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Taking part in a Dec. 2 ribbon-cutting were, from left to right: Mike Cannon of Hutchinson EDA, City Administrator Matt Jaunich, Jack Dagget of the EDA, HUC Commissioner Anthony Hanson, Mayor Gary Forcier; EDA Director Miles Seppelt, City Attorney Marc Sebor, HUC Electric Distribution Manager

Dave Hunstad, Justin Zientara of Ziegler Power Systems, HUC General Manager Jeremy Carter, Nate Raway of Hunt Electric, HUC Commission President Matt Chaney, Mike Chase of Ziegler and HUC Commissioner Don Martinez.

Leaning into the future

Hutchinson dedicates its second solar energy plant

Hutchinson Utilities Commission (HUC) dedicated its newest electric generation resource—a 766-kilowatt direct current solar system—on Thursday, Dec. 2.

The solar plant is located at a city industrial park and near HUC headquarters on the city's eastern edge. The solar array was a turn-key project. It will help promote a local Economic Development Authority incubator building and provide a competitive solar array rate to the City of Hutchinson.

It is Hutchinson's second solar project. A city-owned 400-kilowatt array is tied di-

rectly to the wastewater treatment plant. The 2015 project was the first of its kind in the state and is projected to supply up to 15 percent of the wastewater plant's electrical needs.

Solar generation provides a very small percentage of the community's electric supply, but it is a big example of an increasingly diversified power supply mix. Long accustomed to providing a reliable source of electricity at a competitive price, economics now allow HUC to supply 100 percent renewable energy.

HUC receives 75 percent of its wholesale power from Mis-

souri River Energy Services (MRES). It purchases 20 percent directly from the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) market.

HUC's energy supply in 2020 was 71 percent carbon-free based upon energy generated from wind, solar, nuclear, and other carbon-free energy sources. To offset the remaining 29 percent of energy coming from carbon-based power resources, the HUC board in 2020 unanimously approved purchases of Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) from MRES. A REC reflects the positive

Hutch: see page 5 please

Report details winter outage lessons learned

by Steve Downer

The final report on the February cold weather outages that stretched from Texas into western Minnesota was released Nov. 16 by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) and various regional entity staff.

Recommendations included with the report contain serious implications for Minnesota utilities, energy system planners and policymakers. Recommendations include recognizing the economic and reliability benefits of dual-fueled power plants.

The disaster was the fourth cold-weather-related event in the last 10 years to jeopardize bulk electric system reliability. It was the largest series of rolling blackouts in U.S. history. More than 4.5 million people in Texas lost power during the event, with some exposed to below-freezing temperatures for over six days. At least 210 people died of causes tied to the power outages.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas estimated Texas economic losses of between \$80 to \$130 billion.

The report describes the Feb. 8-20 severe cold weather event and electric grid outages in Texas and the south-central

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Municipal electric powers St. Peter to top of EV charging pyramid

by Steve Downer

Saint Peter might be the electric vehicle (EV) charging capital of Minnesota.

The college town located along U.S. Hwy. 169 north of Mankato recently added its third multi-vehicle charging station and it's a big one: an eight-vehicle Tesla V3 Supercharging station. The facility, which is expandable to 10 spaces, is located in a Hy-Vee parking lot within walking distance of various amenities.

The site was reportedly selected to provide a V3 station on the transportation corridor from the Twin Cities to Sioux Falls, S.D. Other Tesla charging stations along the corridor only have V1 or V2 chargers.

The City of Saint Peter Electric Department installed a large 750kVA 277/480v transformer to power the new V3 station and energized it on Oct. 15, said Electric Superintendent Jason Lee.

New V3 chargers provide up to 250 kilo-

Chargers: see page 6 please



Four lanes of U.S. Hwy 169 runs through St. Peter's wide boulevards, which were set when the city was vying to serve as the state capital. This view is looking north toward the city's downtown commercial district.

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Citing clean energy move, Minnesota Power requests 18 percent rate increase

From Minnesota Power

Minnesota Power, a utility division of ALLETE Inc., filed a request Nov. 1 with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) to increase its annual operating revenue by \$108 million and adjust rates for its retail electric customers.

The approximately 18 percent increase proposed by the company reflects changes in revenue and expenses related to Minnesota Power's ongoing EnergyForward clean energy transition, evolving customer demand, business operations and regulatory requirements

since the company's last completed rate review submitted in 2016. In the past 25 years, Minnesota Power has completed three full rate reviews.

"The energy industry of the 2020s looks far different than it did five years ago as our customers' expectations for clean energy and high-value service are increasing," said Bethany Owen, ALLETE Chair, President and CEO. "Through EnergyForward, Minnesota Power is meeting those expectations by delivering a resilient, reliable and sustainable supply of 50 percent renewable energy that is

competitively priced."

In its Integrated Resource Plan submitted to state regulators on Feb. 1, Minnesota Power announced its goal to achieve a 70 percent renewable energy mix by 2030, an 80 percent carbon reduction with an end to all coal operations by 2035, and a 100 percent carbon-free energy supply by 2050.

Recognizing the impacts of climate change, Minnesota Power is making additional investments in a more resilient grid to maintain energy delivery as the number of more extreme weather events increases. Minnesota Power also is providing tools that

empower customers to reduce how much energy they use and to choose their sources of energy.

Minnesota Power's request also reflects changes in customer demand for energy. Minnesota Power customers have exceeded state energy conservation goals every year for the last decade, reducing energy consumption and total energy bills for households and businesses. In addition, the economy of northeastern Minnesota continues to evolve, and as the energy requirements of customers change, it affects rates paid by all classes of customers.

The company has request-

ed an interim rate increase of approximately 14 percent for all customers beginning in early January 2022. According to Minnesota law, the MPUC will approve an interim rate increase that will remain in effect until a decision is made on final rates. If the approved final rate is lower, the company will refund the difference to customers with interest.

The company's last completed rate review was filed in 2016, while a 2019 request was withdrawn in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on customers and the region's economy.

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MPUC approves Otter Tail generation cost recovery

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) approved changes to Otter Tail Power (OTP) Company rates on Nov. 4.

