

# LIVELines

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## MEUW 86th Annual Conference a Huge Success

This year's Annual Conference was held in Wisconsin Rapids from June 17-19, to commemorate Wisconsin Rapids Water Works & Lighting Commission's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of providing reliable and affordable electric service. Wisconsin Rapids was an incredible host, helping push attendance to the highest level since 2000.

The conference opened with a welcoming reception on Wednesday night at the Bull's Eye Country Club hosted by the Wisconsin Utility Suppliers Association, MEUW's vendor network. Over 100 MEUW members and vendors attended the reception at the picturesque venue overlooking the Wisconsin River. The reception was a huge hit, providing our members the opportunity to reconnect with many of our valued business partners at WUSA.

The conference kicked off Thursday with keynote speakers Steve Collier from Milsoft Utility Solutions, and Steve Vandermeer from Hometown Connections. Mr. Collier provided a brilliant look at rethinking revenues and rates in the dramatically changing electric industry. Mr. Vandermeer provided a great refresher on customer service and the responsibilities of every utility employee. Scott Fry from Mycoff, Fry & Prouse, and Steve Zach from Boardman & Clark provided an eye-opening look at employee recruitment and retention issues for public power systems. The presentation included a look at the labor shortage, the changing generations, and how to invest in and retain top talent. Representatives from American Electric Power and NextEra also provided attendees with an overview of long-term energy market fundamentals and natural gas supply and demand.



Karl Bletzacker, AEP, addresses conference attendees.

The MEUW Awards were presented during a special reception Thursday evening, recognizing individuals and utilities for their commitment to the public power industry. Recipients included:

- Charlie Bradburn Pillar of Public Power Award (Bronze level – 10 to 19 years of service) – Wayne Beebe, River Falls; Jim Heiar, Richland Center; Greg Freiberg, Pardeeville; Gene Rosin, Kaukauna; Jerry Burkett, Eagle River and Russell Ritchie, Algoma.

*...continued on page 3*



## MEUW Executive Director's Corner

By Zak Bloom, MEUW Executive Director

The 86th MEUW annual conference was held June 17-19 in Wisconsin Rapids. The conference included the annual business meeting, which provided me the opportunity to address the membership as I head into my third year as MEUW Executive Director. It is safe to say the honeymoon is over and I am pleased to report on the progress we have made in the past 12 months.

First and foremost, we have improved our core member service, advocacy. The addition of The Kammer Group as our contract lobbyist paid dividends instantly and continues to do so on a daily basis. Their professional staff is engaged at the Capitol and other state agencies at a level we have never experienced, allowing us to be more engaged and responsive than ever before. Members have taken notice of our improved legislative efforts through increased support of our political conduit. Contributions were at a record high in the 2013-2014 election cycle, having increased 35% over the previous cycle.

In addition to improving our advocacy efforts, we addressed program offerings. We realized very quickly that we needed help with marketing and member services to promote MEUW's value. To address this gap, we created the marketing and member services position and hired a professional to help in this area. That investment resulted in high-quality marketing materials and communications, record attendance at major conferences and other regular programming, and record support from MEUW's vendor network, WUSA. We also implemented a branding strategy that included a new logo, integrated program marketing materials, consistent communications and a new website.

We also addressed MEUW's safety services. The Job Training and Safety curriculum was revamped to refocus training on technical applications and safe work practices. We also went back to seven training sessions and a site visit to each utility, based on member feedback. The Board of Directors approved Standard Operating Guidelines for our Regional Safety Management Program to provide detailed responsibilities for MEUW and program participants. In addition, regional safety training programs were revised to ensure compliance with existing code and to ensure consistent training across the program. Recently announced a Municipal Safety Services Program to offer ala carte services to members and non-members who are not able to join a regional safety group. Revenue from this program will help MEUW stabilize our Regional Safety program fees and allow for the purchase of additional safety equipment in the future.

The final area of improvement was MEUW's general administration. We made many improvements to the employee side of our operations by outsourcing our human resourcing function to improve the process and make our front office more efficient, increasing salaries for critical safety positions to correct the retention issues we experienced in 2013, and eliminating outdated and cumbersome policies. All of the changes have made MEUW a better place to work.

