

## Elk River Municipal Utilities lowers electric rates

Electric rate reductions are part of the Elk River Municipal Utilities (ERMU) 2019 Annual Business Plan, which the ERMU Commission approved Dec. 11.

In explaining his recommendation to reduce rates to the Commission, ERMU General Manager Troy Adams highlighted three points:

- A change in wholesale power supplier, and reduced wholesale power rates. In October 2008, a generation and transmission cooperative gave ERMU a 10-year notice for the termination of its wholesale power contract. After five years of research and consideration, the ERMU Commission approved joining

the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (MMPA). In October 2018, ERMU began receiving power from MMPA, with 2019 the first complete budget year where ERMU is receiving power from MMPA.

- Starting in 2015 Connexus Energy has been transferring electric service territory within the corporate boundaries of the City of Elk River to ERMU, as part of a negotiated agreement.

In 2019, ERMU will receive the transfer to the remaining electric service territory areas as identified in the 2015 transfer agreement. In the end, the electric service territory transfer agreement will have re-

sulted in an approximate 20 percent growth in customers for ERMU.

- ERMU has recognized significant efficiencies as a result of the 2018 change to multiple billing cycles and has been able to reduce staff, through attrition, lowering fixed costs.

“The change to MMPA, the growth in customer base and service territory, and the efficiencies gained through the change to multi billing cycles have put ERMU in a unique and unprecedented situation to lower electric rates,” Adams said.

The reset of rates will affect consumers differently based on usage. A residential customer



ERMU Commissioners recently had the happy task of reducing electric rates. Commissioners are, from left to right: Matt Westgaard, Mary Stewart, Al Nadeau, Paul Bell and Mayor John Dietz.

with typical electric usage will experience a 5 percent reduction in electric costs. For commercial customers, the service size and usage can

vary drastically which has a varying effect on the rate reset impact. Commercial customers

Rate: see page 3 please

## NMPA's Tveitbakk retires

by Kevin Fee

Minnkota Power Cooperative

Sitting across from two bond insurance underwriters wearing slick-looking suits, Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA) General Manager Darryl Tveitbakk was first in line for the presentations to the men.

Meeting at a boat table on the 25th floor of a meeting room gave Tveitbakk a good view of New York Harbor, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.

Tveitbakk, NMPA staff and Minnkota Power Cooperative staff were meeting with representatives from Ambac Assurance Corp., a municipal bond insurance company. Tveitbakk and others were presenting information to the corporation a day after delivering similar presentations to ratings agencies in the Big Apple.

Tveitbakk, who grew up on a dairy farm near Clearbrook, found his thoughts drifting after his part of the presentation concluded. He couldn't help it, apparently mesmerized by the view.

Tveitbakk: see next page please



## Transformer School

MMUA closed out a full 2018 training schedule Dec. 11-14 with the annual Transformer School and Pre-Conference. The training, which featured hands-on work with miniature transformer banks, was held at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. Here, Tanner Ellis of Melrose Public Utilities (facing camera) worked with his group, which includes Zac Johnson (foreground) and Mitch Girtz (reaching out) of Elk River Municipal Utilities. Jeff Marks of Mountain Iron looks on. For a closer look at this valuable event, see page 7.

## City of Ada partners to bounce back strong after string of disasters

by Steve Downer

Following hard on the heels of fire and flood, the City of Ada is experiencing an economic revival.

Ada, named after the daughter of a railroad superintendent, was platted in the 'flat, fertile farmland' of the Red River Valley in 1874. The city of 1,700, incorporated in 1881, is located 42 miles northeast of Moorhead, and an hour southeast of Grand Forks.

In the last five years, local businesses, a private foundation, and various levels of gov-

ernment have worked together to move the city forward. Some of the steps seemed rather innocuous at first.

In 2014, the city council voted to change its form of city government. In 2015, it hired its first city administrator.

Since then, Ada has successfully competed for and raised more than \$1 million in grant funds. Over the same period, the city's economic development authority leveraged funds to loan more than \$200,000 to growing businesses. The Dekko Community Center, which has received

large private donations but is also publicly-funded and built, also benefitted from grants and other forms of assistance, and has seen \$500,000 worth of upgrades.

Where there were many vacant storefronts downtown, there are now thriving businesses. One is West Main Pizza, owned by Mayor Todd Sawrey, who formerly was a councilmember and headed the city's economic development efforts.

Businesses have made lighting upgrades, with help from the city, which also offered

matching grants for exterior improvements. Main Street jobs have grown by an estimated 70 percent.

Much of the impetus for the improvements were spurred on by local entrepreneur Edi Ramstad, who turned a hobby into a business named Weave Got Maille. The niche business relied on customers outside of Ada to be successful, but was seriously hampered by inadequate internet service and a part-time post office.

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## Tveitbakk:

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"I thought what the heck is a dairy farmer's kid from Clearbrook doing here?" he said. "It was way beyond where I thought I'd be."

A decade later, Tveitbakk smiled and laughed as he reflected on the anecdote just weeks before his retirement after more than 23 years with NMPA—the energy provider for 12 municipal utilities in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. Minnkota is operating agent for NMPA.

