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Xcel plan envisions new utility business model IRP seeks transition to more 'customer-centric, sustainable framework'

Xcel Energy filed its 2016-2030 Integrated Resource Plan Jan. 2 with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. Under the plan, Xcel would more than double its renewable energy portfolio.

Perhaps more significantly, the plan is based on a new utility business model and regulatory compact. How changes to regulation of the state's largest utility would affect municipal utilities is unclear, but could be significant. The Xcel plan, anticipating public policy directives, reduces carbon emissions from 2005 levels—a 30 percent reduction by 2020 and a 40 percent reduction by 2030.

Carbon reductions would be achieved by:

- Adding 600 megawatts of wind by 2020 and 1,200 megawatts by 2030, bringing total wind power on Xcel Energy's Upper Midwest system to over 3,600 megawatts;

- Adding 187 megawatts of large-scale solar energy by the end of 2016 and an additional 1,700 megawatts of large-scale solar and 500 megawatts of customer-driven small-scale solar—such as rooftop solar panels and solar gardens—bringing total solar power on the company's Upper Midwest system to about 2,400 megawatts;

- Operating the carbon-free, baseload Monticello and Prairie Island nuclear plants through their current licenses, which begin expiring in 2030; and

- Gradually decreasing reliance on Units 1 and 2 at Sherburne County (Sherco) Generating Plant through 2030.

"Our resource plan proposes nation-leading carbon emission reductions and renewable energy integration," said Chris Clark, president of Northern States Power Co.-Minnesota, an Xcel Energy company. "It charts a course to

cost-effectively meet and exceed the carbon, renewable energy and energy efficiency requirements of the states we serve in the Upper Midwest."

The resource plan will also be filed in North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Michigan.

Clark said the resource plan should be viewed in the context of the e21 Initiative Phase I Report: *Charting a Path to a 21st Century Energy System in Minnesota*, and Xcel Energy's request to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to discuss a potential roadmap for advancing the e21 vision.

Minnesota e21 Initiative

The Great Plains Institute, beginning in February 2014, convened a group including Xcel, Minnesota Power, Center for Energy and Environment, En-

Xcel: see page 4 please

Duerr bolsters government relations team

Amanda Duerr has joined MMUA as a government relations representative.

Duerr was most recently employed as a lobbyist with Flaherty & Hood, where she started in August 2012.



Duerr

At the firm, she represented a number of clients—including the Coalition of Utility Cities, Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities and the U.S. Highway 14 Partnership—before the state legislature and regulatory agencies.

She developed legislative strategy, a media program and grassroots outreach efforts to advance her clients' priorities, and also prepared advocacy materials, research reports, committee testimony, legislative and regulatory agency correspondence and media releases.

Duerr, a North Branch native with ties to east central Minnesota, has significant political experience. She worked for Senate Research from 2006 to 2011, where she served as a resource for various committees.

Prior to that she worked as a Senate legislative assistant.

Duerr is a University of Minnesota-Morris graduate with a degree in Political Science and Management.

Warren faces challenges; strides into brighter future

by Steve Downer

Recent decades have been full of challenges for Warren, Minnesota, but reasons for optimism now abound.

Warren, the county seat of Marshall County in northwest Minnesota, had a population of 1,563 in 2012, down 6.9 percent from 2000. And previous to that, about 20 percent of the population was lost between 1980 and 2000.

The city straddles the winding Snake River. Major floods, typically occurring in spring because of heavy rain and snowmelt, punctuate the city's history. Recent floods include 1996 (twice) and 1997.

A four-mile floodway channel, complete with a 550-acre impoundment, now surrounds Warren on the east and south sides, directing excess water around the city and back to the river. The floodway, completed in 2010, was a partnership between the city, the watershed district and the Minnesota DNR.

The floodway has saved local property owners significantly on flood insurance, and gave business the confidence to invest again in Warren. In 2014, the city issued \$14 million in building permits, including an expansion at the CHS Ag Services elevator, and a new hospital and assisted living facility.

Along with being the county seat, Warren is home of the Warren-Alvarado-Oslo school district.



Shannon Mortenson has been a part of several significant developments during her time as Warren city administrator-clerk treasurer.

The district has one six-year high school and one elementary school, both located in Warren. Enrollment is increasing.

"With the new hospital, good school and good overall infrastructure, the city has a lot to market and a lot to grow off of," noted a recent city newsletter. "We are excited for the possibilities."

Shannon Mortenson is the Warren city administrator-clerk treasurer. She previously was clerk-treasurer a half hour up the road in Kennedy, where she worked for 11 years. A number of significant changes have been made in Warren during her five years

there.

Some of these changes involve the municipal electric utility.

Jeff Wohlers is the public works working superintendent. He oversees the electric, water, natural gas, wastewater, streets, garbage, pool and campground.

For many years, the electric department had constant turnover. It seemed the city would no sooner train a person than they would leave for higher wages elsewhere. Having a rural electric cooperative headquartered a few blocks away from the city shop made

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Electric generating sector sheds jobs, according to latest federal statistics

from the federal Energy Information Administration

The electric power generation sector lost more than 5,800 jobs from January 2011 through June 2014 despite a gain of nearly 1,800 non-hydro renewable electricity generation jobs, according to the latest data available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

Jobs involved in the construction of new facilities, processing or transportation of fuels, or behind-the-meter distributed generation installations and service (e.g., solar panel installers) were not counted by BLS as jobs in the electric power sector.

The overall decline in electric power generation jobs coincides with a period in which the United States has seen declining year-over-year electricity sales, driven by energy efficiency improvements, and growth in distributed generation, such as behind-the-meter rooftop solar, among other factors. Additionally, the growth in

some types of non-hydro renewable generation, particularly wind and solar, brings relatively few ongoing operations and maintenance jobs.

Fossil fuels. Recent coal plant closures, which were partially offset by new natural gas capacity additions, drove the net decline of 1,750 fossil fuel power generation jobs since 2011. While BLS does not break out the jobs category by fuel, the operations of the new natural gas power plants are less labor intensive than those of the older coal plants that are being displaced.

Nuclear. Nuclear power facilities have shed more than 4,900 jobs since 2011. Most of the nuclear generation job losses occurred since January 2013, and are attributable to reactor closures at three locations.

Renewables. BLS first provided separate data series for renewable generation job categories in 2011. All four categories of non-hydro renewables have seen gains in

power generation jobs since 2011. Solar has led the way, with the number of jobs related to the operation of solar generation installations in the electric power sector more than tripling in that timeframe. Although wind jobs have grown at a slower rate than solar since 2011,

increasing 16 percent, there are still more than twice as many wind jobs as solar jobs in the electric power sector.

