



*Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association*

**2019**

***Year in Review***



Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association

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*MMUA and the City of Marshall signed a purchase agreement for the MMUA Training Center property on Oct. 8, 2019. MMUA began leasing the approximately 18 acre property in 1999 and has made numerous improvements since then. Playing prominent roles in the Training Center development have been, from left to right, Kevin Thompson, Cody Raveling, Executive Director Jack Kegel and Director of Training and Safety Mike Willetts of MMUA. Thompson and Raveling, of the MMUA safety staff, have both served as Training Center coordinators. Thompson was the first to hold the position; Raveling is the current coordinator.*

## About MMUA

The Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association is a non-profit entity representing 124 electric, 170 water, and 33 gas utilities owned and operated by cities across the State. MMUA strives to be a recognized leader in advocacy, bringing value to municipal utilities and enhancing their position within the industry.

MMUA’s mission is to support and serve as a common voice for municipal utilities. Its core values: People, Safety, Advocacy, Teamwork, Communication, Creativity, Dedication, Integrity, and Environment. For more about MMUA, its mission and values, visit us online at [www.mmua.org](http://www.mmua.org)

## Government Relations

The 2019 Regular and First Special Session of the Minnesota legislature saw:

- 54 attendees at Legislative Conference from 30 utilities, six power agencies
- 5,846 regular session bills introduced and reviewed for relevance (2,925 Senate Files and 2,921 House files) plus 31 special session bills (17 House files, 14 Senate files)
- 78 bills (65 regular session and 13 special session) presented and signed by the governor with no full or line-item vetoes

# 21

*Number of legislators supported, at fundraising events, through individual donations to the Municipal Utilities Action Fund.*

- 16 issues of the Capital Letter newsletter
- 17 conference calls with the Government Relations Committee

Many direct meetings with legislators, staff, commissioners and agency representatives

Regular attendance at both the House and Senate committees with jurisdiction over energy and related issues of interest or concern to MMUA members, as well as conference committees and other negotiations

5 – MMUA commitments to serve on several special task forces, working groups, etc.

*Other 2019 numbers:*

49 – APPA rally attendees from 19 utilities, six power agencies, and MMUA (four staff)

131 – attendees at regional DER Interconnection Process training sessions from 80 utilities, six power agencies, and MMUA (seven staff)

12 – visits to member utilities

3 – Drive Electric MN meetings attended

3 – MPCA Clean Water Discussion Series meetings attended



*MMUA government relations staffers Kent Sulem (left) and Bill Black were very active in 2019 and are familiar faces around legislative offices.*

4 – MNOPS excavation law change proposal meetings

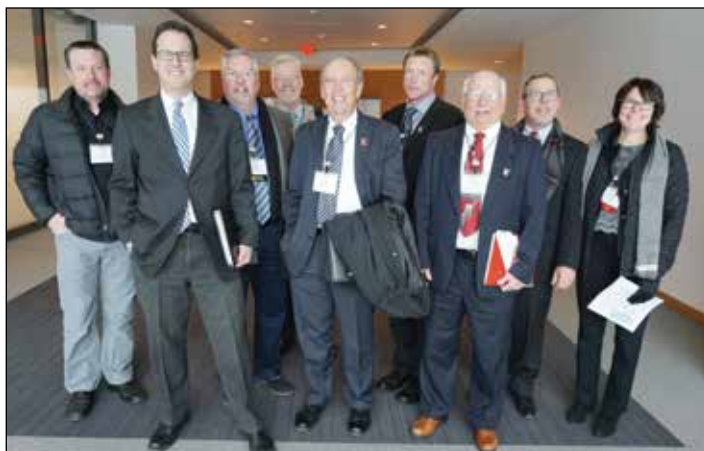
2 – DER fuel switching meetings

12 – political fundraising events attended in support of 21 candidates

5 – Energy Utility Diversity Group meetings attended, plus several subcommittee meetings

Kent Sulem assisted in the gas pre-pay effort, acquiring the Marshall Training Center land, renewing the MMUA St. Paul office lease, and attended the annual TAPS conference in Madison, Wisc.

