

Nuclear energy is getting a fresh look

After a period of decline and stagnation, the nuclear power industry is enjoying a revival as a clean energy source essential to safely meeting Wisconsin's growing energy demands. Understanding how to leverage innovations in nuclear and fusion energy are the focus of two bipartisan bills signed into law in early July by Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers.

Technological advancements in the science of nuclear fission led to the construction of nuclear power plants in the 1960s and '70s before plateauing in the 1980s when the number of new plants

substantial changes in the technology of nuclear energy in the years since the last time a new nuclear power plant was considered in the state.

Nuclear reactors now come in smaller sizes, opening the possibility of constructing units in off-site factories and assembling them at retired nuclear and coal sites. Without specifying which ones, a 2024 Department of Energy report on nuclear energy siting said Wisconsin has two coal plant sites that could accommodate nuclear reactors. The same report suggested Wisconsin could triple its nuclear-powered electric output by adding reactors to sites at Point Beach and at the former Kewaunee plant.

Another change involves nuclear fusion. Traditional nuclear reactors run on fission — making heat by splitting heavy elements' atoms. Fusion does it by merging light elements' atoms.

One of the two new laws — 2025 Wisconsin [Act 11](#) — orders a \$2 million study to find the best location for a nuclear fusion power plant in the state. The second — [Act 12](#) — creates a new board to advance nuclear power and fusion technology in Wisconsin and host a national summit in Madison in 2028.

Point Beach can produce about 1,200 megawatts of electricity and supplies

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Wisconsin's Point Beach Nuclear Plant

coming online little more than matched retirements. Today, there are 94 nuclear reactors across the United States, operating in 28 states and accounting for 45.5% of the country's carbon-free electricity generation. There are two reactors operating in Wisconsin — both at the Point Beach facility near Two Rivers.

Wisconsin lawmakers repealed a moratorium on nuclear plant construction nearly 10 years ago. There have been

PSC approves Sturgeon Bay buy-back tariff revisions

In a closely watched decision, the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) on June 19 approved a proposed parallel generation (PG) tariff for Sturgeon Bay Utilities (SBU), with a few modifications.

SBU was the first municipal electric utility in Wisconsin to propose PG tariff revisions following the PSC's investigation of PG rates and subsequent amendments from each of the state's investor-owned utilities.

A central issue in the case was whether it was appropriate to set the avoided-cost rates for the applicant as the avoided-cost rates of WPPI Energy, the applicant's full-requirements power supplier. Each of the three PSC Commissioners ultimately answered in the affirmative, largely due to WPPI's commitment to purchase all the surplus power of non-legacy customer-owned generating units.

Watch for a more detailed discussion of the decision in *LIVE LINES* once the PSC issues a written decision.

— Richard Heinemann
Boardman and Clark

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Close-call is a crucial reminder to keep up with work practices



A municipal utility electric lineman in Wisconsin accidentally came into contact with a live wire in July. The incident serves as a sobering reminder of the life-threatening risks utility workers face — and the absolute imperative to follow safety protocols every time, and *all* the time.

In this most recent incident, a lineman was working to make a connection using an H-tap compression connector. While positioning the conductor and tool, he unintentionally made contact with a neutral line — resulting in 120 volts of electricity passing across his chest, from his left hand to his right arm. The lineman was unable to release himself from the circuit. Fortunately, a nearby

Streets department employee (serving as the groundman) activated the lower bucket controls, which helped to free the lineman from the energized conductor.

The lineman — alert and responsive — sought guidance and was able to describe the details of the incident to a MEUW Electric Utility Safety and Training Coordinator. He was later evaluated by medical professionals and, after a series of tests, was released with a clean bill of health.

Lessons from the incident

This close call underscores the importance of wearing proper protective equipment at all times. In this case, rubber insulating gloves — a minimum of Class 0 — were not worn during the work. The lineman was wearing only leather gloves, which do not offer electrical protection. This practice, passed along

from a now-retired mentor, highlights the danger of relying on outdated practices.

A common but dangerous mindset — “It’s only 120 volts” — played a role in this event. While 120 volts may seem low, it takes as little as 70 to 100 milliamps to cause ventricular fibrillation, a potentially fatal heart rhythm. That’s roughly the amount of current used by an 8-watt lightbulb. The reality is this: Current kills. Voltage only determines how forcefully it can be delivered.

The role of training and updated work practices

This incident is also a stark reminder of why utility safety rules exist. Many of the practices shared today were developed after serious injuries or fatalities occurred. Instructors are not simply repeating regulations — they are sharing lessons from incidents across the industry.

Take every voltage seriously, follow your training, and never rely on outdated habits.

