

LIVE Lines

Volume 73, Issue 4 • April 2024

Members will gather in Marshfield for Annual Conference

Municipal utility leaders are meeting in Marshfield for this year’s MEUW Annual Conference. The event will take place over three days — May 15–17 — and will feature informative sessions about key issues facing municipal utilities, as well as time to connect and collaborate. Meeting in Marshfield

will allow attendees to join in celebrating the 120th anniversary of the founding of host utility Marshfield Utilities (MU). There will also be an opportunity to visit MU’s new office and 55,000- square-foot garage/warehouse, which will be the site of the Welcome Reception.

This is 94th time MEUW has brought its member utilities together for the Annual Conference. Even though the association recently marked 95 years of service to municipal electric utilities, the once-a-year event was postponed in 2020 due to the pandemic. Every year, the event

offers participants the chance to discuss emerging trends impacting public power utilities. This year’s conference will include discussions about advances in battery storage and the future of nuclear power in Wisconsin. There will also

be presentations about national politics and the upcoming elections,

as well as the potential impacts and opportunities associated with artificial intelligence. The opening keynote address features Tom Still, President of the nonprofit, non-partisan Wisconsin Technology Council, who will cover current economic conditions in and factors impacting Wisconsin and the utility industry.

The conference will feature both large and small group presentations and discussions to give everyone a chance to ask questions and offer insights, whether you’re from a large or small community, regardless of

role. Participants will also provide input into the priorities for MEUW’s long-term strategic plan.

The agenda will include:

- A four-person scramble-style golf outing at RiverEdge Golf Course in Marshfield. Registration includes a boxed lunch, drink tickets, and prize eligibility.
- An open house and guided tours at MU’s new facility
- A welcome reception hosted by the Wisconsin Utility Supplier Association (WUSA) at MU, including food and beverages, as well as competitive corn-hole games and axe-throwing activities.
- Thursday’s conference will be held at Hotel Marsh-

field, including breakfast and an awards luncheon to recognize individual and utility successes.

- A closing reception at Hotel Marshfield, providing hors d’oeuvres and refreshments, and additional networking time to discuss the conference and more.
- Breakfast on Friday at Hotel Marshfield, and
- MEUW’s Board of Directors’ Meeting at MU.

Registration is \$295 per person. The fee for the golf outing is \$50 per person. Preferred lodging for the event is at Hotel Marshfield, which has a group rate available through April 23.

Full details are available at meuw.org/94th. •

94TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

May 15–17 • Marshfield
Registration is now open
Full details: meuw.org/94th

— INSIDE THIS MONTH’S ISSUE —

New efforts are focused on keeping safety top of mind
Page 2

Cumberland’s Bergstrom is easing into retirement
Page 3

The Village of Stratford is in this month’s Community Spotlight
Pages 4-5

Updated interconnection rules in PSC 119 set to take effect May 1
Page 5

Legislation championed by MEUW signed into law
Page 8

Don’t miss the chance to celebrate lineworkers
Page 9

New efforts are focused on keeping safety top of mind



Dear MEUW Members:

It seems hard to believe the first quarter of 2024 has already come and gone. We kicked off the new year promising some new safety-related offerings, and I wanted to provide a quick update about where things stand.

We started our monthly safety calls in February, and I am very impressed with the attendance on our first few calls. I want to thank all those who have participated by sharing a story and want to continue to encourage participation if someone has either a close call, near miss, property damage, incident, or a safety success story, especially now that storm season has arrived. The calls are purposely designed to be member driven, so you won't hear much for me or other MEUW staff.

We want this to be a forum where our members get together and talk about safety with one another. The more participation we have, the more useful each of the monthly calls will be. If you do have something specific that you'd like to share, feel free to let me know in advance so we can be sure there's enough time to hear from everyone. Again,

thanks for your help in making this a valuable new tool for our members.

You may have also noticed that we've shifted to a new and improved format for the safety reminder emails we send out each Sunday. We know from feedback that a lot of folks find the information useful as conversation starters among their crews and other employees. We hope that you'll continue to find the topics useful and encourage you to share any feedback or content ideas.

