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LIVELines

Volume 64, Issue 6 | June 2016

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MEUW Hosts Another Great Annual Conference

Dr. Sudip Bose delivers inspiring keynote to 120 conference attendees

Leaders of organizations can apply some of the same lessons learned on the battlefield to improve their management and inspire others.

That message, from Iraqi war veteran Dr. Sudip Bose, came during his keynote presentation to more than 100 executives and administrators who gathered at the 87th annual Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin annual conference in Elkhart Lake June 1-3.

The conference highlighted the work that Wisconsin's 82 municipal utilities do to provide services to customers throughout the state. Conference attendees also heard in-depth reports from Wisconsin Public Service Commission regulators, social networking experts, and the emerging and vibrant market for natural gas.

In addition, MEUW leadership presented their annual awards for safety and performance excellence at the conference, held at the Osthoff Resort.

Bose, whose parents immigrated to the United States from India, said the key to leadership starts with each individual -- maintaining your health with proper diet and exercise.

"Keeping your inner army strong is the first step toward successful leadership," he said.

Those who are responsible for an organization's overall health and success also need to recognize that what they view as significant issues for the organization may not be shared by others on the front lines, or even middle-level managers.

"As leaders, sometimes what we see – what we think we see – is not the actual situation," he said, using a series of slides of optical illusions to make his point.

Bose knows about front-line experiences. He enlisted in the U.S. Army and served for 12 years. He then volunteered for duty in Iraq, serving as the first medical doctor responding to those injured and killed in combat. He treated Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein after his capture, and was recognized with the Combat Medical Badge for participating in operations under enemy fire.

...continued on page 7

Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin's mission is to lead, unify, advance and protect the interests of Wisconsin's municipally owned utilities. Since 1928, MEUW has been the trade association for Wisconsin's 82 public power communities and is affiliated with the American Public Power Association (APPA), www.publicpower.org.

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MEUW Association Update

From Bob Trussoni, President, MEUW

Over the last two months, MEUW has seen the departure of four of its office staff, including the Executive Director. The search to fill the various vacated positions is underway.

We have engaged Mycoff, which has previous experience assisting MEUW with an Executive Director search, to facilitate the search for a new director. We anticipate that the cutoff for applications will be late June. Mycoff will conduct phone interviews and from those discussions, it will provide a long list of candidates. A search committee has been established to review the resumes and narrow the selection to five to eight candidates for on-site interviews. The interviews should take place in mid-July. We would expect a successful candidate to be on board in late August or early September.

The board also approved moving forward with the Marketing and Member Services Manager and the Regional Safety Manager. We are working with QTI in Madison on these two positions. Depending upon the difficulty of filling these positions, we could see people in place in late July or sometime in August. The Marketing and Member Services Manager position will remain unchanged from its previous duties. The Regional Safety Manager position has been changed somewhat in that this individual will supervise the regional safety coordinators but not the Job Training and Safety Instructors. Those two individuals will now report directly to the Executive Director.

Past President Randy Jaeckels, New Holstein Utilities, addresses the annual conference earlier this month.

We are using outside temporary help with the various office functions while we continue to evaluate the best way to staff the office for the long term. Zak Bloom, Partner, KMA Bodilly CPA's and Consultants, is managing MEUW's accounting and Tim Herlitzka, Waunakee Utilities, is overseeing MEUW's financial transactions. Mary Cardona, Community Communications Consulting, is working as MEUW's Interim Administrator two days per week and handling all ongoing administrative activities and member communications. Mary also coordinated the final preparations for the annual conference with significant assistance from volunteers Lori Ewoldt of Sun Prairie Utilities and Phil McDade from Waunakee Utilities. Phil and Lori also attended the conference; Phil reported on the conference for this issue of Live Lines and Lori made sure everything went smoothly.

Coming Events

August 25	MEUW Management Training Program—Session E, Wisconsin Dells
September 13	MEUW Accounting and Customer Service Seminar, Wisconsin Dells
October 12	Management Training Program—Session F
October 17-18	MEUW JT&S Tree Trimming Workshop, Rice Lake
October 19-20	MEUW JT&S Tree Trimming Workshop, New London

Mark Your Calendars! Visit the MEUW website for a full list of events scheduled through summer 2016.

