

# Nibaur takes MMUA reins from Roberts at 'virtual' conference

## Board approves freeze on dues for upcoming year, due to pandemic uncertainty

Unable to meet in person for the first time since the association was formed in 1931, MMUA held a 'virtual' Summer Conference Aug. 25-26.

Mark Nibaur of Austin Utilities takes over as MMUA president. Jenny Palmer of Winthrop was elected president-elect, placing her in line to become MMUA's first female president, next year. Don Martodam of Hawley was selected by the board as its secretary-treasurer.

Facing economic uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic and response, MMUA member dues will be held at the exact same amounts as last year.

The dues resolution was approved by the MMUA board of directors Aug. 24.

Dues were approved by members attending the virtual business meeting, held Aug. 26.

Associate Member dues will be held at \$375.

Affiliate Member (joint action agency) dues also remain unchanged for 2020-21.

The MMUA 2020-2021 fiscal year begins Oct. 1.

Issues around the COVID-19 pandemic have caused much budgetary uncertainty.

The current fiscal year has seen challenges due to the pandemic, as MMUA meetings and training workshops were cancelled, or changed to virtual settings. There is no certainty of knowing when we can get back to normal operations and holding our regular meetings



Outgoing MMUA President Vernell Roberts, left, accepted a clock commemorating his service to the association from incoming President Mark Nibaur. Roberts is from Detroit Lakes; Nibaur from Austin.

and conventions, noted MMUA Executive Director Jack Kegel. While that complicates budget planning, MMUA believes it

has proven that it can adjust to changing situations and make things work out for the organization and its members.

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## President's Award

### The most 'essential' of employees—those who toil for municipal utilities—honored in 2020

*Editor's note: The following is a written version of the MMUA President's Award speech, given by Vernell Roberts, general manager of Detroit Lakes Public Utilities and 2019-2020 MMUA President. The President's Award is MMUA's highest honor. The award is presented annually at our Summer Conference.*

Going into 2020 optimism was high, unemployment at lowest levels in recent history, stock market was very strong, all financial indicators showed good positive growth for the upcoming year.

Many of us were making plans for growth in our communities, business expansion, residential development, and additions and upgrades to our systems. Several large projects in our communities were under way and plans were being made to close out those projects and move forward with the excellent customer service all of our employees deliver.

Then March happened. To provide for the safety and wellbeing of Minnesota citizens, Governor Walz implemented stay at home orders and closed many businesses in an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Employees: see page 5 please



Municipal utility employees were officially recognized as 'essential' in 2020. For their contribution to keeping the lights on, the water running, and everything else a city or utility provides, the 2020 MMUA President's Award goes to them. This picture, taken in 2019 at the MMUA Training Center, shows Brainerd's Trent Hawkinson and Joe Moore of Moorhead (background).

## Granite Falls ravaged—municipal utilities provide mutual aid

Severe storms, with wind gusts of over 70 miles-per-hour, knocked out power to thousands of electric customers in southern Minnesota Saturday, Aug. 8. Granite Falls was particularly hard-hit.

By 6:45 p.m., power outages affected the Granite Falls area and, farther east, much of Goodhue County—including Cannon Falls and Red Wing.

Granite Falls suffered widespread tree damage, which contributed to the downing of power lines. Debris blocked some streets. The local high school roof was damaged.

Four main electric distribution circuits in Granite Falls were out-of-service after the storm, and there was widespread damage to secondary (house) services.

Seeing the extent of the damage, Granite Falls Electrical Superintendent Perry Peterson called MMUA mutual aid coordinator Mike Willetts, to call in extra help. Willetts, MMUA's director of job training and safety, called in the necessary assistance.

Cody Raveling, MMUA's training center coordinator/job training and safety instructor,

was in Granite Falls by 6:45 the next morning. He was followed shortly afterward by crews from the Benson, Olivia and Willmar municipal utilities. Marshall Municipal Utilities sent two crews, and electrical superintendent Larry Lamote.

Following a safety and res-

Mutual aid: see back page please

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MRES Dedicates  
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Hydro Project  
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## Four new member representatives join MMUA's board of directors

Nominees elected to the MMUA Board of Directors, during the recent Summer Conference, included these four people:

*Bruce DeBlieck, Willmar Municipal Utilities, Commissioner*

DeBlieck has a long history of service to Willmar.

From 2017 to the present, he has served on the Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission, and is currently serving his second three-year term (2020-2022), with the potential for a third term beginning in 2023.

Previously, for a nearly 20-year span (1995 to 2014), DeBlieck served as the city council liaison to the Municipal Utilities Commission. He was a member of the Willmar City Council during this time.

From 1980-1986, DeBlieck was appointed and served on the Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission.

DeBlieck has regularly attended MMUA annual and legislative meetings.



DeBlieck



Hoffman



Lee



Trembley

*Joe Hoffman, city administrator and utility manager, Preston Public Utilities*

Hoffman is currently Preston's city administrator and utility general manager. He assumed that position in September 2005, after having served in economic development roles in Minnesota. In his role as both utility manager and city administrator, he brings a broad perspective of how the utility and city function together.

He was elected to the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA) board of directors in 2012. He was elected an officer in 2014 and is now the agency presi-

dent, active in policy development and actions on critical utility issues like cybersecurity, renewable energy development, automated metering infrastructure and community solar.

Hoffman is an active participant at MMUA's summer conference, legislative conference and on ad-hoc committees. He is a regularly participates in the Government Relations Committee calls and is a prompt and effective lobbyist with his own representatives as well as state legislative leadership.

*Kevin Lee, finance director, Marshall Municipal Utilities*

Lee has served as the Marshall Municipal Utilities (MMU) finance director since August 2013.

He regularly attends the MMUA Government Relations Committee meetings and attends different MMUA functions, including the annual Summer Conference. Lee was a member of the first class of MMUA's Leadership Academy.

Members of that first Leadership class noted he has a positive outlook and friendly demeanor. He is a deep thinker and has a mind for leadership, which will make him an effective member of the MMUA Board of Directors.

Lee also volunteers in his community as a youth basketball coach.