On March 6, we held a Foreman's Roundtable in Mauston. The daylong session was well attended (27 municipal utilities were represented) and there was a lot of good discussion among the participants. The Safety & Education Committee and Scott Adler (Stoughton), who chairs the Committee, have been advocating for a meeting like the one we just hosted. We appreciate the support of

those who freed up their foremen and crew leaders to be away and get involved in the discussions. Based on feedback, we're planning to make the Roundtable an annual event.

Finally, every now and then I am asked when MEUW is going to bring back a Lineman's Rodeo in Wisconsin.

The idea is something we have talked about inside MEUW and with the Safety & Ed Committee from time to time. We know it's a big undertaking

and not everyone sees the value in the event, so we're not sure how we'll proceed.

In the meantime, however, MEUW has signed up to sponsor the Badger State Electric Power Distribution (EPD) Rodeo, which is set for Thursday, April 11, in Beaver Dam. The event is hosted by Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC) and attracts nine-month EPD students from Milwaukee Area Technical

College, Blackhawk Technical College, North Central Technical College, and MPTC. The Rodeo is intended to support teambuilding through inter-collegiate competition and showcase necessary trade skills with an emphasis on safe work practices.

Representatives of MEUW plan to attend to get a sense of how the Rodeo is organized and to talk with spectators and participants. All are welcome. The competition begins at 10 a.m. and will end at 2:30 p.m. There is no cost to attend. If interested, please sign up [here](#).

As always, we welcome your feedback about MEUW's safety programs. Please reach out anytime to share your ideas, criticisms, and compliments. We all play a role in the safety of our co-workers and friends — thank you.

You can reach MEUW Director of Safety Services and Operations **Mike Czuprynko** by email at mzczuprynko@meuw.org or by phone at (608) 478-2530



Participants in the March 6 Foreman's Roundtable in Mauston took a break to pose for a group photo, which included a selfie captured by Czuprynko (top).

Cumberland's Bergstrom is easing into retirement

After more than 24 years at Cumberland Municipal Utility (CMU), Dean Bergstrom is retiring this month — sort of.

Dean has been the Utility Manager since 2018, following roles as Assistant Manager and Water Operator.

Prior to joining CMU in 2000, Dean completed a two-year program at Staples Technical College (now Central Lakes College) in Staples, Minn., earning a diploma in Heavy Equipment and Maintenance. After a brief stint working in the Minneapolis area, Dean felt drawn back to his hometown of Cumberland. “I just wanted to live in a small town,” he explained. “I enjoyed the community. In fact, at the time, I knew 90% of the people!”

Once back in Cumberland, Dean joined his stepfather in running their own house painting business for 10 years. A Water Operator position then became available at CMU, and Dean made the move into municipal utilities. His prior work with heavy equipment helped him fit right in at CMU to help operate their generators.

Throughout his tenure at CMU, Dean had the chance to learn many things. Starting in the water operations area, then taking on the management of the electric and utility presented learning opportunities. In 2020, CMU took over management of the sewer department from the City, which is the only membrane plant in Wisconsin. “I was always learning something new,” he says.

His involvement in MEUW also provided learning opportunities and helpful resources. “We have always been a member of MEUW,” Dean explains.

CMU had a long history of participating in MEUW training programs for lineworkers but didn't get more deeply involved until Dean convinced Cumberland's Utility Board of the value of participating in MEUW's Regional Safety Program. From there, Dean's involvement in MEUW grew, eventually leading to a seat on the Board of Directors. “It's such a good group of people,” Dean shares. “The MEUW family is always there to help.”

Dean is also currently President of the Wisconsin Rural Water Association, and he appreciates the support they've provided over the years.



When asked to recall some highpoints of his municipal utility career, Dean quickly noted last summer's 125th Anniversary celebration for CMU, as well as the people he's worked with along the way. “I've always enjoyed serving the customers and working with all of the employees and staff at the utility. And I've also enjoyed interacting with other utilities.”

Dean admits he won't miss the increased regulations and politics involved in running a utility. “It's hard to do your job when you have so many rules,” he acknowledges.

He is looking forward to the future. “I'm semi-retiring,” Dean explains. He will be working part-time for CTW Corporation (a well-drilling company) as a Customer Representative. In his spare time, he plans to do more hunting and have more family time with his two daughters and wife, Pam. His family is excited about his daughter's upcoming wedding next year.