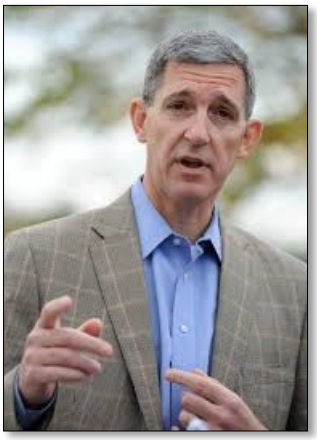
Three Plymouth Utilities staff members, Tanya Williamson, Laurie Klemme, and Bonnie Hebl, as well as Paula Pethan, Business Manager for New Holstein Utilities, staffed the conference registration table and provided general assistance. During this interim period, Past President Randy Jaeckels and I have been providing supervisory support and Steve Hedden has expanded his duties to fill in as needed.

Please feel free to contact the office at our general number 608-837-2263 and leave a message if we are not in. Mary's direct line is 608-478-2529 or email her at info@meuw.org or at 608-478-2529.

We will certainly encounter some challenges during this process, but in the end, MEUW will come out better and stronger for it. Please be patient with us and let me know of any comments, concerns, or suggestions. You may contact me at my office, 715-898-2101.

Durbin Envisions a Strong Role for Natural Gas

By Phil McDade



Natural gas, once thought of as a "niche player" in energy markets, should now be viewed as a foundational source of energy, Wisconsin municipal utility officials were told at their annual conference this month.

Martin Durbin, executive director of market development for the American Petroleum Institute, provided a background briefing on energy trends in the United States at the MEUW annual conference earlier this month.

The United States is now the world's largest producer of both oil and gasoline, Durbin said. Its oil-producing capabilities have long led to the country exporting oil, but now natural gas is part of that equation as well, he said.

"That's not going to stop anytime soon," he said of natural gas' emerging role as a force in energy use throughout the world. "It's clean, it's reliable and it's affordable."

Prior to 2009, natural gas prices were volatile and thus led companies away from exploring its potential as a reliable source of energy, Durbin said. Now, the United States with improved exploration capabilities has an estimated reserve of at least 150 years of natural gas.

"Prices continue to drop as production rises," he said. "The outlook is very positive on the production side and on the cost side as well."

One critical question facing the natural gas industry will be transporting it. Pipeline construction and routing needs to keep pace with expanded exploration of natural gas, and the United States also needs to increase its refining and shipping capacity if it plans to continue expanding exports of the fuel, Durbin said.

But consumer demand for affordable energy – a key component of natural gas's appeal – will likely continue its use by utilities in the long term, Durbin said.

"It's a foundation and it's going to be for a long time," he said.

MEUW Management Training Program - SESSION E

Personnel Issues

August 25, 2016 Wisconsin Dells

Registration cost: $275.

The MEUW Management Training Program provides continuing education to utilities to create "home grown" management personnel. Participants may start at any point in the six-session (A-F) program which will be scheduled over a two-year period. MEUW recognizes those who complete the program.

Topics in Session E include:

- Personnel policies and work rules
- The importance of accurate and updated job descriptions
- Identifying the true qualifications of the job
- Interviewing dos and don'ts
- Discipline and firing - legal issues to consider during the selection process
- Orientation tips to make new employees feel welcome and competent in their position
- Legal considerations when termination is necessary
- Union negotiation and bargaining considerations
- The basics of employee insurance and benefits
- The performance review - why it's important and how to do it best
- Your utility's current safety and regulatory compliance program
- A primer on Wisconsin Open Records and Open Meeting laws

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Public Service Commission Staff Provides an Overview of the Current Regulatory Environment for Public Utilities

By Phil McDade

Wisconsin's public utility regulators provided an overview of the regulatory environment for utilities at the 2016 MEUW annual conference. The Public Service Commission panel included PSC staffmembers Jeff Ripp, Division Administrator for Energy Regulation; Kristy Nieto, Assistant Administrator, Division of Telecommunications & Consumer Affairs; Carrie Templeton, Assistant Administrator, Division of Energy Regulation; Jackie Madsen, Energy Utility Auditor; and Sam Shannon and Corey Singletary, Rate & Policy Analysts.

