



THE BEST LAID PLANS...

Make sure you're registered for the new online billing system, which comes with many advantages

With all new system implementations, we have high hopes that the transition will be smooth. The implementation of the new online billing/payment system was anything but smooth. Some of this was our own fault because even though we thought we were keeping everyone informed through these pages, emails, Facebook posts, direct mailing, and a note on billing statements, not everyone got the message that we were transitioning from Invoice Cloud for online payment and emailed billing to a system developed by our accounting software company, Civic Systems.

Some members had no issue whatsoever getting registered and setting up paperless billing and entering the payment method of their choice, but others struggled. Again, some of this was our fault and some of it was due to some issues in the new system itself.

Believe us when we tell you that, while the pain was unanticipated, the gain will be worth the effort. Member history is available to you on the portal. Multiple accounts can be linked and billed paperless through email (and text if you wish). Fees paid by the cooperative for use and maintenance of the system are significantly less. Fees paid by the member for direct withdrawal or credit card payment are less, and the link to our existing accounting system means literally many hours each month of reconciliation work are reduced to minutes.

In addition, the missing emails and additional problematic issues we had with Invoice Cloud will (again, best laid plans...) go away.

We need everyone to register on the portal for the new system and we are almost there! By the time you read this, it may be that all of this has been accomplished, but we still need to communicate the importance. If you got an emailed bill under the old system and are not getting one now, it is likely because you did not choose the paperless option if you registered on our new Portal.

You can still have your bill mailed to you by not selecting the paperless option, although we would prefer to email as many bills as possible due to the cost of printing, supplies,

and postage and the recent issues we have had with reliability of the USPS (remember they lost over 400 invoices that were sent out late last year).

It is also your choice as to how you pay your bill once you receive it. You can still stop in and pay, mail us a check, drop payment in the drop box in the front hall of the cooperative, or as some members do, use a bill pay service through your bank. You can also use the portal to make one-time payments for your bill or set up auto pay through your checking or a credit/debit card (again with lower fees than were charged by Invoice Cloud).

One thing that did occur when some people who had registered on the portal tried to make a one-time payment

Believe us when we tell you that, while the pain was unanticipated, the gain will be worth the effort.

was that it did not appear the payment went through and they clicked on the payment button again and ended up making multiple payments. Hopefully this issue will not occur again as a banner has been added to the page saying "only click once," and the software is being modified to

not allow additional clicks, but we want you to be aware of it so you don't provide us with an extra payment.

As noted, by the time you read this, everyone may have already registered for the portal, but just in case anyone still needs to, **the instructions are on the following page**. They also are available on our website, www.wiecoop.com, by clicking the view/pay my bill button in the upper right of our home page. Thanks for your patience with this transition, and if you are not already paperless (emailed bill) please consider switching! Regardless, we would still like to have your email address as well as an updated phone number if it has changed. It is not just for billing reasons that we might need to get hold of you, and you would not believe the number of times we get "this number is not in service" messages because someone has changed their contact information without letting us know.

*Do you still need to register for the
new online billing system?
Follow the directions below...*

REGISTERING ON

wiecoop.ourcommunityconnect.com

Go to: wiecoop.ourcommunityconnect.com

Click on **Create your account**.

You will be asked to enter your email address and to create a password. The password needs to be at least 8 characters long. You will need to use upper- and lower-case letters, a symbol and numbers.

Once you have entered this information click on register. You will receive an email from noreply-WIECOOP. Once you receive this you will need to **Click to verify**. It will say your account has been verified.

Go to Log In.

Enter your Email and Password.

You will see **Link a Customer** in the middle of the screen. Click on this.


Log In: Enter your account number, without the dashes.

Enter your last name, or the total of the last bill you received. In some cases it is easier to use the last billed amount. Especially if it is a company name or two last names combined.

Click Submit.

You should see a screen that Welcomes you to the Community Portal.

On the right-hand side of the screen, you will have the options of:

Enrolled in Paperless Billing – Once you click on this to sign up you will see a green leaf  appear to the left of the wording. You will receive emailed bills.

Manage autopay – Follow the steps on the screen if you want to sign up for autopay. You can use your checking account or credit/debit card. The fees will be listed.

Manage Wallet – shows you your account information.

Link Another Account – if you have more than one account you will click on this to register the other accounts. If signing up for paperless you need to click on paperless for each one.

If you have ANY PROBLEMS, please call us at the office at 920-847-2541 and we will be happy to help you.

WISCONSIN DISASTER

Thanks to emergency fund reforms triggered by cable failure, co-op has access to funds to help offset costs of April 2 storm

Some of you will remember back to 2018 (we in the cooperative prefer to try and forget) the cable failure, repair, and replacement and how, with the help of Governor Walker's disaster declaration, we were able to offset the cost of the nearly \$900,000 repair of the old cable by tapping into the Wisconsin Disaster Fund. We received approximately \$650,000 in disaster aid for this segment of the project. In the end, the \$4.1 million project as a whole ended up receiving assistance from this fund, the Wisconsin state budget, and some grant funding of over \$3 million, and long-term debt for the project ended up being just over \$600,000. We are pretty proud of that, but it took a huge amount of effort on our part and on the part of many cooperative friends.

