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COVID-19

The title COVID-19 alone conjures up an ominous connotation, and it should, given the death left in its wake. Social distancing (maintaining at least six feet from others), face masks, a limited number of people allowed in the grocery store at

any given time, and a “Safer at Home” existence, has become our new reality. The objective of staying home is to flatten the skyrocketing curve of confirmed victims of this merciless virus. The aggressiveness of COVID-19 is unrelenting. A patient could walk into a hospital under their own power and 12 hours later be on a ventilator fighting for their life. Our history can attest that we have survived pandemics of cholera, smallpox, black death, malaria, and influenza, and though we are strong and resilient, we must take this seriously.

The most recent predictive modeling indicates that the COVID-19 apex for Wisconsin is around May 22. The difficulty in saying this now is that the information and data are changing daily, and you are reading an article that was written 30-odd days ago. Given the concerns related to the coronavirus and to protect cooperative employees and ensure safety and reliability, the front Member Service Center lobby has been closed. Inside the office, employees are continually washing hands, trucks, and work areas, while practicing social distancing, and communicating primarily by phone, radio, and email. Some employees are working from home, while others are working in the field and minimizing face-to-face interactions, but we are still here to take care of your needs. We are postponing outside meetings, training, and travel beyond our service territory, which could also mean a possible postponement of your June Annual Meeting. We will certainly keep you apprised of any related changes. For the first time in Cooperative history, the board’s last meeting was conducted via video conferencing. I could see this continuing until the virus subsides, and we are free to interact without the possibility of contracting the virus.

The COVID-19 situation is so fluid that new information and clarification are becoming available almost hourly and at least daily. As of April 6, there are 2,440 confirmed cases in Wisconsin, and 1.4 million worldwide spanning 184 countries. Nineteen days ago, there were only 90 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Wisconsin. That’s averaging 124 new cases a day.

Price Electric Cooperative will be extending its moratorium on disconnects through the month of April and possibly May, and late charges will be relinquished to ensure members have electricity during the pandemic. Emergency response support from other cooperatives during large-scale outage and emergency situations will be available on a case-by-case basis depending on the effects of the pandemic for the utility being requested.

Please keep in mind that the doors of your Cooperative may be closed, but we are here working to ensure your safety and reliability.

Your Cooperative’s sales and revenue were below budget for the first quarter because of milder weather. With the advent of COVID-19, we are predicting a reduction in usage by commercial enterprises

for Dairyland Power Cooperative whose members are 36% commercial and industrial, and when manufacturing and sand mines come to a halt, that equates to lost revenue. Price Electric’s membership demographic is 4% commercial, 51% residential, and 45% seasonal, and thus we anticipate an increase in residential usage as members are home, but seasonal and commercial should decline. However, I am seeing several seasonal members traveling into the area recently. Also, the unemployment rate is projected to be as high as 30% in the second quarter. That’s more than in the Great Depression.

Please keep in mind that the doors of your Cooperative may be closed, but we are here working to ensure your safety and reliability. Protect yourself, your family, and your community, and remember, you will always be “Safer at Home.”