All of our success is possible through the work of our dedicated and knowledgeable staff, and the continued support and participation of our members. Our progress is measurable because of the buy-in to the process and the new MEUW. Thank you all very much for your continued support!

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, comments or concerns about MEUW. You can reach me at 608-837-2263 or [zbloom@meuw.org](mailto:zbloom@meuw.org).



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# MEUW 86th Annual Conference *continued...*

- Charlie Bradburn Pillar of Public Power Award (Silver level – 20 to 29 years of service) – Lee Meyerhofer, Kaukauna, and Robert Becker, Pardeeville.
- Retirement Award – Eugene Weihert, Waterloo Utilities
- Meritorious Service Award – John Andres, Baker Tilly and Doug Brown, Border States
- Donald L. Smith Distinguished Service Award – Jeff Feldt, Kaukauna Utilities

MEUW Safety Achievement Award winners were also recognized at the awards reception for their continued dedication to establishing a strong safety culture. “The MEUW Safety Award allows MEUW and the membership to recognize those utilities that show a significant commitment to ensuring every employee goes home at the end of the day. It’s through the continued focus on building a safety culture that our members see the biggest returns on their investment through a safe, healthy, happy and productive workforce,” said Chris Schlechta, MEUW director of safety services.



Jem Brown (right) passes the president’s gavel to Randy Jaeckels

At Friday’s business meeting, MEUW’s Executive Director Zak Bloom addressed the membership and thanked them for their support over the past year. “MEUW is stronger today than it has been for quite some time. We have undergone a rigorous transformation that has made us more relevant with legislators and regulators, and has improved upon all program offerings. This is all possible through the tremendous work of our talented staff and the support of our

members. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your continued support and engagement,” said Bloom. At the end of the meeting, outgoing MEUW President Jem Brown passed the president’s gavel on to Randy Jaeckels from New Holstein Utilities as he begins his one-year term as MEUW president.

Please mark your calendars for the 2016 Annual Conference which will be held at The Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake from June 1-3.

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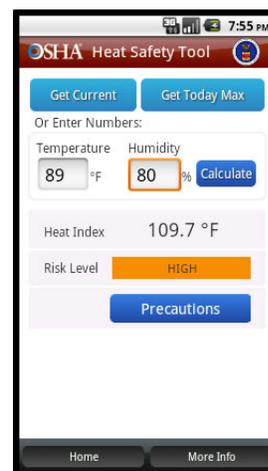
## MEUW Safety Corner

By Chris Schlechta, MEUW Director of Safety Services

Summer has finally arrived in Wisconsin! With the sun and fun I wanted to share some safety tips to help you make it a summer to remember for all the right reasons.

Due to the relatively short months of summer heat, we often forget that our bodies aren't acclimated to high temperature and high humidity. Each year an average of 650-700 people die from heat-related illness. That's more than killed by tornadoes, wind storms, floods, lightning, or any other weather event combined. Just in the past few years one lineman has died as well as 6 other employees engaged in utility work (electric, gas, water, and telecommunications) nationwide. These are just the work related cases reported to OSHA, thousands more will seek emergency medical treatment.

So how do you know when you need to be concerned that you are at risk for heat-related illnesses? Remember the old adage "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure", it'll go a long way to ensuring your safety from heat illnesses. Because of the way our bodies handle heat, we may not be aware of the dangers until it's too late. With that in mind the best prevention is to ensure that your body is prepared for the heat. The simplest solution is to ensure you stay properly hydrated throughout the day. That begins with drinking fluids before you arrive to work, and continuing to consume liquids at a steady pace every 15 minutes throughout the day. Don't wait until you feel thirsty, by this point you are already behind the eight ball. Secondly, watch your diet throughout the day. Eat lighter foods in smaller quantities, but eat more frequently. Lastly, throughout the day take small breaks during intense periods of heat...preferably in an air conditioned vehicle or building. Just a quick 5 or 10 minute break will help lower your body temperature and the stress of the heat on your body. OSHA has put out a great tool to help you determine when you may be at risk based on the weather forecast and real-time temperatures for your location. It's a free app available for Android or iPhones and available through Google Play or Apple App Store called "OSHA Heat Safety Tool". It will provide you with specific guidance and additional tips to keep yourself safe.



