



Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative's new fleet truck is fully electric and comes with a lot of upgrades, such as built-in WiFi and a GPS map display to navigate with ease. A feature in the odometer display, shows what direction the vehicle is headed and even the precise position of the truck on the roadway, as well as if any cars or trucks are oncoming.



It's not the Jetsons car, but it comes close

By Ginna Young

The future of transportation is here, in the form of an electric vehicle (EV) at Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC). Affectionately known as Sheila, the 100 percent electric Rivian R1T truck has been part of CVEC's fleet in Cornell, for a month, with specially made decals from Ron's Signs & Designs in Cadott.

With a feeling that comes straight out of the Jetsons, when the owner walks up to the EV, because they are registered to the vehicle on their phone, the car will greet them by turning on lights and preparing their specifications that are preset.

"It determines what temperature the cab should be for me and then moves the seat where I have it set," said CVEC CEO/president Dean Ortmann.

It took four years since Ortmann ordered the truck online, to when it was delivered from Minnesota. The order wasn't without its oddities, because there was no test drive, no admiring the car on the lot, since not many make the EVs.

"There's no dealer," said Nicole Sime, CVEC member services.

Designed to fully charge within eight hours, the 800 horse power EV can go for 300 miles on a full charge in normal drive. With four motors on each tire, the EV can function in regular mode/general purpose, off-road to go mountain climbing, sport mode or conserve mode, which just runs the front tires.

"It will go farther in conserve mode," said Ortmann. "You almost never have to touch the brakes, because when you let off of the gas, it's slowing you down."

The EV takes the energy and torque of going forward, and sends it to the generator to charge the battery. It does lose some power when running the heat or air cooling, but not as much as a gas-powered car. Since it has no engine, the EV can drive through three feet of water and the plat-

form is the battery, while the body is bolted on.

For those who imagine themselves as *Top Gun*, this car is the right one for you, as it goes from 0-60 mph in just three seconds, and can navigate even the trickiest curve without tipping.

While CVEC didn't spring for the extra add-on, there's even a space for a compartment to hold a stove for those who enjoying camping. There are also cables to lock things up when four-wheeling or doing something else outdoors, where if anyone comes too close or touches the vehicle, a camera takes a photo.

In back, there's an electronic bed cover and extra storage in what is called the tunnel space, as well as an on-board cooler with a drain where the engine would normally sit. Since there's no gas tank, no transmission, no drive shaft, the EV provides more space for "living."

"It leaves all kinds of room," said Ortmann.

The only maintenance for the vehicle is to add windshield wiper fluid and its daily charging – that's right, you'll never need an oil change and the batteries are under warranty for eight years.

While the EV offers many opportunities and adventures, Kevin Scheidler, line superintendent, says that realistically, full-blown EV usage is probably at least 50 years down the road.

"The lines aren't big enough to handle the load," he said.

Right now, Scheidler said it is not a problem, as many around the area don't have EVs, but in the future, it could be a problem, which is why they have to start at the ground and rework the infrastructure. Because there are a handful of people who have EVs in CVEC's system, it's up to the cooperative to see what they need to do to prepare for "going green."

A normal house (100 amps) cannot handle the charging requirements, with 400 needed to power up the EV.

Scheidler said even though 50 years seems like a long time, now is when the plans have to begin.

"It will be here before you know it," said Scheidler. "Time goes fast."

For now, the co-op is planning to schedule test drives for members in the near future, but until then, people can get a chance to observe the EV at an experience Saturday, Oct. 1, beginning at 8 a.m., at CVTC in Eau Claire.

Scheidler says a lot of things depend on if the EVs will become a way of life in Wisconsin, which the coming winter will help determine. Will the cold zap the charge more than it should? Will the EV hold up to winter roads? Will there be enough manufacturers to keep up with demand?

"There's a lot to play in with it," said Scheidler. "This will be our test run."

Don't be another victim of Facebook phishing scams

A large number of fraudulent messages, claiming to be Facebook customer service representatives or automated customer service systems, have recently been reported to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection's (DATCP) Bureau of Consumer Protection.

These messages claim that a recipient's Facebook account has been hacked, stolen or disabled, and urge them to click a link, in order to recover their account. If the link is opened, users are asked to "log in" to a website that appears very similar to Facebook, but is actually a convincing fake set-up by scammers, to steal account information.

This practice is known as a phishing scam, and may target specific individuals or thousands of people at once.

Similar phishing scams may occur through Facebook Marketplace, Facebook Groups, a friend's hijacked Facebook account, Instagram or WhatsApp. If someone receives an unsolicited message about a Facebook or other social media account that is compromised, do not reply to the message, call or text any number provided in the message.

Also, do not provide any account information or passwords, or click any links or open any attachments in the message. These may contain viruses or malware that could be installed onto the device, without permission or knowledge.

If the user does click on a link in a suspicious message, they may want to have the device scanned for viruses and malware, at a reputable computer or cell phone repair establishment. Change passwords on a separate, secure device, as soon as possible.

Users should not panic or feel intimidated if they receive these messages about compromised accounts, as Facebook will never contact users, via text or private message. If users are unsure of an email's legitimacy, they should check the sender's address, to make sure it's an official Facebook account.

They can also hover over links in the email message without clicking or opening them, to see the web address to which they lead. Facebook users concerned that their account may be compromised, can seek help at facebook.com.

For more information and consumer protection resources, or to file a complaint, visit ConsumerProtection.wi.gov.



Photo by Ginna Young

Kevin Scheidler is still figuring out all the bells and whistles on the electric vehicle (EV) at the cooperative, but is hopeful that they can begin to offer test drives to members in the near future. While it comes with a steep price, because it takes no gasoline, oil changes or other maintenance, the EV will pay for itself.