*Chris Trembley, Madelia Municipal Utilities, General Manager*

Trembley has been Madelia Light & Power general manager since January 2019. Prior to that, he was employed as an MMUA regional safety coordinator, serving the South

Central area of Minnesota.

In both of these roles, Chris earned the respect of members. He is resourceful and has a broad network of individuals in the utility industry that he can—and does—reach out to.

As general manager, Trembley has played an active role and participated in numerous MMUA membership meetings and technical conferences, as well as the APPA Legislative Rally. He is currently enrolled in MMUA's Leadership Academy.

Trembley proudly served in the United States Marine Corps.

### Thanks to outgoing board members

Four people left the board, including 2019-20 President Vernell Roberts.

Three of the departing board members—John Crooks, Vernell Roberts, and Chris Olson—stepped down after completing the traditional two terms on the board. In addition, policymaker Carol Laumer left the board because of local term limits, as she completed her nine years on the Willmar Commission at the end of 2020. Two seats on the MMUA board are reserved for policymakers.

MMUA thanks the outgoing board members for their service, and hopes they will remain active in the association in the years ahead.



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##### President-Elect

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Don Martodam

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Chris Trembley, Madelia

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## Nibaur leads slate of officers; Palmer president-elect

Mark Nibaur, Austin Utilities General Manager, was elected MMUA president at the association's annual Summer Conference business meeting, Wednesday, Aug. 26. Nibaur was elected to the board in 2017.

Nibaur accepted the position of General Manager for Austin Utilities in 2010. He was previously employed, for 23 years, by MidAmerican Energy in Sioux City, Iowa as Operations Manager. He received his MBA from the University of South Dakota-Vermillion.

Nibaur is involved with a number of local organizations, including serving as a board officer for the Development Corporation of Austin, an economic development organization.

Nibaur is also a board member of the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, and serves on the American Public Gas Association's Board of Directors.

Jenny Palmer was elected MMUA President-Elect. This is the first time a woman has served in the role, and puts her in line to become MMUA's first female president, next year.

Palmer, the Winthrop city administrator/EDA director, began serving on the Board in 2017, being appointed to fill the remainder of a retiring Board members' term. Palmer was elected to the board for an initial three-year term in 2018.

She has been with Winthrop over 23 years and in her present position for six years. She was previously clerk/treasurer, an accounting clerk and started as utility billing clerk/receptionist.

Hazelton also serves as a commissioner on a multi-city cable commission and on several boards. She holds a bachelor's degree in account-



Nibaur



Palmer



Martodam

ing and several professional certifications, including a municipal clerk certification from the Minnesota Clerks and Finance Officers Association.

Hazelton is a Winthrop native and a former Fairfax city council member.

Hazelton is also a graduate of the MMUA Leadership Academy.

The MMUA Board of Directors Aug. 25 selected Don Martodam to serve as its secretary-treasurer.

Martodam has served on the Hawley Public Utilities Commission for more than 30 years. He has also served on the Northern Municipal Power Agency board for several years.

Martodam was born and raised in Perham, the oldest of 10 children and graduated from Perham High School. He has a degree in soil science and crop production from the University of Minnesota.

He owned the John Deere dealership in Hawley, and ran that for 25 years. He currently manages Martodam Holdings. He is active in local organizations, is past president of the West Central Initiative board, has served on the Rural Minnesota CEP (Concentrated Employment Program) board for over 30 years, is a Clean Energy Resource Team board member and a past president of the Minnesota Workforce Board.



Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association

## MMUA unveils refreshed logo at annual meeting

MMUA unveiled a new logo, as part of its recent virtual Summer Conference.

MMUA Executive Director Jack Kegel explained that the primary reason for seeking a professional evaluation of the association's logo were problems in getting consistency in different printed and digital formats.

"The color rendition ranged from pink to almost brown in different media," Kegel said.

MMUA contracted with

a Twin Cities-area marketing firm to develop the new look.

The consultant felt that "our basic acronym logo had served us well, and it was so well known that they thought it best to give it a subtle updating rather than start over from scratch," Kegel said.

The consultant recommended MMUA would be well served by moving to brighter colors. The blue and yellow combination, said Kegel, was the most popular choice among board members and staff.



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### Wisconsin extends disconnect moratorium

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) Sept. 3 voted 2-1 to continue an ongoing ban on electric, gas and water service disconnections until Oct. 1.

According to news reports, 1.4 million customers—or nearly 33 percent of the total number of customers—were delinquent in July. The PSC survey of utilities included municipals, which are state-regulated in Wisconsin.

Nearly 13 percent of commercial accounts were in arrears, compared to just 2.7 percent the previous two years.

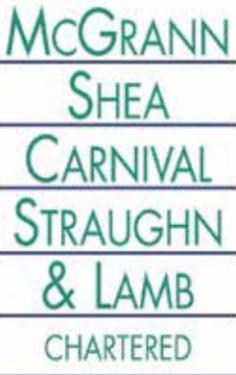
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## 'Virtual' Summer Conference program designed to fit these troubled times

MMUA's virtual Summer Conference program for 2020 included a variety of topics and allowed those attending to discuss a variety of topics with peers and MMUA staff.

A presentation on Coping with the Change, Stress and Communication Dynamics of COVID-19, presented by Kit Welchlin, started the online presentation the morning of Tuesday, Aug. 25. Welchlin offered solid advice on how to move ahead with the changes that have come as a result of the pandemic, mixed with a healthy dose of humor.

MMUA Executive Director Jack Kegel followed that with a fascinating look at the development of the electric industry and MMUA through the years.

The Advantage of Transmission Investing for Public Power was presented by Jim Pardikes, Ron Kennedy and Chris Nagle, MCR Performance Solutions.

A unique look at The Washington Scene, from the public power perspective, was presented by our Washington lobbyist, Michael Nolan.



A highlight of the meeting was the President's Award presentation, by Vernell Roberts.

Another timely topic offering was Leading Public Power and City Operations During COVID-19 Pandemic. This was a panel discussion featuring Chris Trembley of Madelia Municipal Light & Power; Mark Nibaur of Austin Utili-

ties and Vernell Roberts of Detroit Lakes Public Utilities, moderated by MMUA Director of Job Training and Safety Mike Willetts.