Jordan Peichel will be taking the reigns as Dean departs later this month. Jordan has worked in the CMU generation department for seven years as an operator and has been training with Dean since January.

When asked what advice he'd give to others, Dean says the utility industry offers great job opportunities. “There are great people all around that are always willing to help,” he says. He recommends people continue to spread the word about the utility industry. “You need to go to high schools because people don't always know about lineman, water, and sewer positions.”

Dean wants to share his thanks for a great career. “Thank you to everyone at MEUW for making me feel welcome over the past years. I wish everyone the best.” He hopes he may bump into some familiar faces in his next career. “I'm looking forward to being part of the utility in some form or another.” ●

Elections for MEUW Board of Directors start later this month Nominations for individuals interested in serving on the association's Board of Directors are being accepted through April 19. Self-nominations are welcome. This year's elections are for Directors and Alternate Directors in [even-numbered districts](#). The voting will take place April 24–May 8. Each member utility is entitled to a single vote for seats in their respective district. Those elected to serve will begin their two-year terms on May 17 as part of the association's Annual Business Meeting. Full details are available at meuw.org/elections. ●

The Village of Stratford continues to evolve and prosper



The Village of Stratford, located at the intersection of State Highways 97 and 153 in Marathon County, has a long and rich history. Originally established as a logging town, the community has continued to

stand tall despite the shifting tides of economic change throughout the last 130 years.

Stratford, which is about 30 miles from Wausau, has owned its own electric, water, and sewer/sanitary utilities since 1925. The utilities are operated as a part of the village's public works department and serve nearly 900 residential and commercial customers.

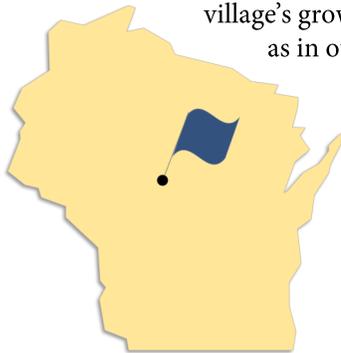
Scott Dennee has been with the department for 18 years, and as the director for the last six. "Stratford has a great small-town environment," he said. "There are only about 1,600 people who live here, so we pretty much all know each other, and we look out for each other."

Dennee leads a team of four people that operate all three Stratford utilities. "We are proud to serve our community and our neighbors," Dennee said. "Our customers know that when they call us, they will talk to a real person — a person they know — who will do their best to help."

Stratford's History Traced Back to Logging

In the 1870s, the Milwaukee, Lake Shore, and Western Railroad built a new route from Wausau to Marshfield, which helped move lumber from the area. Robert Connor, who already operated a successful family lumber business in Auburndale, purchased the land adjacent to the new railroad route to expand his business. In time, a small village — Stratford, named after the Connors' home in Stratford, Ontario, Canada — grew around the logging enterprise.

The logging industry continued to fuel the village's growth for several decades. But as in other logging communities in northern Wisconsin, the eventual decline of lumber led to a rise in the dairy industry and eventually the establishment of the Stratford Co-operative Creamery Company in 1919. There were as many as seven cheese factories in the area in the 1930s.



Manufacturing Has Taken Off in Stratford

Today, Stratford Utilities still serves commercial customers in the forestry and agricultural industries. However, over the last few years, several manufacturing operations have taken off in Stratford, primarily those who produce fabricated metal products. According to Kari Schoenherr, Stratford's Utility Clerk/Treasurer, A&B Process/JBT Aero Tech, and Omega Thermo Products are now Stratford Utilities' largest electric customers. Both businesses are located in a 115-acre industrial park owned by the village.



Dennee said they expect Stratford to continue to experience steady growth in the next few years. "We typically add at least one industrial customer each year, as our industrial park expands. And with those commercial customers, come additional residential customers as people move to town for new job opportunities."

Schoenherr added that the village's location between two major highways also attracts manufacturers to the area. "We are centrally located between Marshfield and Wausau. It's easy to get [here], which helps make it a good place for business."