Bill Black attended the annual APPA Legal and Regulatory Conference in Portland, Ore., the annual Midwest Statewide Public Power Associations meeting in Ankeny, Iowa, and the annual Midwest Electric Consumers' Association in Denver, Colo., and hosted four regional training sessions on implementing the state's new Distributed Energy Resource Interconnection Process.



*MMUA's most effective advocates are members with the facts. At the 2019 Legislative Rally were, from left to right: Jeff Larson of Marshall, Joe Bagnoli of the McGrann Shea firm, Bob Elston of Sleepy Eye, Rob Scott-Hovland of MRES, Bob Weiss of Sleepy Eye, Scott Johnson and Randy Haseleu of Springfield, Mark Kober of Sleepy Eye and MMUA's Theresa Neddermeyer.*

## Federal Government Relations

The new 116<sup>th</sup> Congress started out just like the 115<sup>th</sup>—under the cloud of a federal government shutdown. While certainly not new to Washington, this shutdown somehow felt different: more serious, more entrenched, and certainly longer. In fact, it was unprecedented—never before has a Congress ended and a new one started during a federal shutdown.

So when the 116<sup>th</sup> was sworn in on Jan. 3, as the Constitution dictates, the shutdown was already weeks old. The new Democratic majority in the House, having been swept into power by the 2018 midterm elections, immediately passed several spending bills, hoping to end the impasse. But the Senate, under Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, held off—he wouldn't bring anything to the Senate floor unless he was certain the president would sign it. But that was the rub: the White House forced the shutdown over funding for the border wall, one of the president's top priorities. All sides dug in, and there was plenty of blame to go around.

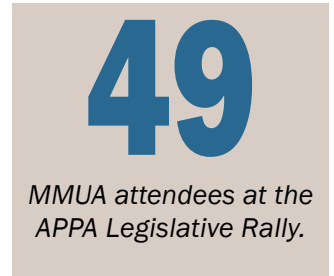
The shutdown finally ended on Jan. 25—after 35 days, the longest government shutdown in history. And it didn't end well: House Democrats, under new Speaker Nancy Pelosi, declared spending on a border wall a non-starter; the president declared a national emergency to gain access to federal funds; and Senate Republicans were caught in the middle. This is the way the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress began, and things never got better, culminating in the impeachment of President Trump, only the third time in U.S. history.

Maybe it was inevitable; it was certainly predictable. The 2018 midterm elections saw a Democratic 'blue wave' that dramatically changed the House; Democrats needed 23 seats to win back the majority—they won 43. Nationally the Republicans flipped three seats, two of them in Minnesota. The Republican Senate didn't change hands—Democrats won two seats but the GOP won four for a gain of two and a new margin of 53-47.

The Minnesota congressional delegation saw five new freshman members come to Washington:

- Republican Jim Hagedorn (MN-1)
- Democrat Angie Craig (MN-2)
- Democrat Dean Phillips (MN-3)
- Democrat Ilhan Omar (MN-5)
- Republican Pete Stauber (MN-8)

Democrats were suddenly in charge, at least in the House of Representatives. Mitch McConnell still led the Senate and quickly vowed to stymie House legislative priorities, no matter how lofty or bipartisan. Key Democratic goals included immigration reform, infrastructure, health care reform, prescription drugs, and climate change, which garnered lots of attention when Speaker Pelosi named a new House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis. But most of the House agenda never got off the ground, having been met with what McConnell proudly claimed was his "legislative graveyard" in the Senate. All told the House passed approximately 400 bills but very few saw action in the Senate. Only in the waning days of the session did Congress manage to show a little progress on anything significant, including a spending package, defense, and trade.



### *MMUA priorities*

MMUA key messages and talking points were developed for the annual APPA Legislative Rally. These included:

- Support and improve tax-exempt financing, including municipal bond modernization
- Reasonable and effective environmental regulation
- Preserve local pole attachment regulation
- Protect WAPA customers.

