MEUW Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin

Live Lines

Volume 75, Issue 10 | October 2026

Municipal utilities: Connected by a commitment to safety

As MEUW turns 98 this month, its founding purpose remains as relevant as ever: giving Wisconsin's municipal utilities a stronger voice and a way to work together on issues that affect their communities. That same collaborative spirit continues to guide MEUW today. The association brings a collective voice to legislative and regulatory issues, but the value of working together extends well beyond advocacy — especially when it comes to safety.

Across Wisconsin's municipal utility communities, utility leaders, lineworkers, and safety professionals come together to share their experience, ideas, and dedication to promoting safer work practices.

MEUW's Safety and Education (S&E) Committee helps carry that commitment forward, keeping safety at the forefront of the association's work. The 11-member committee includes a diverse group of municipal employees, representing different geographic areas, job roles, and utility sizes. The S&E Committee meets regularly and looks for ways to promote safety initiatives, share knowledge, and identify opportunities to strengthen work practices and foster a culture of safety across the membership.

Chair Brian Dellemann, Electric Utility Director at Two Rivers Water and Light, emphasized that the committee builds on a commitment established by MEUW members before them.

"Previous members recognized the importance of making safety a priority for everyone, and our current committee is dedicated to carrying that mission forward while looking for new ideas and opportunities to improve," he said.

Mike Czuprynko, MEUW's Director of Safety Services and Operations, added that same spirit of collaboration is central to all of the association's safety work.

"No utility has to figure out every safety challenge on its own," Czuprynko said. "By bringing people together, we can turn those shared experiences into safer practices across the industry."

That collaborative approach takes many forms. The Job Training and Safety Program (JT&S) brings hands-on electric safety instruction directly to utility crews, while the Regional Safety Management Program provides broader safety expertise to utilities and other municipal departments. Monthly safety calls give members a forum to discuss current issues and learn from one another. Mutual-aid responses put those relationships into action when communities need help, while annual safety awards recognize utilities for their commitment to safe work practices.

Training where it matters most

For MEUW members, the commitment to safety includes a training program that has been evolving for more than six decades. MEUW held its first safety training workshop in 1965, and the effort expanded in the 1970s when the association partnered with Wisconsin's Vocational, Technical and Adult Education system — now the Wisconsin Technical College System — to develop a more comprehensive program. Don Smith, MEUW's executive director at the time, championed the effort, writing in a 1977 edition of *Live Lines*, "This is a program that municipal utilities have long needed."

Smith's vision became a lasting part of MEUW's member services. Today, every dues-paying member has access to the JT&S program, which provides hands-on training to help municipal utility crews recognize electrical work hazards and perform their jobs safely. Czuprynko says about 325 lineworkers across Wisconsin receive training through the program each year.

The program's instructors bring years of experience in the field to that training. Don Harnisch, who has worked in the industry for more than four decades, joined MEUW in 2022. Two newer em-

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ployees — John Salscheider and Damian Pasch — are bringing their own experience and perspectives to the program.

Pasch has more than two decades of lineworker experience, while Salscheider has 17 years in the field, a military background, and experience coaching youth sports. Both understand teamwork and are eager to pass their knowledge to the next generation of lineworkers. Salscheider said his experience helps him build trust, teamwork and leadership while teaching crews the technical skills needed to work safely.

"What I enjoy most is the brotherhood of it," Salscheider said. "You have people from all these different communities, but once you're out there together, you're all working toward the same goal. You're looking out for each other, and that's what makes this job and this program so special."

A broader approach to safety

While JT&S focuses specifically on electric utility work and hazards, MEUW's Regional Safety Management Program extends that safety support across a broader range of municipal operations. Forty-four utilities currently participate. Six regional safety managers (RSMs) — Steve Eller, Jeff Helgestad, Brian Johnson, Jacob Lanier, Patrick Murphy and Sean Wall — as well as contract RSM Christy Rosenthal — cover territories across the state and work directly with the communities they serve.

For smaller municipalities that may not have the resources to employ a full-time safety professional, that relationship can be especially valuable, Czuprynko said. RSMs provide training, inspections, audits, and other safety services for electric utilities as well as public works, streets, and other municipal departments. They also are available to help municipalities address safety questions or concerns as they arise.

For Helgestad, who has served MEUW for 17 years, those ongoing relationships are among the most rewarding parts of the job.

"The work becomes personal. You almost become part of the community," Helgestad said. "You get to know the people, their operations, and the challenges they face. You care about them, and they know they can call me when they need help."

That support goes beyond scheduled visits. RSMs are available around the clock when safety questions or concerns arise. MEUW members also can draw on their expertise as needed, and municipalities outside the full program may engage an RSM for specific services such as inspections, audits, training sessions, or other safety-related projects.

Dellemann, whose utility participates in both JT&S and the Regional Safety Management Program, said having those resources available gives member utilities an added level of support.

"Having access to experienced people, training resources, and support when it is needed most provides tremendous value to member utilities and gives employees confidence that they are not facing an emergency alone," he said.

When utilities need each other

The value of MEUW's safety training and the relationships it builds becomes especially clear when disaster strikes. Since April, Czuprynko and the JT&S team have coordinated four mutual-aid responses, bringing municipal utilities together to help communities recover from significant storm damage in Two Rivers, Eagle River, Gresham, and Menasha.

