

LIVELines

Volume 74, Issue 6 • June 2025

Annual Conference spotlights value of association

The mighty Mississippi River was the backdrop to MEUW's 95th Annual Conference in La Crosse. Attendees from 42 municipal utilities (representing more than half of the MEUW membership) were in attendance to hear presentations about the current state of the industry, new and potential legislation that impacts municipal utilities, energy storage opportunities, and a discussion about navigating the regulatory landscape.



More than 115 registrants took part in the event held on Thursday, May 15, at the Radisson Hotel in La Crosse. After MEUW Board Chair and General Manager of Marshfield Utilities Nicolas Kumm greeted attendees, MEUW President and CEO Tim Heinrich spoke about the state of MEUW, accomplishments over the past year and the association's refreshed strategy (see story on page 7).

American Public Power Association (APPA) President and CEO Scott Corwin was onsite to give an overview of APPA's strategic priorities of advocacy, education and training, security resilience and technology, as well as details about the national association's organizational and financial health. Corwin



also highlighted the value members receive from being part of APPA and reviewed 11 steps to operational excellence each utility can do to enhance and maintain their value to their communities.

Michael Nolan, a Washington, D.C. lobbyist and President of MJN Consulting, made a return appearance at the conference, offering information and insights about happenings in the nation's capital. He admonished par-

ticipants to "stop trying to make sense" when discussing the chaos and confusion underway at the federal level.

The program also included time to focus on what's ahead in the utility space and an informative presentation about energy storage technology and how it's being applied in the industry. Olaoluwa "Ola" Ilelaboye, P.E. from Power System Engineering shared valuable information about available options in energy storage, differences between them, and established vendors to look for when pursuing installing energy storage.

To provide attendees with a peek inside what's happening on the regulatory landscape, Boardman Clark Attorney Richard Heinemann, who also serves as General Counsel of MEUW, talked about proceedings at the Public Service Commission (PSC) and their potential impact on municipal utilities. Heinemann offered his insights about the prospects on a simplified process for municipal electric

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Mutual aid crews rally to help Juneau

The National Weather Service confirmed multiple tornadoes in Dodge County on Thursday, May 15, including one that led to a full system outage for Juneau Utilities that afternoon. Transmission lines feeding Juneau's three substations were impacted, leaving more than 1,200 households without power. The system damage included nine broken poles, six distribution poles that could be salvaged and straightened,

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Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin's mission is to **strengthen and unify community-owned utilities**. Since 1928, MEUW has been the trade association for Wisconsin's 81 public power communities and is affiliated with the American Public Power Association (APPA) — www.publicpower.org



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rate cases as well as takeaways from PSC “generic” dockets. He encouraged MEUW to continue efforts to host PSC staff for “field trips” to better engage them in experiences and foster a deeper understanding of how municipal utilities operate.

During a lunchtime awards ceremony, MEUW honored six individuals for their service to MEUW and the public power industry and recognized four individuals with retirement awards.

Breakout sessions offered highlights of 2025 HR trends, cybersecurity, Wisconsin’s open meeting law, as well as open-forum roundtable discussions focusing

on legislative and regulatory issues and safety and operational training topics.

The day closed with an energetic and highly interactive session with professional speaker Patty Hendrickson (who happens to live in La Crosse). She offered a variety of common-sense ideas about leadership and self awareness, encouraging participants to commit to building a personal and professional culture that encourages and celebrates growth. Among the takeaways was that leadership is less about position and more about disposition as well as her encouragement that leaders, “Be *your* best, not *the* best.” ●

If you did not attend the conference and would like to learn more, please email the MEUW Office.

MEUW honors utilities for safety achievements

The association presented 43 member utilities with Safety Achievement Awards for their 2024 safety performance. Each was honored at a ceremony held in conjunction with the 95th Annual Conference on May 15.

The MEUW Safety Achievement Award was developed to recognize safety performance and to encourage safety activities by member utilities. Awards are given based on voluntary reporting. Utilities receive recognition for their dedication to employees’ on-the-job focus;

following safety rules, using safe work practices and watching out for one another. The metrics are designed to identify leading indicators of safety performance, rather than lagging indicators. MEUW first presented safety awards in 1999.