Once again MMUA sent a large contingent to Washington—49 Minnesotans attended the conference. MMUA issues were aligned with APPA priorities, which also included grid security and infrastructure investment, a key issue for the White House. Unfortunately no major legislation was considered in 2019.

The Minnesota delegation was busy, especially in the Senate. Sen. Tina Smith led the way with several noteworthy bills, including energy storage, efficiency, renewable resources, and a major legislative proposal calling for a new federal Clean Energy Standard (S. 1359). The bill received great attention upon release and was immediately endorsed by several environmental organizations



Minnesotans at the APPA Rally included, from left to right: Pete Moulton of St. Peter, Alysa and Mike Ressler, 'H' and Jean Peterson, all of Blooming Prairie, Kim Cosens of Owatonna, Blooming Prairie's Jerry Mausbach, Joe Hoffman of Preston, SMMPA's Dave Geschwind and Chris Schoenherr and Tom and Shelby Kuntz of Owatonna.

and labor unions. But the proposal remains controversial for the electricity industry: it would impose new federal standards on all electricity providers in the hopes of putting the U.S. on a course to achieve zero carbon emissions by 2050. The proposal has several Democratic cosponsors but no Republicans signed onto the bill, and it never got a hearing in the Senate Energy and

Natural Resources Committee. Other bills did, including the Wind Energy R&D Act, and a joint Smith-Klobuchar proposal on energy investment for rural communities. The Senate energy panel made a late attempt to produce a significant legislative package, but this will most likely get attention in early 2020.

The House never produced such a package, concentrating instead on climate change proposals that were expected to be introduced in the waning days of the session. But the House did produce energy-related tax legislation, including a bill to reinstate advance refunding mechanisms for public power systems and local communities, which was repealed in the major tax reform bill of 2017.



It's not every day you get a chance to talk with a presidential candidate. Owatonna Mayor Tom Kuntz took advantage of the opportunity with Sen. Amy Klobuchar at the APPA Rally.

## Engineering and Policy Analysis

Bob Jagusch is MMUA's Director of Engineering and Policy Analysis. He likes numbers. In 2019, Jagusch reports:

Miles driven: 27,193

Air miles: 9,236

Member visits: 13

Minnesota Public Utilities Commission meetings: 14

e21, Xcel, Minnesota Power meetings: 6

Division of Energy Resources meetings: 6

Conservation Improvement Restructuring meetings: 8

National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO) meetings: 3

Midwest Governors Association meetings: 3

APPA meetings: 4

Joint Action Agency meeting visits: 7

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency meetings: 3

MMUA/MMGA Board meetings: 12

Department of Energy meetings: 2

University of Minnesota/ CERTs/ Energy Storage/ Humphrey School/ Mondale School of Law meetings: 6

Midwest Associations of Municipal Utilities meeting: 1

FERC meeting: 1

**14**

Number of Minnesota Public Utilities Commission meetings attended in 2019 by MMUA's Bob Jagusch.

# Safety and Training

The safety program has been a priority for MMUA and has grown to meet the needs of our members. Today, MMUA offers a wide variety of job training, safety and regulatory (OSHA, DOT, NESC, NFPA 70E, etc.) compliance assistance services, including:

## *Safety Management Program*

13 – Safety Management Coordinators (three with additional duties) serving over 100 member utilities/cities.

## *Job Training & Safety Program*

103 – cities benefitting from MMUA technical training.

## *Natural Gas Circuit Rider Program*

31 – Municipal gas utilities/private companies benefitting from MMUA’s audits, inspections, hands-on instruction and guidance.

## *On-Site Apprentice Lineworker Training Program*

122 – Days of on-site training completed.

32 – students enrolled in the “On-Site” Linework Apprenticeship Training Program, from 19 cities/utilities, at year end. James Monroe serves as our primary instructor.