OTP said the rate changes allow it to recover the final costs associated with Hoot Lake Plant, which retired in 2021, and costs associated with two generation resources

that came on-line in the last year: Astoria Station, a 250-megawatt natural gas generator near Astoria, South Dakota, and Merricourt Wind Energy Center, a 150-megawatt wind project near Merricourt, North Dakota.

Otter Tail Power Company initially requested permission to increase revenue by approximately \$14.5 million, or 6.77 percent.

In November 2020, recognizing the economic impact to customers of the ongoing pandemic and with input from MPUC staff, OTP proposed reducing its interim rate request by approximately half to \$6.9 million, or 3.2 percent. The MPUC subsequently approved OTP's request to implement interim rates on January 1, 2021, as part of the company's current Minnesota rate review.

While the MPUC decision on Nov. 4 results in substantially unchanged rates, OTP said the approval recognizes many cost reductions it achieved during the rate review, including lower depreciation expense due to lengthening the useful lives of wind generation resources, decreased pension costs associated with higher pension fund assets, and an increase in expected wind energy plant tax credits. The company said it will take time to calculate the dollar impact of the MPUC's decisions on numerous and complex issues, but it expected that the change to customer rates would be minimal.

The MPUC set OTP's return on equity at 9.48 percent, an increase from the 9.41 percent return approved in 2017.



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The Times, They Are a-Changin' but MMUA will still be there for you

It's December, the weather has turned cold, snow is falling, and my feet feel like icebergs. Meanwhile, as I look back at 2021 and ahead to 2022, one thing is clear. There's a lot going on in municipal utilities these days. Are you ready for all the changes that may come your way?

This isn't the first time we've seen massive shifts in the municipal space. There was the period of rapid expansion in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Then public power shrank by 40 percent in the 1920s, bounced back in the 1930s, and evolved in the post-war years. Public utilities of all types—gas, water, wastewater, telecommunications, and other services—have all had their periods of adjustment over the 90 years since MMUA was founded.

One of the big decision points in Minnesota came in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During the time that native son Bob Dylan's trademark song, *The Times, They Are a Changin'* was topping charts, times were also a-changing in the world of Minnesota public utilities. In 1968 MMUA hired its first paid staff member, Executive Director St. Clair Beeman, to help navigate a seemingly existential threat to municipal electric service viability.

Following several years of concern, Minnesota electric co-ops pursued legislation in 1969 that would have resulted in fixed service territories, thus not allowing municipals to grow with their cities. Had it passed, the new law would have been a game-changer, and municipal power as we know it today would likely look very different if it existed at all.

Back then, MMUA members came together, St. Clair's expertise as a lobbyist and organizer was critical, and eventually the matter was settled with a "grand bargain" in 1974, which preserved the municipal utilities' right to grow along with the cities they serve.

This effort took expertise, patience, relationships, and a willingness to work together for the good of the whole.

Today, times are a-changing' again. There are several things being bandied about that could be transformative for municipals. The impact of electric vehicles, the move toward carbon-neutral generation requirements, and third-party sales could all dramatically impact the future of municipals' provision

of power. Other trends such as cyber risks, aging infrastructure, population shifts toward urban areas, cryptocurrency, and the impact of government actions all stand to affect municipals' viability as they strive to provide gas, water, wastewater, and other utility services.

MMUA is paying attention to these things, and many more. Though you may know us as primarily focused on electricity, the truth is we are watching issues in any arena that may affect the ability of municipalities to evolve and effectively meet the utility needs of their communities going forward. Here's what we are doing.

- Listening to all cities in Minnesota who offer utility services — not just members — to learn what issues are on your radar. Thank you if you were one of the many people who shared your thoughts in the survey that just closed. We want to be proactive, and that means finding out what's going on before it reaches a critical level.

- Putting boots on the ground in places where we need them. That means we have people in Washington and St. Paul advocating for municipals. It also means helping municipals learn how to stay safe and deliver utility services—all of them, not just electricity—with excellence even as expectations, legal requirements, and opportunities change.

- Staying on top of what is emerging and what is needed. Whether cities need help dealing with an unwelcome threat to their municipal utilities, seek knowledge about how to access infrastructure money for upgrades to water systems, broadband, and charging stations, or need someone to respond to proposed rules, MMUA is there.

- Developing a strategic plan that is designed to be service-oriented in the current world, visionary about the utility world that is evolving, and focused on how MMUA can be uniquely relevant to municipal utilities well into the future. You'll be

From My Desk to Yours

Karleen Kos
MMUA CEO



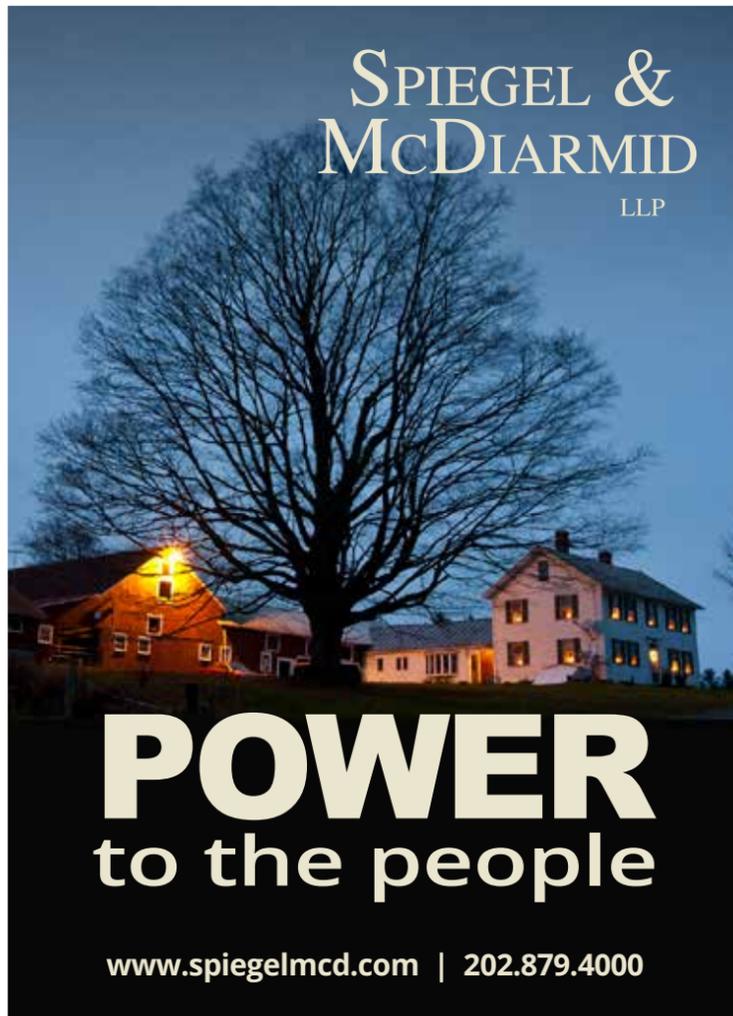
hearing more about that as 2022 unfolds.