Every safety meeting, every updated rule, and every piece of PPE is in place for one reason — to ensure everyone goes home safe at the end of the day. Let’s honor that by doing the right thing every time. ●

Equipment donation will benefit members

G. E. T. Utility Sales and Buckingham Manufacturing donated more than two dozen pieces of training equipment used for practicing Pole Top Rescue. This equipment will help utilities participating in MEUW’s Electric Utility Safety and Training Program receive “life-like” experiences while practicing pole top rescues. G. E. T. Utility Sales is an Associate Member of MEUW and arranged the donation through MEUW Electric Utility Safety and Training Coordinator Randy Larson. Donations and partnerships like this help MEUW to deliver top-notch training to municipal employees across Wisconsin.

MEUW NEWS Monitor

Registration open for Accounting and Customer Service Seminar

Don’t miss your chance to participate in MEUW’s annual one-day seminar that brings together municipal electric utility staff with a focus on accounting and customer service topics. Attendees receive updates on regulatory and legislative topics that affect their utilities and compare best practices to improve their operations. MEUW’s Accounting and Customer Service Committee assists MEUW staff in putting together the day’s program to address industry topics. This year’s seminar is planned for Wednesday, Sept. 24, in Mauston. The agenda and registration info is [here](#).

Increase your effectiveness with improved communications and project management skills

Effective communications and project management skills are essential to any role and in utility management. As part of MEUW’s four-part professional development program, the Communications and Project Management course covers techniques for planning your time, prioritizing your obligations, and evaluating your success, as well as how to communicate clear instructions, and listen well for meaningful feedback. The one-day course is designed for municipal workers of all skill

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Start your week safely with **MEUW safety reminder emails**. Use the topics as discussion starters in meetings throughout the week. Always keep safety top-of-mind — sign up to have the safety reminders delivered to your in-box [here](#).

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roughly 15% of the power used in Wisconsin. The Kewaunee Power Station, with one reactor, had about half that capacity, and was closed in 2013. According to published reports, the owner of the Kewaunee plant is currently working with WEC Energy Group, the parent company of We Energies and Wisconsin Public Service, to potentially bring the plant back online.

“We can’t afford to choose between mitigating climate change and protecting our environment or creating good-paying jobs and building a strong economy, and by working toward clean energy options Wisconsinites can depend on in the future, we’re doing both,” Gov. Evers said in a statement.

The bills were co-authored by Sen. Julian Bradley (R-New Berlin), and Reps. David Steffen (R-Howard) and Shae Sortwell (R-Two Rivers). According to reports by Wisconsin Public Radio, lawmakers say expanding nuclear power in Wisconsin would bring clean energy and high-paying jobs to the state.

“Not only on the construction side, but with these new, next-generation reactors, which are much smaller, cleaner and safer,” Rep. Steffen said. “And they are a necessary part of next-generation manufacturing and technology. So if we want to be a part of that revolution, including the AI (artificial intelligence) revolution, we need to have the energy to support it.”

In addition to creating a study to find the best site for a nuclear power plant, the new law also helps to ensure the Public Service Commission moves fast on approvals. Once a site is chosen, an 18-month timeline to begin construction begins.

The renewed interest in nuclear energy comes as states across the country are re-evaluating their energy portfolios in the face of rising demand and the need for clean, reliable power sources. The combination of existing grid infrastructure and community familiarity with nuclear operations makes sites like Kewaunee and Point Beach particularly attractive for redevelopment or expansion. While regulatory and financial hurdles remain, nuclear power is enjoying a resurgence as an electricity source — one that emits no carbon dioxide while producing power much more reliably than do wind turbines or solar panels.

Across the Midwest and beyond, discussions about nuclear power reflect a broader national movement toward modernizing the energy sector, embracing innovation in reactor technologies, and strategically leveraging legacy sites for new development. As Wisconsin considers its next steps, the stage is set for significant transformation, not only in power generation but also in the economic opportunities and workforce development that could accompany a new era of nuclear investment. ●

APPA hosting “Current State of ‘New Nuclear’ Virtual Summit”

The American Public Power Association (APPA) is hosting an online summit — planned for Aug. 19, 20, and 21 — to explore the latest advancements and future prospects of new nuclear, including small modular reactors (SMRs) and advanced nuclear. Over the course of three days, industry experts, utility representatives, and regulatory authorities will delve into various aspects of new nuclear, including their technological specifics, development status, cost structure, and safety considerations. The summit will also feature discussions on the role of nuclear energy in future electricity generation, the economic viability of SMRs and advanced nuclear, and public opinion on their deployment.



Participants will engage in Q-&A sessions, expert panel discussions, and individual presentations.

Learn more about the value of participating in the virtual forum by listening to a recent episode of the *Public Power Now* podcast, featuring insights from APPA's Senior Vice President for Education, Training & Events Ursula Schryver [here](#).

Additional details and registration information is available [here](#).

MEUW News Monitor *Continued from page 2*

levels and backgrounds as a foundation for understanding the public power industry. The next session will take place in Mauston on Wednesday, Oct. 8. Full details and registration information can be found [here](#).