In Two Rivers, that network was put to work after a severe storm in May. The utility initially requested four mutual-aid crews, but as the extent of the damage became clear, additional crews were called in to help with the restoration.

"The cooperation and dedication of everyone involved were critical to the restoration effort," Dellemann said. "With the support of the mutual-aid crews and MEUW staff, we were able to restore electric service quickly and safely." He said the response was a reminder of the value of having other utilities ready to step in when help is needed.

The network faced an even greater test on July 27. Czuprynko received an 8 a.m. call from Eagle River Light & Water requesting mutual aid after straight-line winds caused widespread system damage.

Four hours later, Czuprynko received a call from Menasha, where an EF3 tornado caused extensive damage to the electric system and left 82 homes condemned. As the work in Eagle River wrapped up, some crews moved directly to Menasha. Twenty-five utilities ultimately sent 107 lineworkers to Menasha to help restore power. Working long hours under difficult conditions, the crews rebuilt approximately 70 percent of Menasha's electric system and reset 290 poles in just 10 days.

"The damage in Menasha was some of the worst our crews have seen, even compared with what they've encountered responding to hurricanes in places like Florida and the Virgin Islands," Czuprynko said. "It was a devastating situation. But our crews stepped up. They worked incredibly hard, they worked well together, and they got the job done."

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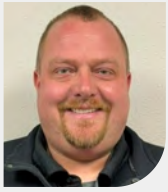
During a recent job site training visit from MEUW JT&S Instructor Damian Pasch, crews from Evansville, Mount Horeb, and Waunakee Utilities replaced an aerial air break switch with a GOAB switch. The crews were reminded of the importance of proper coverup on bells, ensuring all open spots underneath are covered to protect the worker. There was good communication throughout the task, even among members who were unfamiliar with one another. Exercises like this are essential to building trust and preparing for mutual aid events.

Safety & Education Committee

Scott Adler, Stoughton
Adam Carroll, Shawano (Secretary)
Brian Dellemann, Two Rivers (Chair)
Scott Gald, Richland Center
Aaron Hau, Plymouth
Dave Pahl, Kaukauna (Vice Chair)
Ryan Pelowski, Trempealeau
Jordan Schmitz, Mount Horeb
Jimmy Smith, Rice Lake
Wayne Siverling, River Falls
Owen Vande Kolk, Waupun

Members' News



Brian Reuter has been named the Director of Public Works in Cuba City, succeeding George Morrissey, who retired in September. Brian formerly worked for the Village of Hazel Green as Wastewater Operator and Parks employee.

◀ **Dalton Hiley** was recently promoted to Assistant Utility Manager at Columbus Utilities.

Lance Mugrew has been named Line Crew Superintendent at Manitowoc Public Utilities.

Cindy Suzda has joined the City of New Lisbon as the new Clerk/Treasurer.

Brandon Shipley has joined Rice Lake Utilities as Journeyman Lineman; he previously worked for Barron Municipal Utility.

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.

MEUW's **Tim Heinrich** (on left) presented Eagle River Light & Water Utility Manager **Mike Sanborn** with the utility's Safety Achievement Award along with a banner commemorating their efforts to receive the award 25 times — a new honor presented to workers at three member utilities in 2026.

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As municipal utility crews arrived from across Wisconsin, Menasha residents welcomed them with food, water, and words of thanks for helping their community.

"What we saw in Menasha was the value of all the preparation that happens before a storm ever hits," Czuprynko said. "The training, the relationships and the willingness of utilities to help one another all come together when it matters most. It allows crews to work safely and get communities back on their feet as quickly as possible."

Sharing what works

MEUW's everyday safety work reflects that willingness to learn from one another, helping utilities prepare well before an emergency occurs. The Safety and Education Committee plays an important role in keeping that conversation going. Meeting virtually each month and in person at least twice a year, committee members bring perspectives from utilities across the state, discuss emerging safety issues, and look for ways to strengthen safety efforts throughout the membership.

Each month, MEUW also hosts a safety call where members discuss current issues, share experiences and learn from what others have tried. Czuprynko said some of the most useful conversations happen when utilities talk about what has worked in the field.

"Those success stories are important," Czuprynko said. "When a utility finds a better way to do something or has success with a particular safety practice, sharing that experience gives other utilities an opportunity to learn from it. We don't all have to reinvent the wheel."

When asked to rank the services offered by MEUW in order of "greatest value," members in categories of every size placed "safety" in the top spot. Other services — training, mutual aid, networking, being an information resource, and advocacy — appear in a different order among the member utilities in four different size categories.

MEUW also recognizes that commitment through its annual Safety Awards, which honor utilities for their work to strengthen safety practices. This year, 43 utilities earned recognition at the gold, silver or bronze level. Three utilities — Arcadia Electric Utility, Eagle River Light & Water, and City Utilities of Richland Center — have earned this achievement more than 25 times since the award was created.

A Safety Commitment Beyond Advocacy

Nearly a century after its founding, MEUW remains guided by the belief that municipal utilities are stronger together — a principle reflected in its commitment to safety. "Our members benefit from training, experienced professionals and a network of utilities ready to share knowledge and help when it matters most," said Tim Heinrich, MEUW President and CEO. "All that collaboration serves one purpose: ensuring every worker returns home safely to their family each night."

