

## Blowing in the Wind/Watch Out For Fraud

As the price of diesel and the cost of electricity keep rising, more and more of our members are looking more closely at nature and asking “Why can’t we use wind to generate our own electricity?” Admittedly, a single page is nowhere near enough to address this subject, but I’m going to try.

About half (27) of our member villages have wind resources that are a Range 3 or better, which means they could potentially use wind to displace 10 percent or more of local diesel-fired electricity. We are now generating wind energy in six of these villages with another one, Nightmute, to be connected in the next few months. We are also developing systems in another six communities: Savoonga, Gambell, Hooper Bay, Chevak, New Stuyahok and Mekoryuk. As funding becomes available, we will continue this work in other villages as well.

In some communities, wind will displace 10 percent or less of the diesel fuel used for electricity and in some communities that are blessed (or cursed, depending on your viewpoint) with an excellent wind regime, up to 30 percent could be displaced. As a practical matter, that is the best that can be expected, which means that at least 70 percent of a community’s electricity will continue to be generated by diesel fuel.

Well then, why can’t individual homeowners and businesses put in their own wind generators and simply run the meter backwards when the wind is producing more energy than they can use?

AVEC does not allow “net-metering” or selling back power to the utility at full retail rates. We will buy any surplus power through a two-meter installation at our “avoided cost,” which is essentially the cost of the fuel that is saved. Our average avoided cost is about 20 cents a kilowatt-hour (kWh), with a low of 10 cents to more than 47 cents. If we were to pay more than our avoided cost, it would mean that the other community members would pay more for their power to subsidize the co-generator.

While anyone can generate their own power using any means, that generator cannot be connected to AVEC’s lines unless the owner makes formal application and follows the rules, which are established to protect AVEC’s workers and the rest of the community. There also is a local limit on how much nonutility generation can be connected, calculated based upon the average load and the generator capacity. Since fluctuations in the wind cause the diesel generators to add or reduce generation constantly, the quality of power for all users is dramatically affected if a large percentage of the generation is from external, uncontrolled sources. Community limits range from 4 kW in the smallest communities—Anvik, Wales, Nightmute—to 25 kW in a larger community like St. Mary’s.

I have just heard that an AVEC member received a phone call from someone claiming to represent AVEC, saying the member had won a free vacation and asking for bank account information. **This is an attempt at fraud.** We don’t give away vacations and we don’t ask for your personal information over the phone.

Best wishes for the New Year from the entire AVEC family to yours!

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Pitkas Point  
Quinhagak  
Russian Mission  
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St. Michael  
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Scammon Bay  
Selawik  
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