Dennee said that while growth continues at a steady pace, he is happy Stratford has not grown too fast, too quickly. Dennee himself is a life-long resident of the area who said that some kids he grew up with moved away but later returned to raise their families there. "Stratford has so many things that make it a good place to live. We have great schools, a nearby airport for business travel (Mosinee), easy access to amazing outdoor recreation, and a family-friendly environment."

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

Stratford Makes New History

The school district is a source of much pride in Stratford. “Our district attracts kids from Stratford as well as the surrounding communities. We offer great programs, including our athletics,” Dennee said.

In 2023, the Stratford High School Tigers won their second consecutive Division 6 State Championship in football. Stratford is now tied for the most state football titles in Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) history with nine. What made the 2023 championship more notable was that Stratford won the game with a final field goal from Lauren Plattner, a German exchange student. The team had not attempted a field goal all season — and Plattner had never kicked a field goal — until the State Championship game!

“We may be a small village, but we do our best to make big things happen here,” Dennee said. Because of their staff size, the electric utility relies on Marshfield Utilities to do most of their line work throughout Stratford’s 5.34-square-mile service area. But the team has worked hard to attain the department’s goals. For example, in 2023, they finished replacing all traditional streetlights in the village with LED lighting, improving efficiency and reducing the need to replace bulbs.

They also recently completed replacing all water meters in the service territory with Sensus iPERL water meters, which will improve operational efficiency and customer service. The team is now working to replace all of Stratford’s electric meters. Dennee expects to have this work completed in the next couple of years.

Dennee said that census experts do not expect to see a large population growth in Stratford in the next few years, and that is fine with him. “During both good and challenging times, people feel a sense of responsibility for each other in a way that large cities just can’t replicate. I’m proud to call Stratford my home.” •

Updated interconnection rules for distributed generation to take effect



After more than three years of study and debate, updates to rules in PSC Chapter 119 for interconnecting distributed generation (DG) facilities will go into effect May 1.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) opened docket number [1-AC-256](#) in February 2021 to explore revisions to PSC 119. A few months later, the PSC formed a 20-person committee that included representatives from utilities, renewable energy groups, the state’s consumer advocate, electric manufacturers, and contractors.

The advisory committee recommended a number of updates that were subsequently reviewed by PSC staff before being approved by the three commissioners in 2023. In August of last year, the governor and legislature signed off on the rule changes. The updated rules reflect the significant changes in distributed generation technology and operations since the first set of rules in PSC 119 were issued in 2004. The approved revisions were the subject of a [presentation](#) by PSC staff at MEUW’s recent “Everything Solar” seminar.

Among the comprehensive updates to PSC 119 are:

- References to new technical standards and codes;
- Additional and refined rule definitions;
- Clarifying language related to testing and communication requirements;
- Refined provisions for rules related to the application process; and
- Revisions to the application process requirements.

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Governor appoints Hawkins to be next PSC Commissioner

Gov. Tony Evers announced March 14 that he was appointing Marcus Hawkins to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC), effective April 8. The appointment fills a vacancy created after the Wisconsin State Senate voted down the appointment of former Commissioner Tyler Huebner earlier this year. Hawkins will serve for the remainder of the term ending March 1, 2027.

“Marcus Hawkins’ experience working with utilities and his proven commitment to the state have well-prepared him to take on the role of commissioner,” said Gov. Evers. “We have important work ahead of us at the PSC, from expanding access to high-speed internet to building 21st-century clean energy infrastructure across our state, and I’m glad to have Marcus’ expertise back at the PSC and know that he will serve the people of Wisconsin well.”



Hawkins

Hawkins is Executive Director of the Organization of MISO States (OMS), where he works closely with Commissioners from the 17 state regulatory agencies within the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) footprint. Hawkins has been with the OMS since 2016, serving as executive director since January 2019, a role in which he represents the collective interests of state regulators at both MISO and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Prior to joining OMS, Hawkins was a Senior Engineer at the PSC, and also worked at Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation.

He received a bachelor’s degree in nuclear engineering and a master’s degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Members’ NEWS



Andrea Fencel recently joined the City of Kaukauna as Marketing and Communications Manager. In this new role, she will develop and implement creative and effective communication and marketing strategies between the City and its community.