In a major development, MMUA worked with the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) this year and earned validation of MMUA’s Base Standards of Apprenticeship. MMUA’s partnership with DOLI streamlines the process and consistency within the program, to directly benefit the members. The Linework Apprenticeship Standard is a nationally-recognized credential, that will ensure mastery of essential base competencies.

## *Generation Programs*

60 – Electric generation plant audits conducted by MMUA, under contract with the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT). Operations & Maintenance manuals are under development for 17 power plants. (Cities that have insurance coverage through LMCIT with plants that qualify may receive a 10 percent discount on their insurance.)

## *Regional Safety Group Program*

Worked with more than 200 city governments/departments, under contract with the LMCIT, through our Regional Safety Group Program.



Chitt Keophilalay of Adrian, Ryan Miller of Brainerd, James Monroe of MMUA and Tanner Ellis of Melrose (left to right) at the 2019 Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo. Monroe works with each of these lineworkers through the MMUA Apprentice Linework Training Program.

## *Technical Schools and Workshops*

445 – Students participated in our educational programs throughout the year (includes MREA registrations).

9 – Minnesota municipal lineworkers graduated from Northwest Lineman College (NLC) in 2019. (Three of the graduates were also enrolled in MMUA’s Linework Apprenticeship Training Program.)

22 – SafetySmart Videos were produced and this project wrapped up in 2019. The video series was developed in partnership with APPA through a grant from APPA’s DEED Program.



Jim Brown of Anoka (center) kept a close eye on a task at the Overhead School.

### *Mutual Aid Assistance*

4 – Number of MMUA-coordinated mutual aid events in 2019. In-state events included assistance to Fairmont, Lake City and Rochester. The Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo and Overhead School needed to be rescheduled as 42 lineworkers from 17 utilities, MRES and MMUA answered the call for assistance and travelled to Kissimmee, Florida.

### *For a Great Cause*

For the second year, MMUA helped coordinate the 2019 Minnesota Public Power Walleye Fishing Tournament. Thirty-three teams (two people per boat) participated. The tournament raised \$2,300, which was donated equally to the electric line work programs located in Baudette, Granite Falls, Jackson and Rosemount.



Steve Laugen of RPU (center) led a group at the Underground School.

## **Meetings and Workshops**

One purpose of MMUA is to “meet, confer and provide for the dissemination of information that will make for the greater efficiency and economy of municipally-owned utilities.”

One big way we fulfill that purpose is by meeting!

MMUA held two large membership meetings, a legislative rally, coordinated efforts on a national rally and held numerous training schools and workshops in 2018.



MMUA staffers Theresa Neddermeyer (left) and Rita Kelly made sure the awards were in place and ready to go at the MMUA Annual Summer Conference.

228 – Attendees of the 88<sup>th</sup> MMUA Annual Summer Conference, held Aug. 20-22 at Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria.

85 – Attended the Technical and Operations Conference, held Dec. 4-6 in St. Cloud.

50 – Hardy souls traveled, under the MMUA banner, from the frozen tundra to the relatively balmy climes of Washington D.C., for the American Public Power Association Legislative Rally, held Feb. 26-28.

60 – Public power advocates attend the MMUA Legislative Rally, held Jan. 29-30, in St. Paul.

4 – Number of Interconnection Process for Distributed Energy Resource workshops held by MMUA

around the state. Locations included March 20 in Owatonna, March 22 in Grand Rapids, March 27 in Detroit Lakes and March 28 in Marshall. A total of 126 people attended.

26 – graduates from two cohorts of the MMUA Leadership Academy. The program continues with people enrolling for the Class of 2020.

Thanks to our members for avidly supporting these efforts.

# Communications & Member Relations

MMUA's mission is to unify, support and serve municipal utilities. With 124 electric and 33 natural gas utilities spread around the state, a vital part of unification is communication. MMUA performs the communications function through a variety of mediums.

While staff is adept with various communications tools, we still value face-to-face meetings in member communities and the relationships that develop while assisting municipal utilities and the people that make them go.