This award also acknowledges the commitment of utility management and governing boards to ensuring an environment that supports safe operations. This includes ensuring employees have the equipment needed to do their jobs safely, and training to maintain or improve skills. Award recipients are placed in one of three categories (gold, silver, or bronze) based on scoring against key criteria that promote a strong safety culture. ●



Accepting Safety Achievement Awards on behalf of their community were: *Front row; from left* — Jill Weiss (Stoughton), Sam Sobotta (Arcadia), Troy Wardell (Muscoda), Mike Reynolds (Boscobel), Brian Rhodes (Hartford), Kim Ganz (Trempealeau), Dave Euclide (Sun Prairie), Scott Gald (Richland Center), Karsten Huse (Cedarburg), Dave Tichinel (Clintonville), Jordan Peichel (Cumberland), Steve Brooks (Waupun), Troy Adams (Manitowoc), George Morrissey (Cuba City); *Back row* — Kurt Melchert (Menasha), Jordan Fritche (Fennimore), Tim Herlitzka (Waunakee), Brian Dellemann (Two Rivers), Nick Gahlman (Juneau), Todd Weiler (Wisconsin Rapids), Jason Bessette (New London), Michael Avanzi (Kaukauna), Dalton Hiley (Columbus), Cade Schreiber (Hustisford), Brian Carroll (Gresham), Robb Koepp (Shawano), Nicolas Kumm (Marshfield), Ryan Roehrborn (Plymouth)

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and 22 transmission poles, some of which had distribution under-build on them.

Many buildings and properties across the area were either significantly damaged or destroyed, including a retirement facility, small businesses, residential homes, apartments, and farms. The MEUW team coordinated two waves of mutual aid crews from Columbus, Hartford, Hustisford, Jefferson, Kaukauna, Manitowoc, Waterloo, Waunakee, and Waupun. Thirty-nine municipal utility workers from those nine MEUW communities worked alongside the Juneau crews, restoring power to 90% of customers by midnight, and to everyone within 24 hours.



Additional damage was seen the following day due to strong winds, but the mutual aid crews continued their support to restore the infrastructure.

As the tornado hit, many utility leaders were gathered together in La Crosse for the MEUW Annual Conference. It was inspiring to see the quick and collaborative response as everyone banded together to provide support to Juneau. Electric Superintendent Nick Gahlman expressed his thanks for the mutual aid via a Facebook post, saying, *“All the staff from those Utilities were ready to go! They showed that no matter how close or far we are from one another, we are ONE Utility in a time like this. Our team, along with all these Utilities, were able to restore 100% of its available customers in less than 24 hrs. It was truly amazing to witness this restoration in action. There is still work to be done but I can’t help but feel grateful for what we ALL were able to accomplish in that short amount of time.”* ●

Members' NEWS

Manitowoc Public Utilities (MPU) has earned an award for a project that involves the conversion of two power plant boilers from fossil fuels to 100% Wisconsin-recognized renewable fuel pellets.



The award was given to MPU by Progress Lakeshore, a private-public economic development organization dedicated to accelerating business success in Manitowoc County.

The Corporate Investment Award recognizes a business that has made a positive economic impact on the community through capital investment, has developed product innovation, and has gone above and beyond to enhance its workforce.

This low-capital project extends the life of a vital community asset, preserves over 30 skilled jobs, maintains a \$2 million annual PILOT payment to the city, and strengthens grid resiliency, Progress Lakeshore said.

MPU's efforts also support local industries and divert 18,000 tons of industrial waste from landfills each month, creating a first-of-its-kind, cost-effective renewable energy model in Wisconsin.

APPA contributed to this news item

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.



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Mount Horeb Utilities strives to exceed customer expectations



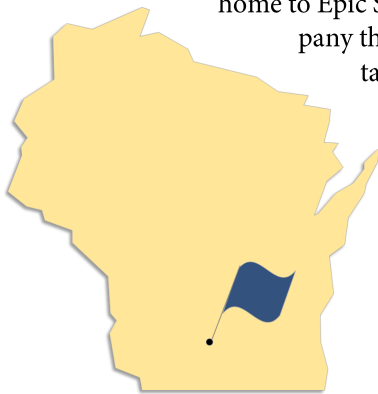
By Karen Whitmer

Mount Horeb, famed as the “Troll Capital of the World,” is known for its Norwegian heritage with a touch of pure magic.

Nearly 40 whimsical, larger-than-life troll sculptures adorn the businesses, parks, and streets of the village, which is in Dane County — about 20 miles west of Madison. Visitors can pick up a map at the Chamber of Commerce to find each troll in Mount Horeb, turning a downtown walk into a fairy-tale adventure. With a population of nearly 7,500, Mount Horeb is also proud to own and operate its own electric, water, and wastewater utilities.