Only the second full-time general manager in history,

Tveitbakk retired Nov. 5 from Thief River Falls-based NMPA.

"Having the opportunity to work on some of the bonding things we've done over the years, the financial things we've done over the years, has been fun," Tveitbakk said. "Even though I at first felt this was way out of my league, you learn fast. I think doing those things was a major responsibility but was also a highlight."

Dalene Monsebroten, the finance manager at NMPA, said Tveitbakk was the right person for the job.

"He's a huge advocate of public power," she said, "and he's very knowledgeable on

the technical side of things. He's great at communicating with the governmental side, legislative and constituents. He's very well-rounded."

Being well-rounded started with education.

Tveitbakk went to school at the old AVTI (now Northland Community and Technical College) after spending a couple of years at the University of Minnesota. He earned degrees in audio communications and industrial electronics.

That allowed him to land a job at the city of Thief River Falls as a technician in the utility department. He spent 17 years with the city before taking a position at Northland as a professor of electronics. After being laid off, he found himself without a job in 1993.

So he went to Minnkota and asked the vice president of marketing and communications if he had any job openings. A business acquaintance of the manager, Tveitbakk was eventually hired to do a study on NMPA for the cooperative. He must have done a good job, as NMPA hired him



Darryl Tveitbakk's grandfather left Norway for Pennington County in the early 1900s. He would be proud of Darryl, who was NMPA's second general manager and also serves as a Pennington County commissioner.

as director of customer service in 1995.

He was promoted to general manager in 1999.

Tveitbakk says he feels good about finishing his career in the same county in which his grandfather homesteaded after immigrating from Norway in the early 1900s. On the wall of Tveitbakk's NMPA office was a letter from President Woodrow Wilson, approving his grandfather's homestead.

Next to the letter was a map of where the farm was located on the east end of Pennington County. Tveitbakk likes to uncover the history of everything in his path and the path of his ancestors. He has an early 1900s picture of the location of the condo he owns just four blocks from Target Field in the Warehouse District of downtown Minneapolis.

In addition to the condo, Tveitbakk and wife Deborah will spend time at their cabin in the woods near Clearbrook. Their three boys and three

granddaughters live in the Twin Cities area.

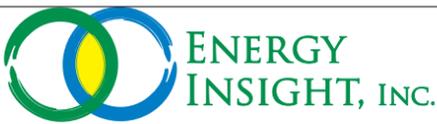
NMPA can thank Deborah for keeping her husband in the Thief River Falls area.

"In college, during my second year, I met this little girl from Red Lake Falls. That's really why I stayed here. I really never intended to stay here at all. That was really the driver of taking the job with the city, even though it paid less than another offer I received on the same day, because she was not interested in moving out of here."

Tveitbakk hopes to continue to be a Pennington County commissioner and a cantor in his church, so he plans to remain in Thief River Falls. In his late 60s, though, he thought it was time to move into another chapter of life.

"I want to control my time," he said. "I don't want somebody else controlling my time. I enjoyed working here. I will miss it. But I'm going to be 69 years old."

"Every day I'm here is one day I'm not retired."



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# FERC must keep electricity transmission costs fair and reasonable to all

by **Delia Patterson**  
Senior Vice President,  
Advocacy & Communications  
and General Counsel, American  
Public Power Association

(Editor's note: The December 2018 Washington Report is based on a blog written by Patterson that was originally published on the Association's website in November.)

In some regions, particularly those with regional transmission organizations (RTOs) and independent system operators (ISOs), electricity transmission costs have risen significantly in the past several years, imposing a significant burden on transmission customers, including public power utilities.

The Edison Electric Institute projects that investor-owned utilities and stand-alone transmission companies will invest a record \$23.7 billion in transmission assets in 2018. This figure is approximately 15 percent more than the 2016 transmission investment (\$20.6 billion), and nearly double the level of investment just seven years ago (\$12.0 billion). An analysis prepared by the Brattle Group confirms this sharp increase in transmis-

## Washington Report



sion spending in recent years, calculating that investments by transmission owners from 2013 to 2017 exceeded \$70 billion in the RTO and ISO regions alone.

While much of this transmission investment is for legitimate reasons such as accommodating new renewable generation and upgrading aging infrastructure, the American Public Power Association urges the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to adopt and enforce policies that support reasonable transmission rates.

For example, FERC should ensure that proposed transmission projects receive adequate scrutiny in regional transmission planning processes and that the authorized equity returns included in cost-based transmission rates are not excessive. The Brattle Group study found that nearly half of the 2013-2017 transmission investment in RTO and ISO regions was not subject to the full

RTO/ISO regional transmission planning process. An open and transparent planning process helps ensure that proposed transmission infrastructure is truly needed and will benefit customers. And getting needed transmission built should not require piling additional incentives on top of already generous returns.

The Association is closely following recent FERC pronouncements regarding the Commission's policies on allowed equity returns and transmission incentives.