Here is a look at our efforts, mostly by the number:

## **Print media:**

- 1933 – The year MMUA began producing publications (see cover below).
- 1968 – The year MMUA began producing a monthly publication.
- 11 – Editions of the MMUA Resource newsletter produced in 2019 (combining July and August)
- 21 – MMUA Annual Sponsors with ads in the monthly *Resource* newsletter
- 15 – Promotional/registration publications produced for various meetings and training programs.

MMUA staff also produced a meeting/schools calendar, and position statement booklets for the APPA Washington Rally and the MMUA Winter Legislative Conference. The MMUA brochure and a brochure on municipal utilities were updated, as were various maps and presentations. Some of this updating of general information included statistical updates.

## **Social media:**

- 47 – Tweets combined from @SDownerMMUA and @BBlackMMUA on @MMUATweets
- 63 – Facebook posts
- 1,559 – People reached with our most popular Facebook post
- 13 – Number of new photo posts on Flickr

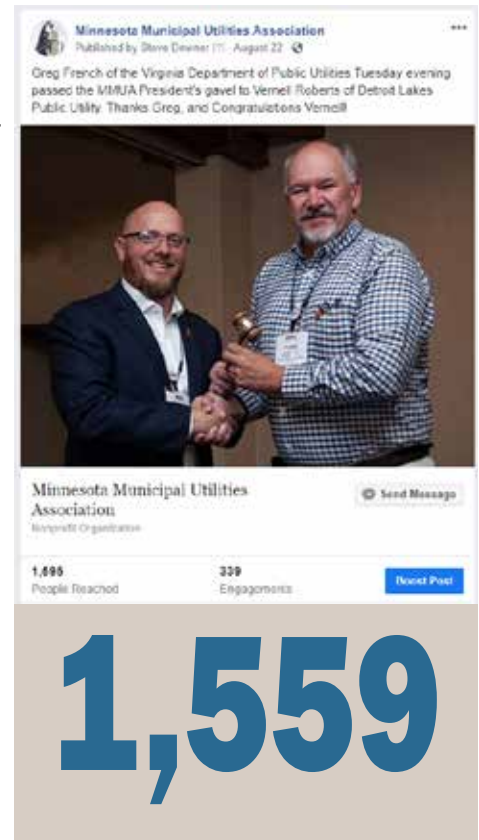
## **Member Relations:**

- 52 – Visits to municipal electric utility cities, by communications/member relations staff
- 8,566 – Miles covered on MMUA

business during these visits and other meetings. Thanks to everybody who took the time to talk!

## **And that's not all:**

MMUA Communications/Member Relations staff also met with municipal and other representatives on a variety of topics relating to municipal utilities and their operation, including the benefits of a city owning and operating a municipal electric or natural gas utility.

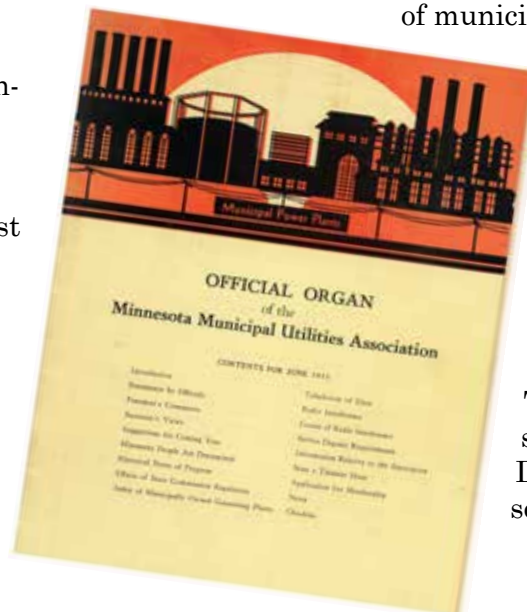


*Our most popular Facebook post of 2019: Greg French handing the president's gavel to Vernell Roberts.*

Staff monitors low-income issues while chairing the Salvation Army HeatShare Advisory Board, which includes investor-owned utility and state government representatives.