A session of Online Networking rounded out the day. Association members conducted their annual business

the morning of Wednesday, Aug. 26 (see front page article). The business meeting was followed with an Awards Presentation and the ceremonial passing of the association president's gavel from Roberts to Nibaur.

The meeting offers MMUA

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the opportunity to update members on a variety of important topics. This included distributed generation Technical Specification Manual 101: The Basics, by MMUA Director of Engineering and Policy Analysis, Bob Jagusch.

In this unsettled time, there was renewed interest in a look at State Legislative Developments, from the capable hands of Bill Black and Kent Sulem of MMUA and Doug Carnival of McGrann Shea et al. MMUA staff closed the meeting with an Issues Round-Up.

MMUA thanks all those who attended and our meeting sponsors. Hopefully we will all be together again next year!

### MRES low-carbon institute sponsor

Sioux Falls, S.D. – The Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) and Gas Technology Institute (GTI) are embarking on a five-year initiative to accelerate the development and demonstration of low-carbon energy technologies. With increasingly ambitious decarbonization goals from private companies and governments alike, existing technology is not enough to achieve those targets.

The Low-Carbon Resources Initiative (LCRI) is a unique, international collaborative spanning the electric and gas sectors that will help advance global, economy-wide decarbonization. The 18 anchor sponsors include Missouri River Energy Services (MRES).

Seeded with \$10 million from the EPRI collaborative, funding for the initiative is expected to be leveraged many times over its \$100 million target through public and private collaboration.

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## Award:

continued from page 1

With these orders and closing of businesses came layoffs, downtowns becoming eerily quiet, reduction in electrical loads, and closing of schools, distance learning and a whole new need for alternate day care facilities to care for employees deemed essential.

As many of us were trying to navigate changes and updates in “Executive Orders” on nearly an hour by hour basis, it appeared that our employees were not necessarily listed as “essential” employees. How do we continue critical services, provide electric, water and sewer services if our employees are required to isolate or work from home? How do we provide for utility billing services and work with customers impacted by COVID-19 if required to “stand down.” In the end we were listed as “Critical” employee sector.

The MMUA membership consists of 208 members, including water and gas utilities. In total we serve nearly 1.5 million customers membership wide. We serve numerous hospitals including the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, many police departments, fire departments, schools and oth-



The pandemic response also disrupted office functions, with many employees shifting to a work-from-home mode, for at least part of their work week. This picture of part of the Elk River Municipal Utilities staff was taken pre-pandemic.

er facilities deemed essential or critical during this unprecedented pandemic. These 208 municipalities are critical to the life, safety and economic health of the communities they serve. In the midst of this pandemic, their top priorities are to keep customers and their employee’s safe while continuing to provide exceptional service.

We worked with our employees to allow split shifts, dispatching crews from home and having tele-conference morning meetings to provide work orders. Efforts were made to keep our staff out of facilities to keep them and

other employees healthy. We set up tele-work plans, provided additional technology and computers to aid employees who could work from home. Many of us went to rotating schedules to limit internal exposure.

Our employees embraced the necessary changes. They shared ideas of how to provide continued service while operating under a pandemic.

They changed their routines, adapted to working more independently, accepted the need to wear masks and practiced social distancing. All did so without our customers ever noticing. Our

employees continued to show up every day, even though in a different manner. They provided quality electric service with continued reliability, high-quality drinking water, maintained the gas systems and kept the sanitary sewer system working and treatment at a high level (even with the great toilet paper shortage of 2020).

All employees did this without much fanfare and hardly a word mentioned in the press or media about what they do, or who they are.

All of our employees give so much more than just their normal jobs—from volunteering as a fireman, with local service organizations, doing some extra maintenance at city hall, coaching sports at school, helping out at the food shelf or serving on the church board. Many of them help out

because they have the sense of community that we all share. And they continue to help as much as current circumstances allow.

I am proud to present the 2020 MMUA President’s Award, to all of the utility employees of the 208 municipals that are the MMUA Membership. This award is presented to all of you for a job well done and a sincere ‘thank you’ for all that you do. While all of you work behind the scenes to keep the lights on and the water flowing, today is the day we bring you to the forefront because of all of your efforts.

Please recognize all of your employees for their efforts and commitment to their communities. And thank them all for a job well done—they are well deserving of the 2020 MMUA President’s Award.

Thank you!

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## Lifetime Honorary Memberships

### Award caps lifetime of municipal utility service for Marshall's Roos and Shakopee's Crooks

Two people were honored with an MMUA Honorary Lifetime Membership Aug. 26 during the annual conference. They were John Crooks and Brad Roos.

The award is for an individual who has concluded or is about to conclude a long and distinguished career in the municipal utility industry, and has a strong record of involvement in MMUA and efforts on behalf of the betterment of the industry on a statewide basis.

#### Brad Roos Marshall Municipal Utilities

Roos was introduced to municipal utilities by working a summer job at Orange City, Iowa Municipal Utilities. He began his career as city administrator and municipal utility manager in Sanborn, Iowa, from 1977 to 1984. He then became General Manager at Denison, Iowa Municipal Utilities.

Roos served on the Board of Directors of the American Public Power Association from 1997 to 2003, while he was the general manager at Denison. He also served as President of the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities.

In 2003, Roos moved to Marshall, Minn., to become General Manager of Marshall Municipal Utilities. He has been an active member and opinion leader in MMUA ever since.

Roos was a board member of Missouri River Energy Services for 32 years during his

service with municipal utilities both in Iowa and in Minnesota. He has long been an active participant in the Midwest Electric Consumers Association, and served as its President in 2013.

Roos served for a number of years as chair of the MMUA Government Relations Committee, where he displayed an even-handed and judicious approach to chairing the group. In 2006, he spearheaded the development of an MMUA renewable energy standard bill in anticipation of likely passage of a renewable energy standard bill. The MMUA bill served as a model for many elements of the renewable energy bill that was enacted in 2007.