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Race to be next Wisconsin governor enters final stretch

*MEUW Director of Legislative and Regulatory Relations **Tyler Vorpagel** provides perspective on the candidates' positions on issues of importance to public power utilities*

With just a few weeks remaining before the November general election, control of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, the Wisconsin State Senate and Assembly, and the governor's office are all at stake. In the September edition of *Live Lines*, we highlighted the four state senate races that will determine who will control the Wisconsin State Senate. This month, we're looking at what gubernatorial candidates David Crowley (D) and Tom Tiffany (R) are saying about energy and utility issues — in their own words.

The campaign has focused on several issues, including the cost of living, taxes, public safety, data centers, energy policy, and utility costs. For Wisconsin's municipal electric utilities, energy and data-center policies could be particularly relevant because the governor appoints members of the Public Service Commission (PSC), which regulates Wisconsin's investor-owned utilities and oversees utility rates and major projects.

Energy and utility policy have become an increasingly prominent part of the campaign. Crowley, a former state legislator and current Milwaukee County Executive, has said his priorities include making energy more affordable while maintaining grid reliability. His campaign has pointed to energy efficiency, weatherization, clean-energy technologies and ensuring that large energy users, including data centers, pay the additional costs associated with their energy demand. (*Wausau Pilot and Review*)

Tiffany, who represents Wisconsin's 7th Congresssional District since being elected in 2020, has emphasized affordability and reliability, calling for continued use of existing baseload generation, development of new nuclear generation, and changes to how utility rates are regulated. His campaign has also proposed lowering utilities' authorized return on equity and establishing a cooling-off period for PSC commissioners before they can work for regulated utilities or transmission companies. *(WisPolitics)*

Data centers have emerged as another major point of discussion. Both candidates support additional standards for the industry and giving local communities a role in deciding whether projects move forward. Crowley has proposed requiring data centers to cover infrastructure and grid-upgrade costs, use new clean energy and contribute to the state's Focus on Energy program. Tiffany has called for ending state tax incentives for data centers, requiring projects to pay the costs they create and protecting farmland, water resources and local communities. (*David Crowley for Wisconsin)*

The candidates also differ on broader energy-development questions. Tiffany has called for maintaining existing coal generation where needed, expanding nuclear power and limiting the conversion of farmland for large-scale energy and data-center projects. Crowley has emphasized clean energy, efficiency and ensuring that large energy users do not shift costs to residential customers. (*Daily Reporter*)

The race remains closely contested in recent polling. A Marquette Law School poll conducted Sept. 16–23 found Crowley at 49% and Tiffany at 46% among likely voters, with 5% undecided. The poll's margin of error for likely voters was plus or minus 4.8 percentage points, so the results are within the survey's margin of error. *(Marquette University Law School)*

A televised debate between Crowley and Tiffany is scheduled for Oct. 21 at 7 p.m. at Marquette University. Full details about each of the candidates can be found on their campaign websites: *Tom Tiffany.com* and *CrowleyforWI.com*. Please remember to vote on or before Nov. 3.

Friends of Public Power making progress toward fundraising goal

Through Friends of Public Power, the political action committee and conduit managed by MEUW, the association directs financial resources to support in-state legislative candidates who have signaled their support for public power and the electric-utility industry. Many of the same politicians have shown a willingness to listen to and learn about the issues that matter to MEUW members. As with other trade associations, political giving and developing good relationships with lawmakers is important to advocacy.

MEUW set a goal to raise $30,000 for the 2026 elections. Through Sept. 30, individual contributions totaling $24,675 have been received. The funds are directed to both Republican and Democrat candidates in races for the Wisconsin Assembly and State Senate.

To learn more about MEUW's political giving, please contact Director of Legislative and Regulatory Relations Tyler Vorpagel at (920) 265-7720 or visit *www.meuw.org/fpp*.

Save the date for MEUW's 2027 Day at the Capitol

Mark your calendar and make plans to attend MEUW's "Day at the Capitol" on Thursday, April 1, in Madison.

The new legislature is expected to have a number of new faces, and this is our chance to educate them about municipal electric utilities. There is no cost to participate, and MEUW will coordinate the meetings.

After a brief informational session to review the issues and talking points, small groups will make their way to the Capitol to visit Senate and Assembly offices for pre-arranged meetings with legislators and their staffs.

Full details will be communicated at a later date.

Stoughton Trailers still growing after six decades in its namesake hometown

A periodic feature highlighting products made in one of Wisconsin's 81 public power communities

If you've spent much time behind the wheel, chances are you've spent some time behind a Stoughton trailer. The company's familiar blue logo is a common sight on highways across the country, from the Midwest to the mountain passes of Colorado and the Pacific Coast. Its trailers carry the goods that keep businesses, communities, and households moving every day.

But Stoughton Trailers is more than a familiar name on the road. The family-owned company has grown alongside the community where it was founded, supported in part by a long-standing partnership with Stoughton Utilities (SU). Since its founding in 1961, Stoughton Trailers has grown into one of the nation's largest trailer manufacturers.

Stoughton Trailers employs about 2,000 people and operates manufacturing facilities in Wisconsin and Texas. Its family of businesses has also expanded over the years. Yet for all that growth, the city of Stoughton remains home.