Over the course of the year, MMUA researched and answered numerous questions regarding operation of municipal utilities. On three of these occasions, the answer was gained through posting an online survey on the MMUA website. MMUA staff also completed a salary survey. These surveys are posted on our website, behind the login.

23 – Years MMUA has offered and administered the MMUA Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award, and the MMUA Drug and Alcohol Testing Consortium.





# Timeline

## January

January 29-30 – In the midst of record-breaking cold and stress on natural gas and electric systems, MMUA holds its annual Legislative Conference, in St. Paul. The essence of the municipal message? Let us keep the lights on at a rate our customers can afford. MMUA also led an intensive attempt to modernize the state's Conservation Improvement Program law.

Anthony Lenz joins MMUA as a Regional Safety Coordinator. Lenz previously worked as a lineman for the cities of St. James, and Lakefield.



Anthony Lenz (left) joined MMUA in January 2019. Lenz is pictured here with Jeff Bechhold of MRES at the Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo.

## February

February 12-15 – MMUA holds its Meter School and Pre-Conference at the Training Center in Marshall.

February 25-27 – APPA holds its annual Legislative Rally in Washington, D.C. Approximately 50 people attend under the MMUA banner, including utility and power agency staff, local elected and appointed officials, and MMUA staff.

February 27-28 – In anticipation of upcoming state and national Lineworkers Rodeos, MMUA holds



The Meter School started MMUA's training year, in February.

a free Lineworker Rodeo Clinic, at the Training Center.

## March

March 20 – the first in a series of MMUA workshops is held, on a requirement to adopt a new Interconnection Process for Distributed Energy Resources. Owatonna was the site. Additional workshops are held March 22 in Grand Rapids, March 27 in Detroit Lakes and March 28 in Marshall.

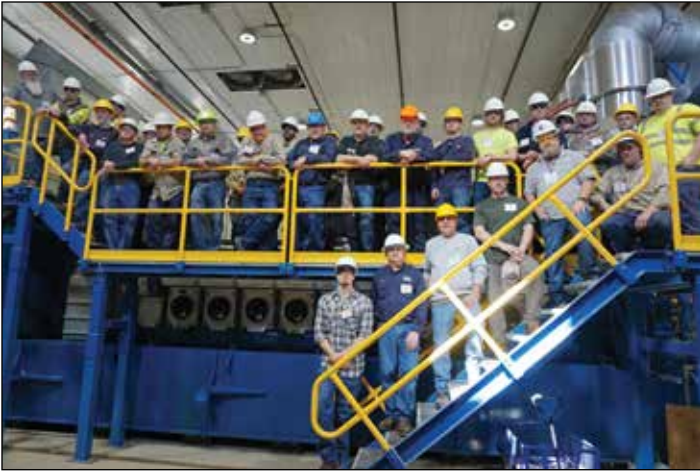
March 30 – Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo held in Colorado Springs, Colo. Five Minnesota municipal electric utilities send teams or individuals to the event. Staff from MMUA, power agencies and utility members also served in varying capacities, including as judges.

March 31-April 3 – APPA Engineering & Operations (E&O) Technical Conference held in Colorado Springs. MMUA staffers Mike Willetts and Marc Machacek serve as presenters at the meeting.

## April

April 16-18 – MMUA partners with the Minnesota Rural Electric Association to hold its Substation School, in Buffalo.

*continued on next page*



Attendees of the MMUA Generation School gathered for a group picture at Shakopee Energy Park.

April 23-25 – MMUA Generation School held in Hutchinson, and the Shakopee, Delano and Glencoe municipal power plants.

April 25 – the top four finishers are selected in the MMUA Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award contest. Each contestant, a high school senior with a parent or guardian who is a customer of a municipally-owned electric or gas utility, submits an essay on the benefits of Public Power.

### May

May 1-2 – MMUA holds a Competent Person and Excavation Workshop at the Training Center. Thirty-four attend the school, mostly from municipal utilities but also from rural water systems and a private business.