Renewables jobs are more geographically concentrated than fossil fuel jobs, corresponding to the location of renewable generation capacity. California is home to the

most solar, geothermal, and biomass jobs, and the second-most wind jobs behind Texas. Employment at hydroelectric generators fell six percent over this time, but it was still more than double that of all other non-hydro renewable generation employment.

Austin Utilities announces closure of Northeast Plant

AUSTIN, Minn. — The Austin Utilities Board of Commissioners at its Dec. 9, 2014 board meeting set a goal of decommissioning the Northeast (NE) Power Plant beginning in June of 2016. The action was taken based on the Austin Utilities staff report *Austin Utilities Power Supply & Resource Plan*. The Board also voted to continue operating the NE Power Plant and to sell the capacity of the plant through May of 2016. Austin staff will begin negotiating to sell the available capacity into the electric market.

Many factors led up to

these decisions, including inefficiencies of the plant, low electric market prices and local upgrades that have significantly reduced the potential need for the NE Plant. Ultimately, the Board of Commissioners determined it was in the best interest of the customers to move forward with decommissioning the Plant. Discontinuing operation of the Plant from Austin Utilities power supply portfolio is not expected to impact customer rates.

The NE Power Plant is a 30 Megawatt power generating facility commissioned in 1971. The NE Plant was fueled predominately with coal until 2012 when the Austin Utilities Board of Commissioners set direction to eliminate the burning of coal, and move to natural gas in an effort to meet future environ-

mental regulation requirements and reduce operating costs. Austin Utilities currently obtains nearly all its electric needs from Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA) through an agreement that is set to expire in 2030.

Austin Utilities will continue to monitor the *Austin Utilities Power Supply & Resource Plan* and update the plan as future industry and local utility operations change.

Austin Utilities is a municipal utility serving approximately 12,300 electric customers, 10,300 natural gas customers, and 9,000 water customers. Its mission is to offer utility products and services in a safe, reliable and responsible manner in order to enhance the quality of life in its community.



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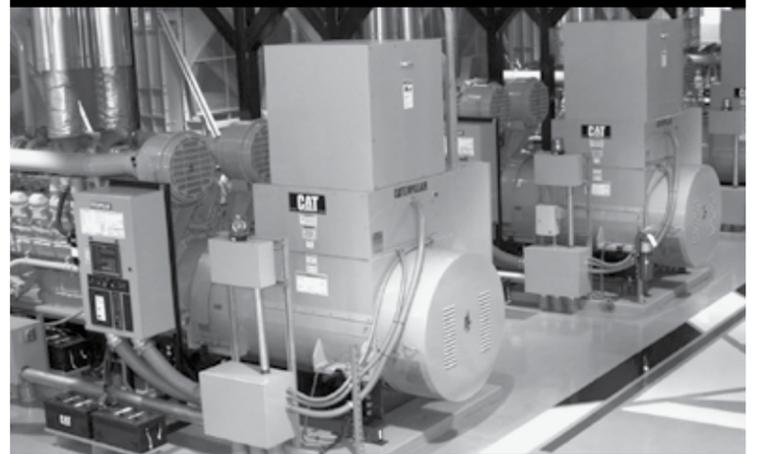
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EPA's proposed 'Clean Power Plan' raises serious concerns across the country

The American Public Power Association and several other organizations have voiced a range of concerns in comments submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency about its proposed rule, known as the 'Clean Power Plan,' which seeks to regulate carbon dioxide emissions under Section 111(d) of the Clean Air Act.

APPA agrees that the electricity sector needs to reduce CO2 emissions, but cautions against the dangers of the proposed rule trying to do too much too quickly.

If implemented in its current form, EPA's proposed rule, which was issued in June 2014, will, among other things, create economic inefficiency, impose additional costs on electricity customers and force risky over-reliance on a single fuel—natural gas—to generate electricity, APPA said.

APPA urged the EPA to withdraw the proposed rule, revise it, and re-propose it. If the agency moves ahead with the rule as drafted, APPA recommended a number of revisions to improve the rule's workability and affordability, while still continuing to reduce CO2 emissions.

"This rule, as proposed, aims to make unprecedented changes to the way energy will be generated and used in this country," said APPA President and CEO Sue Kelly. "These changes will ripple over the next several decades, so they must be made carefully and collaboratively. In our comments, we've laid out constructive changes to make the proposed rule more likely to work in the real world and fulfill its intended

Washington Report



purpose."

APPA said in its comments that the proposed rule's requirements go beyond what is legally permissible under Section 111(d) of the Clean Air Act, and conflict with the authority of other federal, state, and local government entities.

APPA is highly skeptical about EPA's assertion that while electricity costs will rise due to compliance with the proposal, consumers will see only 'negligible' increases in their actual bills after 2020 and could even see a decrease.

APPA believes the EPA has relied too heavily on optimistic assumptions on key elements—the price of natural gas; the ability of utilities and system operators to dispatch natural gas units at significantly higher capacity factors; the availability in some states of viable, economic, renewable energy resources; and the rate at which new energy efficiency programs can be implemented.

"For EPA to assert that the electric utility industry can achieve a 30 percent reduction in CO2 emissions and also lower consumers' electricity bills by 2030 recalls the adage that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't true," APPA said.

Meanwhile, 17 attorneys general noted in Nov. 26 comments filed at the EPA that the proposed plan has numerous legal defects, each

of which provides "an independent basis to invalidate the rule in its entirety."

EPA's proposal "attempts to use the Clean Air Act to override states' energy policies and impose a national energy and resource-planning policy that picks winners and losers based solely on EPA's policy choices, forcing states to favor renewable energy sources and demand-reduction measures over fossil fuel-fired electric production," the attorneys general said in their comments.

"But the Clean Air Act generally and Section 111(d) specifically do not give EPA that breathtakingly broad authority to reorganize states' economies," they added.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation and some regional reliability organizations highlighted the potential reliability impacts of the proposed rule.

NERC in early November issued an initial reliability review of EPA's proposed plan. NERC examined the assumptions made in the four "building blocks" referenced by EPA in its proposal.

The four building blocks make up the best system of CO2 emission reductions under the Clean Air Act, according to EPA. The blocks are: make fossil fuel power plants more efficient (by increasing heat rates); make more use of lower-emitting power sources (natural gas combined-cycle units); use more zero- and low-emitting power sources (nuclear and renewables); and use electricity more efficiently.