Jordan “Jordy” Schmitz, who came to Mount Horeb Utilities (MHU) in 2012 as a line worker, has served as the Electric Superintendent for the last three years. “Our team is very committed to doing our part to make Mount Horeb a great place to live and work,” Schmitz said. “Mount Horeb is booming, so our team has to work hard to exceed customer expectations,” he added.

According to U.S. Census data, Mount Horeb has experienced significant growth over the last several decades, with a more than 30% increase in population since 2000. Schmitz attributed some of the growth and new construction to the village’s proximity to both Madison and the City of Verona which is home to Epic Systems, a fast-growing company that dominates the U.S. hospital software market.



MHU’s team includes six linemen, who are committed to increasing reliability, safety, and customer satisfaction in Mount Horeb (see photo on page 5).

“Being a tight-knit team that relies on each other makes the work easier,”

Schmitz said. “We work on keeping our outages, as well as our average response times, down.” And they are succeeding. MHU’s average response is now only about 12.5 minutes.

The village reinvents itself

Mount Horeb was incorporated as a village in 1899. Early settlers established farms and relied on agriculture as their primary livelihood. Dairy farming became a significant industry in the region, contributing to the town's growth and develop-

ment. Over time, Mount Horeb evolved into a thriving community with a mix of agriculture, trade, and tourism.

The village’s trolls date back to the 1970s, when a local Scandinavian gift shop, Open House Imports, placed troll sculptures imported from Norway on their front lawn to attract visitors. These quirky trolls quickly became popular, especially among truckers who would joke about them over their CB radios.



In the 1980s, when a bypass was built around Mount Horeb, local businesses feared losing foot traffic. That’s when the town fully embraced the trolls. Michael Feeney, a local wood-carver, was commissioned to create more playful, life-sized troll sculptures, and soon, they lined Business Highway 18/151, earning the road its famous name: “The Trollway.” Over time, other local artists have contributed new trolls, keeping the tradition alive and growing.

MHU takes proactive approach to managing growth

MHU was founded in 1939. Today it serves about 4,700 electric customers in the village of Mount Horeb and the surrounding area. Its service territory includes a vast, rural area with 144 miles of overhead lines. About 87% of customers are residential and 13% are commercial customers.

According to Schmitz, Tyrol Basin, a ski and snowboard facility, is among MHU’s largest customers. Tyrol Basin provides 18 trails serviced by five lifts and is recognized for having some of the premier terrain parks in the Midwest.

Other notable customers include Ingleside Manor, a senior living community with various care levels, and retailers Duluth Trading, Brunzell Lumber, and Kwik Trip.

The team recently worked with Kwik Trip to install four electric vehicle (EV) chargers in its Mount Horeb store. The

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chargers officially went online on May 5 and are now available for public use. Schmitz said that MHU is carefully watching to see if the EV chargers become profitable before deciding to add any of their own. “It costs about \$70,000 to install a single public fast-charging station and needs to attract about 40 customers a day to even break even,” Schmitz said. “It may be a possibility in the future if they prove to be a good investment. We’ll see.”

This summer, MHU will be constructing a 3.1-mile tie-around to further enhance reliability and grid stability throughout the service territory. They are also working on replacing 20,000 feet of older cable over the next six years. “We are proactive in many of our projects, always trying to keep ahead of things,” Schmitz said.

Last year, MHU also constructed a new substation west of the village in Blue Mounds to expand capacity and support new development. “Our town is growing like a weed, and we are doing all that we can to keep our systems in good condition, rather than run the risk of needing to make emergency repairs.”



But MHU’s commitment extends beyond infrastructure, it also has developed programs to foster civic pride. For example, MHU offers several community grants as well as a high school internship program.

“No doubt, we are facing a shortage of qualified employees in our industry,” Schmitz said. “We have decided to keep an intern on staff to help train future potential employees, and also to help spread the word about good careers in Wisconsin’s municipal electric utilities.”

Mount Horeb’s many hidden treasures

Beyond troll hunting, Mount Horeb visitors can explore the natural beauty of the area at Tyrol Basin, Blue Mound State Park, Military State Park, Stewart Lake County Park, and the Cave of the Mounds.

The downtown area of the town features an array of unique shops, local boutiques, and charming restaurants, including the Grumpy Troll Brew Pub and Sjolinds Chocolate House. The art galleries and museums, including the Driftless Histor-



The line crew keeping Mount Horeb booming is made up of (front row, from left): Chris Hook, Bo Schult, Bryan Moyer; Jordy Schmitz (on step); (top row) Corey O’Hearn and Garrett Leis.

ic Museum, display the town’s cultural heritage and offer a look into its history.