December training focuses on consistency

MEUW's three-part Municipal Utility Leadership Certificate Program continues with another class late this year. “Leading with Consistency” is being offered as one of the critical competencies identified for municipal utility leaders.

The one-day leadership development course focuses on why consistency is essential to being an effective utility leader. The training will be held Wednesday, Dec. 3, in Mauston. Participants will learn practical tactics they can apply to become a consistent leader and learn how consistency can inspire people to work toward a common goal. Click [here](#) for details.

Training offered through MEUW's Professional Development Program will continue in 2026. To learn more about the two training tracks available to municipal employees of all skill levels, visit meuw.org/pdp. Specific training dates for the new year are expected to be set no later than Oct. 1. ●

State budget eliminates residential energy sales tax; takes effect Oct. 1

Wisconsin utility customers will soon see permanent savings on their monthly bills, thanks to a provision included in the state budget signed into law in July.

Previously, residential electricity and natural gas usage was exempt from the state sales tax only during the months of November through April, when home heating is considered an essential service. The new law extends that exemption year-round, providing consistent, ongoing savings for residents across the state.

This change is expected to result in approximately \$178 million in savings statewide for utility customers over the next two years. The sales tax exemption takes effect Oct. 1.

The Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR) will publish guidance on the new tax laws enacted in Act 15 in an upcoming issue of the [Wisconsin Tax Bulletin](#). Those interested can also subscribe to [DOR E-news lists](#) — Tax Professional or Sales and Use Tax — for updates.

“This is a great example of why advocacy matters,” explained Tyler Vorpagel, MEUW Director of Legislative and Regulatory Relations. “When our legislators understand the issues that matter to municipal utilities and their customers, we can deliver meaningful results like this.”

Implementing the new sales-tax exemption

According to DOR, the exemption is based on the bill date, not the usage or meter reading date. Electricity or natural gas is considered “sold” at the time of billing. This means:

- Bills issued before Oct. 1, 2025: Tax applies, even if some or all of the usage occurred in October.
- Bills issued on or after Oct. 1, 2025: Tax exemption applies, even if some of the usage occurred in September.
- Mid-month billing cycles (e.g., Sept. 15 – Oct. 15): If the bill is dated prior to Oct. 1, sales tax must still be charged on the entire billing period.

This interpretation is outlined in Wis. Stat. § 77.54(30)(b) and Wis. Adm. Code Tax 11.57(2)(n).

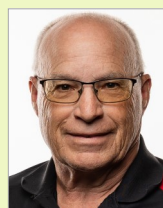
These rules also apply to any county’s 0.5% sales tax. ●

Members’ *NEWS*



Aaron Wallin joined Kaukauna Utilities on Aug. 4 as Finance and Administration Director. He has more than 15 years of experience in the utility industry and most recently worked as Director-Finance for Pierce Manufacturing.

Send us your news! Tell MEUW about new hires, promotions, retirements, honors, and awards, so those tidbits can be shared in MEUW member communications. Simply send an email to news@meuw.org to share your news.



Jim Heiar of Richland Center was presented with MEUW’s Charlie Bradburn Pillar of Public Power award to recognize his 20 years of service on the seven-person Commission governing City Utilities of Richland Center. Heiar has announced his intention to step down in September. He is currently serving as Vice President of the Commission.

MEUW President and CEO Tim Heinrich presented the award at the Commission’s July 9 meeting. The award recognizes milestone years of service for those who give of themselves through service on a municipal utility governing body. It is named to honor Charlie Bradburn, who served as a Cedarburg Light & Water Commissioner for 60 years from 1952-2012, following in the footsteps of his father, who served from 1924-1951.



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Waupun Utilities powers a strong community



By Karen Whitmer

Waupun is a place where people believe in doing things right — working hard, looking out for each other, and planning thoughtfully for the future.

It's a friendly, close-knit community that respects its roots while welcoming steady growth. Local businesses are thriving, and the strong values that built the community continue to guide it forward.

Located in south-central Wisconsin, Waupun has about 11,000 residents and sits right on the border of Dodge and Fond du Lac counties. It's about 40 miles from Madison and 70 miles from Milwaukee — close enough to big city amenities, yet far enough to keep its small-town feel.

The city has owned and operated its electric, water, and wastewater utilities since 1894. Today, Waupun Utilities provides electric service to 3,901 residential customers and 619 commercial customers and stands out for being reliable and responsive.