Roos always made sure that MMUA had the support needed to complete projects at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. Under his leadership, MMU employees contributed hundreds of hours of work to improve the training center and keep it running smoothly. When MMU retires a bucket truck or digger derrick, the vehicle is donated to the training center.

Both Brad's father and grandfather managed municipal utilities in Iowa. He may be the only person who wanted to be a municipal utility manager as a 6-year-old.

He embodies the best in a long tradition of municipal utility leadership in the Midwest.

Roos retired in late August after a 43-year career managing municipal utilities. He



photos by Steve Downer

Brad Roos chaired by the MMUA Government Relations Committee for many years and often served as a spokesperson on various issues. Here he addresses an issue during the 2014 Legislative Conference.

and his wife Patty will be moving to Cedar Rapids, Iowa to be close to family.

#### John Crooks Shakopee Public Utilities

Crooks began his career in the municipal utility industry in 1981, running the lab at the Rockford, Ill., water utility, which had more than 100 employees. Over the years he moved up to an operator position, then foreman, and then production manager.

In 2001, Crooks moved to Minnesota, to become the Shakopee Public Utilities (SPU) water superintendent. In 2010 he was named Utilities Manager. During this time, Shakopee was one of the fastest growing communities in the state. Under the direction of Crooks, the water



John Crooks (right) accepted the president's gavel from Bob Elston of Sleepy Eye at the 2017 summer meeting.

system serving Shakopee increased from 8 to 18 production wells to meet the growing demands of a customer base

which increased from 6,000 to 11,700 accounts.

Crooks served on the MMUA Board of Directors from 2014 to 2020 and as MMUA President in 2017-18.

In 2016 Shakopee was the site of the national Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo. Crooks worked very closely with MMUA staff for more than a year to plan and host the event.

He has been an active participant in MMUA's Government Relations Committee. He was a key member of the municipal-cooperative group that developed the principles that underlie the municipal-cooperative CIP reform bill known as the ECO Act.

Crooks has served as chair of the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency Board of Directors, is on the Board of Directors for St. Francis Regional Medical Center and is Past President and member of the Shakopee Rotary Club.

As his career winds down, John's ability to listen, solve problems creatively and his positive attitude will be missed.

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## SMMPA reinvents itself; earns MMUA's System Achievement Award

The MMUA System Achievement Award is for a member utility that has demonstrated significant leadership and innovation in one or more key aspects of utility operations, such as customer service, energy efficiency or renewables, or technology. The award this year went to Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA).

SMMPA on Feb. 5 announced its strategic plan to reshape its generation portfolio through the retirement of the Sherco 3 coal-fired power plant and replace it primarily with wind and solar generation. The plan, known as SMMPA 2.0, would result in a 90 percent reduction in CO2 emissions from 2005 levels and become 80 percent carbon-free energy on an annual basis in 2030.

SMMPA viewed this as a unique opportunity to reimagine SMMPA and take the Agency in a direction with an increased commitment to sustainability while maintaining reliability and affordability.

SMMPA was originally formed essentially to build Sherco 3 and while SMMPA has evolved considerably, to many SMMPA was synony-



mous with Sherco 3. From a resource planning perspective, it had become clear to co-owners SMMPA and Xcel that coal-fired generation would no longer best serve the needs of their customers. With all its outstanding debt on Sherco 3 anticipated to be paid off in 2027, a more economically and environmentally sustainable path forward became evident. It would include roughly 190 megawatts of wind and another 190 megawatts of solar combined with existing non-coal generating resources. Natural gas and other non-coal fossil-fueled generation will continue to play an important role in maintaining reliability for SMMPA's members. The Agency expects these facilities to provide a relatively small percentage of its energy needs on an annual basis, but to continue to facilitate the increase in intermittent renewable resources while maintaining reliability and affordability.

SMMPA is optimistic that technological breakthroughs

are on the horizon but cautions the cost of achieving the last 10-20 percent reduction in carbon emissions in the power sector is currently projected to be prohibitively high with today's technology.

SMMPA 2.0 captures an aggressive portfolio of new and continuing initiatives designed to provide maximum value to SMMPA's 18 municipal utility members while striving to keep its rates competitive and limit wholesale rate increases to levels at or below the rate of inflation.

The key elements of SMMPA 2.0 include:

- Plan to retire Sherco 3 and cease owning coal generation after 2030
- Will add significant levels of wind and solar
- Plan to be at least 80 percent carbon-free in 2030
- Will have reduced carbon emissions in 2030 by nearly 90 percent compared to 2005 levels
- SMMPA and member utility natural gas and diesel units will continue to play an

important role for reliability

- Society will need new technology to go beyond 80 percent carbon-free and should evaluate cost-effectiveness

- SMMPA will evaluate storage and deploy when cost-effective

- There will be a continued need for transmission investment

- Plan to meet at least one percent of renewable resources with local member projects located in their communities

Build on successful energy efficiency programs

- Develop beneficial electrification programs including SMMPA's electric vehicle charging network

- Continue providing economic development credits to



SMMPA: see page 9 please



SMMPA partnered with NSP to build the largest unit at the Sherburne County generating site—Sherco 3 SMMPA owns 41 percent (359 megawatts) of the coal-fired power plant.

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## MMU's Johnson recognized for Training Center contributions

Steve Johnson, the Marshall Municipal Utilities electric operations manager, Aug. 26 received the MMUA Distinguished Service Award. This award is for an employee or governing body member of an MMUA member utility who has provided outstanding service in support of MMUA or its goals.

Johnson was instrumental in the development and on-going success of the MMUA Training Center.

It was Johnson's idea to build a Training Center adjacent to the City of Marshall's Minnesota Emergency Response & Industrial Training (MERIT) Center project. He promised that if MMUA would build a training center in Marshall, he would fully support it, as would Marshall Municipal Utilities' (MMU).

That left a huge question—if MMUA built such a facility in the southwestern part of the state, would the membership travel the distance for training?

To help determine the answer, and with Steve Johnson's constant support, an Underground School was held in Marshall. All of the

hands-on classes involved working directly on MMU's underground electrical system around the City of Marshall. The school attracted approximately 100 students from across the state and demonstrated that our members were indeed willing to travel to Marshall for training.