In an October 16, 2018 order, FERC proposed a new approach for calculating the allowed return on equity (ROE) to be included in the rates of transmission owners in ISO-New England. Application of this new approach could result in higher allowed ROEs and could increase the level of incentive ROE that transmission owners are permitted to collect. At its November open meeting, FERC directed that this new approach be considered in other pending proceedings.

Chairman Chatterjee also announced at the November meeting that the Com-

mission intends to consider whether it should make additional changes to both its calculation of base ROEs and its long-established policies on transmission incentives. Chairman Chatterjee said that FERC's incentive policies were overdue for a "fresh look," with input from all interested stakeholders, not just those involved in the pending ROE proceedings. He said it was "high time" to see if the Commission's ROE and incentive policies are producing "the level and type of transmission investment the nation needs."

As FERC undertakes this review, the Association urges the Commission to adhere to its statutory obligation under Federal Power Act sections 205 and 206 to ensure that transmission rates are just and reasonable and not unduly discriminatory and preferential. For an incentive rate to meet this standard, the costs of the incentive must not outweigh the expected benefits. Incentives must be

carefully designed to encourage the desired behavior, and not be greater than what's needed to achieve the desired result. FERC must abide by the long-standing principle that the level of return follows the level of risk.

While it's important for transmission owners to earn a fair rate of return on their investments in infrastructure, many are receiving overly generous returns of 10 to 12 percent. Rates of return should reflect actual market risks and not have the unintended consequence of encouraging building or over-building just to generate revenue. Return on equity rates must reflect current economic conditions, and any additional incentives must be awarded judiciously and only as needed to promote beneficial transmission investment.

FERC must support policies and rates that get needed transmission built in a way that reduces overall costs to consumers.

## Comment period open on new Waters of the U.S. rule

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers on Dec. 11 unveiled a proposed new "waters of the United States," or WOTUS, definition that clarifies federal authority under the Clean Water Act.

"Unlike the Obama administration's 2015 definition of 'waters of the United States,' today's proposal contains a straightforward definition that would result in significant cost savings, protect the nation's navigable waters, help sustain economic growth, and reduce barriers to business development," the EPA said in a news release.

The agencies noted that their proposal is the second

step in a two-step process to review and revise the definition of "waters of the United States" consistent with a February 2017 executive order signed by President Trump.

The executive order said that it is in the national interest to ensure that the nation's navigable waters are kept free from pollution, while at the same time promoting economic growth, minimizing regulatory uncertainty, and showing due regard for the roles of Congress and the states under the Constitution.

The agencies said their proposed rule would provide clarity, predictability and consistency so that the regulated community can easily understand where the Clean Water Act applies.

Under the proposal, traditional navigable waters, tributaries to those waters, certain ditches, certain lakes and ponds, impoundments of jurisdictional waters, and wetlands adjacent to jurisdictional waters would be federally regulated.

The proposal also details what are not "waters of the United States," such as features that only contain water during or in response to rainfall (e.g., ephemeral features); groundwater; many ditches, including most roadside or farm ditches; prior converted cropland; storm water control features; and waste treatment systems.

Comments will be taken on the proposal for 60 days after publication in the *Federal Register*.

## Rate:

continued from front page

should experience a rate reduction between 4 percent and 5 percent.

Mayor John Dietz, who has also served on the ERMU Commission for 23 years, was quoted as saying, "I'm excited that we're able to do this. I think it's a win-win. In today's world, you don't see many decreases in the cost of anything. For us to pass along a decrease is a boost for our city."

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## Thief River Falls Electric Department makes way for Digi-Key; moves into new headquarters

The City of Thief River Falls Electric Department is currently in the process of moving into its new 30,000 square-foot headquarters. The move was made to help Digi-Key with its expansion plans, which included the parcel formerly occupied by the utility. The old site was sold to Digi-Key last spring for \$1,368,000.

The estimated price for the new building, constructed on a city-owned parcel on the northwest side of the city, is \$3.85 million.

The entire building project is estimated to cost \$4.9 million, which includes construction, the contingency and the cost of issuing the electric revenue bonds. The bonds will be covered by electric rates, which were recently increased, and the sale of the building to Digi-Key.

After hastily vacating its old headquarters, the Electric Department worked out of temporary offices. Equipment was stored at two rental properties, the power plant and the site of the Streets/Sanitation Division. Line crews worked out of a rental

property.

The site of the new headquarters wasn't the first choice of city leaders. Two other locations were dropped after soil borings and an in-depth analysis showed they were unsuitable.

The city's Building Committee chose the city property over a property that was outside of city limits.

The new building includes a storage area, but the utility will also use storage at another city property (adjacent to the wastewater treatment ponds) and also at an unbuildable parcel.

Cranes operating at the expanding Digi-Key site are plainly visible across a field from the Electric Department building.

The Thief River Falls-headquartered global distributor of electronic components last March announced it was reviewing several potential options for a one million square-foot fulfillment, value-added manufacturing and warehouse center, with an investment value of between \$200-\$300 million.

Digi-Key's expansion is



The City of Thief River Falls Electric Department is northwest of Digi-Key, at 1711 First Street West.

expected to add more than 1,000 new jobs over the next 10 years to its existing base of 3,200 employees in Minnesota. The City offered an Economic Development Tax Increment Financing package to assist with the building expansion, and the Legislature appropriated \$1.6 million in 2018 to the City for utility extensions, roads and other

public improvements.