According to SU Education and Outreach Coordinator Brandi Yungen, Stoughton Trailers is now the utility's largest electric customer. The company is also among the largest electric customers served by both Brodhead Water & Light (second) and Evansville Water & Light (fourth).

That connection was highlighted in September 2025, when Stoughton Trailers opened the doors to a new global corporate headquarters in its namesake community. The 53,000-square-foot facility can accommodate up to 200 employees and took nearly 15 months to complete, using approximately 300 tons of steel and 1,850 cubic yards of concrete. When the building opened, company CEO Bob Wahlin described it as "an investment in our people, community, and the future of Wisconsin manufacturing."

That investment in Stoughton extends beyond the headquarters itself. As part of the development surrounding the 182-acre property, the company donated a significant amount of land for what will become Stoughton Trailers Community Park. The broader development includes new homes, businesses and roughly 60 acres of park space, with plans for soccer fields, pickleball courts, a playground, walking trails, and other recreational amenities.

From a local company to a national manufacturer

Stoughton Trailers was founded in 1961 by Don and Carol Wahlin, who purchased the assets of a small, bankrupt truck-body company and renamed it Stoughton Truck Body. The company initially manufactured truck bodies before expanding into trailers in the early 1960s. The first Stoughton trailer rolled off the assembly line in 1963, and the company adopted the Stoughton Trailers name in 1973.

More than six decades later, the local business has grown into a major transportation-equipment manufacturer. From its truck-body roots, Stoughton Trailers now produces dry vans, refrigerated trailers, flatbeds, intermodal equipment, and other specialized products. The company has three manufacturing facilities in southern Wisconsin and in Waco, Texas. It is the largest employer in Stoughton, Evansville, and Brodhead, and the largest manufacturer in Dane County.

Stoughton Trailers and the Wahlin Foundation, a foundation established by the Wahlin family, have donated more than $5 million to local nonprofits, youth teams, and community events. The company has supported the Stoughton Area School District's Collins Field, Fab Lab, arts, music and athletic programs, and the Wahlin Foundation also provides scholarships in Brodhead and Evansville. The company has also partnered with UW-Whitewater to support scholarships and a supply-chain faculty fellowship, helping build new connections to Wisconsin's future workforce.

A longstanding energy partnership

As SU's largest customer, Stoughton Trailers plays a major role in the community's electric system. The relationship, however, goes beyond the local utility providing power.

For nearly a decade, SU and WPPI Energy have worked with Stoughton Trailers to aid the manufacturer in carefully managing its energy needs. What began as conversations among WPPI, the utility, and Stoughton Trailers' facility and operations staff has grown into quarterly energy team meetings that bring together representatives from the organizations, along with Focus on Energy, according to Darren Jacobson, energy services manager for WPPI Energy.

“The meetings provide a meaningful opportunity to identify energy-efficiency opportunities, discuss utility initiatives and make sure Stoughton Trailers is taking advantage of available resources and incentives for energy savings projects,” Jacobson said.

The partnership has a history of helping Stoughton Trailers identify opportunities to improve efficiency and invest in its facilities. Earlier projects included lighting, air-compressor and ventilation upgrades that secured more than $316,000 in funding and incentives.

Nearly a decade later, the conversation continues. SU and Focus on Energy have supported additional lighting upgrades and are exploring potential compressed-air projects, while WPPI Energy has provided data to support Stoughton Trailers' sustainability efforts.

More than six decades after Don and Carol Wahlin started the company in Stoughton, Stoughton Trailers has grown into a national manufacturer. Yet its roots remain firmly planted in the community where it began — and its partnership with its hometown utility remains an important part of what keeps the company moving forward. For Stoughton Trailers, that means building for the future while staying connected to the energy that has powered its growth from the beginning.

Live Lines

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 since 1961 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.

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Reader comments and suggestions are welcome
Send by email to
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Operations Conference and Expo set for January

Registration opens Oct. 15 for the annual gathering in Wisconsin Dells

Each year, municipal and electric cooperative employees come together to network and learn about important topics impacting utility operations. MEUW and the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA) will hold EOCE27 at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells on Jan. 13–14. Employees at all levels are welcome and encouraged to attend.

EOCE features presentations on industry-related topics of interest and includes a large trade show where utility suppliers showcase the latest products and services for utility operations. Exhibitor space is expected to sellout again. The Expo is a highlight of the event.

The program will include strategic updates from the Public Service Commission and Focus on Energy. It will also feature a panel discussion featuring large customers. General session presentations will also focus on investing in distribution system resiliency, mutual aid, critical cyber security considerations and recommendations, and what changes in the state legislature mean for Wisconsin. And, as always, there will be plenty of opportunities to network with other public power and cooperative utility leaders and staff.

Day one will close with a timely keynote address from Certified Professional Coach Dana Zurbuchen about how individuals' everyday actions shape teams, safety, and well-being.

The closing keynote address (on Thursday afternoon) will be delivered by Don Beebe, who played in the National Football League (NFL) for nine seasons. A wide receiver, he was a member of the Buffalo Bills teams that lost four consecutive Super Bowls before he made two more Super Bowl appearances with the Green Bay Packers, including winning his first ring in 1997 in Super Bowl XXXI. His personal story of perseverance and determination highlights his struggles, successes, and the importance of family values in achieving one's goals.