May 14-17 – MMUA holds its annual Underground School, at the Training Center, along with our partners in training: the American Public Power Association and MREA. Forty-nine attend from Minnesota municipals, 11 from four South Dakota cooperatives.

### June

June 1 – Minnesota Public Power Walleye Fishing Tournament held at Rush Lake, near Otter Tail.

June 4 – Mutual aid process kicks in following damaging storms in southeast Minnesota, including Rochester.

14 municipal utility or city personnel complete the MMUA Firstline Supervision Course through



MMUA holds a golf 'scramble' tournament prior to the start of the Annual Summer Conference. The winning team in 2019 included, from left to right: Mike Leshovsky of Border States Electric, Hutchinson's Dave Hunstad, Shakopee's Greg Drent and Jordan Rykal of EMS Partners.

Central Lakes College. Sessions were held, for two groups, Feb. 6-8. and 20-22, March 6-8 and Oct. 9-11, Oct. 23-25 and Nov. 13-15.

### July

MMUA requests members contact the association regarding mishandled locate tickets involving a large, multi-state telecommunications company. The information was sought for potential future reference, and recourse.

MMUA regional safety staff continued work with Minnesota OSHA on scientific sampling, at member



Day in and day out, MMUA staff work with members on a variety of issues. Here, Regional Safety Coordinator Mark Hottel (foreground) worked with City of Kenyon employees on preparing a street sweeper for scientific sampling of 'respiratory crystalline silica.'

sites, to determine “respiratory crystalline silica” levels for standard tasks, including mowing, street sweeping, etc.

## August

August 19-21 – MMUA holds its 88th Annual Summer Conference, at Breezy Point Resort.

Greg French of the Virginia Department of Public Utilities hands the president’s gavel to Vernell Roberts of Detroit Lakes Public Utility.

August 31 – Assembled municipal electric crews leave Rochester Public Utilities for Kissimmee, Fla., as widespread damage is expected from Hurricane Dorian.

## September

September 4 – Municipal electric crews leave Florida to return to Minnesota, as Hurricane Dorian strikes only a glancing blow to the Atlantic coast.

Work continues on the Minnesota Distributed Energy Resource ‘Technical Interconnection and Interoperability Requirements,’ as submitted by a technical workgroup. MMUA’s Bob Jagusch toils away on a subgroup.

September 24 – Severe thunderstorms roll through southeastern Minnesota, and Lake City calls for mutual aid through MMUA.

## October

October 15 – The third annual Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo is held at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. Utilities sending people to compete included Melrose, Adrian, Rochester, Marshall, Shakopee, Brainerd, Elk River and Chaska.



Hands-on work with miniaturized transformer banks highlighted December’s Transformer School.



Another cohort from the MMUA Leadership Academy graduated Nov. 21, at the MMUA office in Plymouth.

October 15-18 – MMUA holds its annual Overhead School at the Training Center. Both utility and Associate Members play a large role in the success of the School, which is attended by more than 50 lineworkers from Minnesota, Michigan and South Dakota.

October 15-17 – The MMUA Cross Training School is held in conjunction with the Overhead School, at the Training Center. Smaller, but no less important than the Overhead, the Cross Training School is attended by city/utility personnel who may be called on to assist line crews.

## November

MMUA graduates another cohort from the Leadership Academy, Nov. 21 at the MMUA office in Plymouth.

## December

December 3-5 – MMUA holds its annual Technical and Operations Conference in St. Cloud.

December 10-13 – The MMUA Transformer School, and Pre-Conference, are held at the Training Center.



Rick Martagon, Cody Raveling, James Monroe, Mike Willetts and Jeremy Parker (from left to right) met at the T&O Conference. Martagon and Parker, with the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, have developed a close working relationship with the MMUA safety staff people.



*Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association*

**Our main office is moving, with  
a tentative date of Jan. 24, to:**

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Suite 200  
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Marshall, MN 56258

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161 St. Anthony Ave.  
Suite 800  
St. Paul, MN 55103