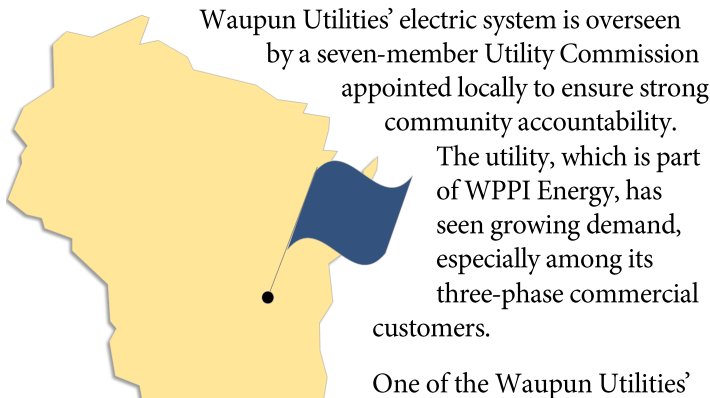


Brooks

"We're accountable to the people we serve," says Steve Brooks, General Manager of Waupun Utilities. "That means reliable service, fair rates, and a real commitment to this community," he continued. A Waupun native, Brooks started out as a line worker 26 years ago and now oversees all utility operations.

Waupun Utilities has a staff of 20, including five who focus on electric service. "Everyone here takes pride in their work," Brooks says. "This is our hometown. We live here, too — and we're here to make sure the lights stay on, and things run the way they should."

Reliable electric service with a local touch



Waupun Utilities' electric system is overseen by a seven-member Utility Commission appointed locally to ensure strong community accountability.

The utility, which is part of WPPI Energy, has seen growing demand, especially among its three-phase commercial customers.

One of the Waupun Utilities' largest electric customers is

Tenneco Inc., a company specializing in valve guides and valve seats for combustion engines.

Waupun is also home to major state correctional facilities, including the historic Waupun Correctional Institution (WCI), Dodge Correctional Institution, and the John C. Burke Correctional Center. "These large facilities are major energy users and significant contributors to the wastewater system, and our community is proud to have them here," Brooks said. "They've been woven into our community's history for generations, providing jobs and supporting local fam-



The natural beauty of the Waupun area is on full display at the Horicon Marsh Wildlife Refuge, where a floating boardwalk extends across the wetlands. *Photo from cityofwaupunwi.org*

ilies. Today, every Wisconsin license plate on the road is stamped right here in Waupun by inmates at WCI," he added.

Other key customers include National Rivet & Manufacturing Co., which produces rivets and machinery for the aerospace and automotive industries; SSM Health Waupun Memorial Hospital; United Cooperative, a farm co-op that processes soybeans and grains; and Eagle Flexible Packaging, a family-owned business expanding its facility in Waupun with plans to add dozens of jobs.

Investing in electric infrastructure for growth, reliability

To support Waupun's growing industrial base, Waupun Utilities is investing in its electric infrastructure. They're in the early planning stages of constructing a new substation that will increase capacity, add essential redundancy, and support future development throughout the city. The utility already operates five substations within its service area, which primarily covers the city limits of Waupun.

"This is about staying ahead of the curve," Brooks explains. Beyond the substation, the utility is in the process of a voltage conversion across its distribution system and rebuilding over-

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head and underground infrastructure — improvements that will boost reliability, reduce outages, and meet rising energy demands.

These upgrades aren't just about growth — they're about resilience. "With more three-phase customers coming online and new industrial and residential developments underway, we're focused on building a system ready for whatever the future holds," Brooks said.

Smarter water, cleaner future

Waupun's dedication to quality extends well beyond electricity. The city is proud to provide some of the best-tasting water in Wisconsin, thanks to thoughtful, local management. In 2008, Waupun became one of the first communities in the state to adopt reverse osmosis for its water treatment. This environmentally friendly process pushes water through a special membrane that filters out minerals, salts, and impurities — resulting in cleaner, better-tasting water.

"Our old lime-softening system was becoming outdated and difficult to maintain," explains Brooks. "Switching to reverse osmosis improved water quality and made the system more efficient and easier to operate. It's been a smart investment in our future."

Waupun also uses an innovative Advanced Biological Nutrient Recovery (ABNR) system at its wastewater plant — the largest of its kind in the country, according to Brooks. This



system relies on algae to absorb nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen from wastewater. The harvested

algae are then turned into useful products like shoe insoles and bioplastics, transforming waste into valuable resources while protecting the environment.

This upgrade was part of Waupun's efforts to meet strict phosphorus discharge limits set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The project received significant financial support — \$37 million — through the USDA Rural Development's Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program. "Investing in this plant wasn't just about regulations," Brooks says. "It's about protecting our water, land, and future generations."

More than a utility — a community partner

Waupun Utilities is more than a service provider; it's a community partner. From sponsoring local festivals and funding scholarships to supporting sustainability projects and school programs, the utility plays an active role in enhancing everyday life in Waupun.

While the line crew has grown and the equipment has been upgraded, the commitment to community is unchanged in Waupun's 130-year-plus history.



Today's Waupun Utilities crew includes (from left to right): Linemen Carson Schramm and Ross Hackbarth; Lineman/Meter Technician Chris Jahn; General Manager/Electric Superintendent Steve Brooks; Electric Foreman Chad Flegner; and Assistant Electric Superintendent Owen Vande Kolk.