Three types of registration passes — Kilowatt, Megawatt, and Gigawatt — are available for those who wish to attend only part of the three-day event. Those most interested in the Expo (trade show), for example, will want to purchase a Megawatt pass, which offers access to the Wednesday Welcome Reception and Thursday's conference sessions, meals, and the Expo. MEUW members who register as an "Early Bird" can get a Megawatt pass for $265. A pass for the Expo only (after 12:30 p.m.) is also available.

Full details about the conference, including the registration link, will be available at *www.meuw.org/eoce*. There is a $30 discount for all registrations received on or before Nov. 20.

Graduating apprentices to be honored as part of annual event

Each year, Wisconsin's municipal utilities and electric cooperatives gather to honor the newest members of the trade and recognize graduating apprentice lineworkers and electric meter technicians. An Apprentice Graduation Banquet will be held on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2027, at the Kalahari Convention Center in Wisconsin Dells, with a social reception from 6–6:30 p.m., followed by dinner and a program.

Sixty-seven graduates from both Chippewa Valley Technical College and Northeastern Wisconsin Technical College will be recognized during the program. A complete list of those who are graduating is available here. Make plans to attend and celebrate their accomplishments. Online registration for the Banquet will open on Oct. 15.

Be mindful: Routine can turn risky

*MEUW Regional Safety Manager **Sean Wall** offers tips to avoid complacency on the job*

Complacency impacts workplaces and employees in different ways, often appearing as a false sense of security that can result in decreased awareness of your environment. Even if you believe you are unaffected, it can be as subtle as lowering your guard, losing concentration, or neglecting to observe hazards regularly. Depending on your position, this can pose significant risks to both you and your co-workers. While no one intentionally becomes complacent, being conscious of the risk and staying actively engaged in your work can help.

Employees who are content and attentive usually focus on the present, immersing themselves in their tasks and surroundings. On the other hand, complacent workers might act on autopilot, simply going through the motions without engaging in critical thinking. This mindset can increase the risk of incidents and injuries, regardless of age or experience. Whether it arises from familiar or routine tasks, together, we can work toward preventing the hazards associated with complacency.

No one understands you better than yourself but becoming too comfortable can blind you to potential risks. To ensure your safety, it's crucial to recognize signs of complacency within yourself:

- Feeling dissatisfied with your work or lacking motivation
- Skipping steps in work processes
- Experiencing frequent near-misses or incidents

Because identifying these signs in yourself can be challenging, it's also important to be able to recognize them in your co-workers.

Learning to detect these signs in others can help you notice them in yourself more easily. Watch out for:

- Changes in attitude;
- A significant increase or decrease in communication; or
- Being consistently late.

Complacency can arise not only from losing focus on tasks but also from set expectations. These expectations can lead to overlooking signs of complacency in co-workers who may not consistently meet performance standards.

If complacency is a rut that many employees find themselves in, then boosting employee engagement can be the solution. To enhance focus and prioritize safety, consider these steps:

- Set yourself up for success by consciously concentrating on your tasks. Acknowledge and eliminate distractions as they arise.
- Seek ways to enhance your routine or task approach.
- Consider altering parts of your daily schedule to maintain focus and avoid falling into autopilot mode.

Besides engaging yourself, strive to encourage your colleagues to also work safely:

- Integrate safety discussions and inspections into your routine with co-workers.
- Encourage discussing task steps with co-workers, regardless of your experience working together.
- Help with tasks and highlight any potential risks to prevent oversights.

Be vigilant about signs of complacency in yourself and speak up if you notice them in your co-workers. Everyone is vulnerable to these risks, and sometimes you just need an outside set of eyes to bring them to your attention.

Check out tips to safely enjoy the fall season — page 12

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MEUW *News Monitor*

There's still time to join a Member Roundtable

MEUW has once again been hosting Member Roundtables around the state this fall, giving 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 remaining luncheons planned to receive updates and participate in roundtable discussions. Locations and dates are:

- Thursday, Oct. 8 — Clintonville
- Thursday, Oct. 15 — Richland Center

While there is no cost, advance registration is required. Each session will begin at 9 a.m. and wrap up by 1 p.m. Registration is available here.

Planning & Risk Management offered Oct. 7

As part of MEUW'sprofessional development programming, we're launching a new one-day course to focus on utility planning and risk management. Taught by experienced engineer, Dave Krause, this training will explain the basics of strategic and operational planning, why planning matters, and how well-thought-out plans and careful assessments of risks can contribute to long-term success.The class will be held in Mauston on Oct. 7. Registration and details about the class and instructor can be found here.

Develop your coaching skills with this training

Invest in your own professional development through this Dec. 2 Leading Through Coaching course. As part of MEUW's professional development programming, we're offering a one-day leadership development course that focuses on knowing how and when to coach — highlighting the skills and emotional intelligence needed to coach others effectively. Good coaches are seen as role models and, therefore, need to understand those things that cause them to have frustration, negative self-talk, and, in turn, prevent them from channeling their emotions productively. Knowing yourself will help you to become a more effective leader and coach, enhancing your ability to effectively develop others. Registration and details about what you'll learn are available here.