Mount Horeb is also known for its strong sense of community. Residents actively participate in various events and festivals throughout the year. “We add a new festival and hang new banners around town every year,” said Schmitz. Mount Horeb events include the Troll Brew Fest, which is held annually in September, and the Mount Horeb Summer Frolic, which is coming up on June 12-15.

“Mount Horeb has a lot of quirky charm,” Schmitz said. “But it’s also a great community with great people. Our utility is proud to serve them.” ●

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

Correction: The Cuba City Tractor Pull is June 13–14. The wrong date was listed in last month’s *LIVE LINES*.



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MEUW NEWS Monitor

Results of Annual Wage & Benefits Survey distributed

Each year, MEUW collects and shares data about the pay and perks MEUW member utilities provide their employees. The results of this year's Wage & Benefits Survey were distributed on May 5. Only the utilities that provided information for the survey received a copy of the results, which were sent to the email address of the person who submitted the data. A total of 66 utilities responded to this year's survey; that represents 82.5% of the MEUW membership, compared to 62 in 2024 and 68 in 2023. The comprehensive survey results are considered proprietary. MEUW does not provide the results on request. This practice makes it easier to control how the data is used and by whom.

Virtual training on navigating conflict planned for June 19

As much as we try to avoid it, we sometimes find ourselves in difficult customer service interactions. As part of MEUW's "The Power of One" customer service training series, a 90-minute virtual training will help participants develop the skills to effectively navigate and resolve conflicts. Learners will identify potential conflict triggers and understand their individual preferred conflict management style and how to adopt other styles as needed. The training will explore a proven conflict-resolution model and offer practice on de-escalation techniques and recovery strategies that build stronger relationships. Participants will take away ideas that contribute to professionalism and positive outcomes. The virtual class is on Thursday, June 19 at

10:00 a.m., with options to enroll as an individual learner or as part of a group from your municipality. Registration is located [here](#).

Annual Accounting and Customer Service Seminar is Sept. 24 in Mauston

Registration will open soon for 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 policies affecting utilities to 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 September 24 in Mauston. ●

Make plans to join MEUW for dinner this fall

MEUW will once again be hosting District Dinners 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 planned to receive updates and participate in roundtable discussions.

Planned locations and dates are:

- **Tuesday, Sept. 23** – Hartford (tentative)
- **Wednesday, Sept. 24** – Rice Lake
- **Monday, Sept. 29** – Algoma
- **Tuesday, Sept. 30** – Gresham
- **Monday, Oct. 6** – Cuba City
- **Wednesday, Oct. 8** – Cashton
- **Thursday, Oct. 9** – Merrillan
- **Wednesday, Oct. 15** – Mazomanie

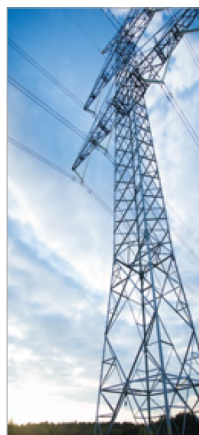
Advance registration will be required. Please watch for details about specific locations and sign-up in future communications from MEUW. Each session begins with a cash bar at 6:00 p.m., meal at 6:30 p.m., and a brief program to follow. The events typically wrap up no later than 8:00 p.m.

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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

The state of MEUW is “strong, unified, focused”

When MEUW President and CEO Tim Heinrich kicked off the association's 95th Annual Conference on May 15, he focused on the “State of MEUW.” The talk included a high-level report on findings from the Member Engagement Survey conducted in March and April, results that indicate continuing satisfaction with MEUW's services. More than 70% of member utilities completed the survey, representing a strong response rate for a survey of this type. The survey results reflected higher satisfaction among members who are familiar with and have read the association's [Strategic Plan](#), which was refreshed through work by MEUW's Board of Directors in 2024. The full set of slides from the presentation are available [here](#). More survey results will be shared in the July *LIVE LINES*. ●

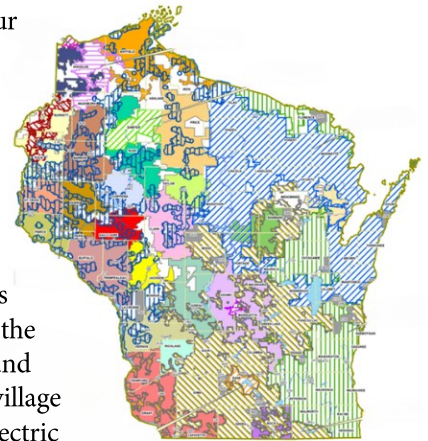
New committee to focus on territory boundaries

Municipal electric utilities have the right to provide electric service within their corporate limits. Many cities and villages throughout Wisconsin have been experiencing growth that literally pushes the boundaries of their municipality, including many of MEUW member communities.