Brooks said that line workers visit local classrooms to talk with students about electrical safety, conservation, and careers in the trades, bringing books, equipment, and even a bucket truck. Water and wastewater staff also engage with students through facility tours and summer park programs, offering hands-on demonstrations and sparking curiosity about vital services, working to build early connections and spark interest in future generations.

The utility is also investing in workforce development, recently welcoming its first youth apprentice to the water/wastewater treatment facilities—an important step in developing local talent and fostering future industry leaders.

"That human connection is a big part of what we do," Brooks said. "We answer to Waupun," Brooks continued. "Serving this city is an honor, and we're committed to making it stronger every day."

A place to visit and enjoy

Waupun's natural beauty is one of its biggest draws. Just outside town, Horicon Marsh — the largest cattail marsh in the U.S. — offers incredible opportunities for birdwatching and wildlife viewing. Right in Waupun, you'll find scenic spots like Waupun County Park, with hiking and skiing trails, a campground, and a disc golf course. The Rock River Trail also winds through the area, making it a great place for biking and walking.

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MEUW scholarship helps to grow pipeline of future lineworkers

Choosing a career in electric-power distribution is a noble calling. Thanks to MEUW's Powering Futures Scholarship, two members of the high school Class of 2025 are well on their way to pursuing their dreams of becoming lineworkers — with municipal utility experience already under their belts.

Aiden Humphreys, a 2025 graduate of Wrightstown High School and three-sport team captain, began his Youth Apprenticeship with Kaukauna Utilities (KU) in the Water Department but soon transitioned to the Electrical Lineman Department. He discovered he wanted a hands-on, team-oriented career outdoors.



Humphreys

Working alongside KU's electric crews during his senior year, Aiden found himself drawn to the fast-paced environment, physical challenges, and crew camaraderie. He's assisted on underground subdivisions, conduit installation, pole setting, and equipment operation, including a mini-excavator and backhoe — experiences that solidified his interest in electrical distribution.

Kade Kinney was initially unsure about his future (he considered a four-year college) until he found inspiration in his older brother Bo, an apprentice lineman. Hearing Bo's stories about the daily challenges, camaraderie, and excitement of linework sparked Kade's interest.

Kade always wanted a job that combined variety and outdoor work. Growing up in a family of tradespeople — ironworkers, linemen, electricians, carpenters — he came to value the pride

and stability the trades offer. That background, along with Bo's influence, convinced Kade that linework was where he belonged.

He's currently serving as a Youth Apprentice lineman at the Village of Prairie du Sac Utilities and Street Works through Sauk Prairie High School and CESA-2. The hands-on experience is providing him with a solid foundation as he learns



Kinney

about essential tools, climbing, heavy equipment, and operating a bucket truck and digger. Kade says it has been an honor to be part of the program, and he plans to attend a technical college and start his career in electrical power distribution.

MEUW's Board of Directors created the Powering Futures Scholarship in 2018 to reflect the association's long-term commitment to sustaining public power in Wisconsin. The fund is managed as an endowment with the Incurable Community Foundation in Wisconsin Rapids. Its annual earnings support students in public power communities who pursue careers as Field Service Technicians, Groundmen, Lineman Apprentices, Meter Technicians, Substation Electrician Apprentices, or Utility Technicians.

"Aiden and Kade embody the true purpose behind this scholarship," said Tim Heinrich, MEUW President and CEO. "We're proud to support them and encourage others to apply. MEUW members know how rewarding it is to work in our industry — we hope to continue growing our workforce with future scholarship recipients." ●

Waupun *Continued from page 6*

Waupun is widely recognized for its reputation as the City of Sculptures, making it an attractive destination for those with an interest in the arts.

Waupun's reputation for public art began with the iconic End of the Trail statue by James Earle Fraser, commissioned in 1929 by local industrialist Clarence Shaler. In addition to founding National Rivet & Manufacturing Co., Shaler left his mark on the city through his lasting contributions to both industry and the arts.

But Shaler didn't stop at supporting art — he became an artist himself. After retiring in 1928, he began sculpting bronze works of his own, creating pieces like The Citadel, Recording Angel, and The Pioneers, many of which he gifted to Waupun and nearby communities. Today, the city proudly honors this creative spirit with public sculpture tours, events, and installations that keep art front and center in its community life.

Waupun also comes alive with vibrant festivals throughout the year: Celebrate Waupun in June offers music, rides, food, and fireworks; Volksfest in September brings German food and music; and IceFest in winter brings families and friends together with intricate ice sculptures and fun for all ages.

All these events showcase Waupun's traditions and welcoming spirit. "Waupun is a great place to be," Brooks said. "If you haven't been to our community, stop by and see what it's all about." ●

Karen Whitmer is a regular contributor to LIVE LINES; she is freelance communicator based in the Fox Valley.



LIVELines

Official monthly publication of **Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin, Inc.**, the statewide trade association representing the interests of Wisconsin's public power providers since 1928.