COMMUNITY powered
PUBLIC POWER WEEK 2026

Every October, Wisconsin's community-owned electric utilities join the nationwide celebration of **Public Power Week** to highlight what differentiates public power from other types of utilities — namely, being local, being not-for-profit, and offering reliable electric service that's second- to-none. Many of the 81 communities that own and operate their electric utility host events, offer giveaways, and engage with their customers to celebrate what makes public power special.

As seen on facebook

Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin
September 25 at 10:48 AM

More than 50 people, representing 35 MEUW member utilities, gathered in Mauston earlier this week to network and share best practices. MEUW's annual Accounting and Customer Service Seminar featured speakers from **Public Service Commission of Wisconsin**, **Focus on Energy**, **Boardman & Clark LLP**, and a panel discussion among members of our Accounting and Customer Service Committee. This popular event always inspires great discussions and connections that help members in their daily service to their communities and customers.

Are you following MEUW on social media?
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It's MEUW's birthday month, and we're celebrating you!

Trade associations like MEUW benefit from having devoted members who invest their time, expertise, and passion to advance the profession and strengthen their community. As MEUW celebrates its 98th birthday this month, we're celebrating with Member Appreciation Days, a special opportunity to recognize and celebrate the individuals and organizations that help our association thrive.

MEUW MEMBER APPRECIATION DAYS

Membership is much more than a name on a roster. Our members volunteer on committees, attend events, share knowledge with peers, advocate for important issues, and contribute to our collective success. Involvement helps shape programs, drive innovation, and ensure that MEUW remains a trusted resource for years to come.

MEUW Member Appreciation Days is our way of saying "thank you." In today's fast-paced, ever-changing environment, the relationships built through association membership are more valuable than ever. We want to use MEUW's birthday as a chance to celebrate the collective accomplishments of our members and the association. Your commitment, ideas, and engagement are the foundation of everything we do. Watch your email for a chance to win prizes and be part of the festivities. We look forward to celebrating with you during Member Appreciation Days beginning Oct. 19.

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month — a good reminder that protecting our systems starts with everyday habits.

For municipal utilities, a cyber incident can disrupt more than computers. It can affect communications, customer information, business operations and even critical infrastructure. Every employee plays a role in keeping those systems secure.

A few simple reminders:

- **Think before you click.** Be cautious with unexpected emails, links, and attachments.
- **Use strong, unique passwords** and multi-factor authentication when available.
- **Keep devices and software updated** and don't ignore security alerts.
- **Protect sensitive information.** Don't share passwords or confidential information unless you know who you're dealing with.
- **Be alert in the field.** Don't plug unknown USB drives or devices into utility computers, control systems or other equipment.
- **Speak up.** If something looks suspicious — whether it's an email, login attempt, device or activity on a utility system — report it.

Cybersecurity isn't just an I.T. responsibility. It's everyone's responsibility. Take a moment this month to think about how your everyday actions can help protect your utility, your coworkers, and the community you serve.

Long-awaited permitting reform bill moves one step closer to reality

In an industry flush with acronyms of all kinds, the energy sector is preparing for a new one: BAAJA. On Sept. 30, the Environment and Public Works and Energy and Natural Resources Committees of the U.S. Senate reached agreement on the text of the Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act of 2026. BAAJA is a major effort to overhaul federal permitting for energy and infrastructure projects. The package combines broad permitting and environmental review reforms with significant changes impacting electric transmission, large-load growth and energy project development.

The 417-page bill addresses three major themes. First, it would make it easier to permit and build energy infrastructure, such as natural gas pipelines and geothermal, hydropower, and wind projects. Second, it would reform how electric transmission is planned and how its costs are allocated. Third, it would establish ways to ensure AI data centers, other computational loads and cryptocurrency mining operations get access to the grid and pay the costs they incur, while protecting other ratepayers.

More specifically, the legislation would streamline federal environmental reviews and establish clearer deadlines for projects seeking federal permits and approvals. It would also provide new protections for projects that have already received federal approvals and limits the circumstances in which agencies could later revoke, suspend or otherwise interfere with those approvals. These protections could be particularly consequential for large, capital-intensive energy projects, including offshore wind and other generation, transmission, pipeline and energy infrastructure projects by allowing projects with valid federal approvals to continue moving forward while certain legal or administrative issues are resolved.

Among the most consequential provisions are those addressing large-load growth and electric transmission. The package would establish new cost-responsibility rules for data centers and other computational loads, while giving states substantial flexibility over how those customers receive and pay for electric service. It would also make significant changes to transmission siting; local, regional and interregional planning; cost allocation; generator interconnection; and deployment of advanced grid technologies.

The agreement is a major step forward following months of negotiations, but the legislation is not final. A Senate floor vote is not expected until after Congress returns from its pre-election recess on Nov. 9, 2026, and any Senate-passed bill would still need to clear the House before going to the president. Permitting reform has been a legislative priority for the American Public Power Association (APPA) and others in the energy sector for many years. While the text of the comprehensive package could change as it moves through Congress, and many provisions would require subsequent rulemakings or state regulatory action before taking full effect, BAAJA is moving forward, and real permitting reform is one step closer to reality.