The panel said the commission's primary focus is to design rates to promote economic growth; audit and monitor utilities to protect ratepayers; review major construction projects undertaken by utilities; and oversee natural gas pipeline safety issues.

The officials told the participants gathered at the 87th annual conference that the commission is particularly interested in reviewing innovative rate designs. Examples could include: voluntary "green" pricing that takes into account renewable energy; high-usage customers with significant impacts on power supply costs; and coincident demand billing.

Among the "hot topics" appearing on the PSC docket are solar projects undertaken by utilities large and small throughout the state including one initiated by MEUW member utility River Falls. In River Falls, a customer may purchase shares of solar panels and receive a credit on their bill and even utilize a loan program through the utility to help pay for the shares.

Regulators also discussed PSC auditing practices. Between seven and ten utilities are typically selected for audits each year. Utilities are selected based on the length of time since their last audit and whether there have been any billing or rate application issues that have arisen with the utility.

Common audit findings include:

- Lack of required annual customer notifications;
- Missing information that is required to be on bills;
- Misapplied rates or unauthorized tariffs;
- Billing errors;
- Sales tax and tax-exempt status issues;
- Coincident billing without an authorized tariff rider.

PSC staff said the commission received more than 4,750 customer contacts in 2015, with roughly one-third of these formal complaints. Inquiries from utilities have also grown substantially in recent years, totaling 606 in 2015.

The PSC panel reminded attendees about the "collection tools" available to municipal utilities and how they can be utilized by utilities and customers.

- Utilities are required to offer a deferred payment agreement (DPA) to customers who cannot afford to pay their bills in full (unless the utility has a different DPA policy in its tariffs
- PSC rules allow, but do not require, utilities to pursue disconnection as a means to collect delinquent accounts;
- Municipal utilities may pursue collection through small claims court;
- Utilities may consider limited use of the "treble damage" option outlined in Wisconsin statutes 196.642;
- Municipal utilities are authorized by the PSC to collect unpaid bills as a lien on property by placing charges on the tax roll.

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Social Media Platform Differences are Key to Effective Use

By Phil McDade

Social media can be an asset for any organization – public utilities included – but managers and leaders need to recognize the distinct differences among major social media platforms.

That advice, given to more than 100 municipal utility leaders and managers at the 87th annual MEUW Conference, came from Lindsay Harrison-Eirich, founder of Engaged Social Networking, a Sheboygan-based firm founded in 2013 to encourage businesses and other organizations to use social media to reach more customers. "We want to show how social media can work in your favor," she told the gathering.

Harrison-Eirich outlined the major social media platforms now in use throughout the world: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and blogging. While all of these are categorized as social media, they all have distinct differences that can help organizations promote themselves and improve their community outreach, she said. Among them:

- Facebook is the largest and most popular social media platform, with more than 1.5 billion users worldwide. One of the more noteworthy feature of Facebook is its analytics, Harrison-Eirich said. Users can get detailed information on those who interact with a Facebook page broken down by age, gender and geographic location.
- Twitter has more than 300 million active users, and it provides quick and short bits of information that can be shared through a network of users with common interests.
- LinkedIn provides a way for professionals to interact with each other for business-to-business networking. It has more than 400 million users, with 70 percent outside the United States.
- Pinterest is an online picture-based bulletin board, where users can post useful information. It has 100 million users, 85 percent of whom are women.
- YouTube has one billion users, with 300 hours of video uploaded every minute among users worldwide. It can provide in-depth information in a rich, visual format.
- Blogging can be done through websites; 6.7 million people have published something on a blog. More than four out of five online consumers report that they trust information posted on blogs.

In the utility world, Harrison-Eirich suggested social media can be used in a variety of ways: customers learning about new products; providing quick information during critical times such as outages; submitting opinions about services provided; and providing exclusive information to customers.

The key to using social media, she said, is to be consistent about posting information, and to use it to engage and interact with customers. "Ask; don't just tell," she said. "Share relevant and outstanding things and accomplishments. Be transparent and help others understand."