This e-newsletter is distributed to more than 1,200 utility professionals and leaders throughout Wisconsin and the Midwest on the first Tuesday of every month.

LIVE LINES has been published continuously for many decades and provides useful information, news on emerging utility issues and legislation, updates on events, training programs and member services, as well as engaging feature stories spotlighting utilities, communities and leaders.

Reader comments and suggestions are welcome — send by email to news@meuw.org

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An archive of past issues of *Live Lines* is available at www.issuu.com/meuw

Make plans to join MEUW for dinner this fall

District Dinners have been planned by MEUW around the state in September and October to provide local utility leaders a chance to connect and network over topics of interest to public power. Make plans for you and your Commissioners or Board Members to attend one of the eight dinners to receive updates from the association and to participate in roundtable discussions.

The dates and location are:

- **Tuesday, Sept. 23** – Casa Tequila, Hartford
- **Wednesday, Sept. 24** – Lehman's Supper Club, Rice Lake
- **Monday, Sept. 29** – Stebbins Hotel, Algoma
- **Tuesday, Sept. 30** – NorthStar Casino Resort, Gresham
- **Monday, Oct. 6** – Red's Supper Club, Cuba City
- **Wednesday, Oct. 8** – Badger Crossing Pub, Cashton
- **Thursday, Oct. 9** – Castle Hill Supper Club, Merrilan
- **Wednesday, Oct. 15** – Old Feed Mill, Mazomanie

Advance registration is required. Full details are available on MEUW's website [here](#). Each session begins with a cash bar at 6:00 p.m., meal at 6:30 p.m., and a brief program to follow. The events typically wrap up no later than 8:00 p.m. ●

Customer Service skills training series wraps up

Early in 2025, MEUW launched a new offering called "The Power of One: Developing and Delivering Effective Customer Service." The training series was developed based on member feedback and included a series of six 90-minute modules. Offered virtually, and held once per month from January through June, the classes enabled many municipal utility employees from across the state to participate, either as a group or individually.

The classes focused on different aspects of customer service and skills needed to deliver exceptional service to both internal and external customers. While offered in a series, members could participate in some or all of the classes, based on schedules or topics.

Overall, more than 120 people participated in the classes, with 23 municipal employees completing all six classes and earning a certificate of completion for their effort (*see list at right*).

Participants have been asked to provide feedback about the training series, and MEUW is evaluating options to offer it again. Members with specific questions are encouraged to call the MEUW Office at (608) 837-2263. ●



Julie Bocker, Kaukauna
Missy Collins, Fennimore
Charlie Busshardt, Sun Prairie
Dave Euclide, Sun Prairie
Brenda Fenske, Sun Prairie
Ashley Fox, Sun Prairie
Lionel Gellermann, Marshfield
Dayna Holmes, Kaukauna
Deran Johnston, Kaukauna
Melissa Justinger, Bangor
Brenda Mackey, Rice Lake
Pam Mackiewicz, Rice Lake
Jennie Nelson, Manitowoc
Tony Nelson, Marshfield
Jessica Nessinger, Sturgeon Bay
Jenny Palmer, Kaukauna
Sarah Rodrigues, Sun Prairie
Kim Sankbeil, Waunakee
Christie Schaeffer, Waunakee
Kamren Seefluth, Marshfield
Katie Slaby, Sturgeon Bay
Joe Vance, Marshfield

Actions in D.C. impacting electric sector worth monitoring

Highlighting the ongoing focus at the federal level on grid reliability, energy efficiency, and infrastructure resilience, several energy initiatives have moved forward this summer.

Federal spending bill advances

The House Appropriations Committee approved the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, allocating \$57.3 billion overall and \$24.1 billion for non-defense energy programs — a 2.7% reduction from FY 2025. The bill funds federal programs and services affecting the electric sector. Following are the key provisions:

The Department of Energy (DOE) is directed to survey grid operators about new generator interconnection applications and report findings by next year.

The Energy Information Administration (EIA) is encouraged to collect and publish monthly, state-level data on electricity use in the commercial computation sector. Computing includes energy consumption from data center servers, desktop and laptop computers, and monitors in commercial spaces. Data center computing is significantly more energy-intensive than computing in general. By 2050, as much as 7% of all U.S. commercial floorspace requires additional energy to meet data center demand across most building types.

DOE is urged to expand domestic manufacturing of distribution transformers and improve energy efficiency in production, while continuing engagement with industry stakeholders to address supply challenges.

House committee unveils FEMA reform bill

Leaders of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee have introduced the Fixing Emergency Management for Americans Act of 2025 (H.R. 4669), aimed at streamlining federal disaster response and elevating the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to a cabinet-level agency.