In 2007 change management expert John Kotter published a great story called, "Our Iceberg is Melting." It is simple tale of how a group of penguins discovered the world as they knew it was going to change whether they liked it or not. The MMUA staff recently used this piece to help us think about the ways in which the municipal utilities iceberg, and by extension, the MMUA iceberg might be melting.

Like the penguins in the story, there are mixed reac-

tions and a lot of different thoughts on the MMUA team about how we might work together with you to ensure we have a proactive plan for dealing with the changing situation. The MMUA Board will have a similar conversation during our upcoming strategic planning process.

What no one doubts is that "The Times, They Are a-Changing" and our iceberg may be melting. Count on MMUA to figure out how to ensure that municipal utilities in Minnesota have what they need, regardless of what iceberg we are on.



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Energy prices up 58 percent from last summer, according to MISO market monitor

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) Independent Market Monitor presented its Summer 2021 report to the MISO board on Oct. 7. Highlights from the report, prepared by Potomac Economics, included:

Energy prices rose 58 percent from last summer as fuel prices and load rose. Natural gas prices doubled from last summer and coal prices rose modestly. The average load grew 3 percent and peak load grew 2 percent over the last

year as COVID-19 effects diminished and it was hotter than normal.

Day-ahead market and real-time revenue sufficiency guarantee (RSG) payments were relatively high, more than double last summer's to more than \$59 million. RSG payments ensure that generation and demand response resources recover their production and operating reserve costs. Intermittent, renewable resources are generally considered the cause of real-time RSG costs. Some of the increase, noted the monitor, are attributable to higher natural gas prices. A large percentage of RSG commitments occurred on a few days, said the report, and only 26 percent of the commitments were ultimately needed. The RSG process will be evaluated and possibly improved.

The cost of real-time congestion on the transmission grid increased 34 percent over last year to \$431 million. Forty-three percent of the congestion was attributed to wind generation constraints, although wind output was only slightly higher than last summer. Higher natural gas prices contributed because of increased marginal costs to

manage system flows. Congestion primarily attributable to wind was 22 percent last year and 15 percent in 2019. As congestion grows, the need to improve transmission increases. The costliest transmission constraint in the quarter generated over \$57 million in congestion charges and primarily limited the output of wind resources in MISO North, including Minnesota.

Hurricane Ida caused severe damage to the transmission system on Aug. 29. Shortages were avoided because more load was lost than generation.

In addition, hotter than normal temperatures led to several alerts, capacity advisories and a Maximum Generation Event on June 10. Average prices ranged to \$140 per megawatt-hour (mwh) during the event, which led to increased imports from outside the MISO region. Had the emergency not been called, said the report, prices would have averaged \$50-\$60 per mwh early in the event and imports would not have risen.

Energy resources for Summer 2021 were: nuclear 14 percent; coal 44 percent; nat-

ural gas 30 percent; hydro 1 percent; wind 8 percent and other 3 percent. The coal share of energy output was up from 38 percent a year ago; gas down from 37 percent, and wind and nuclear essentially the same.

Maximum wind output was 17,788 MW and the average actual output 6,239 MW. Maximum 60-minute wind output decrease was 4,956 MW; the maximum 60-minute increase 3,439 MW.

Wisconsin court rules on request to slow proposed transmission line

On Nov. 8, the Wisconsin Supreme Court denied a request to block a lower court order that could allow opponents to temporarily stop construction of the Cardinal-Hickory Creek line from Iowa across southwest Wisconsin.

A Dane County Circuit Judge in October granted an injunction that paused construction of the MISO multi-value project while challenges to the \$492 million project's permit were considered.

The high court said utilities can follow traditional procedure and ask the court of appeals to review the injunction.



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Hutch:

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environmental attributes of 1,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of renewable and carbon-free electrical generation.

The utility's locally-owned and operated generation, from solar and two power plants, provides a small, but very important, percentage of the electricity used in the municipal service territory.

While solar is cost competitive, HUC General Manager Jeremy Carter noted that its capacity factor in Minnesota ranges from 12 to 15 percent. It can't be relied on all the time. With several large manufacturers, a robust commercial sector, and a hospital on its system, Carter said "reliability is big for us."

To ensure reliability, including voltage control, HUC can call on its local generators. This local generation is used when required by MISO or as a hedge against high market prices.

HUC's Plant 2 includes a 42-megawatt (MW) combustion turbine, a 22-MW simple cycle combustion turbine and one steam boiler, each natural gas-fired. The larger turbine, operated in combined cycle mode, uses a heat recovery steam boiler to power an 11-MW steam turbine/generator to produce additional green power.



HUC Electric Distribution Manager Dave Hunstad pointed out an item of interest.

Plant 1 is prominently located at the intersections of Minnesota Hwys. 15 and 7 in Hutchinson. Plant 1 currently runs four reciprocating internal combustion engine (RICE) generators with a capacity of approximately 33 MW. These generators are ideal for firming up variable-output renewable resources.



text and photos by Steve Downer

HUC General Manager Jeremy Carter made a few remarks prior to the ribbon-cutting.



This picture, courtesy of HUC, shows the solar plant, Plant 2 and the utility headquarters behind trees in the middle background.



A closer look at Plant 2, above, and Plant 1, below.



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Chargers:

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watts (kW) per vehicle. Older V1 or V2 chargers only provide up to 150 kW per vehicle. Tesla estimates the V3 chargers will cut charging time by an average of 50 percent, with an average charging time of 38 minutes per session.

Tesla paid for and owns the charging station. St. Peter contributed to the new service installation, as it would for any three-phase customer.