Digi-Key's current operations are said to generate approximately \$1.5 billion in economic output and add over \$940 million to the state's gross domestic product. The proposed expansion is estimated to contribute an additional \$500 million to state economic output.

Digi-Key has been, and will

continue to be, powered by Thief River Falls Municipal Utilities.

The expansion unleashed a flurry of activity, which is still ongoing for the Thief River Falls Electric Department, but its people are glad to be moving into their new location.

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The Grand Marais Public Utilities Commission has recommended no increase in electric or water rates for 2019, but did recommend a two percent bump in sewer rates. The recommendation was forwarded to the city council for final action.

Commissioners scheduled a workshop to discuss solar projects and future staffing needs. An automated metering infrastructure pilot project is also being conducted, with 100 meters.

The City of Nashwauk has received a \$1.14 million loan from the Public Facilities Authority for the replacement of city water mains, hydrants and valves. Nashwauk will use the 20-year-loan from the Drinking Water Revolving Fund (DWRF) to fund the project. The one percent loan will save an estimated \$236,188 when compared to the cost of market-rate financing.

The cities of Mountain Iron and Virginia are exploring consolidation of fire and emergency medical services. A consultant was hired to audit the fire departments and identify savings opportunities. The state Governor's Fire and Rescue Shared Services Task Force paid for 90 percent of the study and the cities covered the remaining 10 percent.

The study found the cities should consolidate to improve fire and EMS services. Challenges include loss of local autonomy and employee fear

### Around the State



of losing rank and jobs.

Governance would need to be negotiated between the cities and a funding formula developed. While some initial savings might occur the greatest cost savings would come through future cost avoidance, said the consultant, who counseled, "Keep it simple and start talking this through."

The Delano City Council has approved a \$248,423 bid to purchase and install new lights at the Delano Municipal Stadium baseball field. The new LED lights will replace those installed in 1961.

City staff and Delano Municipal Utilities assessed the entire system, including underground electric lines, electrical panels, wires and fixtures. Everything will be replaced.

Community groups will contribute to the project.



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The Ada Feed and Seed grain elevator dominates the view of the city. The business specializes in sunflower processing for the wild bird seed market.

## Ada:

continued from front page

Faced with closing the doors, Ramstad worked with the Kauffman Foundation and spoke about her situation at a 1 Million Cups community resources and support event. Others picked up her cause. Former U.S. Senator

Heidi Heitkamp asked the U.S. postmaster general to increase the Ada post office hours. The mayor of Fargo advised the governor of Minnesota that Ada needed upgraded internet access.

The post office was authorized to stay open longer, in part to handle Weave Got Maile business. Internet service was improved, helping

business and local schoolkids, who can now do their homework online.

Weave Got Maile has since opened a spinoff business.

### Attractive electric rates

Home values are rising, a new residential development has been established (with three new homes built) and school enrollment is grow-

## Following recurring floods over several decades, construction of dike huge benefit for Ada citizens

Ada is the Norman County seat. As of 2013, the county had been included in 17 federal disasters in 35 years. Hopefully that string of disaster is a thing of the past.

In 1997, Ada was inundated in the historic Red River Valley flood. Knee-deep water froze during a spring blizzard. The city endured seven more floods, including two two record-breaking floods in June 2002, when heavy rains caused the Marsh River to overflow its banks and caused \$40 million in damage.

In 2012, the local watershed board, facing down a divide between city residents and rural landowners, allowed the city to move a drainage ditch. That enabled construction of a FEMA-certified earthen dike, which was completed in 2013. The Minnesota DNR took the lead on the \$11 million project, and the city contributed \$500,000.

In January 2013, the city's water supply was drained twice as 14 fire departments responded to fight a fire which destroyed a grain el-

evator complex—one of the city's top four water/electric customers. That fire left a gap but a newer addition to the grain complex was saved.

Good news came in September 2017, when the city received notice that it was no longer located in the 100-year flood plain. The dike eliminated the need for homeowners in the city to purchase expensive flood insurance, which often cost from \$1,000 to \$1,800 annually.

ing. The city has also used tax increment financing and tax abatement strategies to spur growth in the industrial park.

Standard and Poor's has twice upgraded the city's bond rating.

Ada has been designated a Tree City USA and is enforcing a strong blight ordinance.

City administrator/clerk treasurer Benjamin Burgener continues to work with elected officials and an active city and county economic development group to keep the momentum going.

Burgener was hired in November 2018. He formerly was a manager with Utah Department of Transporta-

tion, administering a \$58 million budget covering over 400 employees. He is putting the finishing touches on a Master of Public Administration degree, and considered Ada a good city to settle in and work for.

Burgener notes Ada has a number of advantages, including affordable electric rates. The city buys its power at wholesale from Xcel Energy and the Western Area Power Administration. While still handling some electric system duties, Ada annually budgets for and contracts with an electric cooperative for larger projects.