American Public Power Association

2027 Legislative Rally

March 1-3

Join us in Washington, D.C. for this important annual event that brings together public power executives, policymakers, and staff to take public power's message to Capitol Hill. Connect with public power peers and advocate collectively for the industry at the federal level. APPA will give you the tools you need to communicate public power's value and help you influence federal policymakers whose decisions will impact your community's future. **Learn more:** publicpower.org/rally

Industry News

EPA repeals power plant emissions standards

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has repealed Biden-era regulations limiting greenhouse gas emissions from coal- and natural gas-fired power plants. The EPA said the change is intended to reduce regulatory costs and lower electricity prices, while environmental groups argue that the rollback could increase public health risks.

The repeal returns power plant emissions requirements to a 2015 standard established under the Obama administration. The EPA is also considering a broader proposal that would eliminate existing federal greenhouse gas standards for power plants. The agency estimates the repeal could save $310 billion over approximately 20 years.

Environmental groups have indicated they will challenge the repeal in court. The changes described apply to greenhouse gas emissions and do not affect existing requirements for other air pollutants.

42 new EV charging stations coming to Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has awarded grants to 42 communities across Wisconsin to support the development of new fast-charging stations for electric vehicles. The projects are funded through the Wisconsin Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (WEVI) Connecting Corridors Program, with approximately $25 million in federal NEVI funding supporting this latest round.

The new charging sites will be located along U.S. and state highway corridors that were not previously included in the program. Locations include fuel retailers, hotels, restaurants, and other businesses across the state. Eleven public power communities are receiving grants: Belmont, Boscobel, Eagle River, Fennimore, Marshfield, Oconomowoc, Reedsburg, Richland Center, River Falls, Sturgeon Bay, and Wisconsin Rapids.

WisDOT has now awarded approximately $62 million for 120 EV charging projects statewide. The broader Alternative Fuel Corridor network is considered fully built out, with 25 charging stations currently operational. Wisconsin has more than 43,200 registered EVs.

The grants are intended to expand access to reliable fast charging while supporting local businesses and communities.

APPA urges DOE to provide clarity in transmission study

The American Public Power Association (APPA), joined by the Large Public Power Council (LPPC), filed comments on the Department of Energy's (DOE) draft 2026 National Transmission Needs Study. Once finalized, the study will help inform DOE's designation of National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors (NIETCs), as well as the agency's coordination of federal transmission financing and permitting authorities.

Given the significant ways the study will be used, APPA and LPPC asked DOE to clearly define what the study does — and does not — conclude. Specifically, they asked DOE to:

1. State plainly that the study identifies transmission needs rather than solutions;
2. Explain what the study's economic and reliability findings do not establish; and
3. Emphasize that identified needs should be met at the lowest reasonable cost to consumers.

The organizations also offered broader recommendations for DOE to consider as it exercises its transmission authorities, including supporting infrastructure-neutral permitting reform, expanding opportunities for joint transmission ownership and addressing supply chain constraints.

North Carolina regulators reject gas plant for Amazon Data Center

North Carolina regulators have rejected Duke Energy's proposal to build a 250-megawatt natural gas plant primarily to serve a $10 billion Amazon data center under construction near Charlotte. The five-member North Carolina Utilities Commission (NCUC) cited concerns about how the project's costs would be allocated and whether Duke had demonstrated the need for the facility.

The decision comes as utilities and regulators face growing electricity demand from large data centers. The NCUC said Duke had not adequately evaluated alternatives — including battery storage — or demonstrated that the proposed plant would not create costs for all customers if it ultimately proved unnecessary. Duke said it believed the project was part of a least-cost approach to maining reliable service as demand grows.

The decision is not permanent, and Duke can refile its application. Meanwhile, Amazon has received permits to operate temporary and backup diesel generators while the data center connects to the electric grid.

Innovative design part of proposed transmission line in southern Wisconsin

The Bell Center–Columbia–Sugar Creek–Illinois/Wisconsin State Line (BECI) Project is a proposed $1.2 billion, 765-kilovolt (kV) high-voltage electric transmission line spanning approximately 190 miles across southern Wisconsin.

One feature that could help reduce the project's impact on communities and landowners is its innovative "Guyed-Y" structure design (depicted in photo at right). Compared with traditional 765-kV transmission structures, the Guyed-Y design is expected to reduce the required right-of-way width by at least 10 percent. A narrower corridor can help minimize impacts on property and the environment while still providing the capacity needed for the high-voltage line. Typical BECI structures will be approximately 175 feet tall, with a right-of-way of about 180 feet and spans of approximately 1,200 feet between structures. Exact dimensions will vary depending on location and site conditions.

The BECI Project is part of MISO's regional transmission plan and is being developed by Midcontinent Grid Solutions, a joint venture between Transource Energy and BHE Transmission.

focus on energy®
Partnering with Wisconsin utilities

HomeBoost helps utilities support customers looking for residential energy savings

Customers often turn to their utility for guidance on making their homes more comfortable and using energy more efficiently. FOCUS ON ENERGY® has a new resource utilities can share to support those conversations: the HomeBoost Energy Assessment Kit, a do-it-yourself option for identifying energy-saving opportunities at home.

Utilities can recommend HomeBoost to customers with questions about drafty rooms, uneven temperatures or energy-saving improvements to help them better understand their home's efficiency and prioritize next steps.

How HomeBoost works

HomeBoost is best suited for single-family homes and multifamily homes with up to four units.