Key provisions include:

- **New grant program:** The bill creates a new estimate-based Stafford Act Section 409 grant program to eventually replace the current cost-based Section 406 program.
- **Procurement flexibility:** Local governments would be required to use their own procurement rules for all Stafford Act assistance, addressing concerns raised by the American Public Power Association (APPA).
- **Faster reimbursements:** A new provision mandates reimbursement for debris removal and emergency work within 120 days if at least 9% of the costs are deemed eligible.

EPA reconsidering "Endangerment Finding" dating back to 2009

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will begin formal reconsideration of its 2009 "Endangerment Finding" that determined greenhouse gases threaten public health and welfare, serving as a legal basis for regulating emissions under the Clean Air Act. The EPA's proposal is to rescind the Finding, including reconsideration of all agency regulations and actions that rely on the Endangerment Finding.

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin said, "The Trump Administration will not sacrifice national prosperity, energy security, and the freedom of our people for an agenda that throttles our industries, our mobility, and our consumer choice while benefiting adversaries overseas. We will follow the science, the law, and common sense wherever it leads, and we will do so while advancing our commitment towards helping to deliver cleaner, healthier, and safer air, land, and water."

As part of its reconsideration process, EPA plans to rely on the expertise of the White House Budget Office, including the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and other relevant agencies.

APPA is closely monitoring all of the developments happening at the federal level, and MEUW will continue to engage with APPA and member utilities to stay informed about outcomes. ●

National association seeking feedback about tariff impacts

APPA wants to hear from utilities that have seen significant cost increases for project equipment due to tariff negotiations by the Trump Administration. They're especially interested in tariff impacts on new natural gas plants/equipment. Please contact Vice President, Government Relations **Amy Thomas** at athomas@publicpower.org or (202) 467-2934.



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Get to know a little about some Wisconsin lawmakers



This regular feature helps readers get to know Wisconsin elected officials and better understand their views on policies that may impact municipal utilities.

Rep. O'Connor serves on the Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities



Jerry O'Connor (R-Fond du Lac) has served in the Wisconsin State Assembly since January

2023. He was originally elected to represent the 52nd Assembly District but began representing the 60th Assembly District in 2025 following legislative redistricting. The 60th District is located in east-central Wisconsin and includes the city of Fond du Lac as well as much of Fond du Lac County.

O'Connor brings deep experience in both public service and private enterprise. Earlier this year, he joined the Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities. He also serves as Chair of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, Vice Chair of the Corrections Committee, and is a member of the Financial Institutions Committee.

Before entering public office, O'Connor had a long and dis-

tinguished career in banking. He served as president and CEO of National Exchange Bank & Trust in Waupun from 1998 until his retirement in 2020, concluding more than 40 years in the financial services industry. He also held leadership positions with the Community Bankers of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Bankers Association.

In addition to banking, O'Connor has professional experience in insurance, real estate, and property development.

O'Connor has long been active in civic and community life. He served as chair of the Charis Pregnancy and Family Help Center in Fond du Lac and as treasurer of e-Center for Hope & Vision, a national nonprofit. He is a longtime member of the Fond du Lac Noon Rotary Club and has held board roles with the Fond du Lac Economic Development Corporation, Waupun Economic Development, and other local organizations.

Born in Lone Rock and raised in Madison, O'Connor graduated from Madison West High School and earned a diploma in pastoral studies from Minnesota Bible College, along with advanced credentials from the UW Graduate School of Banking.

He now lives in Fond du Lac with his wife, Luanne. They have five children and four grandchildren.

Rep. Kreibich represents 28th Assembly District



Rob Kreibich (R-New Richmond) has served as the representative for Wisconsin's

28th Assembly District since January 2025. Located in the northwestern part of the state, the district includes most of St. Croix County and parts of western Dunn and northeastern Pierce counties. It encompasses the communities of New Richmond, Somerset, and Baldwin, and stretches into the outer edge of the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Originally from Wabasha, Minn., and raised in River Falls, Kreibich earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Minnesota. He began his career as a television anchor and reporter for WEAU-TV in Eau Claire before being elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly in 1992.

Kreibich served in the Assembly from 1993 to 2007. During that time, he chaired the Colleges and Universities Committee and played a key role in launching the Edvest college savings program, providing Wisconsin families with new tools to plan for higher education. After leav-

ing the Legislature, he transitioned to the private sector.

One of his most significant roles was with Marshfield Clinic, where he worked in marketing and business development. His efforts focused on building stronger connections between the Clinic and the broader community, particularly in western Wisconsin, positioning him as a bridge between health care providers, businesses, and policymakers.

In 2014, Kreibich became executive director—and later president—of the New Richmond Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau.

Kreibich returned to public office in 2024, winning election with 66% of the vote against Democrat Danielle Johnson. His campaign emphasized support for small businesses, workforce development, educational opportunity, and fiscal responsibility. In the Assembly, he currently serves as Chair of the Commerce Committee and Vice Chair of the Financial Institutions Committee. He also sits on the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities and the Assembly Housing and Real Estate Committee.