Kilowatt-hour sales are expected to be relatively low for the high kilowatt demand service. The unique service characteristics of the chargers may lead to a review of the electrical rate. The utility does have automated metering infrastructure so a variety of rates are possible. Peak usage is expected to occur on the weekend.

“The Tesla charging site will be a great addition to the two city-owned charging sites already located in Saint Peter,” Lee said.

The city-owned stations resulted from the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency’s EVChoice program, which took the lead to supply one charging station to each member. St. Peter duplicated the initial installation to add a second charging station.



MMUA photos by Steve Downer

City of St. Peter Electric Department lineworkers installed the Tesla V3 Supercharger station. Among those involved in the project were, from left to right: Lincoln Hooper, Pat McShane, Brian Shellum and Jerry Holsapple. Also pictured at right is MMUA Regional Safety Coordinator Anthony Lenz.

One is located in the Saint Peter Food Co-op parking lot adjacent to Hwy. 169 and another in a city-owned downtown parking lot.

There is one DC Fast Charger and two Level 2 Chargers at each of these locations.

Fast chargers are initially more expensive and take more energy but have the capability to charge at a quicker rate (estimated to provide up to 180 miles of charge in an hour). Level 2 chargers use less power, require lower volt-

age and take longer to charge (estimated 20 miles of charge in an hour).

People can park and charge, walk and shop in the city of approximately 12,000.

“We want to support down-

town,” said Public Works Director Pete Moulton said. “It’s a great partnership with the Food Co-op and we also used an existing city parking lot.”

“It’s a good thing for St. Peter,” Lee said.



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Small size doesn't keep City of Pierz from making steady progress

Tucked between U.S. Highways 10 on the west and 169 on the east is the City of Pierz, one of the nicest small towns in the state of Minnesota. From humble beginnings in 1892, the city population has grown to approximately 1,400.

One of the city's advantages is the municipal electric utility. The benefits of a municipal electric often manifest themselves in a prosperous community. That is evident in Pierz, which serves approximately 770 electric customers.

The customer count places Pierz in the smallest third of municipal electric utilities in Minnesota. Like many of these smaller cities, Pierz runs an active public works crew but contracts out much of its electric system work. Minnesota Power (MP) serves as both a wholesale power supplier to Pierz and provides hands-on service with crews out of Little Falls, 14 miles to the east.

While working closely with MP and various contractors, Pierz is also intent on looking out for its customers' best interests. It has been working closely with other municipal utilities through the North-

east Municipal Power Agency, which is currently negotiating wholesale power issues with MP.

Bob Otremba is the city administrator. Pierz in recent years has served as a sort of stepping-stone for a succession of city administrators that had come and left for larger cities, but Otremba promises to bring stability. He is a native of the area, hailing from south of nearby Buckman.

He certainly knows his way around Pierz and its infrastructure, having served as the city public works director from 2003 to 2019. He was the public works/parks director from 2018-2019 and also currently serves on the volunteer fire department.

From his office at city hall, Otremba is gaining a newfound appreciation for the administrative work that needs to occur before actual project construction begins. For example, a complete rebuild of 3rd Ave. N., was completed this year, including sewer and water infrastructure. The city received grants to add a trail in conjunction with the total reconstruction project. It also relocated and rebuilt nearly a mile of overhead electric line



text and photos by Steve Downer

Pierz City Hall occupies a prominent place on Minn. Hyw. 25, which also serves as Main Street. Like many city halls, the facility is also connected with the local senior center.

to underground.

It took two years to get ready for the improvements, Otremba noted. "I never saw this side of it before."

The city has some big projects underway or in the planning stages.

Pierz operates both a municipal golf course and campground, on its eastern

edge. The two are mutually supporting and connected with trails. The amenities have been successful and are being expanded: the golf course from nine to 18 holes; the campground from 49 sites to potentially 90 sites.

Campers can explore miles of cross-country ski trails directly from the campground.

The Pierz trail will eventually connect to the Soo Line Trail for walking, biking and riding ATVs.

Mayor Dave Fischer and an active city council have spearheaded the improvements, while Public Works Director Eric Gaffke now oversees

Pierz: see next page please

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Pierz:

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much of the hands-on work. Otremba is also thankful for a small but dedicated and talented group of city staff members.

Much to offer

A visitor to Pierz will immediately notice its smooth streets, an active, mile-long Main Street commercial district and many neatly maintained properties.

The city was originally called Rich Prairie. In 1892, the 48 citizens, largely of Ger-

man descent, voted unanimously to change the name in honor of Father Francis Xavier Pierz, a Slovenian-born Indian missionary priest, who established St. Joseph's Catholic Church.

The church remains a prominent feature and social gathering place in the center of town.

While business and industry has grown in Pierz, there is still an emphasis on agriculture.

State highways 25 and 27 connect residents to regional jobs and bring tourists through town on their way to

the Central Lakes Region.

The city operates its own police and fire department, stormwater and solid waste utilities and provides a variety of services. Pierz and other nearby communities have established a Water and Sanitary Sewer district that operates the area's water and sanitary sewer systems.

Otremba said, "Whether you are travelling through heading north or looking for a place to vacation or relocate, Pierz has a lot to offer for a small town including the legendary Thielen Meat Market, Red's Auto & Bait, Pierz Golf Course and Campground, bars, restaurants, and specialty retail stores to meet your needs."

Moorhead earns status as Smart Energy Provider

Moorhead Public Service has earned a Smart Energy Provider (SEP) designation from the American Public Power Association (APPA) for the second time in a row for demonstrating a commitment to and proficiency in energy efficiency, distributed generation, and environmental initiatives that support the goal of providing safe, reliable, low-cost, and reliable electric service.

"We are honored to be recognized as a utility at the forefront of smart energy best practices," said Travis Schmidt, General Manager of Moorhead Public Service. "This SEP designation represents our dedication to offering programs and implementing practices that work towards our goals to reduce our collective environmental impact, help our customers save money and support our community's responsible energy use."

The SEP designation, which lasts for two years (December 1, 2021 to November 30, 2023) recognizes Moorhead Public Service for demonstrating leading practices in four key disciplines: smart energy program structure; energy efficiency and distributed energy programs; environmental and sustainability initiatives; and customer experience. Moorhead Public Service is joined by more than 90 public power utilities nationwide that hold the SEP designation.

The designations were announced on Oct. 26 in Scottsdale, Arizona during APPA's annual Customer Connections Conference.