While this increased development is good for our communities, the expansion creates challenges for our member utilities related to the right to provide electric service in new areas. MEUW members have had a variety of experiences, both positive and negative, attempting to enter into agreements with other public utilities or cooperative associations when municipal boundaries change. Determining boundary lines can be complex and may result in disputes over the right to serve areas that are not already served, and state statutes governing annexation to a city or village as well as a municipal utilities' right to extend electric service to its own property or facilities further complicate territorial disputes when they arise.

MEUW's Board of Directors recently adopted a resolution that creates a work group named the Service Territory Extension and Protection — or STEP — committee to evaluate legal, regulatory, and/or legislative options to reduce the complexity of rules governing utility service area boundaries. The work group will be looking at ways to ensure that we protect our members' current service territory but also that as a municipality's boundaries expand, our member utilities have a pathway to serve customers within that expanded municipality.

We are in need of members to fill out this seven-member work group. Please reach out to [Tyler Vorpapel](#), MEUW Director of Legislative and Regulatory Relations, with any questions or if you are interested in participating. As always, we are trying to balance the committee considering size, location, and supplier to reflect the MEUW membership. ●



This colorful map — developed by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin — shows the patchwork of electric service territories in place among the state's investor-owned, cooperative, and municipal electric utilities. Click on the image to access an interactive version on the PSC's website or click [here](#) to download a PDF.

National Safety Month brings focus to leading practices



Contributed by Regional Safety Manager Sean Wall

The National Safety Council (NSC) celebrates National Safety Month each June to remind everyone about the importance of safety — especially as we approach summer.

“Safety is everyone’s responsibility,” said Lorraine Martin, NSC President and Chief Executive Officer. “National Safety Month gives us an opportunity to reinforce best practices that help protect lives. Working together, we can create safer environments for our colleagues, communities, families, and friends,” she continued.

NSC breaks the month of June into themed safety weeks, each focusing on different topics to address at both home and at work.

Week 1 (June 1-7): Continuous Improvement

The first week encourages strengthening safety policies and protocols within the workplace. This may include updating written safety programs and training employees about safety and hazard recognition. At home, it’s an ideal time to discuss emergency procedures with the whole family. For example, does your family have an emergency escape plan if there is a fire or another ur-

gent situation? If you have pets, do you have a plan to keep them safe during an emergency? Having an emergency plan, along with practicing that plan, can help ensure your family’s safety at home.

Week 2 (June 8-14): Employee Engagement

This week is about getting employees actively engaged in workplace safety initiatives. With summer now in full swing, it’s a great time to ensure all employees know how to prevent heat-related illnesses. During the summer heat, drinking the recommended amount of water per day, which is approximately half of your body weight in ounces, is vital. For example, if you weigh 160 pounds, you should drink 80 ounces of water daily. If someone experiences heat-related illness symptoms (cramps, flushed skin, fever, nausea, vomiting, headache, fatigue, anxiety, feeling faint), take action:

- Move to a cool place; rest.
- Remove excess clothing and place wet compresses on the head, neck, armpits, and inner thighs to help reduce the core temperature. Fanning the skin will also help.
- Offer cool sports drinks (Gatorade, Powerade) containing important minerals, salts, and electrolytes. *Note that these sports drinks are high in sugar and should be consumed in moderation. Cool water is the preferred choice for regular proper hydration.*

- Stretch cramped muscles slowly and gently.
- If there is no improvement or the person is unable to take in fluids, call 911 for emergency assistance. Time is critical. When in doubt, do not hesitate to call for help.

Week 3 (June 15-21): Roadway Safety

Week three brings the first official day of summer and is focused on addressing the risks associated with driving through construction season. In 2024, there were 2,161 work-zone crashes in Wisconsin. Roughly 38% of those crashes were rear-end collisions, which are often caused by inattentive driving. Nearly half of the crashes occurred when a lane closure was in place to allow work to be done safely. Establishing a safe work zone should be a key part of planning when work occurs on the roadway. The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) provides essential guidelines for setting up a safe work zone, including using signs, cones, and various traffic control devices. Make sure employees are properly trained in setting up work zones and that they have the necessary equipment to do so safely. At home, talk to your family about construction and work-zone safety. Stress the importance of staying focused when driving, especially in and around work zones.