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## New Prague Public Utilities and MVEC agree to alter service area boundaries

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission Dec. 6 approved a joint request to modify the service territory boundaries of New Prague Public Utilities Commission (NPUC) and Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative (MVEC).

The parties, under state law, sought to adjust their boundaries to permanently transfer certain areas to the municipal's assigned territory.

The four distinct areas transferred were within the city limits. The areas involved approximately 700 acres and 750 customers (711 residential and 39 commercial), primarily in the southeast and

western parts of the city. In the course of their negotiations, the municipal provided construction service to one customer under development in an area included in the transfer.

The parties engaged in extensive technical discussions, spanning multiple years, to minimize disruption to customers, avoid unnecessary duplication of facilities, and ensure a smooth transition of electric service.

The changeover in service was planned for late October or early November of 2018. The parties communicated extensively with customers in the affected areas. Com-

munications included correspondence, multiple updates in newsletters and a dedicated public meeting to answer questions and assure an understanding of rates and programs. NPUC sent out one letter a week before the switchover, and the day before placed door hangars on the affected properties.

NPUC noted several reasons to acquire the areas, including that a coordinated electric service will be more cost-effective and reduce overall costs to New Prague residents in the future. The city noted it was already providing the electric customers with water and sewer utility

services.

In a letter to its customers, New Prague noted that customers being transferred can expect continued excellent service, comparable (if not lower) rates, and the same energy saving programs with off-peak heating and cooling. The municipal also noted its highly-reliable service and local electric generating plant.

"We respect the quality of service MVEC has provided to its customers in the past and pledge to meet and continue with those same services going forward," said the letter, from New Prague Pub-

lic Utilities General Manager Bruce Reimers. "We appreciate the neighborly approach MVEC has taken in working with us on drafting an agreement that is beneficial and fair to all."

The municipal anticipated funding the acquisition through current and anticipated financial reserves. Compensation details were not filed with the requested boundary change.

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### Kasson, Xcel terminate service by exception pact

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission Dec. 6 approved a joint petition—from Xcel Energy and Kasson Public Utilities—for approval of the termination of a service-by-exception agreement and permanent adjustment of service territories.

The exception agreement, signed in 2013, allowed Xcel to serve 14 locations in the city. Kasson reserved the right to serve the exception customers upon 90 days notice to Xcel. That notice was provided on May 26, 2017.

There are two different types of service territory issues in the Kasson agreement:

- First, customers that were served by Xcel Energy by exception are in Kasson Public Utilities' service territory. Kasson Public Utilities will compensate Xcel Energy for the applicable facilities.
- Second, a portion of adjacent Xcel Energy service territory owned by one of the 'exception customers' is being transferred to Kasson Public Utilities. Kasson Public Utilities will compensate Xcel Energy for the permanent transfer.

Kasson Public Utilities will compensate Xcel Energy net book value for the applicable facilities and a total of \$448 for lost revenues.

The city notified each affected customer, in advance, of the MPUC filing to acquire permanent service rights.

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## Transformer School draws participants from two states and 27 utilities

Under the instruction of Scott Meinecke, this year's Transformer School and Pre-Conference was again well attended: 34 people took advantage of the Pre-Conference training on Basic Metering and 55 people from 27 municipal utilities attended the Transformer School. While most came from Minnesota municipals, we were also pleased to have four people from South Dakota municipals and personnel from three cooperatives participate in the training.

Participants were chal-

lenged by the course instruction and hands-on station work.

The Pre-Conference covered basic transformer connections classroom and hands-on training.

The Transformer School covered the basics of transformers, including turns ratios, polarities, calculations, connections, and troubleshooting.

In the hands-on portion of the course, participants will work with energized miniature transformers that would blow fuses when wired incor-



Instructor Scott Meinecke, at right in the black shirt, talked transformers with school participants.



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rectly.

The class continued to build on the miniature transformer banks and work on troubleshooting. Motor rotation as it relates to three-phase sys-

tems was discussed, as well as ways to prevent voltage theft.

Participants left with a good understanding of:

- Basic Three-Phase Con-

nections

Delta Connection

• Wye Connection

• Open Delta Connection

• Three-Phase Troubleshooting.

## Anthony Lenz joins MMUA as a regional safety coordinator

Anthony Lenz has joined MMUA as a regional safety coordinator.

Lenz was most recently a power lineman for the City of St. James Light Department. He joined the city in June 2017 and performed a variety of duties, including: maintenance and construction of electrical distribution system, troubleshooting and preventative maintenance. Lenz followed OSHA and American Public Power Association safety guidelines, took a regular on-call shift and worked as a team member.

the Army, he presented training and safety briefs weekly to groups of 10-45 people. He gained leadership experience and supervised projects alongside service people from other countries.

Lenz earned a diploma in Powerline Technology in 2010 from Minnesota West Community and Technical College. The St. James High School graduate plans to receive an Associates of Science degree in Business Manage-

ment from Minnesota West in May.

Lenz holds several licenses and certificates, including from the U.S. Army Leadership Development Course and Horizontal Construction Engineer Course.