The kit is available for $20 after a $79 Focus on Energy instant rebate off the original $99 retail price, with free shipping. Customers should plan for approximately 90 minutes to complete the assessment and return the kit within 30 days to avoid a $200 late-return fee. Additional time may be available by contacting HomeBoost to request an extension.

Each rental kit contains a thermal camera, a black light for identifying inefficient light bulbs, and assessment supplies, including a prepaid return envelope. The HomeBoost app guides customers through gathering information about their home and scanning equipment and areas where energy may be escaping.

Once customers complete the assessment, they return the kit and receive a personalized energy report. The report identifies recommended improvements and includes information about potential rebates. Recommendations can range from smaller do-it-yourself changes to projects that warrant a conversation with a contractor.

Understanding assessment requirements

HomeBoost can help customers discover opportunities and prepare for a conversation with a contractor. For customers exploring Focus on Energy's insulation and air sealing rebates or the federal IRA HOMES program, a professional assessment is the next step. HomeBoost's DIY assessment does not replace the professional assessment required for these rebates.

Focus on Energy's Find a Trade Ally and Find an IRA Registered Contractor tools can help customers identify experienced contractors in their area. Contractors can discuss potential improvements, available rebates and the assessment needed to get started. For HOMES projects, an IRA Registered Contractor can guide customers through the assessment and rebate process before work begins.

Qualifying low-income households may receive up to $500 toward an eligible professional assessment through HOMES. Outside that offer, Focus on Energy does not currently provide an incentive for professional assessments. Discussing assessment options and costs with a contractor can help customers plan their next steps.

Taking the next step

HomeBoost and other Focus on Energy tools complement energy efficiency programs and rebates offered directly through utilities. Together, these resources help utilities support customers as they turn questions about home efficiency into specific actions.

Customers can learn more about HomeBoost and order their rental kit here. Customers who prefer to explore rebates directly can use the Residential Rebate Finder at *focusonenergy.com/get-started*. Customers should confirm eligibility and any rules for combining incentives before making purchases.

MEUW provides Focus on Energy the opportunity to regularly contribute content to Live Lines *because of the organizations' shared support of municipal utilities.*

Energy use trends can be an early predictor of affordability challenges

Energy affordability is becoming a growing concern for Wisconsin households, and experts say better use of utility data could help identify struggling customers before they reach a crisis point.

Speaking at the Customers First Coalition Power Breakfast event in September, Carnegie Mellon University professor Dr. Destenie Nock highlighted the importance of analyzing household energy-use patterns to identify customers experiencing "energy deprivation." Financially strained households may reduce heating, air conditioning, or appliance use to save money, and in some cases resort to unsafe practices such as using ovens to heat homes.

Citizens Utility Board Executive Director Tom Content emphasized that policymakers, regulators, and utilities should use data-driven approaches to better understand affordability challenges. Existing metrics such as service disconnections, late payment fees, and participation in assistance programs provide valuable insights, but experts say additional measures are needed to track energy-limiting behaviors and identify households at risk.

Nock noted that utilities have access to significant amounts of data that could help flag customers before financial hardships escalate. Early intervention can prevent families from falling into crisis while reducing bad debt and costly collection efforts for utilities.

Content said that data shows more working households are struggling to keep up with energy bills, and the number of middle-income customers facing financial pressure continues to grow. Leveraging customer data more effectively could help utilities and policymakers develop proactive solutions to keep energy affordable and accessible.

Fall brings cooler weather, hunting season, football, travel, and plenty of opportunities to get outdoors. **As you enjoy the season, keep safety in mind:**

- **Hunting safety:** Treat every firearm as loaded. Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction, keep your finger outside the trigger guard and be absolutely certain of your target and what is beyond it.
- **Driving:** Expect more traffic during fall activities and holiday gatherings. Put your phone away, avoid distractions and slow down for wet leaves, rain, fog, and shorter daylight hours.
- **Watch for wildlife:** Deer are especially active in the fall. Stay alert in wooded and rural areas, particularly around dawn and dusk.
- **Dress for changing weather:** Temperatures can change quickly. Wear layers and make sure you have appropriate clothing for outdoor activities.
- **Prevent slips and falls:** Wet leaves, mud, frost, and early ice can make walkways and work areas slippery. Keep paths clear and watch your footing.
- **Use ladders carefully:** Fall is a popular time for cleaning gutters and preparing homes for winter. Make sure ladders are on stable, level ground and maintain three points of contact.
- **Stay safe around fire:** Keep leaves and other combustible materials away from fire pits, grills, and outdoor heaters. Never leave a fire unattended.
- **Be visible:** As daylight hours decrease, wear reflective or high-visibility clothing when walking, biking, or working near roads.
- **Slow down and pay attention:** Fall activities can be busy and distracting. Take a moment to assess your surroundings and don't let a routine task become an unexpected accident.

Enjoy everything fall has to offer — but don't let a moment of distraction ruin a perfectly good day.

MEUW is proudly affiliated with AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION

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

Companies interested in advertising in Live Lines *should call (608) 837-2263*

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Look Who's Hiring

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:

New Holstein Utilities — Journeyman Lineman

City of New Lisbon:
Full-time Laborer/Equipment Operator
Journeyman Line Worker

Cedarburg Light & Water Utility — Journeyman or Apprentice Lineworker

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

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