Jordan Fritche became Director of Public Works at Fennimore Municipal Utilities on April 1, succeeding John Murray who is retiring in May. Jordan has been with Fennimore since 2019, starting as an Apprentice Lineworker. He served a short stint as Interim Electrical Superintendent, and then Utility Superintendent. For the past few months, he has served as Interim Director of Public Works, shadowing John.

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.

“I’m so excited to be joining the Commission during such a critical time of rapid change in the utility industry,” Hawkins said. “Throughout my career, I’ve had the opportunity to work alongside many dedicated and inspiring utility commissioners from Wisconsin and around the country. I’m very humbled to be stepping into this role myself and hope to follow the excellent examples that have been set before me. I look forward to hitting the ground running and contributing to the extremely important work of the PSC.” ●

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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



94th
Municipal Electric Utilities
of Wisconsin
**Annual
Conference**
May 15–17, 2024
MARSHFIELD

Host Utility >



Register online at



Wednesday, May 15

9:00 a.m. Conference Golf Outing
Shotgun Start at 10:00 a.m.

3:00 p.m. [Hotel Check-in Available](#)

3:30 to 5:00 p.m. Host Utility Open House

5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Welcome Reception
Sponsored by Wisconsin Utility Suppliers Association (WUSA)

— Dinner on your own —

Thursday, May 16

7:00 to 8:15 a.m. [Registration](#)

7:00 to 8:15 a.m. [Networking Breakfast](#)

8:00 a.m. Welcome / Opening Session

8:15 a.m. Opening Keynote

9:00 a.m. General Session I

9:40 a.m. [Networking Break](#)

10:15 a.m. General Session II

11:00 a.m. General Session III

11:45 a.m. [MEUW Honors Luncheon](#)

1:15 p.m. Breakout Session A

2:00 p.m. Breakout Session B

2:45 p.m. [Networking Break](#)

3:00 p.m. General Session IV

3:30 p.m. Closing Keynote

4:30 to 6:00 p.m. [Post-Conference Networking Social](#)

— Dinner on your own —

Friday, May 17

7:00 to 8:00 a.m. [Breakfast Buffet](#)

8:00 a.m. Board of Directors' Meeting

Conference events will take place at Marshfield Utilities and Hotel Marshfield

MEUW's Annual Conference provides a unique forum for networking, education, and information-sharing among municipal utility leaders and industry partners from around the state. The program structure enables attendees to get the most out of their time.

- General sessions bring everyone together on broader issues.
- Breakout sessions dive deeper into strategic priorities to help MEUW support its member utilities.
- Built-in time for peer roundtable discussions provide for targeted learning about current topics of interest.
- Pre- and post-conference receptions and networking breaks allow attendees the chance to make and renew connections.

Registration Fee:

\$295 per person through May 1
\$325 on May 2 or later

Registration deadline is Friday, May 10

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Legislation championed by MEUW signed into law

The 2023-24 legislative session came to a close in mid-March. The Assembly introduced a total of 1,156 bills, and the Senate introduced 1,088 bills during this session, which began in January 2023 and lasted through the Senate's final floor votes held on March 12, 2024. Of those totals, three bills that matter to municipal electric utilities made it through both houses of the Wisconsin legislature and were signed into law by Gov. Tony Evers.

Two of those bills — [Senate Bill 791](#) and [Senate Bill 792](#), now 2023 Wisconsin Acts 121 and 122 — clear the way for the development of a network of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations along Wisconsin's interstates and highways. The new laws provide Wisconsin a path to capture nearly \$80 million in federal funds to help private businesses begin work on offering high-speed Level 3 charging stations.

The state has already been approved for the first two years of funding, which would cover up to 80% of the cost of



Above: Sen. Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) shared a laugh before Gov. Evers signed two bills related to electric vehicle charging.



At left: Rick Wicklund, current Board Chair for MEUW and Sun Prairie Utilities Manager, was among those representing municipal utilities at the March 20 bill-signing ceremony inside the Capitol.

building out a privately owned, high-speed EV charging network along Wisconsin's interstates, federal and state highways. Until now, the state Department of Transportation (DOT) hasn't been able to spend the money because state law doesn't conform with the rules of the federal program.