Working out in direct sunlight will elevate the heat index as much as 15 degrees above the ambient temperature. The direct sunlight presents other concerns as well that need to be considered. Simple things like making sure that the sun glasses you are using provide 100% UV protection will help ensure that you won't have to deal with cataracts later in life due to sun exposure. In addition to your eyes, make sure your exposed skin is protected from the damage caused by the sun's rays. Use a higher SPF sun lotion and reapply throughout the day to exposed areas like your face and back of your neck. The damage to your skin from the sun is cumulative, so it's never too late to start protecting yourself and reducing your risks of skin cancer. For some great additional information on preventing heat illness at work, visit OSHA's reference page on the matter at <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/index.html>.

Speaking of great training resources, MEUW offers several great safety training opportunities for members beyond the Job Training and Safety sessions delivered around the state every year. We offer a Regional Safety Management Program that essentially provides you access to a full time safety professional, all of your required and industry best practice based training needs, and much more at a fraction of what it would cost you to hire your own safety professional or even another contract safety provider. The position is shared amongst several entities in a geographic region making it very cost effective. We have also begun offering an ala carte version as our Municipal Safety Services Program. We can provide 30 or more topics of safety training, audits, inspections, and written programs based on your individual needs. This is an extremely cost effective method of augmenting your existing in-house program or providing just the minimum training required by regulation. Even if you are using another service provider, I encourage you to contact me for a price quote to provide an apples to apples comparison. You might be a little surprised that you could be paying as much as 3-6 times more than what you need to. We can also provide baseline audits to determine where your safety program is at, or provide affirmation that you are on the right track.

As always, if you have any questions or I can be of service, please don't hesitate to contact me.

# Member News & Tidbits

## Cedarburg Utility Commissioner Receives National Award

Jim Coutts, commissioner for Cedarburg Light & Water Utility in Cedarburg, Wis., received the Spence Vanderlinden Public Official Award during the American Public Power Association (APPA) National Conference in Minneapolis, Minn. This award recognizes elected or appointed local officials who have contributed to the goals of the association. Coutts is one of four winners in 2015.



Cedarburg Light & Water Commissioner Jim Coutts, center, receives the national Spence Vanderlinden Public Official Award on June 9 during the American Public Power Association National Conference in Minneapolis, Minn. Presenting the award were Paula DiFonzo, CEO of New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) in Texas, left, and Gary Stauffer, Executive Director of NMPP Energy in Lincoln, Nebraska, right.

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- Accounting and Finance Webinar Series: Industry Rate Trends and Future Rate Structures **July 9**
- Public Utility Governance Webinar Series: Rate Making for Utility Boards and City Councils **July 14**
- Negotiating Power Purchase Agreements: A Practical Guide **July 22**
- Key Accounts Webinar Series: Managing Time, Resources, and Your Sanity **July 30**

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# MEUW Management Training Program

The MEUW Management Training Program consists of six sessions and has been a successful effort in providing education to create “home grown” management personnel. This program is designed for both existing management and future management prospects offering relevant and engaging sessions. Participants may start at any point in the six-session (A-F) program, which is scheduled over a two-year period. MEUW will recognize those who complete the program.

## Session B Wraps Up

On June 2, the 2015/16 MEUW Management Training Program continued with Session B – Effective Skills for Leadership and Team Building. Jeffrey Russell, co-director of Russell Consulting, Inc. facilitated the session as he has since 2007.

Attendees from Session B learned about the qualities of resonant leaders and emotional intelligence, servant leadership, strengthening your bench by effective delegations, performance coaching for great results and providing constructive feedback, and managing conflict. The group took part in several exercises that included discussing leadership examples and characteristics of influential leaders that bring out the best and worst in all of us, the what and whys of delegation, building employee ownership for great performance, and exploring the cycle of conflict.