Kreibich lives in New Richmond, where he continues to lead the local Chamber of Commerce and remains actively involved in community and economic development. ●



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Upgrades from home energy pilot taking root in Black River Falls

The Home Energy Upgrades Pilot Program launched by Focus on Energy is delivering measurable energy savings and meaningful community impact in Black River Falls. The pilot brings together utilities, community-based organizations (CBOs), and Focus on Energy Trade Allies to provide no-cost weatherization, health and safety improvements, and energy efficiency upgrades to income-qualified households.

Black River Falls is the first community to participate in the pilot program, which launched in late 2024. Since then, 17 customers have completed the program, with 15 implementing energy-saving upgrades in their homes. Collectively, these upgrades are projected to save participants a total of \$5,426 annually on their energy bills. An additional 18 customers have either begun their projects or are preparing to start soon.

Key improvements made by the participating Focus Trade Ally include attic and wall insulation, air sealing, and the installation of energy-efficient products such as smart thermostats and faucet aerators. Health and safety enhancements were also a priority, with 89% of participating homes receiving upgrades like smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

The pilot has already identified common themes among the participating homes and their savings opportunities. The average home served was built in 1942 and is approximately 1,357 square feet. Homes had an average attic insulation R-value of just R-8, and air sealing assessments revealed an average reduction opportunity of 35%, highlighting the significant potential for energy savings.

Black River Falls Municipal Utilities has played a pivotal role in the pilot's success. Their outreach, through bill inserts, social media, and in-person events, generated 12 customer leads and helped build trust in the program, a critical factor in overcoming skepticism among residents.

In addition to Black River Falls Municipal Utilities, five organizations partnered in outreach and intake, generating 36 additional leads. The organizations all had strong community ties

and included the School District of Black River Falls and local Boys and Girls Club. Through outreach, trust emerged as a key theme as 83% of participants said hearing about the program from a trusted source was a major motivator.



Participants reported immediate improvements in home comfort and energy bills, with 67% noting lower utility costs after upgrades. The other 33% were unsure about bill impacts but still reported improved comfort in their homes. One customer even saw a 70% drop in their energy bills. Respondents cited the program's no-cost offering as a primary reason for participating, and 83% said they would enroll in another Focus on Energy program offered through Black River Falls Municipal Utilities.

With the remaining projects in Black River Falls nearing completion, planning is already underway to expand the Home Energy Upgrades Pilot Program to Racine and Kenosha. ●

Researchers at Dept. of Energy seeking feedback about residential electrical work

The U.S. Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Lab is conducting a brief survey to help identify ways to reduce cost and time delays associated with residential electrical work (such as panel and service upgrades). Researchers are especially interested in collecting responses from:

- Utility staff with knowledge of electrical service requirements, extensions and loads;
- Contractors who do electrical work, electrical load calculations, and electrical service work;
- Engineers who design or inspect residential electrical systems; and/or
- Building department staff who review plans, issue permits, perform inspections, or otherwise interact with electrical upgrades occurring in residential buildings.



Participation is voluntary and the survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The first 200 respondents to complete all study requirements may be eligible to receive a \$25 eGift card. All responses to the survey questions will remain anonymous; respondents can opt out at any time.

To share your insights, complete the survey by Aug. 31 using [this link](#). For questions or more information on the rights of study participants, call (510) 486-5399. ●



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Shown here, MEUW staff and members met with U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany (R-WI 7th) on a recent trip to Washington, D.C., for the American Public Power Association's **Policy Makers Council** (PMC) summer meeting. The group also met with U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman (R-WI 6th) and staff for other federal legislators representing Wisconsin. Those pictured are (*from left*) MEUW Director of Legislative and Regulatory Relations Tyler Vorpagel, Cedarburg Light & Water Commission President Andy Moss, Marshfield Utilities Commission President Mike Eberl, Rep. Tiffany, Kaukauna Utilities Commission President Lee Meyerhofer, and WPPI Energy Director of Government Affairs Joseph Owen.

PMC is comprised of governing officials from public power utilities, including mayors, city council members, and elected or appointed board members. PMC members participate in meetings with elected representatives and congressional staff to advocate for APPA's [legislative and regulatory priorities](#). Meyerhofer completed his one-year term as PMC Chair at the July meeting.

LIVELines Classifieds

MEUW is pleased to promote job openings with its member utilities across Wisconsin. New positions are regularly added to our website — check them out [here](#) or use your smartphone to scan the QR code below. Here are some current opportunities available:

Kaukauna Utilities

[Mechanical Technician](#)

[Electrical Technician](#)

[Electric Line Technician](#) (Journeyman or Apprentice)

Village of New Glarus

[Journey Line Worker \(New Glarus Utilities\)](#)

City of Lodi

[Utility Billing Coordinator](#)

When your utility is hiring, be sure to email the job posting to office@meuw.org.



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