But how to pay for it?

Fortunately, MMUA has many very dedicated members, who recognized the value of the project. For one, the City of Marshall, at Johnson's urging, offered MMUA a favorable land rental agreement.

MMUA also received monetary donations from both our Regular and Associate members, as well as other companies and private individuals who donated both money and in-kind donations of equipment and qualified skilled labor. The fundraising process required seemingly countless meetings promoting the project and asking for donations. Johnson always touted the benefits, from a member's perspective, that such a Training Center could offer.

When construction began,



Steve Johnson has been a constant presence and supporter of the MMUA Training Center in Marshall.

Johnson was MMUA's eyes and ears on the ground. Without his presence on-site and his tireless attention to the project, it would not have progressed as smoothly as it did.

He was involved at every step:

- led the logistics for graveling the Training Center roads with "waste" blacktop from a local city project.
- made sure the soil was

seeded properly, and personally watered the grass after work to make sure it was growing properly.

- planted most of the trees around the Training Center property.

- continues to be involved offering his services as an instructor when needed.

From the very beginning, MMU and Steve Johnson have supported every training session that takes place at the Training Center, whether to provide equipment, trucks, instructors, or anything else needed.

Johnson is foremost among the people that deserve to be recognized for their involvement with the MMUA Training Center, for his unwavering commitment to the vision and to the on-going success of the facility.

## Public Power responds to Category 4 Hurricane Laura

The national Public Power mutual aid network was activated in August, as Hurricane Laura made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane in the early morning hours of Aug. 27. The hurricane made landfall in Louisiana with 150 mph winds and more than nine feet of storm surge.

The Department of Energy reported there were approximately 484,000 customer

outages reported across the states of Louisiana and Texas, including approximately 386,000 customer outages in Louisiana.

The Florida Municipal Electric Association (FMEA) on Aug. 26 reported that it had assembled public power crews from across the state to aid with power restoration efforts in Louisiana.

Along with Florida, crews

were also deployed from Missouri, Texas, Georgia and Alabama. Public power utilities from other states were on standby and ready to send crews if needed.

Texas Public Power Association (TPPA), reported that a total of eight municipally-owned electric utilities that were in the track of the storm, and that six cities were hit with power outages.

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## Anoka's Flahave, SMMPA's Koneczny recognized as MMUA Rising Stars

The MMUA Rising Star Award is for an employee of an MMUA member utility who has been employed for five or fewer years in their current position.

Those honored will have demonstrated a dedication to the goals and principles of municipal utilities through problem solving, creativity, and job knowledge; a professional who performs all job responsibilities in an outstanding manner, achieving high quality results; and has demonstrated interest in improving management and operational skills through continuing education.

This year there are two honorees. They are:

**Matt Flahave, Journeyman Lineman/Lead Lineman, Anoka Municipal Utility**

Although Flahave is a younger lineman his peers rank him very highly in the utility's 'Over the Horizon' award. He scored higher than any other employee with outstanding marks in leadership, safety, and mentoring. This shows that at an early stage



**Matt Flahave, Anoka Municipal Utilities' lead lineman.**

in his career, Flahave has already learned the importance of giving back to others in order to help our industry succeed. While there is some outside training available to help the industry employees, much has to come internally from mentors and future leaders. He strongly practices these traits.

Flahave continually receives high marks for job performance, safety, mentoring, and leadership. When projects come up, he is willing to take the lead. He is more than willing to volunteer to help improve operations, and is a solid, dependable worker who offers helpful insight with no complaining. He has been a wonderful resource at Anoka Municipal Utility.

Flahave is also the Electric Department's representative on the City of Anoka's safety committee, and has also taken over to lead Anoka's rub-

ber glove testing program.

**Seth Koneczny, Power Delivery Engineer, SMMPA**

Koneczny joined the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA) team two years ago and has shown an intense desire to learn, grow and add value to our SMMPA members. He performs

M I S O modeling, coordinates the collection of load forecast data from member representatives, works with Minnesota



**Seth Koneczny, SMMPA power delivery engineer.**

transmission owners to compile and submit the Minnesota Biennial report and coordinate with various Agency personnel and departments to compile load forecast, generation, and accounting data for submission of the yearly Department of Commerce Electric Utility Annual Report.

Koneczny plays a key role in helping SMMPA members implement the interconnection process and answers their questions. He has developed an updated Public

Utility Regulatory Policies Act (PURPA) contract between SMMPA and its members.

Koneczny has strong technical and analytical skills combined with excellent interpersonal skills and a dedication to customer service. He is a true team player and a strong believer in the power of joint action. He is dedicated to expanding his industry knowledge and developing his skills and has participated in numerous learning forums.

In addition, he has mastered CAD/CAM software and provides services to agency members and staff, including maps of member electric and water distribution systems, detailed transmission assets, easements and permit filings and points of delivery or metering changes.

Koneczny is a younger person who joined an organization of mostly seasoned veterans, bringing enthusiasm, energy, new ideas and a great sense of humor which combined with his extensive professional skills to quickly make him an excellent teammate.



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### SMMPA:

continued from page 7

members

- Committed to maintaining competitive rates and will strive to hold increases to at or below CPI
- Urge policymakers to resist one-size-fits-all mandates.

SMMPA announced in late 2019 its intent to build out a SMMPA Member EV Charging Network consisting of a DC fast charger and two dual-port level 2 chargers in each SMMPA community. Deployment has begun with the goal of having the chargers installed before the end of 2020. SMMPA's board authorized the program based on



**SMMPA CEO Dave Geschwind spoke at the 2017 dedication of the Lemond Energy Center solar plant.**

the need for public charging infrastructure to help address consumers potential "range anxiety" a major barrier to EV adoption.

As part of SMMPA 2.0, the Agency has adopted a new logo and tag line: "Your

Partner for a Bright Energy Future." While challenging, SMMPA views this as an exciting turning point that the new logo and tag line capture as it pursues this new strategic initiative.