Moorhead Public Service has provided water and electric service to its city since 1896.



Pierz City Administrator Bob Otremba often refers to the aerial photograph of the city in his office when discussing recent improvements.

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City and utility crews around the state put up holiday decorations in November.

Among them were crews from **ALP Utilities** and the Alexandria Street Department, which put up holiday decorations along Broadway and Third Avenue on Nov. 22.

The lights were turned on during the annual Christmas event the day after Thanksgiving. This fun photo opportunity was dutifully captured by local media outlets.

The Minnesota Municipal Power Agency has partnered with its member utilities to install electric vehicle charging stations in member cities.

Anoka Municipal Utility had the new two-car Level 2 electric vehicle charger installed in the historic downtown Rum River Parking Ramp.

The chargers are intended to add an amenity that will attract visitors and support local businesses.

The installations also support the growth of the electric vehicle charging network

Around the State



and the evolution toward electric vehicles.

EnelX JuiceBox Level 2, dual port, 48-amp chargers were selected for the project. Two vehicles can recharge at one time at the full rated capacity. The charger is compatible with most EVs and allows for payment by credit card at the device or through an app.

The Community Image Committee of the Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce, **Worthington Public Utilities** and a local realty are co-sponsoring this year's Holiday Lighting Contest.

The committee will drive around Worthington and take pictures of the top decorated homes throughout the community.

The photos will then be posted on the Chamber's Facebook page. People must "like" the original post photo to cast a vote. First place is a \$100 credit on the December utility bill and \$100 in Chamber checks. Second



The Mille Lacs County Historical Society is located in the former Great Northern Depot building pictured in the foreground of this picture. The depot is across the street from Princeton Public Utilities, which recently helped restore a telegraph between the Princeton and Long Siding depots.

place is a \$75 credit and \$75 in Chamber checks; and third place is a \$50 credit and \$50 in Chamber checks.

A plan for new downtown streetlights was approved by the **Willmar City Council** Nov. 1.

Willmar Municipal Utilities purchased the LED street lights for \$968,600 and the City of Willmar will pay

for decorative features and repair of the lights' concrete bases.

The lights selected have decorative glass globes and brackets from which to hang banners and flower baskets. Willmar Municipal Utilities is also contributing \$120,000 in labor costs.

After more than 60 years of silence, the telegraph con-

nection has been restored between the **Princeton** Great Northern Railway depot and the Long Siding Great Northern Railway depot.

Those on the telegraph restoration team, including former Princeton PUC electric superintendent Jon Brooks, didn't have far to string wire.

The Long Siding depot was gifted to the Mille Lacs County Historical Society in 2016. With the move of the 34-foot structure five miles south to the Princeton depot property came the opportunity to reestablish the original electronic communication between the two depots.

The Mille Lacs County Historical Society is housed in the Princeton depot, located across the street from Princeton Public Utilities.

Princeton Public Utilities set two vintage cedar poles to carry the telegraph wires between the two depots, and attached the telegraph wires to the insulators.

Madelia Municipal Light & Power (MMLP) conducted a planned electrical outage during the early morning hours of Oct. 17. The outage affected the entire city and lasted approximately four hours.

Madelia utility staff along with a contractor inspected electrical equipment and safely performed maintenance. Contracted personnel performed maintenance on the main substation transformer, inspected the switchgear, buss bar and other items during the outages.

The work followed a recent systems study, which found minor deficiencies. MMLP took the proactive steps to avoid larger and more costly problems down the road.

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Outage report places high value on dual-fuel capable electric generating units

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) staff report on the February outages (see article on page 1 and continued on facing page) contains 28 recommendations to avoid a repeat of the calamity. Some of these recommendations may be of particular interest to MMUA members.

The report's seventh Key Recommendation addresses fuel availability and stresses the value of dual-fuel capable electric generators. These units are common in municipal electric generating plants.

Units capable of fuel switching have both economic and reliability benefits, notes the report. Benefits include allowing operators to purchase the cheaper of two fuels and have an alternate source of fuel if one source is interrupted or curtailed. In the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) footprint, 41 of 392 generating units are capable of fuel switching, yet only roughly a third attempted to switch from their primary fuel to their secondary fuel during the event.

Approximately 86 percent (12 out of 14) generation units that attempted to switch fuel



Engine/generator sets, like these found in the Fairmont Public Utilities power plant, that are capable of running on either natural gas or distillate fuel oil were singled out for their value in the FERC/NERC report.

factoring in accelerated heat loss due to wind speed. This recommendation has serious implications for Minnesota, with ambient temperatures often colder than wind turbine cold-weather shutoff limits.

Generator owners, recommends the report, should be compensated for cold-weather upgrades necessary for any new units they may build and should have the opportunity to be compensated for the costs of retrofitting existing units to operate to a specified ambient temperature and weather conditions.

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types in ERCOT failed or reduced generation. The majority of units that attempted switching were gas generators switching to distillate oil or oil. Failures in fuel switching were due to problems including the blade path temperature spread from uneven burning of oil, fuel oil pump fouling, fuel oil system trip, fire in turbine enclosure due to fuel oil leak, valve failure, never operated on alternate fuel, inability to synchronize on alternate fuel source due to loss of flame issues during startup, and inability to synchronize on alternate fuel source due to failure to accelerate fault during startup.

In MISO South, four entities reported owning a total of nine dual-fuel units, and one unit was asked to operate on fuel oil due to natural gas fuel restrictions. The unit used a propane system for starting and contributed up to 120 MW of generation from Feb. 15-17.

Generating units in Southwest Power Pool (SPP) that switched fuels contributed an average of 1,300 MW of generation during the height of the event from Feb. 15-18.

The fuel-switching recommendation was first made in NERC Reliability Guidelines issued after a 2011 cold-weather event.

The very first Key Recommendation issued this November addressed Electric Generation Cold Weather Reliability and urged revision to the NERC reliability standards to require generator owners, including wind generators, to understand the effect of precipitation and wind chill on equipment.

The recommendation urged that generator owners who are retrofitting existing generating units or building new ones be required to design the units to perform at the lowest ambient temperature for the nearest city for which historical weather data is available,

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Lessons:

continued from front page

United States. During the event, more than 1,000 electric generating units were adversely affected, many with multiple outages from a variety of causes. The Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) was hardest hit.