NERC said that it identified sever-

al factors "as requiring additional reliability consideration." For example, the review notes that the proposed plan aims to lower CO2 emissions from existing power plants to 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

But the number of estimated retirements identified in the EPA's proposed rule "may be conservative if the assumptions prove to be unachievable," NERC said. "Developing suitable replacement generation resources to maintain adequate reserve margin levels may represent a significant reliability challenge, given the constrained time period for implementation."

The Western Electricity Coordinating Council recommended that the EPA offer adequate time to identify reliability implications of proposed state compliance plans. NERC delegated some of its authority to create, monitor and enforce reliability standards to WECC through a delegation agreement.

WECC said that the EPA should allow at least 180 days following the filing of state compliance plans for NERC, WECC, and other reliability entities to concurrently evaluate the potential reliability impacts of those plans.

Grid operators are also worried about the reliability implications of the EPA proposal. The Electric Reliability Council of Texas said in a November report that, to meet the plan's interim goal, would "likely lead to reduced grid reliability for certain periods and an increase in localized grid challenges."

APGA addresses end-of-year issues at FERC, including gas-electric coordination

from the American Public Gas Association (APGA)

At the end of 2014, there were several actions of importance related to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) of interest to public natural gas systems.

First, on Dec. 16, the Senate unanimously confirmed the President's nomination of Colette D. Honorable to serve as a Commissioner at FERC for a term that would expire on June 30, 2017. Honorable fills the vacancy created by the departure of Commissioner John Norris who left FERC on August 20. Honor-

able served on the Arkansas Public Service Commission since 2007, was chief of staff for the state's attorney general, and also has served as president of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners.

APGA sent a letter to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in support of Honorable's nomination.

APGA meets with the FERC commissioners twice a year as a means to communicate information and positions on federal regulatory matters of concern to public

gas systems. APGA leadership last met with the FERC commissioners in early December. These meetings play a critical role in APGA's advocacy efforts as they have allowed APGA to develop and maintain a relationship with the commissioners.

In other FERC related news, on Nov. 26, APGA filed comments with FERC in response to a notice of proposed rulemaking (NOPR) on gas-electric coordination. In March, FERC approved a NOPR on gas-electric coordination that proposes, among other things, to: move

the start of the gas day from its current 9:00 a.m. CST to 4:00 a.m. CST; move the timely nomination deadline from 11:30 a.m. CST to 1:00 p.m. CST; and, provide four standard intraday nomination cycles at 8:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 4:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. with the last intraday cycle remaining a no-bump cycle. The move in the start of the gas day time is being driven by some in the electricity sector who want more time to meet the morning ramp-up period and flexibility to revise their nominations as needed by dispatch require-

ments. This issue has major significance on public natural gas system since any changes to the start of the gas day will have both direct and in-direct costs associated with it.

In its comments, APGA states that efforts to improve gas-electric coordination should not result in unintended adverse consequences such as shifting risks/costs among shippers or degrading services to other pipeline shippers. APGA's comments also strongly communicate the association's concerns regarding the direct and in-direct costs, with no apparent benefits, that will be imposed upon public gas systems as a result of the change in the start of the gas daytime imposed by the NOPR. To drive home the cost impacts, attached to APGA's comments are several affidavits from APGA members that directly communicate the anticipated costs that will be imposed upon their system. Examples of costs that would be in-

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APGA: see next page please

MMUA convenes group to study common municipal approach to solar

Is solar power a threat or an opportunity for municipal utilities?

The fact is, it could be either. With that in mind, MMUA has convened a group of members in an effort to further develop the municipal approach to solar. The end goal? Turn solar into a win-win for municipal utilities and their customers.

The initial meeting of the MMUA Solar-DG Task Force was Nov. 21 at the MMUA office.

Dave Berg of Dave Berg Consulting led the group through a discussion of rates. Jim Losleben of tenKsolar talked about solar demonstration projects. Steve Thompson and Chris Kopel of Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (CMMPA) analyzed various solar strategies.

The CMMPA analysis concluded that DG/Solar poses a potential financial threat to municipal utilities and that adopting a passive approach will result in acceptance of the negative consequences. Alternatively,

taking a more pro-active or defensive approach to DG/Solar could potentially result in the strategic/financial benefits.

In developing a strategic response to DG/Solar, a 'high level' cost of service analysis is needed to help develop a better quantitative understanding of the potential differences in the financial impacts of different strategies.

After discussion and a review of strategies a task list was developed. The following tasks were identified by the Solar/DG Task Force as essential in developing the municipal approach to solar.

- Education. The task force will develop educational materials regarding solar aimed at three distinct audiences: customers; municipal electric utilities; legislators and regulators.

- Model ordinance. The task force will work on developing a model ordinance for distributed solar instal-

lations that includes the appropriate elements to protect the public interest.

- Interconnection agreement. The task force will develop a model interconnection agreement.

- Technical requirements. The task force will prepare a set of technical specifications and requirements for distributed solar installations to ensure that they will not present a danger to: The home or business owner; utility personnel, firefighters, contractors, and others who must work around the solar installation; and the public.

- Demonstration projects. The task force will encourage and work to facilitate municipal utility solar demonstration projects, particularly with Minnesota-made solar collectors.

- Costs. The task force will conduct financial research on costs.

- Rate design. The task force will develop educational materials regarding rate design alternatives to

use with small solar installations to ensure that the utility recovers its costs.

Task force members include: Alex Bumgardner of Austin Utilities; Tony Ward of Grand Rapids Public Utilities, Bill Schwandt of Moorhead Public Service, Chris Kopel and Steve Thompson of CMMPA, Dave Meyer of Glencoe Light and Power, Dan Boyce of East Grand Forks Water & Light, Mark Fritsch and Jared Hendricks of Owatonna Public Utilities, Jeff Peters of Missouri River Energy Services, Joe Steffel of Buffalo Municipal Utilities, Larry Johnson and Mark Mitchell of Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, Mark Nibaur of Austin Utilities, Darryl Tvietbakk of the Northern Municipal Power Agency, Toby Saxon of the City of Chaska Electric Department, Troy Adams of Elk River Municipal Utilities, Wally Schlink of RPU, Jack Kegel, Bill Black, Bob Jagusch and Steve Downer of MMUA.