SMMPA crafted a rollout plan for the SMMPA 2.0 strategic initiative by first talking to some key stakeholders in state government, the environmental community and others. Understanding that one rarely pleases everyone, the Agency wanted to understand what concerns might be raised and how they could potentially be addressed. The communications plan was successfully executed and resulted in significant positive feedback from stakeholders.

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## Wells recognized for lighting conversion

The City of Wells and Wells Public Utilities were recently among five cities recently honored by the League of Minnesota Cities with a City of Excellence Award.

In Wells, the city and utility collaborated to convert all city lighting to light emitting diode (LED) technology. The project started with a way to light the downtown decorative street lights.

Upon investigation, new technology was available to light the fixtures. The project was expanded into a city-wide project, once benefits were quantified. The project is sav-

ing money for the city and has created a more appealing and safer environment.

Citizens have been very supportive and complimentary of the changes.

So far, the downtown and 'beltline' high traffic areas have been converted. Parks and other areas will be converted over the next couple of years.

The winning City of Excellence entries were chosen in each of three population categories, with two winners in a topical category. Wells won the cities of under 5,000 population group.



The City of Wells and Wells Public Utilities collaborated on a project to convert all city lighting to light emitting diode (LED) technology.

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### Associate Member News

Fairbanks Morse is proud to supply the main propulsion engines for the USS Beloit, the U.S. Navy's Freedom-class littoral combat ship to be named for Beloit, Wisc. On July 22, a keel laying ceremony took place at the Fincantieri Marinette Marine shipyard in Marinette for the LCS 29.

"The city and citizens of Beloit have been a steadfast supporter of the Navy and Marine Corps," said former Secretary of the Navy Richard V. Spencer. "From building engines for freedom-variant LCSs to manufacturing components for the Ford-class aircraft carriers, the contributions of Beloit citizens make our Navy stronger, more capable, and more lethal. I am proud to name the next ship in honor of the city and citizens of Beloit."

The USS Beloit will be constructed by Lockheed Martin with Fincantieri Marinette Marine in Marinette, Wisconsin. The ship will be 387 feet long, have a beam length of 57.4 feet and travel at speeds in excess of 40 knots.

Scott Mossbrooks has accepted the position of Vice President of Business Development at mPower Innovations. Mossbrooks is an electrical engineer and brings over 32 years of utility experience with advanced metering infrastructures, demand-side management programs, communication systems, Geographic Information Systems, outage management and billing systems, along with cybersecurity.

mPower Innovations is headquartered in Iron Mountain, Mich., with additional offices in Appleton, Wisc., and Grand Rapids, Mich.

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The City of Dawson has joined MMUA as a Regular Member.

Dawson, located in Minnesota's western-most Lac qui Parle County, had a population of 1,540 at the 2010 census. The city operates water and wastewater utilities.

City hall is located at 675 Chestnut Street, Dawson MN, 56232. Mail can be sent to P.O. Box 552. Contact person is Tami Schuelke-Sampson, city manager. Phone is 320-769-2154 and fax is 320-769-2858.

Severe weather, including tornadoes, struck Minnesota the evening of Friday, Aug. 14. Tornadoes were reported

## Around the State



near the MMUA-member cities of **Elbow Lake** and **Brownton**. Those municipalities reported no outages. Thunderstorms were blamed for disrupting electric supply to 54,000 Xcel Energy customers in the Twin Cities area.

The **Princeton** city council Aug. 13, on a 3-2 vote, approved a Nov. 3 referendum question to abolish the Princeton Public Utilities Commission. The issue stems from a commission decision to halt payments in lieu



MMUA photo by Anthony Lenz

Recently-retired from Madelia Municipal Utilities, former lineman **Les Sem** put his skills to work building a raised and lighted platform for a sign welcoming people to the 'Pride of the Prairie.' The project was designed to make the welcome sign more visible, and it certainly appears to have accomplished that. The sign is located on the west side of MN Hwy. 60. Well done, Les!

Nobody was hurt. The incident is under investigation.

The street--2nd St. NW--is also MN Hwy. 7, so the repairs are being done by state crews.

The **City of Kenyon** is putting the finishing touches on its 30-acre business park, slated for availability in 2020. The lots should be open for development this year.

The city in 2019 received a grant from the Minnesota Department of Economic Development that covered about 50 percent of the cost of laying down infrastructure like roads, electric lines and substations, and sewers. The park is located on the northeast side of town.

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of tax (PILOT) to the city, following a city-wide imposition of a franchise fee. The local Commission said it discontinued the PILOT to avoid duplication of city funding resources.

A city subcommittee was established to work with the PUC to resolve the PILOT issue. The subcommittee's work had been going forward in a positive manner, until approval of the referendum.

The **Shakopee** city council Aug. 18 approved a motion to place a referendum question on abolition of the Shakopee Public Utilities Commission on the November ballot.

The council Sept. 1 approved a motion to issue a request for qualifications for daily management of the utility, and an in-depth analysis of the utility to be done over a two-year period. After that evaluation, the council would decide the fate of the utility, including a possible sale.

A local Assemblies of God church paid the delinquent bills of 151 low-income **Willmar Municipal Utilities** customers. A sum of \$20,000 was involved.

The **New Ulm Public Utilities Commission** in late July approved \$1.25 million bid for labor and material to replace transmission line poles, which carry electricity into the city. The old wood poles are deteriorating, a process hastened, on some, by woodpeckers. The new poles will be steel.

The Commission is also offering an apprenticeship program for entry-level boiler operator trainees. Responsibilities will include assisting in the operation and maintenance of power plant equipment, performing chemical testing of cooling tower fluids and other duties associated

with the operation of a power plant.

Meanwhile, New Ulm lineman Jim Henderson won the donut hole eating contest during community Crazy Days. The event included donations to charity.

A new electric vehicle charging station is in service in Alexandria, close to the I-94 corridor. Among those contributing to the project were **ALP Utilities** and its supplemental wholesale power supplier, Missouri River Energy Services.

A street sweeper Aug. 3 fell through a sinkhole on **Ortonville's** main street. One wheel had dropped into a hole and city workers were getting ready to pull it out when the sinkhole opened up. No one was inside the sweeper when it fell in.