The report noted the 2021 event was part of a recurring pattern for the last 10 years. First, large numbers of generating units failed. In the wake of massive natural gas production declines, the natural gas fuel supply struggled to meet demand, worsened by the increasing reliance on

natural gas-fired electric generating units.

Perfect storm

The storm began with extreme cold temperatures and freezing precipitation. Vulnerabilities throughout Texas and the south-central U.S. were well-known: the tendency for natural gas production infrastructure and natural gas generating units common in the area to freeze, and wind turbine blades to ice.

During the week of Feb. 7, ERCOT and Southwest Power Pool (SPP) experienced rising electric demand and generating unit outages, primarily caused by wind turbine blade



The February event area included ERCOT, the Southwest Power Pool and MISO South. This graphic was included in the report.

erating units were also affected by freezing issues during the week of Feb. 7. Natural gas and coal generating unit outages started on Feb. 15. Natural gas-fired generating unit outages nearly doubled in two days, from 25 GW to 50 GW by Wednesday, Feb. 17.

Natural gas production decline questions remain

Natural gas production in Texas and Oklahoma began to decline beginning on approximately Feb. 7 and continued to decline as the week progressed. Natural gas fuel supply issues caused 27.3 percent of all unplanned generating unit outages, derates and failures to start.

Outages and derates due to natural gas fuel supply issues began in ERCOT on Feb. 11. As the week progressed, generating unit outages in the ERCOT increased.

On Sunday, Feb. 14, ERCOT, SPP and MISO combined for over 10,300 MW of generating unit outages and derates due to natural gas fuel supply issues.

ERCOT did not anticipate that rolling blackouts would contribute to power outages of natural gas production and processing facilities. During the Feb. 15-16 time frame, power outages were caused by both weather and firm load shed. According to the report, the extent of power outages that can be attributed to critical natural gas infrastructure limitations and subsequent load shed is unknown because many critical natural gas infrastructure loads had not been identified.

freezing and natural gas fuel supply issues.

Far colder weather came the week of Feb. 14. With freezing precipitation and severe cold invading the region, an increase in generating unit outages and record electricity demands, ERCOT, SPP and Midwest Independent System Operator (MISO) operators were faced with “the perfect storm.”

ERCOT ordered rotating blackouts the early morning hours of Feb. 15, ultimately shedding 20,000 MW of firm

load at the height of the event.

SPP and MISO also shed load Feb. 15-16, with the SPP outages reaching into western Minnesota.

Beginning Monday, Feb. 8, ERCOT saw its first reports of wind generating unit outages and derates due to turbine blade icing. Not surprisingly given their numbers and relatively small size, wind turbine generators were the largest share of individual generating units that suffered freezing issues from Feb. 8-10. Blade icing issues caused outages, derates or failures to start in southern Southwest Power Pool beginning Feb. 8.

To a lesser degree, noted the report, other types of gen-

After blackouts, North Dakota adopts reliability rules

The North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) has drafted “standards of service” rules for its state-regulated electric utilities.

The rules were required by legislative action, brought about by the February cold snap and rolling blackouts that occurred during that time period.

Customers affected by the rolling blackouts were reportedly in rural areas in the Southwest Power Pool footprint. The PSC does not have authority over electric co-ops.

The rules clarify the PSC’s authority over investor-owned public utilities.

The new rules measure reliability of service and provide for fines on utilities that fall short of standards.

Ironically, North Dakota reportedly has some of the best electric reliability in the nation.

The rules are under review by the Attorney General’s office and will eventually be reviewed by a legislative committee.



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MMUA adds another class of Leadership Academy graduates to member ranks

MMUA's 2021 Leadership Academy class graduated Nov. 18 following a two-day session held at the MMUA headquarters in Plymouth.

The Leadership Academy is a one-year program designed for both current and future senior leaders. Class size is limited to 17 students.

Four two-day sessions are held at the MMUA office. The first day of each session features a networking dinner and focused discussion.

Curriculum includes primarily articles and materials provided electronically. Some sessions had assigned reading prior to meeting—typically a book on leadership. Students went through an assessment to help the instructor and the students understand their styles, strengths, and potential deficiencies in key competencies. Students worked on tasks between sessions and were expected to do some journaling.

Each session is a crucial building block in developing the skills, awareness, and perspective of a true leader. Those signing up for the Acad-



Recent Leadership Academy graduates included, front row, left to right: Harlan Schmeling, Moose Lake Water & Light; Kyle Hills, Sioux Falls Municipal Light & Power; Chris Kerzman, Elk River Municipal Utilities; Christina Pierson, Central Municipal Power Agency/Services; Lori Jerpbak, Owatonna Public Utilities; Laureen Bodin and Jason Swanson, City of Buffalo. Back row, left to right: Aaron Erickson and Trent Schafer, Watertown Municipal Utilities; Matt Rynda, City of New Prague; Mike Vourlos, Shakopee Public Utilities; Paul Thompson, Hawley Public Utilities; Zheni Goodrich, Detroit Lakes Public Utilities; Steven Lyseng, Fosston Municipal Utilities; Michele Peterson, City of Lanesboro; Troy Timm, Anoka Municipal Utility and Kent Myers, Instructor.

emy need to be committed to attending each session, in the order presented.

Total program cost is \$3,600 (members)/\$4,800 (non-members).

Primary instructor for the Academy is Kent Myers, Managing Partner of VISION Companies. Myers has over 25 years of experience providing strategic visioning, operational effectiveness, and tech-

nology alignment consulting services to global companies. He has a decade of experience in working with Minnesota municipal utilities on leadership and culture development and strategic visioning. In addition to his extensive consulting practice, Myers is a guest lecturer at the Harvard Business School.

In addition, some sessions

feature guest speakers who have been through their own journey of adversity and triumph and have expertise in that session's leadership topic.

There is a new group starting in 2022. Two spots are currently open.

MMUA will offer three partial scholarships to applicants from member utilities serv-

ing 2,500 customers or fewer. Each scholarship will reduce the cost of the program by \$900. Scholarships will be awarded to eligible students on a first-come, first-served basis. A member utility will be eligible for a scholarship for only one student at a time.