State transportation planners have been working on the Wisconsin Electric Vehicle Initiative since its inception in 2021. The DOT's plan is to partner with convenience stores, retailers, and other businesses to set up about 60 high-speed charging stations that would be placed about 50 miles apart along highways that have been identified as Alternative Fuel Corridors. That includes the interstate highways as well as seven U.S. highways.

Each charging station must have at least four high-speed charging ports that are compatible with all vehicle brands, and stations must be available 24 hours per day, seven days a week. The stations must also charge by the kilowatt hour.

The program authorizes state governments to use the funds to cover up to 80% of the cost of installing privately owned and operated high-speed charging stations that are compatible with all makes of vehicles.

Another piece of legislation — [Senate Bill 355](#), now 2023 Wisconsin Act 155 — increases the number of allowable warning lights on public utility or telecommunications vehicles to allow such vehicles to have up to four warn-

ing lights; it allows flashing green lights to be used if the vehicle is being operated in the restoration or maintenance of utility service.

MEUW and the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association were among the parties the championed the so-called "Green Light" bill because of the additional colored lights have proved to increase safety. The green cone in the human eye is the most sensitive and has the largest wavelength. This

means green lights appear brighter and can be seen from farther away than other colored lights, which makes them better suited for enhanced visibility in inclement conditions. The new law makes in-

stalling green lights on maintenance vehicles an option for municipalities. ●



MEUW President and CEO Tim Heinrich (second from left) was among those on hand when Gov. Evers signed the "Green Light" bill on March 21.

From its earliest days, MEUW has been the "common voice" of community-owned electric utilities in Wisconsin. For 95 years now, member utilities have come to rely on MEUW to monitor what's happening in Madison and keep lawmakers informed about the important role of municipal utilities in the Badger State. If you have questions about the legislative process or simply want to know more about advocacy, please contact MEUW's Director of Legislative and Regulatory Relations Tyler Vorpagel at tvorpagel@meuw.org or by phone at (920) 265-7720.



MEUW NEWS Monitor

Three more Customer Service Roundtable sessions in April

Member utilities have been gathering this spring to exchange ideas and learn from one another about leading practices, service trends, and emerging issues affecting municipal utilities.

There are three remaining sessions on the calendar in April — Tues., April 9 in Waunakee; Wed., April 10 in Wonegoc; and Tues., April 16 in Evansville. A member of MEUW's Accounting and Customer Service Committee moderates the sessions, which are sponsored by Focus on Energy. There is no cost to attend; lunch is provided. Pre-registration is required. Sign up today at meuw.org/csr

Overhead Hotline School planned for Eau Claire in April

MEUW has partnered with Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) on a three-day hands-on training session to enable lineworkers of all experience levels to fine-tune their skills on a number of critical overhead line procedures. The workshop will take place both inside the classroom and on the pole field at CVTC's Eau Claire campus on April 23, 24, and 25. Planned training topics include using drones to assess damage and maintenance needs; grounding; stringing wire with rope machines; splicing broken wire; and three-phase arm changeouts. Full details are available [here](#).

Kickoff your summer with some professional development

Continue — or take a first step — in your professional development by jumping in to the “Fundamentals of Utility Management” training series. The four-part series includes Communications and Project Management, which will be held in Mauston on Wednesday, June 5. The one-day course is designed for municipal workers of all skill levels and backgrounds as a foundation for understanding the public power industry. Among the topics to be covered are techniques for planning your time, prioritizing obligations, and evaluating success. Details and registration information can be found [here](#). ●

Don't miss the chance to celebrate lineworkers

Thursday, April 18, is this year's observation of **National Lineman Appreciation Day** — a date set aside each year to recognize and thank the men and women who put their talents to work as electrical line workers. The day was first commemorated by a Resolution in the United States Senate in 2013. MEUW and others in the electric industry, will mark the occasion on and in the days leading up to April 18.

Together, MEUW member utilities employ more than 300 lineworkers across Wisconsin. MEUW will use its social media platforms to recognize the hard-working folks who commit themselves to their customers and communities. Member utilities are encouraged to share current photos of their line crews that we can post and share with MEUW's social media followers. Send the pictures to news@meuw.org to help us recognize Wisconsin's public power lineworkers.