Here’s a look at what some of the attendees has to say:

- “This is a great class not only for managers but some of the information I through was good for all staff members.”
- “Jeff was a great presenter. He was great at keeping the interest of the audience and was very knowledgeable about the material. Definitely keep him for future classes!”
- “I liked the part on emotional intelligence and social awareness. I need to work on giving people 10 to 15 minutes of my time so that they feel connected.”

Also, at this session MEUW recognized Carole Brown, Utility Clerk and Deputy Treasurer for the City of Elroy, for completing the program. Congratulations, Carole!



Jeff Russell discusses team building.

## Coming Events

July 14	MEUW JT&S Excavation Competent Person Workshop, Black River Falls... <a href="#">Register to attend!</a>	September 23	<b>Save the Date!</b> MEUW Accounting & Customer Service Seminar, Wisconsin Dells
July 15	MEUW JT&S Excavation Competent Person Workshop, Chippewa County Highway Department... <a href="#">Register to attend!</a>	October 7	<b>Save the Date!</b> MEUW Management Training Program Session C, Wisconsin Dells
July 30	MEUW Executive Committee Meeting, Sun Prairie	October 13-14	<b>Save the Date!</b> MEUW JT&S Substation Workshop, Kaukauna
September 11	<b>Save the Date!</b> MEUW Board of Directors Meeting, Stevens Point	<i>Mark Your Calendars! Visit the MEUW <a href="#">website</a> for a full list of events scheduled through summer 2016.</i>	

# Classifieds

**City of River Falls has an opening for a full-time electric superintendent.** Position closing date for application submittal is July 9, 2015. [Click here](#) for a complete job description and application details.

**City of Whitehall is accepting applications to fill a full-time deputy clerk/treasurer.** Applications must be received by July 10, 2015. [Click here](#) for a complete job description and application details.

**Village of Prairie du Sac is seeking a journey line technician.** Applications must be submitted no later than 5:00 p.m. July 16, 2015. [Click here](#) for a complete job description and application details.

**Menasha Utilities is accepting applications for a lineworker.** Qualified applicants should submit a resume by July 17, 2015. [Click here](#) for a complete job description and application details.

**Kaukauna Utilities is seeking a qualified candidate to fill the position of journey line technician.** The application deadline is July 31, 2015. [Click here](#) for a complete job description and application details.

**City of Stoughton is seeking a qualified candidate to perform collections and customer services tasks for Stoughton Utilities.** Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. [Click here](#) for a complete job description and application details.

*Send your employment opportunities to [info@meuw.org](mailto:info@meuw.org).*

## Member News & Tidbits continued...

### Best Wishes in Retirement

Eugene Weihert, superintendent for Waterloo Utilities will be retiring on July 31, 2015. Gene was born and raised in Waterloo and has been involved in the industry for the past 38 years serving as a lineman for seven years, line foreman for 10 years and superintendent for 21 years. During his tenure, Gene served on the WPPI Energy CSAG (ESAG) and DSAG committees. He also received the WPPI Individual Achievement Award and the APPA Larry Hobart Seven Hats Award.



During his many years at the utility, Gene has seen the city grow from one substation to three and from a population of 1,700 to over 3,300. Other changes in the city have been the building of a new city hall and fire station. As superintendent, Gene was instrumental in getting a new utility office and garage to house inventory and equipment. Over the years, he saw quite a turnover in mayors and city clerks, and even experienced losing one of the city's biggest customers, which accounted for half of their electric load and about ¾ of water usage. He also experienced the steam heat system that was used to heat the downtown area and then its abandonment in 1992. In 2008, the utility reached the centennial milestone and Gene and his staff celebrated 100 years of service to the city in both the electric and water departments.

To say he has experienced changes throughout the city through the years is an understatement. When asked what he will miss most, Gene said the interactions with other fellow municipal utility personnel and the many conversations. In retirement, Gene plans on doing more woodworking projects, taking care of the "honey-do" list and spending more time at their cottage.

### City of Whitehall Personnel Changes

Former City of Whitehall administrator Tina Sass took a different position with the city of Altoona. Ashley Slaby has been promoted to City Administrator/Clerk and Karen Witte promoted to Treasurer/Deputy Clerk.

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