Xcel:

continued from front page

ergy Systems Consulting Services, George Washington University Law School, and other stakeholders to map out a transition of the

Minnesota regulatory model in Minnesota, "to develop a more customer-centric and sustainable framework."

The executive summary of the report begins with this statement: "A growing and fundamental misalignment exists between the tradi-

tional utility business model (and the regulatory framework that supports it), and the realities of today's marketplace and Minnesota's public policy goals."

Some of the e21 Recommendations, which were released in a December 2014 report, are:

- Allow a multi-year, performance-based regulatory framework for utilities that wish to opt-in.

- Revise Minnesota statutes to allow utilities that opt into a multi-year, performance-based framework to replace the current Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) with a 15-year (or longer) Integrated Resource Analysis (IRA) that guides the utility business plan;

- Encourage the use of pilot programs or other methods for testing and evaluating

components of a multi-year, performance-based framework, and establish clear methods for determining the value of grid services and DER services.

- The Commission should review and adjust time-varying rates for energy services so that they send more accurate and effective price signals.

- Enable innovative product and service options and technologies by revising Minnesota statutes and regulations, specifically including options for energy-intensive trade-exposed industries.

- The Commission and Department of Commerce should use their existing authorities to achieve e21 Principles and Outcomes;

and review and recommend revisions to their authorities where needed.

- The Minnesota Legislature should appropriate the resources necessary for the Commission and the Department to implement e21's recommendations.

- Develop a transparent, forward-looking, integrated process for modernizing the grid.

- Identify and develop opportunities to reduce customer costs by improving overall grid efficiency.

"In light of the evolution occurring in our industry, we believe a comparable evolution in the regulatory and utility business model is necessary if this vision is to be achieved," Clark said.

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APGA:

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curred include the hiring and training of additional personnel to be in the office at a 4:00 a.m. gas day start time to manage scheduling and ensure that the system stays in balance.

In addition to APGA's comments, APGA also joined comments filed by the Natural Gas Council (The Natural Gas Council is made up of the: American Gas Association, America's Natural Gas Alliance, the Independent Petroleum Association of America, the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, and the Natural Gas Supply Association) to demonstrate to the Commission a united gas industry that supports retaining the 9 a.m. Gas Day start time.

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The city of Chaska Electric Department celebrated its 125th birthday on December 20, 2014. On that date in 1889, the City Council adopted a resolution calling for a special election to consider the sale of \$7,000 in bonds to finance the construction of a municipal power plant. Following a vote, electricity within the community was born. Shortly after, Chaska residents were the first in the area to have the modern convenience of electricity. After 125 years, the goals of the Chaska Electric department remain: to provide safe and reliable power to the residents and businesses of Chaska.

The city of Windom Municipal Utility has started replacing high pressure sodium street lights with light emitting diode (LED) lights. So far, the utility has replaced lights in an industrial park and is working to replace lights along highways through the city. It will likely be several years before all the street lights in the city are replaced. Payback on the new lights is anticipated to be six years.

The Hibbing City Council recently approved the local Public Utilities Commission's plan to borrow \$3.4 million to install gas burners in existing boilers. When installed, the gas burners will help curb emissions at the power plant by better drying wood for easier burning.

The Commission approved a two percent rate increase for 2015 for electric, water and steam customers. The increase is the first since 2009 and will help deal with increased wholesale power costs.

The Grand Marais Public Utilities Commission has increased rates two percent for 2015. The increase will apply to electric, water

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and wastewater bills. The commission also approved a donation to a local group promoting a class geared toward installers of solar electric systems.

The Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission has received a consultant's recommendation calling for a 4.5 percent increase in electric rates and a 20 percent increase in water rates. The last cost of service study performed for the utility was in 2008. When taken together, the increases are expected to result in rates that remain competitive with neighboring communities.

Electric and water capital improvement plans are significant and reportedly reflect several years of deferred projects.

The Hutchinson City Council Dec. 9 held a public hearing on a \$1.47 million proposal to install 400-kilowatts of solar power at the city wastewater treatment plant. The city has secured a \$958,000 grant from Xcel Energy to pay for two-thirds of the cost.

Former City of Arlington and Sibley County administrator Matt Jaunich has been hired as the new Hutchinson City Administrator. Jaunich was an economic development intern at the city in 2001 and 2002.

A rate increase sought by the Ely Public Utilities Commission was approved by the city council in December. Sewer charges will jump by 10 percent, water rates by 20 cents per 100 cubic feet and electric customers will see a four percent increase. Minimizing the increase on customer bills is the elimination of a \$75,000 franchise fee the city had formerly



The City of Windom Municipal Utility is replacing high pressure sodium street lights with LEDs.

levied on customer bills.

The recommendations came from the utility rates committee, which put together a long-range forecast that includes projected rates and budgets extending to 2021.

Long-term capital projects and maintaining sufficient reserves are factored into the budget, along with increased wholesale power costs.

The Worthington Public Utilities Commission approved an electric rate increase for 2015. On average, residential customers will see a nine to 11 percent increase, commercial customers six to 10 percent and industrial customers a six to eight percent increase, depending on use. Increased wholesale power cost is driving the increase.

A 1.5 percent increase in wholesale power plus a 19 percent jump in transmission charges is leading to increased electric rates in Adrian. It would take a 6.2 percent increase to cover the increased costs, but, due to a number of economies an overall 3.5 percent increase has been approved. From 2005 to 2014, the utility's total purchased power costs increased 112.54 percent.

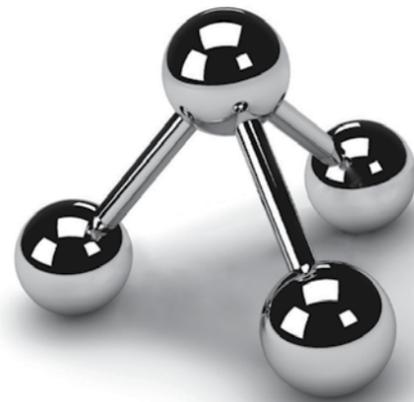
The city of Peterson has adopted a water service line ownership policy, which identifies the property owner as owner of service lines, from the curb stop to the premise. The city, with rates significantly lower than surrounding suppliers and significant work in the offing, is considering an electric rate increase in 2015.

Elementary students in Springfield in December were treated to a presentation on electricity and electric generation. War of the Currents—the Fight for our Electrical Future was presented by the Bakken Museum of Minneapolis.

tric rate increase, largely in response to a projected 2016 increase in wholesale rates. No charge to water or natural gas rates is expected.