Week 4 (June 22-30): Personal Well-being

The final week of the month highlights the importance of mental and physical health. Prioritizing both mental and physical health can help foster a safe work environment, promote improved job performance, and support the overall well-being of all employees. Mental health issues such as depression and anxiety can affect concentration, decision making, and reaction time, all of which can potentially increase the risk of accidents. Mental health can also influence physical health habits, including exercise, diet, and sleep. Promoting well-being in the workplace also requires creating a work culture where employees feel safe to express themselves, share ideas, and report concerns without fear of negative consequences.

Encourage your co-workers and family to engage in regular exercise, eat a healthy diet, and prioritize getting sufficient sleep. It’s also important to have open communication channels to provide a way for employees to voice concerns in a timely manner.

Keeping safety in mind at both work and home will allow you to take full advantage of the amazing experiences and activities Wisconsin summers have to offer. After working so hard through the off seasons, make the most of summer ... but remember to do it safely. ●

Forum explores energy challenges and opportunities of data centers

The energy used by a modern-day data center can be comparable to adding an entire city to the electric grid. The prospect of more data centers coming online presents an opportunity to accelerate new technologies even as the electric-utility industry grapples with how to meet the increased demand. Data centers were the focus on a forum organized by Customers First Coalition held in Madison on May 6. The event featured multiple panel discussions about the regulatory, policy, and consumer impacts of new data centers.

Tyler Huebner, a former state utility regulator who now works for Google's energy market development team, said data center projects like these bring "a lot of job creation, a lot of economic benefit, tax base benefit" for the communities where they're located. But those benefits come with a substantial energy need to operate a "hyperscale" data center.

Kari Valley, Senior Director of State Policy and Strategy at the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, noted MISO's coverage area has seen little load growth over the past two decades. Over the next 20 years, the energy load is expected to rise by about 2.6% per year, resulting in a more than 60% increase over that period, she said during the event.

"So a whole different picture than we've looked at before ... looking at novel, creative, complex solutions to these problems," she said, noting MISO's exploration of what framework is needed to "answer to the needs of the footprint."

Huebner pointed to geothermal energy and small modular

reactors, or SMRs, as exciting prospects for this space. SMRs are smaller and less expensive than traditional nuclear plants which can be built in a factory and then placed where needed.

"How do we continue to kind of pull and accelerate some of these ideas that people have been talking about for a long time, and how do we scale them?" Huebner questioned, noting Google's investment in improving energy efficiency and weatherization to maximize the potential of the existing transmission grid. "The grid is a constraint now. Getting power is a constraint. How flexible can we be?"

Meanwhile, an executive with the largest investor-owned utility operating in Wisconsin, touted the state's attractiveness to locate data centers, noting the level of interest in development is "fantastic." WEC Energy Group Senior Vice President Bert Garvin said data center developers — such as Microsoft and Cloverleaf, both of which have proposed projects in the WEC utility service area — are prioritizing speed to market, reliability, and cost for new data center projects.

"We have very suitable sites, good infrastructure and a predictable regulatory environment, which are all attributes which I think have helped us," Garvin noted.

A recording of the full program is available online through WisconsinEye and can be accessed [here](#). MEUW is a founding member of the Customers First Coalition. ●

This article includes details reported online by *WisBusiness*.



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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. Tara Johnson is newly elected lawmaker in western Wisconsin



Tara Johnson (D–Town of Shelby) joined the Wisconsin State Assembly in January 2025, repre-

senting the 96th Assembly District, which includes most of Vernon County and parts of La Crosse County in western Wisconsin. Her election marked a historic milestone—she is the first Democrat to hold the seat since 1985.

Born in Minnesota and raised in Pennsylvania, Johnson moved to Wisconsin to attend

Carroll College, where she earned a bachelor's degree in German in 1982. She began her career with United Way of Greater Milwaukee, later working for United Way of Brown County, and in 1993 became executive director of the United Way of the La Crosse Area.

Johnson served on the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors from 2000 to 2020, making history as its first female chair from 2011 to 2020. During her tenure, she focused on fiscal responsibility, improving emergency services, expanding mental health support, and promoting environmental conservation.