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MEUW Recognizes Member Service at Annual Conference

Every year at our annual conference, MEUW recognizes some of our members for outstanding service to MEUW, to the municipal electric utilities they serve, and their longstanding commitment to public power. We are proud to recognize the following members and confer the following awards:

Outgoing President **Randy Jaeckels**, general manager of New Holstein Utilities, received the **MEUW President's Award** in recognition of his leadership and dedication to MEUW.

Charles Christensen, general manager of the Cumberland Municipal Utility received the **Donald L. Smith Distinguished Service Award** in recognition of his commitment and dedication to public power in Wisconsin.

The following members were recognized for their years of service with an **MEUW Retirement Award:**

Thomas Nipple, with more than 26 years of service to Brodhead Power and Light;

Paul Raab, with more than 22 years of service to the Reedsburg Utility Commission;

Thomas Bushman, with more than 37 years of service to Two Rivers Power and Light; and

Pat Drone, with more than 50 years of service to utilities in Prairie du Sac, Sauk City, Viola and Muscoda.

The following people received the **Charlie Bradburn Pillar of Public Power Award** for their years of dedicated service as a public power governing board member:

Bronze (10—19 years)

Gary Fawcett, Eagle River Light and Water Department – 12 years

Jeff Hyslop, Eagle River Light and Water Department – 15 years

Betsy Reach, Eagle River Light and Water Department – 14 years

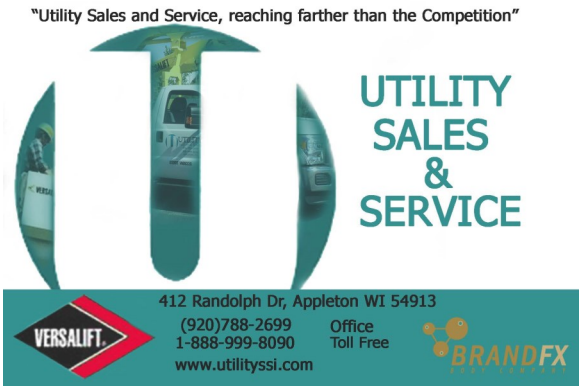
Silver (20—29 years)

Guy Haasch, Algoma Utility Commission – 20 years

Richard Gretebeck, Brodhead Power and Light – 20 years

Heidi Poser, Columbus Water and Light Department – 20 years

James Krueger, Reedsburg Utility Commission – 20 years



Classifieds

The Village of Pardeeville is seeking a full-time Utility Office Clerk. This position is responsible for a wide range of utility-related activities including customer service, billing, and the creation, maintenance and timely filing of a wide range of internal and regulatory reports. The Utility Office Clerk also assists the village with a variety of other tasks. Applications are due no later than 9:00 a.m. on July 8. Click here for a complete job description and application details. Contact Brandon Bledsoe at clerk-treasurer@villageofpardeeville.net if you have questions.

Manitowoc Utilities is seeking a full-time Journeyman Line Technician who will be responsivle for constructing and maintaining electric power facilities up to 69 kilo-volts. A successful applicant will have a Journeyman Lineman certification with a Certificate of Apprentice-ship in Electric Line Trade and five years of journeyman experience. Click here for a complete job description and application details.

Bangor Municipal Utilities is seeking a full-time Jour-neyman Lineman. This position will work as part of a four-person team responsible for day-to-day operation, maintenance and repair of BMU's municipal electric sys-tem. Background in electric system maintenance and construction along with computer skills is desired. Ap-plicants should email sbaker@villageofbangor.com for a job description and application. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Click here for more information.

Send your employment opportunities to info@meuw.org.

From page 1

Dr. Bose shares tactics any organization can use to prepare for change

For his role in serving one of the longest combat tours by a physician since World War II, as well as one of the only frontline doctors in the Second Battle of Fallujah, Bose was awarded The Bronze Star, given to those demonstrating heroic and meritorious service in combat.

Bose highlighted several other tactics used in the Army that can be replicated by any organization to prepare for changes and move its mission forward. Among them:

- Develop mental strength and "mindfulness" – which he described as a kind of yoga for the brain.
- Always be training and preparing in "peacetime" – when things are going fine in the organization -- so you are ready for what occurs during "wartime" – mo-ments of stress or significant change.
- Go past your "pain threshold" to succeed. Mobilize others and build armies.

"We are a lot more capable than we realize," he said. "We just can't let fear stop us."

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