Questions can be directed to Rita Kelly. Her email address is rkelly@mmua.org



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Stepping Into Leadership comes to the forefront as final group graduates from Firstline Supervision

The final group of students graduated from MMUA's long-running Firstline Supervision program Oct. 19.

The group included: Jake Lipski, Brent Yaunick, Jon Engholm and Charlie Gammone of Brainerd Public Utilities, Jennie Frank of Sauk Centre Public Utilities, Matthew Griebel of Shakopee Public Utilities, Erik Sandler of Delano Municipal Utilities,

Shawn Nelson of Marshall Municipal Utilities, Timothy Berg of Princeton Public Utilities, Jason Halvorson of Redwood Falls Public Utilities, Jake Perdue of Owatonna Public Utilities, Darren Gifferson of Madelia Municipal Light & Power, John Goulet of Benson Municipal Utilities, Aaron DuChene of New Ulm Public Utilities, Sam Jones of Missouri River En-

ergy Services, Scott Simondet of Saint Peter Municipal Electric Utility, Mitch Mayer of the City of Prior Lake and Reed Barthel of Wadena Electric & Water.

MMUA introduced Stepping Into Leadership this year, replacing the legacy FirstLine Supervision program.

Stepping Into Leadership is designed for both supervisors and leaders in your organization who aim to improve their leadership and supervisory tools and skills. The program focuses on self, team, and organizational leadership skills and behaviors. The full program will have 54 hours of instruction scheduled over an 18-month period in a mix of in-person and virtual courses.

Instructors include Dana Haagenson and Steve Wischmann.

Haagenson spent over a decade in the software industry. As a college professor at M State, she teaches in the areas of Human Resources and Accounting.

Wischmann is the owner of Horizon Performance Solutions, LLC, a leadership and organizational development consulting company. He retired at the rank of Captain after three decades of military service in the U.S. Coast Guard and has an M.A. in Public Policy and Management.



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Handful of municipal projects listed on MISO's latest transmission planning list

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator's (MISO) Planning Advisory Committee voted 6-3 to recommend to its board of directors a planned \$3 billion expansion of the region's transmission system on Oct. 13. The action was part of an annual MISO process.

Of the 295 projects listed on a September MISO Transmission Expansion Plan (MTEP) Projects Under Evaluation spreadsheet, 41 are completely in Minnesota and two others partially affect the state. Municipal projects are on the list.

Projects typically include

substation work, line upgrades and new lines. Other costs include transformer work, voltage devices and other investments. While most of the projects involve big industry players there are some municipally-led projects on the list.

Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (parent company of Central Minnesota Power Agency Services) has three projects listed, all involving Blue Earth Light & Water (BELW).

BELW is a transmission owner. All three of its MTEP projects involve transmission voltage of 69,000 volts or

above. The projects include:

Replacement of the 69/12.47 kV Rice Street transformer. The 28-year-old transformer carries almost 60 percent of BELW load. Project cost is estimated at \$1.25 million.

The West substation includes a 10/14 MVA, 69/12.47 transformer, which is 32 years old and showing signs of age. Replacement cost is estimated at \$1.25 million.

A new North East 69/12.27 substation is also listed. This was identified as a system need following an engineering study. Estimated price

tag is \$2.75 million.

Tim Stoner, BELW general manager, said reliability is a major goal of BELW. If it loses either of the substation transformers on the list it couldn't carry the city's electrical load without generating electricity from its own power plant.

Another municipal project on the list involves Missouri River Energy Services, and is listed as adding a breaker to the Worthington substation.

The 2022 MTEP was supported by most, but not all, of the various subcommittees

involved in the process, according to reports. State Regulatory, Public Consumer and End-Use sectors abstained from the vote. Supporting the plan were: Environmental, Independent Power Producers, Municipal/Cooperative/Transmission Dependent Utilities, Transmission Owners and Transmission Developers. The Power Marketers section did not respond to the email vote.

The full MISO board is expected to address the plan in December.

Associate

Member News

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Director of Agency and Government Relations

Southern Minnesota
Municipal Power Agency
http://www.smma.com
Rochester, Minnesota

The Director of Agency & Government Relations directs and manages the Agency's efforts to build and enhance Agency relationships with member utilities and external entities. The Director assists the Executive Director & CEO in the development and implementation of policies, procedures, products, and strategic initiatives to fulfill the Agency's goals and objectives. In addition to developing and managing relationships with members, legislators, legislative leadership, regulators and governmental agency staff, the Director also oversees communications, demand-side management initiatives, administrative services, and non-operations center computer systems. The Director is expected to work as part of a team in an open, participatory, and sharing environment and possess proven abilities in empowering, mentoring, and developing direct reports.

Desired Education and Experience:

- Bachelor's degree in relevant field or equivalent combination of education and experience.
 - Ten or more years of utility experience with a comprehension of the "big picture" of public utility operations is required.
 - Five or more years of supervisory/management experience is required.
 - Knowledge and understanding of development and implementation of business/marketing plans, demand-side management modeling and program implementation, public/legislative/regulatory relations, account management, computer systems and software.
 - Excellent verbal and written communication skills are required.
 - Knowledge of finance, engineering, management, and contract negotiations is preferred.
 - An advanced degree in a related field is preferred.
- A successful candidate will offer measurable accomplishments in public, legislative, and regulatory relations arenas. The individual will be expected to become the "face"

See top of next page please

Professional Services Directory

continued from previous page

of the Agency and a trusted advisor in a variety of political, regulatory and industry forums (i.e., Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) and Minnesota Division of Energy Resources (DER), American Public Power Association (APPA), peer utilities, member utilities, city government, and other industry associations). The Agency provides a competitive salary and a full complement of fringe benefits, including reasonable, customary costs associated with relocation. Please email resumes to the contact shown below by December 30, 2021. Questions or inquiries should be addressed to: Sandra K. Feehan (sk.feehan@smmpa.org), Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, 500 First Avenue SW; Rochester, MN 55902

Regional Safety Coordinator/Job Training & Safety Instructor

Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association is accepting applications for Regional Safety Coordinator/Job Training & Safety Instructor. This position will serve as safety coordinator for a group of cities and public power electric utilities located in South Dakota and Western Minnesota. Duties of this position include identifying, developing and delivering training and ensuring compliance with regulatory and safety standards. Applicants must possess a strong background in OSHA/safety compliance and solid teaching skills. Safety professionals having technical line-worker skills are an advantage but not required. Travel required. Salary DOE. EEO. Please submit resume and cover letter to: Mike Willetts, MMUA, 3131 Fernbrook Lane N., Suite 200, Plymouth MN 55447