A passionate advocate for her community, Johnson is a founding member of the Driftless Organizing Cooperative and has been active in Citizen Action Wisconsin, reflecting her deep commitment to grassroots organizing and civic engagement.

In the State Assembly, she serves on the Health, Aging and Long-Term Care Committee and the Agriculture

Committee. She has recently raised concerns about the limited number of legislative session days and the unequal distribution of committee assignments.

Johnson lives in Shelby with her husband, Tom. They have two adult children.

Rep. Tittl serves on Energy Committee



Paul Tittl (R–Manitowoc) has represented Wisconsin's 25th Assembly District since

2013. The district includes eastern Manitowoc County and parts of northeast Sheboygan County, encompassing the cities of Manitowoc and Two Rivers, as well as the village of Cleveland.

Tittl has served on the Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities since the 2023-24 legislative session.

Born in Delavan, Tittl graduated from Lincoln High School in Manitowoc. He is a long-term small business owner

and currently operates both Vacuum & Sew Center and Paintball Paul's in Manitowoc.

Before his election to the State Assembly, Tittl served on the Manitowoc City Council from 2004 to 2008, including a term as council president from 2006 to 2007. He also served on the Manitowoc County Board of Supervisors from 2006 to 2013, chairing the board from 2010 to 2012.

In addition to his role on the Energy and Utilities Committee, Tittl currently serves as Chair of the Assembly Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention and Vice Chair of the Committee on Sporting Heritage. He is also a member of several other committees, including Corrections; Campaigns and Elections; Forestry, Parks and Recreation; and Veterans and Military Affairs.

Tittl is active in numerous civic and community organizations. He is a member of the National Rifle Association, Eagles Manitowoc, and Manitowoc County Home Builders Association.

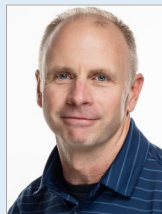
He resides in Manitowoc with his wife. They have two children and three grandchildren. ●

MEUW 2025-26 Executive Committee takes office

MEUW's Board of Directors on May 16 elected a slate of officers to serve as the association's Executive Committee for the coming year.



Board Chair
Nicolas Kumm
General Manager
Marshfield Utilities



Chair-Elect
Tim Aaby
General Manager/CEO
Rice Lake Utilities



Vice Chair
Weston Arndt
Electric Superintendent
New Richmond Utilities



Secretary/Treasurer
Tim Herlitzka
General Manager
Waunakee Utilities



At-Large Member
Steve Brooks
General Manager
Waupun Utilities

A complete listing of the members of MEUW's Board of Directors is available online at www.meuw.org/bod

Report: Focus on Energy program delivers benefits, drives satisfaction

The recently released [2024 Focus on Energy Evaluation Report](#) highlights significant achievements for the statewide energy efficiency and renewal resources program. The report reveals substantial electric savings, a growing interest in smart thermostats, and high levels of satisfaction among participants with both Focus and their utility providers. Conducted annually, this evaluation helps identify areas of improvement, measure progress, and ensures the program continues to deliver significant benefits to utility customers. The report provides particularly valuable insights for municipal electric utility staff, including how the program supports energy savings, cost reductions, and customer satisfaction.

This year's report highlights the substantial electrical savings achieved through the Focus on Energy program. In 2024, Focus engaged 175,258 residents and businesses and distributed \$53,776,295 in cash incentives, making energy-saving measures more accessible and affordable for participating utility customers. Most notably, the program achieved over 7.5 million MWh in lifecycle energy savings. Additionally, there was a 64,941 kW reduction in demand, helping to alleviate strain on the electrical grid.

The report also details information on specific products and initiatives contributing to the impressive energy savings. Over 120,500 free energy-efficient product packs were distributed to residents, with senior residents (age 65-74) having the highest participation rate at 39%, highlighting the program's reach and effectiveness in engaging older demographics. In the residential sector, smart thermostats (referred to as HVAC-controls) provided the highest amount of electric savings outside of renewables, accounting for 21% of the total kWh for the residential channel, an increase of 7% since last year. There was a notable boost in the overall savings from smart thermostats which brought in nearly 25% more savings than last year, demonstrating the market's continued interest in this technology.

Courtney Wojcik, Senior Portfolio Manager for Focus on Energy, emphasized the importance of utility partners in the success of smart thermostat adoption: "Utility partners have played a key role in making smart thermostats more affordable

and appealing. Their promotion of Focus on Energy rebates and manufacturer discounts has helped more households start saving on energy."