**Central Minnesota Power Agency Services** (CMPAS) announced Sept. 2 that CEO Chris Kopel was leaving the agency.

Kopel had been with CMPAS since 2013, serving first as chief operating officer before taking over the Chief Executive Officer role in 2018.

As CEO, Kopel was credited with providing agency members with the lowest wholesale rates in Minnesota, expanding member services and substantially lowering administrative costs.

The Agency wished Kopel well in his future endeavors.

CMPAS Chief Financial Officer Malinda Hibben will serve as interim CEO while the board searches for permanent executive leadership.

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## Several municipal utilities designate CARES Act funds for customer bills

A number of municipal utilities are using a portion of their federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds to help their customers, particularly small businesses.

The CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act enacted on March 27, 2020, has appropriated \$150 billion to the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF), which can be used towards paying customer utility bills incurred during the period of March 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) announced Aug. 4 that a portion of the funding from the Federal Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) allocated to the city of Rochester, will go towards helping local small business customers pay their utility bills. By that date, the City of Rochester had already received over \$8.8 million CRF dollars from the State. The Rochester City Council approved a plan for RPU to work with qualifying small business customers to utilize \$500,000 for utility bill payments.

In addition to providing

assistance to locally owned small businesses, the program also has designated funding for women, minority, and veteran owned local businesses (WMBE).

"These times have been difficult for many of our small business customers and we have listened to them. With this program, we wanted to ensure that it was an easy, straight-forward application process and that it was equitable for all," said Krista

Boston, RPU Director of Customer Relations.

Applications must be submitted for approval by October 16, 2020. Full program details, applications, and eligibility requirements for the RPU program can be found on the utility website.

The Detroit Lakes city council Aug. 10 approved a motion to allocate \$22,500 in CARES Act funding to develop a grant program for utility

customers to get current on delinquent accounts.

The program will be developed in partnership with the local Mahube-Otwa community action agency. It will seek to bring delinquent account holders current by Nov. 15, the earliest date that new funding from the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) would become available through Mahube-Otwa.

According to local reports,

Detroit Lakes Public Utility had \$10,500 in delinquent electric utility accounts, as of Aug. 10. The balance was expected to increase \$4,000 per month, requiring an additional \$12,000 for the months of August, September and October.

Customers who already receive LIHEAP funding would likely receive the bulk of the funding.

**CARES: see facing page**

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## MRES dedicates Red Rock Hydroelectric Project with virtual ceremony

Missouri River Energy Services (MRES) hosted a video dedication ceremony Sept. 2 to commemorate the completion of construction and beginning of power generation at the Red Rock Hydroelectric Project (RRHP).

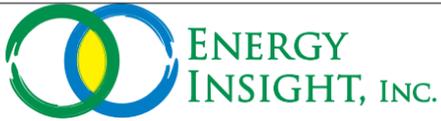
The 36.4 megawatt plant was built at the existing Red Rock Dam on the Des Moines

River, outside of Pella, Iowa, an MRES member community. The dam is 5,200 feet long and 95 feet high. It was built in the 1960s as a flood control project.

The premiere showing of the video dedication was available via the organization's website and social media channels.



The Red Rock hydro powerhouse was built at the existing dam on the Des Moines River near Pella.



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The video dedication was held due to the uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus pandemic.

MRES estimates the project will deliver enough renewable, emissions-free energy to supply over 18,000 homes and businesses in MRES member communities. It is the second largest hydroelectric facility in the State of Iowa.

The project is owned by the Western Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (WMM-PA) and will be operated by MRES. While RRHP is now operational, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Hydro-

### CARES:

continued from facing page

Along with setting aside CARES Act funds for city expenses, the Brainerd city council Aug. 3 approved approximately \$113,500 for small business relief grants.

In money set aside for expected expenses between early August and Nov. 15, the council also set aside \$50,000 for delinquent utility bills. Customers need to petition the council for relief.

An additional \$247,000 was set aside for future use, including small business or non-profit grants.

The City of Buffalo, after covering city expenses, also set aside a portion of its CARES funds for small business grants. Buffalo will administer these funds through its Housing and Redevelopment Authority. Grants of \$10,000 to \$20,000 will be awarded, with funds to be distributed in September. Deadline to apply was Aug. 31. Applications received after that time may be considered, depending on the availability of funds.

logy Department will continue to be responsible for scheduling water releases from the dam into the river, as it has been for the past 50 years. These releases could be directed through the existing gates on the dam, through the new hydroelectric facility, or through a combination of these depending on the reservoir elevation and desired flow release.

MRES expects the facility will provide energy for the next 100 years.

MRES was joined by several speakers for the video dedication ceremony, including:

- Iowa Lieutenant Governor Adam Gregg
- U.S. Senator Joni Ernst (R-Iowa)
- U.S. Representative David Loebsack (D-Iowa)
- R.D. James, assistant secretary of the Army for Civil Works

- Malcolm Woolf, president and CEO, National Hydro-power Association

- Stan Kocon, president and CEO, Voith Hydro

- Mario Finis, executive vice president, Stantec

- Tim Odell, executive vice president, Ames Construction

- Joy Ditto, president and CEO, American Public Power Association

- Harold Schiebout, board chair, MRES

- Scott Hain, president, WMPMA

- Tom Heller, president and CEO, MRES

MRES broke ground on the project almost exactly six years ago with an event featuring then-Iowa Lieutenant Governor (now Governor) Kim Reynolds, Rep. Loebsack, then-Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy, and others.

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The only nuclear power plant in Iowa—Duane Arnold Energy Center—is closed permanently after its cooling towers were damaged in the Aug. 10 derecho.

The plant was scheduled to be decommissioned Oct. 30.

A NextEra Energy Resources spokesperson said it would continue to work with its employees on the transition, which arrived sooner than planned.

The Aug. 10 derecho's straight-line winds approached 100 miles per hour, with gusts up to 140 mph, in Iowa and caused widespread damage there, as well as Nebraska, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan. The long-lived storm covered 770 miles in 14 hours and left more than a million people without power.

Power outages were widespread and caused three deaths in Iowa.

