company and engage in conversation. The assisted living complex has several outdoor areas for residents to enjoy, including a nice paved walking path with raised garden beds, a large garden in the backyard for those who still enjoy vegetable gardening, a shaded sitting area, and a nice covered front porch.

Each facility is licensed with the State of Wisconsin differently. Thus, each provides a different level of care for seniors. Unbeknownst to some, assisted living facilities provide a significant

amount of supportive care—physically, medically, and emotionally. Staff members assist residents with daily personal care needs, medication, nutrition, and health monitoring, allowing them to enjoy a comfortable level of

independence while living in a private apartment setting. With an RN and LPN on staff, The Cottages at Meadowlands is able to monitor chronic health conditions, arrange for therapy services and rehab, communicate with physicians and specialists, and arrange home visits with certain physicians. Many do not realize the extensive communication required with pharmacies, clinics, and physicians in order to maintain a senior's feeling of independence and good health.

The Memory Care program was developed to care for those seniors with dementia, regardless of what stage they are in. Caregivers are specifically trained in communication, approaches, and special needs of someone with dementia or Alzheimer's disease. In addition, caregivers are state certified in fire safety, standard precautions (infection control), first aid, and medication management. The state-required training for Memory Care employees allows them to provide more services than a CNA in a skilled nursing home, something that few people are



aware of until they are researching care for a loved one.

An activity coordinator organizes daily gatherings, community outings, and religious services—all prior to COVID restrictions, of course. They expect to resume all normal activity and visitation by early summer. In a "normal" world, many community groups come in for education, entertainment, or exercise programs. Throughout COVID-19, the facility has provided safe small group gatherings and in-room or hallway activities. The coordinator handles the daily events program for both facilities, and tailors the event for each group based on the residents' cognitive and physical abilities. The staff has managed to keep everyone busy, healthy, and happy through all the challenges of 2020.

In 2017, Oconto Electric Cooperative assisted The Meadowlands with updating their old lighting with LEDs. It was important to the campus that runs 24/7, 365 days a year, to use their energy efficiently to keep operating costs down.

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 February account numbers belonged to Dorothy Calvert, Lena, and Todd Hoida, Coleman.

Byron C. Nolde, CEO

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