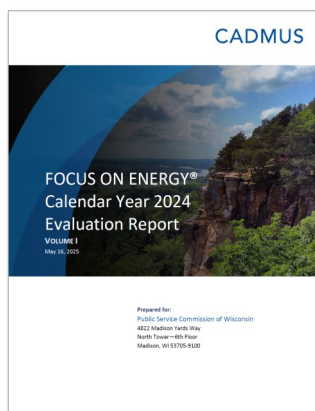
While the program has remained highly cost-effective overall, the evaluation noted the increase in heat pumps as the main reason residential HVAC offerings were not as cost-effective for the program as other measures in the program's portfolio. Heat pumps cause negative electric impacts when people


switch from gas to electric heating. They save significant amounts of natural gas and have emissions benefits, which helps offset the negative electric impacts, but not enough to pass the cost-effectiveness test.

Customer satisfaction remains a cornerstone of Focus on Energy, with high approval ratings across various sectors. Residential customer satisfaction scored 9.4 out of 10, reflecting the program's success in meeting consumer needs. About 70% of residential survey respondents were aware Focus on Energy offerings were provided in partnership with their local energy

utility. Additionally, over 72% of residential participants reported that Focus on Energy offerings made their opinion of their utility much more favorable or somewhat more favorable. These results were consistent with survey respondents' levels of awareness and opinion of utilities in 2023. Nonresidential awareness among respondents averaged about 87%. Most respondents reported that Focus on Energy offerings made their opinion of their utility much more favorable or somewhat more favorable, with 75% of respondents expressing positive views. High satisfaction levels indicate that Focus on Energy is effectively enhancing customer perceptions of their local utilities and fostering positive relationships.

The 2024 Evaluation Report highlights significant program achievements in promoting energy efficiency across Wisconsin, including municipal electric utility territories. With substantial energy savings, widespread participation, and high customer satisfaction, Focus on Energy continues to play a vital role in supporting sustainable practices and reducing energy consumption. Focus on Energy evaluation reports can be found at focusonenergy.com/evaluation. ●





Mutual Aid Hotline

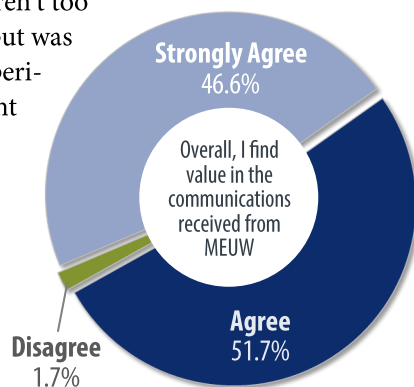
When you need help, call MEUW – 24 hours a day, seven days a week – for help coordinating mutual aid assistance

1-844-MEUW-911

(1-844-638-9911)

Survey responses show members value MEUW communications

Members who provided feedback in recent surveying signaled almost unanimous agreement that MEUW's monthly e-newsletter, *LIVE LINES*, is easy to read, included information they find useful to their job, and has interesting articles that aren't too long or too brief. The input was part of the association's periodic Member Engagement Survey that was conducted in March and April and had a 71% response rate. Nearly 96.5% of respondents said they "typically read (or at least skim) each issue when it is sent."



A separate survey question found that more than 98% of respondents agreed that they "find value in communications received from MEUW." There was 100% agreement that the frequency and timeliness are appropriate and the method used to communicate is effective, including 40% who "strongly agree" with the effectiveness of the method used. ●

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:

City of Elkhorn

[Electric Line Technician \(Apprentice or Journey-Level\)](#)

Hustisford Utilities

[Apprentice Electric Lineman](#)

City of Lodi

[Utility Billing Coordinator / Deputy City Clerk](#)

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



If you're looking for a way to pass the time this summer, you can catch up what's happening in the energy industry by listening to online podcasts — on a road trip, relaxing at the beach, or while mowing the lawn, for example. Here are a couple of podcast series available for download that MEUW members might find valuable:

- **"Public Power Now"** is produced by the American Public Power Association (APPA) to bring listeners the latest news and insights from key public power utility executives, power industry players, and APPA staff. Listen to it [here](#) or wherever you get your podcasts.
- **"Electric Wire"** is produced by Customers First Coalition (CFC) as a tool to educate lawmakers, regulators, and the general public about emerging energy issues. MEUW is a founding member of CFC, which has an online archive that includes dozens of informative podcasts [here](#).



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