Austin Utilities worked with the solar installer course at Riverland Community College to build an electric vehicle charging station at a downtown city parking lot. The station will be able to charge two cars at once. The \$20,000 project was 75 percent funded through grants and donations from the Hormel Foundation and Clean Energy Resource Teams.

The Owatonna Public Utilities Commission has approved a 1.5 percent elec-



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Thanks extended to MMUA's 2015 Annual Sponsors

MMUA tried something new for 2015—bundling a number of associate member opportunities into a sponsorship package.

We are pleased to report that the sponsorship idea was well received, and thank those associate members that signed on as an MMUA Sponsor.

The annual cost to become an annual MMUA sponsor is \$1,500.

The lengthy list of member benefits includes:

- Recognition as an MMUA Annual Sponsor on the new website
- Recognition as an MMUA Annual Sponsor on banners at MMUA events
- Recognition as an MMUA Annual Sponsor in MMUA publications
- A *Resource* newsletter ad
- A trade show table and



The logos of MMUA's 2015 sponsors are displayed above.

Work progresses on next generation MMUA website

two attendees for the show at either the Summer Conference or Technical and Operations Conference.

• Two meeting registrations at either the Summer Conference or T&O Conference.

The total value of the Resource ad, trade show table and meeting registrations is \$1,860, so the sponsorship package represents a solid value for the involved associate member.

With relevant municipal utility data to be integral to the new website (scheduled to debut soon) publication of the MMUA Directory will cease.

Questions and comments can be directed to Steve Downer at 763-746-0702 or email sdowner@mmua.org

MMUA staff and consultants continue to work on the new MMUA website. Our target date to go 'live' with the site is late January/early February.

The site enables you to sign-up for workshops online, purchase products, track attendance, and a variety of other functions relating to meeting attendance.

The MMUA database will be integral with the website. While this enables automating many functions, to fully experience the site's full functionality may require a bit of initial work on the part of members.

For example, website users may find it convenient to set up a profile. Individuals currently associated with all active Regular, Associate and Affiliate members can establish a profile and account.

MMUA will be able to accept credit card payments. Various goods and services can be placed in an online 'shopping cart' for purchase at one time. MMUA will still bill members, if they wish.

Members will be able to post classified ads directly, without going through an MMUA staff member.

The site will also better enable the use of other online tools to set-up discussions forums, etc.

Owatonna enrolls customers in water line protection program

Owatonna, Minn. - Owatonna Public Utilities will provide a new service to residential water customers starting in 2015. Owners of single family homes will have added protection against the cost of repairing or replacing a broken or frozen water service line starting January 1, 2015 with OPU's new Water Service Line Protection Program. Homeowners will be automatically enrolled in the program which will be offered free of charge from January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015 for all eligible customers.

Water service lines are

the property and responsibility of the homeowner and can be costly to repair when damaged. Aging pipes, harsh Minnesota winters, and ground shifts can cause unexpected damage to water service lines requiring repair or replacement. Repairing or replacing a damaged water service line often includes tearing up part of the street and sidewalk and can cost the homeowner upwards of \$3000.

OPU's Water Service Line Protection Program will cover the cost to repair or replace a damaged service line for protected customers. The

new program will also cover restoration or replacement of landscaping disturbed by the repair up to the property line. Landscaping restoration may include repairing the street, public sidewalk, curb, boulevard, and driveway approach in the public right of way. Landscaping restoration between the property line and the building will not be covered under the program.

Enrolled customers will also have the added protection to have a frozen service line thawed under the new program. "Last winter is still fresh on everyone's mind," said Roger Warehime, Director of Field Operations and External Management. "We received numerous reports of frozen service lines in town. Most were thawed without incident but customers with more stubborn lines reported service bills over \$500 for the extensive work. With the new program, customers will have the cost to thaw a frozen service covered once per year."

Owners of multi-family housing units may also qualify for the program and should contact OPU's Customer Service Department to verify eligibility and sign up for protection. To be eligible, the water service line must be one inch in diameter or less and provide water to a residential building.

Program participants will be charged a fee of \$1.99/month to be enrolled in the protection. During the free-trial period, January 1 and December 31, 2015, enrolled customers will receive a credit on their bill of \$1.99/

month, offsetting the charge. Automatically enrolled homeowners will start seeing this charge and corresponding credit on their January water bill and should contact OPU immediately to verify they are receiving protection if it does not appear.

Customers who wish to opt-out of the protection program may contact OPU's Customer Service Department or fill out the opt-out form in the program brochure included with their January bill.

OPU provides electric, water, and natural gas services in Owatonna.

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Warren:

continued from front page

competition for lineworkers a very real issue.

After some study of the electric fund benefits to the city, Mortenson made the recommendation, and the city council made the decision, to significantly increase the lineworker pay.

With that issue settled, the city in 2012 hired Brent McMillan, a journeyman lineman with 25 years of experience.

Another city employee, Tyler Jevne, had dreams of becoming a lineman, but with a family to take care of, going to work was a more realistic option than going to school. Jevne got his chance, however, when the city, knowing it needed a qualified person to help McMillan, asked Jevne if he was interested in working as an apprentice while also working his way through the Northwest Lineman College Lineworker Certification Program. He jumped at the chance. (As part of the program, MMUA staff provides hands-on training and facilitates tests.)

The temptation arises, from time to time, to ask the lineworkers to drive a snowplow, or perform some other duty. Mortenson said the city strives to keep McMillan and Jevne working on electric duties.

A good lineworker will want to focus on line work, she noted. And Warren wants good lineworkers.

There is always distribution system maintenance to perform. The city is also implementing electric demand metering.

Workers are at a premium in the area. Warren residents often work in Thief River Falls, Crookston or Grand Forks.

"If you're not working, you're choosing not to work," Mortenson said.

Lack of housing is a big issue. "If we had more, we could grow our community," she said. Private developers have not been interested in building.

The city offers a number of development incentives. City-owned lots purchased for new construction are sold on a deferred loan, which will convert to a grant upon completion of a home within one year. The city provides free electrical services to the site during construction and upon completion of construction, the owner will be provided with utility credit of \$2,000, and passes to a number of local amenities, including one year of free cable television.



Brent McMillan, left, and Tyler Jevne comprise the Warren electric line crew. McMillan is a journeyman; Jevne an apprentice.



The city of Warren issued building permits for \$14 million worth of projects in 2014, including an expansion at the CHS facility.