Lenz will replace Chris Trembley, who has been selected as Madelia Municipal Light and Power general manager.



Anthony Lenz

Lenz also worked for approximately four years for Lakefield Public Utilities, as a power lineman and water treatment specialist.

Lenz has a variety of other work experiences, including in agriculture. He also attained the rank of sergeant in the U.S. Army, where he served as a construction supervisor and heavy equipment operator/engineer. While in



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## MPUC dismisses territory complaint, but a better defined issue may return

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission Dec. 6 dismissed a Lake Country Power (LCP) electric utility service area complaint against Minnesota Power.

That may not be the end of the matter, however.

The issue began in Octo-

ber 2016, when Canadian National approached Lake Country to arrange for extension of electrical service to new signaling and sensing equipment, near Hoyt Lakes. Lake Country provided the railroad with a price quote.

In the summer of 2017,

Lake Country became aware that Canadian National had decided to build its own electrical distribution infrastructure along the railroad into Minnesota Power's service area and to receive electric service from that utility.

On December 22, 2017, Lake Country filed a complaint against Minnesota Power alleging that the utility violated Lake Country's exclusive service area.

Lake Country sought a Commission order declaring Minnesota Power to be in violation of the service-area provisions of the Minnesota Public Utilities Act, Minn. Stat. §§ 216B.37–43, and determining that Lake Country has the exclusive right to extend electric service to Canadian National's equipment.

Canadian National said it has constructed six-foot by six-foot "intermediate signal bungalows" along its track at intervals of approximately two miles.

Three of these facilities are located in Lake Country's service area, and are supplied with power via a cable that Canadian National buried along and within its right-of-way. This cable originates in Minnesota Power's service

area, where Canadian National has installed a transformer to accept electricity delivered by Minnesota Power. Both the cable and the transformer are owned by Canadian National.

Canadian National and Minnesota Power argued that when a customer's property straddles the boundary between two utilities' service areas, power may legally be delivered within the assigned area of one utility and distributed over the customer's own distribution system to facilities on its property, including any situated within the other utility's service territory.

Lake Country responded that the Commission has allowed power to be distributed from one utility's service area into another utility's service area only when the customer has a building that straddles the boundary. It argued that contested-case proceedings were needed to flesh out whether Canadian National's facilities are an integrated whole, as well as other facts.

MPUC staff brushed aside the "bricks and mortar" argument, and said, based on the facts of the case, the controlling factor would be the MPUC's "well established

preference to allow customer choice of electric service providers for facilities that straddle multiple utility service areas . . ."

The Commission said it would make sense to require the cooperative to file an amended complaint, given the information that surfaced during the investigation, before determining the appropriate procedure for handling the complaint.

Nothing in statute or precedence, said MREA, gives MP or CN the right to extend four miles into LCP service territory. If the Commission finds in favor of MP, there may be little to stop CN or any other customer from purchasing electricity through an electric utility at a meter inside that utility's service territory and then distributing that power through its own distribution lines anywhere it wants, regardless of exclusive electric service territory boundaries, said MREA. "A new precedent would be created that could undermine Minnesota's longstanding service territory requirements and create confusion and uncertainty long into the future."

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## MMUA thanks and recognizes its roster of 2019 Annual Sponsors

Municipal utilities are generally small compared to other utilities, and rely, to varying degrees, on business partners.

Many of these businesses have joined MMUA as Associate Members.

MMUA appreciates all its Associate Members, and particularly wants to recognize those who are supporting the association as 2019 Annual Sponsors.

The MMUA Annual Sponsorship offers a convenient one-stop payment that allows a company to participate in our most popular events and have a significant presence on or in our most visible communications vehicles.

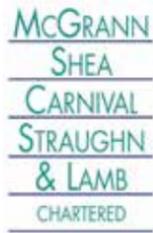
MMUA thanks those associate members who renewed their annual sponsorships for 2019, and those who signed-up for the first time!

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- Recognition as an MMUA Annual Sponsor at [www.mmua.org](http://www.mmua.org)

- Recognition as an Annual Sponsor on banners at MMUA events

- Recognition as an Annual Sponsor in MMUA publications



- One 2-column by 5-inch *Resource* newsletter ad, in color. This includes a complementary, color, business-card sized ad in the Professional Services Directory (on pages 10-11 of the newsletter). Sponsors can also upgrade to a larger ad for an additional

- One trade show table (including power) and two attendees at either the Summer Conference or Technical and Operations (T&O) Conference
- Two meeting registrations at either the Summer Conference or T&O Conference.

- A variety of other acknowledgements throughout the year, at various MMUA events and in other media.

The total value of the *Resource* ad, trade show exhibit space and meeting registrations is more than \$3,650. So you can see that the \$1,750 sponsorship package represents

an outstanding value.

To sign-up as an MMUA Annual Sponsor, go to the Sponsors/Become a Sponsor link on our website, or call Steve Downer at 763-746-0702. Questions regarding meetings should be directed to Rita Kelly at 763-746-0707. Late sign-ups accepted!

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MMUA was recently joined by two new Associate Members: Ditch Witch of Minnesota and Iowa and the Alexandria Lake Area Sanitary District.