At the time, while cooperatives were eligible for federal aid through FEMA (requiring a Federal Disaster Declaration), we were not technically eligible for state aid through the Disaster Fund and had to stand on our head a bit and get this aid through the county. There was great cooperation with then Door County Emergency Manager Dan Kane in making this happen (and great effort here at the cooperative in record keeping and the documentation required for approval).

There were larger parts to the story where receiving the aid would have adversely affected our non-profit status. That was resolved through lobbying in Washington, D.C., which we will not rehash at this time.

When we were included in the budget, the Joint Finance Committee not only included \$2 million in the budget specifically for us (which was suggested by both Governors Walker and Evers), but they also included a suggested policy that clarified that cooperatives are included and eligible for disaster aid in future situations. Interestingly, policy is generally stripped from budgets and

FUND

not reintroduced by the Joint Finance Committee, but it was the JFC that included this in the budget. That budget was passed and that clause was not touched by Governor Evers' veto power. We also will not rehash the political games that were played at the state level in getting the budget passed.

Once this eligibility was codified, there were also some procedural reforms made with Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) so that an event does not require an actual disaster declaration by the governor in order to be eligible but must only meet a per capita dollar cost amount and be an event recognized by county and state emergency management.

Fast forward from all of this to the April 2 storm, which we wrote about last month. With the assistance of Joseph

We (and the town) could be reimbursed for up to 70% of costs determined eligible by WEM [Wisconsin Emergency Management].

“Jeb” Saelens, Door County’s relatively new emergency manager (Dan Kane was literally only weeks on the job when the cable failed), we have moved forward with an application to Wisconsin Emergency Management for a reimbursement of costs associated with the April 2 storm. The Town of Washington is also pursuing reimbursement under a separate application. We (and the town) could be reimbursed for up to 70% of costs determined eligible by WEM. This is a potentially significant dollar amount and, while it might take some time to receive payment and will definitely take time to complete the application and documentation required, will be a significant offset to cost and help with the replacement of inventory used for repairs. Costs that are eligible are overtime costs, material costs, equipment costs at a predetermined FEMA hourly rate, and the cost of contracted work such as the help we received from Michels.

The costs must fall into approved categories that for us are called “protective services,” which essentially are



Damage from the April 2 storm continues to show up and require costly repairs. In this case, a stranded conductor (indicated by red arrow) was tapping into an existing splice, burning the splice and causing intermittent blinks.

the costs required to restore power during the event from the beginning up until the last occupied dwelling is back up and running. This means that costs we incurred as part of the storm from April 2 until the end of the work day on April 10 will be eligible, but the costs incurred after that (and we are still cleaning up) are not. For informational purposes, the Town of Washington’s costs that are eligible are in the category of “debris removal” and “protective services.”

Our initial estimate of the costs of restoration of power due to this storm up until the 10th are significant, totaling approximately \$200,000. As we compile the information and submit our application, this number will be solidified and we should receive as much as \$140,000 in aid if all submitted expenses are determined to be eligible by WEM personnel.

Keep your fingers crossed as we burn the midnight oil to submit this application and the documentation associated with it. We will certainly let you know how it goes. Keep your fingers crossed for the town’s efforts to recover some costs as well!

In the meantime, we continue to clean up the mess left by this storm by pulling up loose conductor, home services, repairing stranded conductor, and items discovered by seasonal members as they arrive. We will be at this for a while!

PROJECT UPDATES

Because of everything that is going on, we are taking a break from our Industry Jargon series for this month, but rest assured, we will get back to it with some photos and explanation of the equipment used out on the lines next month.

In the meantime, we want to update you on progress of the fiber and the associated underground work on Lobdell Point Road and South Shore Drive.



Drew, from Michels, is neck-deep in fiber installations.

After a short hiatus, Michels (they had to help with storm damage elsewhere after they helped us) is back at installing fiber, both underground and overhead, and they are currently working on South Shore Drive working their way down to Njord Heim. They expect to have two crews here off and on and we will be moving to install fiber going south on Range Line Road from the Island Dairy. They also have helped us with pulling underground primary wire on South Shore Drive when the weather (lightning) prevented them from being up in the air.

Karcz Utility Services is back and concentrating on getting underground installed to those homes that have a meter on the pole and have told us they want service now. We did a few installations ourselves while Karcz was off working other places.

Quantum continues with splicing and in-home installations and at the time of this writing, we are making good progress with over 350 in-home installations complete and well over 150



Mike kept up with plowing underground while Karcz was on other worksites.

additional drops waiting for splicing. These numbers are increasing every day.

Related to the fiber, by the time you read this, a third small cell, located behind the visitor center at the Ferry Dock, should be operational and hopefully we will be on our way to the fourth in Jackson Harbor.



An 80-foot pole is delivered to the Ferry Dock area for a third small cell.



Robert Cornell, Manager

1157 Main Road, Washington Island, WI 54246

920-847-2541

info@wiecoop.com

Hours: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