Incentives also exist for: new residents purchasing an existing home, new construction on a private lot, current residents purchasing an existing home as primary residence, and commercial developments.

The city recently hired

Grant Peterson as a deputy clerk, freeing up Mortenson to focus more on economic development. That can be difficult in any city, but the work done over the last few years in Warren certainly make further development a real possibility.



A new hospital and clinic lead the list of recent developments in the city of Warren.



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MMPA LeSueur plant named top renewable power plant by industry magazine

December 23, 2014 – The Minnesota Municipal Power Agency's "Hometown Bio-Energy" anaerobic digestion plant in Le Sueur has been recognized as a "2014 Renewable Top Plant" by POWER Magazine.

The magazine features a photo of Hometown BioEnergy on the cover of its December issue.

This unique project uses the process of anaerobic digestion of food processing and agricultural waste products to produce methane gas, which powers turbines to produce electricity. This innovative way to produce renewable energy is a part of the electricity profile of the 12 municipal electric systems which are members of the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (MMPA). The 8 MW facility began operations in December 2013.

"This significant award recognizes MMPA's innovation, community focus, and support for renewable energy," said Kelsey Dillon, Vice President of BioPower for Avant Energy, MMPA's long time management partner and developer of the project. Avant provides a wide range of services to the Agency under long term contracts, including strategic management, day-to-day operations, power plant development, energy trading, accounting and finance, and regulatory compliance.

Dillon said, "We're generating valuable, dispatchable on-peak electricity. When the power is needed and its value is highest, we draw biogas from storage to run the generators."

She pointed out that the ability to dispatch the power when it's needed is a significant advantage to this facility and is complementary to other, intermittent renewable resources such as solar and wind.

Electrical output from the

County partnerships lead Blandin broadband list

Blandin Foundation announced Nov. 20 that it has selected 10 rural Minnesota communities for intensive, two-year partnerships to advance local broadband initiatives.

The communities include: Carlton County, Central Woodlands (east central Minnesota), Chisago County, Martin County, Redwood County, Red Wing, Renville/Sibley Counties, Resilient Region 5 (north central Minnesota), and Sherburne County.



An aerial view of the 'Hometown Bio-Energy' plant in LeSueur.

plant is consumed locally in Le Sueur, an MMPA member community, and is part of the renewable energy generation portfolio of all MMPA members. The 44 MW Oak Glen Wind Farm near Blooming Prairie began operating in 2011, and MMPA also operates Faribault Energy Park generating facility, which is powered by natural gas.

The Hometown BioEnergy facility also fits with MMPA's mission to provide reliable,

competitively-priced energy to members, Dillon said.

MMPA members include municipal utilities in Anoka, Arlington, Brownton, Buffalo, Chaska, East Grand Forks, Elk River, Le Sueur, North St. Paul, Olivia, Shakopee and Winthrop. Avant Energy, a Minneapolis-based energy management company, provides management services to MMPA including both strategic and day-to-day management.



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In June 2014, EPA proposed emission guidelines for carbon dioxide emissions from existing fossil fuel-fired power plants, invoking its authority under Section 111(d) of the Clean Air Act (CAA).

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in early December announced plans for a series of technical conferences it will hold related to the EPA's proposed plan. Conferences will be held in February and March.

Among the issues to be explored: electric reliability considerations; identifying and addressing infrastructure needs and; potential implications for FERC-jurisdictional markets.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on Dec. 30 approved four stipulation and consent agreements between the Office of Enforcement and the following entities: Twin Cities Power-Canada Ltd., Twin Cities Energy LLC and Twin Cities Power LLC. The companies are based in Min-

nesota. FERC enforcement staff concluded that the Twin Cities entities and the traders violated the commission's anti-manipulation rule by manipulating electricity prices in the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) from January 2010 through January 2011. The Twin Cities entities admitted to the violations and agreed to pay a civil penalty of \$2,500,000 and disgorgement of \$978,186 plus interest.

2015 is expected to be the final year of construction related to the CapX2020 transmission project, with the scheduled completion of the Brookings County-Hampton 345-kV line. The \$662 million project stretches 250 miles and includes 1,435 structures.

Xcel Energy owns 68 percent of the project, and partners include Great River Energy, Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, Missouri River Energy Services and Otter Tail Power.

Bits & Pieces



An administrative law judge Dec. 26 recommended a reduced rate increase for Xcel Energy electric customers. The company had requested a \$291 million, 10.4 percent rate increase over two years to cover investments in carbon-free energy and upgrades to power plants and the electric grid. The utility, at the urging of regulators, reduced that request by \$41 million.

The judge recommended a return on equity of 9.77 percent; Xcel requested 10.25 percent. Customers have been paying a 4.6 percent interim rate hike since Jan. 1, 2014. The proposed increase is the sixth for the company in the last eight years and follows a 3.8 percent increase in 2013.

Minnesota Power ceased electrical generation at four of its coal-fired power plants for two months in 2014 due to low coal stockpiles. Operations were resumed at two of the plants beginning in late November and the company said all units would be back in operation by January. The company said it took the steps to avoid the problems it faced last year, when rail operators failed to deliver the coal needed to sustain operations.

The Coyote Station power plant near Beulah, North Dakota, went offline following a Dec. 4 fire, but crews and contractors brought the plant back on line by Christmas time. The early-morning fire stated in one of two feeder pumps that connect the boiler to the generating turbine. Nobody was hurt. Local crews and a team from Dakota Gasification responded and extinguished the blaze.

Enbridge Energy held a series of public meetings in December to explain plans for a proposed reconstruction of a pipeline from Canada to Superior. The 1,031 mile pipeline would replace a line built in 1968 and carry Canadian oil to Superior, Wisc. The proposed route is similar to the company's proposed 'Sandpiper' line. Public hearings are scheduled for that line beginning in January. A number of groups have expressed environmental concerns.

Mower County's sixth wind farm project—the

Pleasant Valley Wind Farm—is under construction and is expected to be producing energy later this year.

The board of directors at the Midcontinent Independent System Operator on Dec. 11 unanimously approved a transmission expansion plan that includes 369 newly approved projects totaling \$2.5 billion in transmission projects.

The approved expansion plan also marks the first MISO transmission planning cycle to include the full participation of the MISO South region. The Southern region accounts for \$359.2 million in new projects.

The MISO South region includes the following transmission owners and local balancing authorities: Entergy, Cleco, Lafayette

Utilities System, Louisiana Energy and Power Authority, Louisiana Generating, South Mississippi Electric Power Association and East Texas Electric Cooperative.