Regional Safety Coordinator

Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association is accepting applications for Regional Safety Coordinator. This position will serve as safety coordinator for a group of cities and public power electric utilities located in the East Central part of Minnesota. Duties of this position include identifying, developing and delivering training and ensuring compliance with regulatory and safety standards. Applicants must possess a strong background in OSHA/safety compliance and solid teaching skills. Travel required. Salary DOE. EEO. Send resume and cover letter to: Mike Willetts, MMUA, 3131 Fernbrook

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Maintenance Mechanic II

Hutchinson Utilities Commission (HUC) is seeking qualified applicants for a Maintenance Mechanic II for our municipally owned utility. The position repairs/maintains all turbines and reciprocating engines, cuts/installs piping, assists with cleaning and repairs of boilers and other related equipment, replaces/repairs valves, and additional duties. Requires two-year degree in power plant maintenance technician or relevant mechanical/technical field and 2 to 4 years related experience, or equivalent of other education and work experience as

deemed appropriate by HUC. Application deadline is December 27, 2021. Position description and the required HUC application packet are available at Hutchinson Utilities Commission, 225 Michigan St. SE and the City of Hutchinson, 111 Hassan St. SE, Hutchinson, MN 55350, or on the following websites: www.hutchinsonutilities.com and www.ci.hutchinson.mn.us. Questions can be directed to Angie Radke, Administrative Coordinator via e-mail at aradke@hutchinsonmn.gov, or by telephone at 320-234-0501.

For a complete listing, see the News/Classifieds section of www.mmua.org

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1 www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes499051.htm | 2 www.bls.gov/oes/2017/may/oes499052.htm
3 www.bls.gov/oes/2017/may/oes472152.htm

T&O Conference rescheduled to Jan. 18-20

With a pivotal member of its staff testing positive for COVID directly following a two-day all-staff meeting Dec. 2-3, MMUA was forced to postpone its annual Technical & Operations (T&O) Conference Dec. 7-9 in St. Cloud.

“This is frustrating, but the health and safety of our members is the most important

consideration,” said Karleen Kos, MMUA’s CEO. The T&O is the Association’s second-largest meeting each year.

MMUA regrets the inconvenience and looks forward to seeing its members once again at a rescheduled event, Jan. 18-20, 2022.

Electrical Distribution Design Workshop

January 11-13
MMUA Office, Plymouth

T&O Conference

January 18-20
Best Western Plus Kelly Inn, St. Cloud

Rodeo Clinic

January 19-20
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

Emergency Preparedness & Restoration Conference

January 25-26
Holiday Inn, St. Cloud

Legislative Conference

February 8-9
DoubleTree Hotel, St. Paul

Meter School & Pre-Conference

February 22-25
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

Electrical Skills Training for Water/Wastewater Operators

February 16-17
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

Substation School

April 5-7
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

Generation School

April 19-21
Hutchinson

Underground School

May 10-13
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

Competent Person/Excavation Safety

May 24-25
MMUA Training Center, Marshall



Minnesota Public Power Walleye Tournament

June 4
Rush Lake, Otter Tail

Annual Summer Conference

August 22-24
Madden’s Resort, Brainerd

Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo

September 13
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

Overhead School

September 13-16
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

Cross Training School

October 11-13
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

Tree Trimming Workshop

October 18-20
Brainerd Public Utilities, Brainerd

Technical & Operations Conference

December 6-8
Best Western Plus Kelly Inn, St. Cloud

Transformer School & Pre-Conference

December 13-16
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

Note: calendar subject to change

MMUA Leadership Academy

MMUA Office, Plymouth
March 16-17
May 18-19
September 21-22
November 16-17

Stepping Into Leadership

Groups meet monthly.
For more, see our website at www.mmua.org/events/schools/stepping-into-leadership

National Events to Note:

APPA Legislative Rally
February 28 - March 2
Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C.

Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo
March 26
Austin, Texas

APPA E&O Conference
March 27-30
Austin, Texas

APPA National Conference
June 10-15
Nashville, Tennessee

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Upcoming Events

Emergency Preparedness & Restoration Conference

January 25-26, Holiday Inn, St. Cloud

Engage with other utility and city professionals in active discussion and idea sharing on this important topic. This is the ideal venue to increase your understanding of best practices, gain valuable insight to improve your effectiveness in an emergency, and develop or deepen relationships with fellow industry professionals. You must be an MMUA member to attend. Register by Dec. 19 for best rate.



Legislative Conference

February 8-9, DoubleTree Hotel, St. Paul

The 2022 Legislative Session promises to be an exciting time at the State Capitol. Distributing billions of dollars of federal funding, a bonding bill that has in excess of \$5 billion worth of requests, and completing issues carried forward from 2021 are just some of the important matters with which the Legislature will be dealing.

MMUA’s Legislative Conference provides an important opportunity for MMUA members to remind legislators of the important role municipal utilities play across the State and the issues important to them and their customers. And after a nearly two-year hiatus, we are planning on in-person meetings and social time with legislators.

Electrical Skills Training for Water/Wastewater Operators

February 16-17, MMUA Training Center, Marshall

This supplemental training for water/wastewater operators and support staff can help non-electricians improve skills and gain competency. This workshop includes classroom and hands-on instruction/demonstration. Lead instructor for this workshop is Tim Anderson, a Marshall Municipal Utilities (MMU) Electronics Technician. He has extensive experience with electric motor repair/rewinding, telecommunications, fiber optic splicing, industrial process controls, as well as wiring of residential, commercial and industrial buildings.

Basic Metering Pre-Conference and Meter School

Feb. 22-23 & Feb. 23-25, MMUA Training Center, Marshall

These are our annual opportunities to get hands-on meter training. The Pre-Conference is an ideal introductory or refresher course. Meter School offers tracks for Basic/Intermediate or Advanced. Instructors include Larry Chapman and staff from Chapman Metering, John Pollard of TSTM, Inc. and Scott Murfield and Bruce Westergaard of MMUA.

Register by Jan. 16 for best rate!