Another opportunity to honor lineworkers is to sign up for a **specialty license plate** offered by the Wisconsin Department of Motor Vehicles. The “Keeping the Lights On” plate is available for a one-time fee of \$15, and it can be displayed on most cars, trucks, and campers. Because the specialty plate is intended only to honor and recognize lineworkers, the DMV does not charge an annual fee. Personalized specialty plates are also available for an additional \$15 per year. For more information or to order your own “Keeping the Lights On” specialty plate, visit the DMV's website [here](#).



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Wisconsin UTILITY NEWS Digest

Beverage company partners with utility for renewables

We Energies and Molson Coors Beverage Co. announced a partnership in early March that makes the brewer the first company to join the Renewable Pathway Pilot Program. In a statement, We Energies President Scott Lauber said, "We raise a glass to this partnership and thank Molson Coors for its commitment to a more sustainable city and state."

The Renewable Pathway program allows We Energies' large business customers to subscribe to and purchase energy from a Wisconsin renewable energy project. Companies continue to pay the full share of their subscription while receiving clean energy credits that help them reach their environmental goals.

As part of the Renewable Pathway program, Molson Coors is subscribing

to multiyear agreements for 27 megawatts (MW) from the recently completed Badger Hollow Solar Park in southwestern Wisconsin. The energy will offset the power used at several company facilities in southeast Wisconsin, including its Milwaukee corporate offices.

Investor-owned utilities pledge to use union workers for renewable energy projects

The four investor-owned utilities (IOUs) that operate in Wisconsin signed an agreement with five labor unions for construction of utility-scale renewable energy installations in the state. Each of the IOUs signed a pledge to use union labor "to the fullest extent possible," which helps to ensure contractors use Wisconsin union workers on billions of dollars of future solar, wind, and battery storage projects. The agreements include unions representing the building trades, electricians, laborers, carpenters, and operators.

Union officials said the pledge, which was announced in late March, is a first-of-its-kind agreement in the U.S. and aligns with the federal Inflation Reduction Act and a provision that offers additional incentives for projects that are built with union labor or pay the local prevailing wage.

According to news reports, a total of 95 renewable energy projects in Wisconsin are either under construction, under regulatory review, or announced, and those projects will create an estimated 18,000 jobs.

The "to the fullest extent possible" language included in agreements signed by WEC Energy Group (parent of We Energies and Wisconsin Public Service), Alliant Energy, Madison Gas & Electric, and Xcel Energy recognizes that the developers who build the utilities' projects may not be able to fill all of the jobs with local union workers.

Transmission line construction temporarily halted by judge

A federal judge issued an injunction in March that temporarily blocks plans to build part of the Cardinal-Hickory Creek transmission line across the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge near Cassville, Wis.

The decision by U.S. District Judge William Conley prevents ATC, ITC Midwest, and Dairyland Power Cooperative from beginning construction — for an indefinite time period — on a one-mile segment of the 345-kilovolt power line that stretches 102 miles across southwestern Wisconsin. The refuge serves as a haven for fish, wildlife, and migratory birds that use it as breeding grounds. It is the only stopping point left for many migratory birds that use the Mississippi Flyway.

Conservationists fear the transmission line will damage the refuge and have been working for years to stop the project in court. ITC Midwest and Dairyland Power officials released a joint statement saying the utilities disagree with the injunction and said they're striving to minimize the environmental impact within the refuge, in part by avoiding any grading. •

Cold-weather moratorium on disconnects ends April 15

The annual winter moratorium from Nov. 1 to April 15 prohibits all utility providers from disconnecting residential heating services for nonpayment. Customers who are behind on their bills may be at risk of disconnection if payment arrangements are not established by April 15. Wisconsin is one of 39 states with set dates for cold-weather moratoriums. Three states have set dates only for high-temperature disconnections, while 10 have both low and high temperature-based moratoriums.

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Municipal utility schools play big role in energy challenge

Last fall, Focus on Energy and the Wisconsin K-12 Energy Education Program (KEEP) sponsored eight schools engaged in the Renew Our Schools Energy Challenge. Facilitated by Resource Central, the organization responsible for the national Challenge, the transformative five-week initiative encourages students and staff to adopt behavioral changes to enhance energy efficiency within their school buildings.

