

8. THE FORT MCCOY REGION'S ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEMS



Energy rates in the Fort McCoy Region are competitive and our utility service is reliable. The cost of energy to residences, businesses, and industries has a direct effect on a family's budget or a company's bottom line. Having access to reasonable energy rates and reliable service is a consideration in deciding where you live, locate your business, or if your company will go ahead with expansion plans. In Wisconsin, the average energy costs, in comparison with other regions of the U. S., are competitive and reliable.

In Jackson, La Crosse and Monroe counties there are three primary companies providing electric utility service to the region. These companies include Alliant Energy, Dairyland Power Cooperatives (Jackson Electric Cooperative, Oakdale Electric Cooperative, and Riverland Energy Cooperative), and Xcel Energy. Fort McCoy's electric service provider is Xcel Energy.

The natural gas service for Jackson, La Crosse and Monroe Counties is provided by four utility companies. These companies include Madison Gas & Electric, Midwest Natural Gas, Wisconsin Gas Company, and Xcel Energy. Fort McCoy's natural gas provider is Xcel Energy.

Wisconsin energy rates are favorable in comparison to other regions. Wisconsin's energy rates for electrical and natural gas were compared with states in six different Census divisions across the U.S. and included the Mid-Atlantic Region, East-North Central, South Atlantic, West South Central, Mountain and the Pacific contiguous region. The state rate comparison for residential, commercial and industrial consumers are outlined in Table 8.1 (Electrical Rates) and Table 8.2 (Natural Gas Rates). The source for the data is the U.S. Department of Energy-Energy Information Administration.

Wisconsin electrical rates for residential, commercial, and industrial customers are low. The state's low energy costs in comparison with other state's that have major military installations are listed in Table 8.1. It is also important to note that Wisconsin electrical

rates were lower than the average rate for the entire Nation in 2003. The low energy costs in the Fort McCoy region benefit both homeowners, businesses and the Department of Defense by making electrical service in the area more affordable. Our reasonable utility costs can serve an influential role in business expansion and expansion of facilities at Fort McCoy as well.

State	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Average
California	11.90¢	12.62¢	8.61¢	11.04¢
Florida	8.60¢	7.10¢	5.48¢	7.06¢
Georgia	7.74¢	6.59¢	4.03¢	6.12¢
New Mexico	8.63¢	7.49¢	4.85¢	6.99¢
New York	14.23¢	13.08¢	5.24¢	10.85¢
Texas	9.19¢	7.93¢	5.34¢	7.49¢
Wisconsin	8.60¢	6.91¢	4.69¢	6.73¢
U.S.	8.71¢	8.13¢	4.95¢	7.26¢

Source: U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration—*Electric Power Monthly*—September 2004

The natural gas rates for residential, commercial and industrial customers in Wisconsin compete favorably with other states in the Nation. Wisconsin's natural gas rates for 2003 were compared with other states that have major military installations, Table 8.2. On average Wisconsin natural gas rates were in line with natural gas prices in six of the states.

Overall, Wisconsin's rates were slightly higher than the U.S. average. Having access to reasonable rates lowers the costs to residential, business, and Department of Defense users. A significant factor in a company's decision to locate in a certain area is the cost of utility services. The Fort McCoy Region's ability to attract new business start-up and business expansion projects because of the area's low energy costs provide opportunities for economic development.

TABLE 8.2
2003 Wisconsin Natural Gas Rates—State Price Comparison
(Dollars Per Thousand Cubic Feet)

State	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Average
California	\$8.25	\$9.19	\$9.09	\$8.84
Florida	\$10.96	\$16.23	\$15.47	\$14.22
Georgia	\$9.70	\$11.84	\$11.29	\$10.94
New Mexico	\$6.61	\$8.10	\$7.77	\$7.49
New York	\$9.01	\$11.05	\$10.69	\$10.25
Texas	\$7.57	\$8.90	\$8.56	\$8.34
Wisconsin	\$8.18	\$9.37	\$9.23	\$8.92
U.S.	\$8.15	\$9.23	\$8.97	\$8.78

Source: U.S. Department of Energy-Energy Information Administration/Natural Gas Monthly (September 2004)

The telecommunication capability in the Fort McCoy Region is continually improving. The Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 deregulated telecommunications, which led to large capital investment and rapid expansion of the industry. Though rural, the Fort McCoy Region has kept pace with telecommunication innovations. Local leaders formed the Technology Business Alliance (TBA) with the stated purpose of mobilizing resources and coordinating activities in support of technology growth in the region. The region's educational institutions have responded to the demands of the new innovative economy. The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse launched a masters program in software engineering that has a strong emphasis on technology transfer. Western Wisconsin Technical College, Viterbo University and University of Wisconsin-La Crosse have all invested in technology improvements which are the backbone of the region's technological and telecommunications advances.

Telecommunication services in the Fort McCoy Region are provided by CenturyTel. CenturyTel provides communication services in twenty two states to more than three million customers. It is the eighth largest local exchange telephone company in the United States based on access lines. CenturyTel provides DSL service to approximately 65% of its customers and the Fort McCoy Region.

The telecommunications infrastructure available in the Fort McCoy Region is described in Table 8.3. An inventory of the region's telecommunications capabilities was compiled when the area was designated as a Wisconsin Technology Zone in 2002.

Even though the Fort McCoy Region is very rural, the area is served by satellite broadband communications by several providers. The satellite services are available for homes and businesses allowing 24 hour internet connection.

TABLE 8.3
TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

Technology Zone	County	Telecommunications Infrastructure Available
La Crosse/Onalaska/Holmen	La Crosse	Copper T1, Copper DSL Internet, Fiber-up to OC48 Ring in some areas, Fiber 10 and 100MB and 1 GB Ethernet in some areas
La Crosse Downtown	La Crosse	Copper T1, Copper DSL Internet, Fiber-up to OC48 Ring, Fiber 10 and 100MB and 1 GB Ethernet
Black River Falls	Jackson	Copper T1, Copper DSL Internet, Fiber
South La Crosse	La Crosse	Copper T1, Copper DSL Internet, Fiber-up to OC48 Ring, Fiber 10 and 100MB and 1 GB Ethernet
Sparta	Monroe	Copper T1, Copper DSL Internet, Fiber
West Salem	La Crosse	Copper T1, Copper DSL Internet, Fiber
Tomah	Monroe	Copper T1, Fiber

Cellular communication is available in the Fort McCoy Region by several providers. Recently, a cellular tower has been constructed at Fort McCoy by U.S. Cellular to ensure reliable and continued service to the military facility.