August reports filtered out that the City of Los Angeles is considering shutting off power to houses that have hosted large 'pandemic' parties, in violation of local coronavirus-related social distancing orders.

Critics have expressed concerns over the concept of using citizens' utilities as police bargaining chips. Police said the tactic would be a last resort for those with "blatant disregard" for the rules.

Rolling blackouts plagued California Friday and Saturday Aug. 14-15 as electric generation failed to meet demand during a heat wave.

The California Independent System Operator (CAISO), which operates the state's electricity grid, reportedly announced at 4:21 p.m., Aug. 16 that rolling blackouts would not be necessary. At 7:51 p.m., however, it announced an emergency and rolling blackouts.

Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), said in a tweet at 8:49 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 15, that it had been directed by CAISO to initiate a "rotating outage impacting approximately 200K – 250k customers." An hour later, power was being restored to most customers.

PG&E shut off power to 220,000 customers Friday.

The unexpected loss of a 470-megawatt natural gas-fired power plant, along with nearly 1,000 MW of wind power, were blamed

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for the outages, according to the San Jose *Mercury News*. Along with triple-digit temperatures, unexpected cloud cover over desert solar plants added to the lack of generating capacity.

The rolling blackouts were the first in California since 2001. Those blackouts, during a period of electric deregulation, led to the downfall of Enron and a discrediting of retail electric competition. Those outages, noted the San Jose paper, “cost then-Governor Gray Davis his job.”

The Minnesota Department of Commerce said Aug. 23 it would appeal the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission’s approval of Enbridge Energy’s Line 3 crude oil pipeline, which is planned to cross northern Minnesota to Superior, Wisc.

## Appeals Court small cell ruling mixed for cities

The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) reported Aug. 17 that the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had eased restrictions on city-imposed aesthetic requirements while affirming restrictions related to fee caps, shot clocks, and moratoriums on small cell applications.

The court issued the opinion in the matter of *City of Portland v. United State of America Federal Communications Commission* on Aug. 12. The case requested review of the FCC’s Small Cell Order and Moratoria Order, which limit local government authority to regulate small cell wireless facilities.

The court modified aesthetic requirements required by cities related to small cell deployment.

In addition, the court affirmed presumptive fee limits, ‘shot clocks,’ and moratorium limitations placed by the FCC.

The Court of Appeals ruled that small cell facilities are different from other facilities and therefore aesthetic requirements can be different from other communication services. In addition, the court ruled that aesthetic requirements can include subjective standards that result in a public benefit.

While aesthetic standards must still be published, cities should review their standards to ensure they meet the aesthetic goals of the community, suggested the LMC.

The court, in a 2-1 decision, also upheld the safe harbor

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fee limits of \$500 for applications and \$270 for recurring fees. The opinion does not modify the fee caps set by state law.

Shot clocks for small cell applications were upheld.

The ruling did not affect shot clocks of 90 days required by Minnesota Statutes, section 237.163, subdivision 3c.

For more information, contact LMC or MMUA government relations staff.

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

## Hands-on training restarts at Generation School

MMUA held its annual Generation School July 14-16. The school was headquartered in Hutchinson. Hands-on sessions were held in the Delano and Glencoe municipal power plants.

The school was the first MMUA meeting held during the COVID-19 pandemic. Social distancing was practiced, where practical, while everybody wore masks, washed hands frequently and followed other recommended health guidelines.

With 20 attendees, attendance was down compared to past years. Participants still learned from the experts on hand, from each other, and were glad to see their peers from other municipal power plants in Minnesota.

MMUA would like to thank Delano, Glencoe and Hutch Utilities for opening their plants, our instructors, those who attended and the utilities that sent them.



The Delano Municipal Utilities power plant was the scene of hands-on training on the Fairbanks Morse opposed-piston engine.



Jeffrey Crampton of Fairbanks Morse was the instructor.



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## Mutual Aid: Four area municipals respond to the call

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toration plan discussion, the municipal crews dispersed around Granite Falls to undertake service restoration. By late afternoon/early evening, the mutual aid crews had done all they could. A number of customers still

needed the services of an electrician to repair the building service mast.

While a number of MMUA member cities have suffered through well-publicized disasters in recent decades, few have suffered through many repeated disasters like Gran-

ite Falls. A fatal F4 tornado hit the city in July 2000, and damaging straight-line winds in 2016. Damaging floods came to the Minnesota River city in 1997 and 2001, leading to a \$40 million flood mitigation project, completed in 2014.

## Upcoming Events

MMUA is back to in-person, hands-on training. MMUA will take precautions to mitigate risks and is following state orders/guidance associated with COVID-19 response, including temperature checks, providing a disposable mask to anyone who doesn't have one, wiping down surfaces with disinfectant, having hand sanitizer available and practicing social distancing as feasible.

### Cross Training School

**October 6-8**

MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Underground School

**Oct. 6-9**

MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Tree Trimming Workshop

**Oct. 21-22**

Brainerd Public Utilities

This workshop offers lineworkers a thorough overview of electrical line tree trimming. This course will stress the importance of the job briefing and planning for the job. Safety hazards will be identified and the precautions to take will be covered.

James Monroe will lead the instruction. Prior to working for MMUA, James worked for Carr's Tree Service as a Climber doing tree trimming/clear-



ing/removal for more than 4 years. Registration available to the first 50 lineworkers.

### T&O Conference

**December 8-10**

Best Western Plus Kelly Inn, St. Cloud

The Technical & Operations Conference (or "T & O") is a not-to-be-missed event for Managers, Crew Leads, Lineworkers and others. This is the perfect venue to join fellow public power professionals to hear interesting speakers on

timely topics, participate in discussions, share ideas and connect with friends old and new. This program is under development!

### Transformer School & Pre-Conference

**December 15-18**

MMUA Training Center, Marshall

The Transformer School offers the ultimate combination of classroom and hands-on training that can help improve your understanding of the inner workings of a transformer, appropriate installations and applications for maximum reliability.

In addition, we offer a Pre-Conference covering basic single-phase transformer connections and theory.

For more information, see the 'Events' calendar at [www.mmua.org](http://www.mmua.org)