Ditch Witch bills itself as the premier supplier of underground construction equipment to help its customers work productively and profitably.

Primary contact is Weston Peiffer, general manager. He can be reached at 952-334-2311 or westonp@dwmn.com. The company is located at 12826 Emery Way, Shakopee MN 55379. Main line is 952-445-3066. Company website is at www.ditchwitchmnia.com

Alexandria Lake Area Sanitary District (ALASD) is a special purpose district serving sanitary sewer services for the cities of Alexandria, Nelson and Forada, and six townships. It is a governmental subdivision of the State of Minnesota. ALASD services a 100 square mile territory and has roughly 11,000 connection accounts (approximately 24,000 population). Over 200 lift stations convey wastewater to a 4.7 million gallon per day advanced wastewater treatment facility.

Main contact is Scott Gilbertson, executive director. He can be reached at 218-234-8118 or sgilbertson@rea-alp.com The company is located at 2201 Nevada Street, Alexandria and the main phone line is 320-762-1135. Company website is found at www.alasd.org

**Bits &  
Pieces**

Minnesota's state-regulated electric utilities will be required to file detailed plans next year on how they will help increase electric vehicle (EV) adoption in the state, according to a unanimous decision Dec. 13 by the Public Utilities Commission.

The plans, due June 30, must include initiatives to raise awareness of public charging stations for electric vehicles and residential charging options for EV owners. Utilities must also include information on how they plan to educate consum-

*continued on facing page:*

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ers on the benefits of EVs, and assist in the electrification of large fleets of vehicles owned by governmental agencies or businesses.

The Minnesota Department of Commerce has released the Minnesota Energy Efficiency Potential Study: 2020-2029, which concluded that the state's utilities should be able to continue to meet or exceed their annual energy-saving goals. The study estimated that utility conservation programs could reduce electric demand by 14 percent and natural gas demand by 11 percent from what they would otherwise be over a 10 year period.

State law requires utilities to achieve energy savings of 1.5 percent of average annual retail sales each year.

Xcel Energy announced in December a long-term goal of supplying carbon-free electricity by 2050.

In 2030, the goal is to have cut carbon emissions by 80 percent from 2005 levels.

Xcel, which has 3.6 million electric customers in eight states, is reportedly the first major electric utility to set a no-emissions goal.

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission Dec. 6 postponed a certificate of need vote on the proposed 152-megawatt Bitter Root wind farm after unions criticized the project's nonunion builder for hiring mostly out-of-state workers. The 44-turbine project is proposed for a site near Canby.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in late December issued a proposed revised supplemental cost finding for the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards, or MATS, rule as well as the Clean Air Act required risk and technology review (RTR).

EPA is proposing to revise its response to the U.S. Supreme Court 2015 decision in *Michigan v. EPA*, which held that the EPA erred by not considering cost in its determination that regulation under section 112 of the Clean Air Act of hazardous air pollutant (HAP) emissions from coal- and oil-fired electric utility steam generating units (EGUs) is appropriate and necessary.

EPA concludes that the costs of complying with MATS (which it calculates at \$7.4 to \$9.6 billion annually) far exceed the direct benefit of MATS (which EPA calculates to be between \$4 million and \$6 million annually).

Despite the proposed reversal of the "appropriate and

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necessary" finding the emission standards first promulgated under the 2012 MATS rule would remain in place.

In a joint letter sent to Assistant Administrator William Wehrum, the American Public Power Association and its industry partners urged EPA to complete its risk and technology review for power

plants under section 112 of the Clean Air Act and to leave the underlying MATS rule in place and effective.

Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) Dec. 5 notified members of the Legislative Coordinating Commission (LCC) that they were allowing salary cap waivers

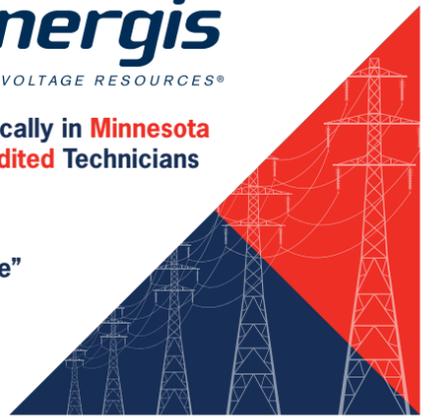
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State law caps the pay for local government jobs at

\$171,338, unless a waiver is granted.

Following notification, the LCC has 30-days to meet and offer recommendations before the new salary limits take effect on Jan. 5.

### Lead Bore Rig Operator

Elk River Municipal Utilities is accepting applications for a full time Lead Bore Rig Operator. This position's responsibilities include: assist with bore rig crew planning and provide work direction for Bore Rig Operator; assist with project planning, materials planning, permitting, and customer communications; perform operation of bore rig machinery and related equipment; placement of underground facilities to project drawings and installation specifications; locate utilities via hand digging, vac-tron, mini excavator, or other equipment; restoration and other groundwork. Position qualifications include five years applicable experience and a valid MN drivers' license with the ability to obtain a Class A license within one year. Please visit our

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website at <https://www.elkriv-erutilities.com/pages/employment-opportunities> for a full job description. Salary range is \$27.43-\$39.20 per hour with excellent benefits. Resumes must be received by January 25, 2019. Please submit resume to: Elk River Municipal Utilities, 13069 Orono Parkway, P.O. Box 430, Elk River, MN 55330, or via email to: mcanterbury@ermumn.com.