Flooding in 2012 damaged Minnesota Power's 71-megawatt Thomson Hydro Station, but the plant was restored to service in November.

The plant has been producing electricity from the St. Louis River for nearly 110 years. All six turbines suffered significant damage in the flood and repairs included extensive work in the powerhouse and water diversion facilities. The company believes the \$90 million project will lead to another century of carbon-free electric production from the facility.

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The City of Lake Crystal/Lake Crystal Municipal Utilities has an opening in the Electric Department for a Line Person and Power Plant Operator. Applicants must have a MN Driver's License with a CDL, Journeyman lineworkers license or certification or ability to work towards such a license or certification. Pay Range \$22.30 to \$31.86. Job description and applications are available at City Hall, 100 E Robinson St, Lake Crystal MN 56055 or on-line at www.ci.lake-crystal.mn.us. Position is open until filled. Priority will be given to applications received on or before January 30, 2015.

Marketing/Customer Relations Director

The Shakopee Public Utilities Commission is accepting applications for the position of Marketing/Customer Relations Director. Consideration will be given to those candidates that are knowledgeable of or possess experience in the following:

- Prior experience in customer service, customer billing and collections processes, key accounts administration, and state conservation improvement programs
- Managerial experience with strong leadership skills
- Development, establishment, and maintenance of customer service operating policies
- Experience in preparing and managing operating budgets, capital improvement plans, and marketing programs
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Bachelor degree preferred or a minimum of two years of college with experience in key account/marketing administration, customer service, and management experience.
- Preference for extensive work and management experience with municipal utilities or related fields.

This position reports to the Shakopee Public Utilities Manager. Shakopee Public Utilities provides electric and water service to approximately 16,600 electric customers and 11,000 water customers in the City of Shakopee, Minnesota and adjacent areas. This position has management responsibility for approximately a staff of eleven. Interested persons must submit an application and resume to Shakopee Public Utilities, Attn: Human Resources, PO Box 470, Sha-

kopee MN 55379 by January 31st, 2015. Applications may be downloaded from the web page at www.spucweb.com or are available at the main office at 255 Sarazin Street, Shakopee, MN 55379, (952) 233-1508. A detailed job description is available upon request.

Superintendent-Manager
Moose Lake Water & Light is accepting applications for the position of Superintendent/ Manager. Moose Lake, Minnesota has a population of approximately 2,800, and is conveniently located 40 miles south of Duluth & 110 miles north of Minneapolis/ St. Paul. We would like to interview candidates having the following backgrounds: utility experience, management background, financial management, strategic planning and operation of local generation. The Superintendent/Manager reports to an appointed Board of Commissioners and is responsible for carrying out all Board policies and directives. Salary and benefit package will be competitive-commensurate with experience, education and qualifications. Interested applicants should send a cover letter and resume to Deb Mohelski, Moose Lake Water & Light, PO Box 418, Moose Lake, MN 55767 by February 6, 2014 with application review beginning thereafter. Applications will be held in strict confidence. Moose Lake Water & Light is an equal opportunity employer. Questions may be directed to Deb Mohelski @ 218-485-4100 or by email debmohelski@mlwl.us

Wastewater Superintendent
The City of Pierre is accepting qualified applications for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Superintendent position. The Superintendent is responsible for directing & supervising the operation, maintenance & repair of the wastewater treatment facilities and lift stations. Individual should have knowledge of plumbing, electrical, electronics, pumps & pump & motor controls & must have knowledge in the operation of Aerobic Digestion and SCADA systems. The Superintendent will: assist in developing the department budget; work with management in overseeing projects and personnel; and must possess strong administrative, oral & written communication skills. The Superintendent is responsible for the plant meeting South Dakota DENR and EPA rules & regulations and for compliance monitoring. Must possess a

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Building Code Official/ Zoning Administrator/ Engineering Technician
The City of Breckenridge, population of 3559 located in West Central Minnesota, is searching for a Building Code Official/Zoning Administrator. The position is responsible for the inspection of properties for compliance with local and state regulations, codes, ordinances and laws. Will issue building permits and ensure they are

accurately carried out. Will do some surveying, designing, and drafting of public improvement projects. Starting wage from \$51,424 - \$54,555 with a maximum salary of \$61,403 negotiable upon qualifications and experience. Job description and supplemental questionnaire available upon request at lmauch@breckenridgemn.net or by phone at 218-643-1431. Position open until filled. EEO

Water Treatment Plant Foreman
Watertown Municipal Utilities has a full-time opening for a Water Treatment Plant Foreman. Reporting to the Water Superintendent, this position is responsible for the technical and supervisory work in the direction of the municipal water treatment plant and related facilities. South Dakota Water Treatment Class III Certification and two years supervisory experience required. Wage range of \$26.94 - \$30.72. Salary commensurate with experience and qualifications. Excellent benefits package, including pension, health insurance, life insurance, 457 plan, paid sick leave and vacation. A completed application and resume, including salary history, references and a cover letter, are required. Job description and application are available at: Watertown Municipal Utilities, Attn: Human Resources, 901 - 4th Avenue SW, Wa-

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UTILITIES PLUS ENERGY SERVICES, INC.
SIX (6) ABB POLIM-S SURGE ARRESTORS
STYLE: Q0125A010A
RATING: 12 KV RMS
MCOV 10.2 KV RMS
WEIGHT: 22 LBS
DATE: 09/18/2013
STATION CLASS 3
PRICE: \$1,380.00
Please contact Jamie Foster at 763-441-1200 or jfoster@utilsplus.com.

ONE (1) ABB STATION POWER TRANSFORMER - RECONDITION T&R UNIT - NEVER USED
50 KVA
HV 13800 GNDY/7970 BIL 95
LV 240/120 BIL 30
IMPED 2.44%
PRICE: \$900.00
Please contact Jamie Foster at 763-441-1200 or jfoster@utilsplus.com.

Hughes arms

Marshall Municipal Utilities has 45 - 8' Heavy construction Hughes arms in good condition for sale at \$ 200.00 each. Please call Arlyn at 507-929-5981 or email at arlyn@marshallutilities.com for more information.