Mount Horeb High School was one of two Wisconsin schools taking home a prize for their efforts. Each winning school earned \$2,500 dedicated to future energy efficiency projects. Winning schools demonstrated exceptional commitment by completing every available activity in the program. As an additional reward, each of the schools received an extra \$100 for meeting the challenge of dedicating an entire school day to achieving a 3% reduction in energy consumption.

Mount Horeb High School's AP Environmental Science Club took the initiative to lead the Renew Our Schools Energy Challenge. Comprised of 10 to 12 dedicated juniors and seniors, the Club convenes weekly during homeroom hours. The students showcased their commitment to the challenge by delivering engaging presentations at staff meetings and morning announcements. To deepen their understanding, they immersed themselves in the intricacies of the HVAC equipment by embarking on a comprehensive tour of the school's boiler room.

The club's success resonated beyond the school grounds, capturing the district office's and administration's attention, prompting recognition from the local Village Board. This attention spurred a collective focus on enhancing energy efficiency and sustainability within the community.

"As a district, we are so impressed by our team for this accomplishment. Earning the 'FA23 Wisconsin Winner' title further proves their dedication to Mount Horeb Area School District's future in sustainability. Our students and staff understand the importance of planning for a sustainable future. Even tasks such as remembering to turn off the lights impact our energy consumption and sustainability," said Dr. Steve Salerno, Superintendent of Mount Horeb Areas School District.

Other notable participants served by MEUW member utilities who competed in the Fall 2023 challenge included Evansville High School, Jefferson High School, Mount Horeb Middle School, Sun Prairie East High School, and Sun Prairie West High School. In addition, Oconomowoc High



Juniors and seniors in Mount Horeb High School's AP Environmental Science Club took the initiative — and take home the cash!

School competed in a special alumni competition involving several schools who participated in previous Renew Our School Energy Challenges. The Fall 2023 Challenge and the alumni schools successfully lowered their kWh usage by 3.63% over the five-week challenge by adopting behavioral changes and implementing energy-saving actions.

A Spring 2024 Renew Our Schools Energy Challenge is currently underway and applications are now being accepted for a Fall 2024 challenge. Applications can be found at <https://focusonenergy.com/renewourschools>.

MEUW Calendar of Events

April 3	Municipal Utility Leadership Program: Leading with Consistency — <i>Mauston</i>
April 9	CS* Roundtable — <i>Waunakee</i>
April 10	CS* Roundtable — <i>Wonewoc</i>
April 16	CS* Roundtable — <i>Evansville</i>
April 23-25	Overhead Workshop — <i>Eau Claire</i>
May 7	Monthly Safety Call — 7:15 a.m.
May 15-17	94th Annual Conference — <i>Marshfield</i>
May 17	MEUW Board of Directors and Annual Membership Meeting — <i>Marshfield</i>
June 4	Monthly Safety Call — 7:15 a.m.
June 5	Fundamentals of Utility Management: Communications & Project Management — <i>Mauston</i>

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Municipal utility employees attending the Underground Locating Workshop MEUW held at Marshfield Utilities (MU) on March 14 were greeted by a couple special guests. MU General Manager Nicolas Kumm led Gov. Tony Evers and state Rep. Donna Rozar (R-Marshfield) on a tour of the MU offices and dropped in on the class. Gov. Evers and Rep. Rozar were in Marshfield to celebrate National Groundwater Awareness Week and to visit MU's temporary PFAS facility. That same day, the governor also signed Wisconsin Act 106 that expands the state's Clean Water Fund Program, helping ensure communities across the state have the resources they need to bolster their infrastructure and replace and modernize aging systems.

LIVE Lines Classifieds

Vanguard Electric Commission — [Journeyman or Apprentice Lineworker](#)

City of Evansville — [Public Works Seasonal Laborer](#)

New positions are added to the "Employment" tab on MEUW.org on a regular basis — check them out [here](#).

For Sale: Eagle River Light & Water is looking to sell 3,000 feet of brand new ¾" rope that was bought in error. They originally paid \$4,680 for it and are asking \$4,000. If interested, please contact **Mike Sanborn** at (715) 479-8121.

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