### General Manager

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spective candidates must be a visionary leader and have the highest sense of integrity and honesty. Duties include but are not limited to developing policies and strategic practices for the Agency; promoting an understanding of the Agency's goals and objectives; directing the Agency's relationships and position on electric industry issues with governmental agencies, legislative bodies, city government, and the general public. This position reports to the President/Board of Directors. Qualifications include a Bachelor degree in economics, business, marketing, or engineering along with five plus years of related work knowledge and proven supervisory experience. The ideal candidate will possess strong leadership and organizational skills along with the ability to work on multiple projects.

Excellent human relation skills with knowledge of the utility industry are essential to this position. Experience in a Joint-Action Agency would be a plus. Travel will include day trips and an occasional overnight. Northern Municipal Power Agency is proud to offer a competitive compensation and benefits package with a stable and team-oriented work environment. EOE To apply and learn more about these opportunities please visit – [www.eidebailly.com/careers/positions-with-clients](http://www.eidebailly.com/careers/positions-with-clients).

**For a full and complete list of current job openings, for sale and wanted items, see the News/Classifieds section at [www.mmua.org](http://www.mmua.org)**



# 2019 Meeting, Development & Training Center Calendar

### Legislative Conference

January 29-30  
Double Tree Hotel, St. Paul

### APPA Legislative Rally

February 25-27  
Washington, D.C.

### Meter School & Pre-Conference

February 12-15  
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Lineworker Rodeo Clinic

February 27-28  
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo

March 30  
Colorado Springs, Colo.

### APPA E&O Technical Conference

March 31-April 3  
Colorado Springs, Colo.

### Substation School

April 16-18  
Buffalo

### Generation School

April 23-25  
Hutchinson

### Competent Person & Excavation Workshop

May 1-2  
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Underground School

May 14-17  
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Minnesota Public Power Walleye Fishing Tournament

June 1  
Rush Lake, Otter Tail



### Annual Summer Conference

August 19-21  
Breezy Point Resort

### Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo

September 10  
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Overhead School

September 10-13  
MMUA Training Center, Marshall



### MMUA Leadership Academy

All at MMUA Office, Plymouth

Group B - Year 2  
March 13-14  
May 29-30  
September 25-26  
December 11-12

Group C  
February 6-7  
May 1-2  
September 11-12  
November 20-21

### Firstline Supervision

Session 1  
February 6-8, Brainerd  
February 20-22, Plymouth  
March 6-8, Plymouth

Session 2  
October 9-11, Plymouth  
October 23-25, Brainerd  
November 13-15, Plymouth

### Cross Training School

October 15-17  
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Technical & Operations Conference

December 3-5  
Best Western Plus Kelly Inn, St. Cloud

### Transformer School & Pre-Conference

December 10-13  
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

## MMUA offers variety of upcoming meeting, training opportunities

The next few months will see MMUA offer a wide variety of meeting and training opportunities. These include:

### Legislative Conference

Jan. 29-30  
DoubleTree Hotel, St. Paul

Politics influences the environment in which municipal utilities operate. Show up in St. Paul and help make that environment as friendly as possible!

MMUA room block closes Dec. 28. Registration deadline is Jan. 9!

### Meter School and Pre-Conference

Feb. 13-15; Pre-Conference Feb. 12-13  
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

The Meter School is an annual educational opportunity offering valuable technical training and hands-on work with electric metering equipment.

To ensure an optimal educational experience, participants select their preferred class level—Basic/Intermediate or Advanced.

The Pre-Conference is an ideal refresher or introductory course for those with little metering experience. For maximum benefit, consider registering for both the Pre-Conference and Meter School.

Registration deadline is Jan. 28.

### Lineworker Rodeo Clinic

Feb. 27-28  
MMUA Training Center, Marshall

Members of MMUA can attend this complementary training clinic to help prepare for the 2019 Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo in Colorado Springs, Colo., or the 3rd annual Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo in September in Marshall. Come and talk with Rodeo veterans and practice events in our indoor training facility.

Deadline to register is Feb. 12.

For additional meeting and training opportunities, see the Events > Calendar page at [www.mmua.org](http://www.mmua.org)

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## 2019 customer deposit interest rate set at 2.7%

State law requires that privately or publicly owned water, gas, telephone, cable television, electric light, heat, or power companies shall pay a specific interest rate on customer deposits.

By December 15 of each year, the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Commerce is required to announce the interest rate for the next year.

The rate for 2019 is 2.7 percent.

The relevant statute (Minn. Stat. 325E.02 (b)) went into effect in 2006 and in 2007 the rate was 5 percent. It fell the next two years and the rate was one percent or less from 2009 to 2017.

For more on the subject, see the 'Breaking News' section of the MMUA website.



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