Mobile Substation

Shakopee Public Utilities has a trailer mounted Westinghouse 7500 kVA, HV 115000 volt Delta with Taps, LV: 4160Y/2400Y X 13800Y/7970 X 24000Y/13860 Mobile Substation with a Westinghouse 115kV, 3 Phase Fused Switch Trailer. This Mobile Substation was rebuilt in 1988. It was last in service during 2010. Interested Parties should contact Marvin Athmann, Electrical Superintendent at (952) 233-1502, or by email: mathmann@shakopeeutilities.com

For a complete and up-to-date listing, see the 'Classifieds' section at www.mmua.org

Xcel files 2013 safety, quality, reliability report; MPUC sets standards for 2014

Minnesota law sets standards for electric distribution utilities and stipulates that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission adopt standards for safety, reliability, and service quality for state-regulated distribution utilities. Municipal electric utilities are required to make reports to their local governing boards.

There are three main annual reporting requirements: the safety report; the reliability report; and the service quality report.

The state's investor-owned utilities recently filed their reports with the MPUC and the Commission on Dec. 4 established reliability goals.

The investor-owned utilities report 'storm normalized' numbers. Storm-normalized data means data that has been adjusted to neutralize the effects of outages due to major storms.

This article covers Xcel's reliability report. The other

IOU reports will be covered in next month's newsletter.

In 2013, Xcel's Southeast region experienced several significant substation outages that negatively affected CAIDI. The specialized personnel required to restore service was outside the normal service territory attending to other duties. The travel time necessary to reach these substation outages negatively affected CAIDI. The company has begun training additional personnel to perform substation outage activities. The company also started to use contractors for some appointments so that the workforce remains at a steady level to meet non-outage customer expectations.

To also improve CAIDI numbers, the Distribution Control Centers will isolate the fault, restore as many customers as possible through switching, and then patrol the rest of the circuit to finish repairs for the re-

Xcel's 2013 standards and performance, by work center:

	SAIDI		SAIFI		CAIDI	
	Std.	Perf.	Std.	Perf.	Std.	Perf.
Metro East	85.44	81.28	0.94	0.83	90.75	97.75
Metro West	97.92	98.71	0.98	0.94	100.17	105.00
Northwest	102.56	95.90	0.87	0.93	117.94	102.86
Southeast	78.16	108.80	0.71	0.75	109.97	145.10

MPUC established Xcel 2014 Reliability standards:

	SAIDI	SAIFI	CAIDI
Metro East	82.41	0.88	93.72
Metro West	97.41	0.95	102.11
Northwest	90.27	0.81	111.70
Southeast	86.31	0.71	121.40

SAIDI = Total Customer Minutes of Sustained Outages ÷ Number of Customers

SAIFI = Total Number of Sustained Customer Interruptions ÷ Number of Customers

CAIDI = Total Customer Minutes of Sustained Outages ÷ Total number of Sustained Customer Interruptions = SAIDI ÷ SAIFI
"Interruptions" are greater than five minutes.

maining customers.

Over the past six years, Xcel met the standards 41 of 72 times, or 57 percent. Xcel

stated that "[d]ue to the fact that these goals are five-year averages, we would expect to achieve target results 50

percent of the time and miss the target 50 percent of the time."

Need to assist lineworkers? MMUA offers 'Cross Training'

Does your city or municipal utility need a competent ground person—who can recognize tools, equipment and hazards—to assist and help keep the lineworker efficient and safe?

To help you meet that need, MMUA is pleased to offer a Basic Cross Training School. This school will be held Feb. 25-27 at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall.

The class is very basic. It is designed for employees in other departments that would assist lineworkers on a call-out or in an emergency.

It is training for a non-lineman person who wants and needs a higher degree of skilled performance.

The program was developed with the intent of providing the basic skills and knowledge that the student will need as a foundation from which to build. Every effort has been made to make this program basic and usable in the ever-growing field of power distribution.

Topics that will be taught include:

1. Introduction to Powerline Training

2. Personal and Job Safety
3. Basic Electrical Theory
4. Overhead & Underground Construction

5. Grounding, Rope, Rigging
6. Meters & Meter Safety
7. Distribution Transformers & Equipment
8. Troubleshooting (Primary & Secondary)

Instructors are Pete Wyffels and Gary Greenwald of MMUA.

For more information, see the 'Calendar' section at www.mmua.org or contact Rita Kelly at 763.746.0707 or rkelly@mmua.org



Mark your calendars!
MMUA / MREA
Meter School
March 10-13, 2015



Legislative Conference



MMUA's Legislative Conference is the municipal utility community's primary opportunity to inform and influence state lawmakers.

In 2015, the House moves to Republican control, while the Senate remains under Democratic control. It promises to be a busy session for MMUA, with each house likely pursuing its own agenda and a wide variety of proposals under consideration.

We will have to work hard to make sure that our voice is heard above the noise. Remember, numbers count and we need your help. A strong turnout will ensure that our message is heard.

We've made some changes to our day on the Hill to accommodate the renovation project at the Capitol, because there is no meeting space available to the public during construction. We'll conduct our member visits during the afternoon rather than the morning, and we will conclude the day with a reception at the Kelly Inn near the Capitol. Be sure

to invite your legislators to join us at the reception for some social time.

The conference is not just about visiting the Capitol. We have a full slate of informative sessions to bring you up to date on our industry and where it's headed.

Tentative Program

Wednesday, February 4

- Board of Directors Meeting
- 12:00-5:00 Registration Desk Open
- Ethical Leadership
- Minnesota Energy Policy in an Era of Divided Government
- Renewable Energy Transmission Integration Study
- Clean Power Plan, State Plan Process

Thursday, February 5

- e21 Initiative - Reforming the Utility Business Model?
- Women's Economic Security Act
- OSHA 269-Highlights of Changes Made and Accident & Illness Reporting
- Rally Briefing

Luncheon Buffet at Hotel
1:15 Shuttle Buses to Front Steps of Capitol

1:30-4:00 Meet with Your Local Legislators
4:00-6:30 Legislative Reception, Kelly Inn Hotel
6:30 Shuttle Buses return to Hotel

Friday, February 6

- Cold Weather Rule
- Regulatory Compliance Annual Reporting
- IPL-SMEC
- Issues Roundup
- Rally Recap
- 12:00 Hotel Check-Out

Transportation

Bus transportation will be provided for your visits to the Capitol on Thursday. The bus will leave from the front door of the Crowne Plaza hotel starting at 1:15 pm. Bus will depart from the Kelly Inn at 6:30 pm.

For more information see the 'Calendar' section at www.mmua.org

Questions? Call Rita Kelly at 763.746.0707 or email: rkelly@mmua.org

February 4-6. Meeting headquarters: Crowne Plaza Hotel and Suites. Bloomington