New year brings anticipation of continued industry evolution

The arrival of a new year means some folks are making resolutions and committing to do things differently in the coming year. Municipal utilities in Wisconsin don’t have to rely on resolutions because they are continuously looking ahead and making positive improvements. Despite mounting political and economic pressures, public power utilities have consistently proven they can make changes to be more efficient, more resilient, and more planet-friendly.

For a look at emerging trends, we recently turned the tables on Kristin Gilkes, Executive Director of Customers First Coalition (CFC). She is the creator of The Electric Wire podcast, and typically is the one asking the questions and engaging podcast guests on a variety of energy topics. A veteran of Wisconsin’s electric-utility industry, Gilkes worked at the Public Service Commission (PSC), for an investor-owned utility, and has led CFC since 2017. We asked her to look ahead to the new year in the ever-changing energy industry. Here are five trends that should be on your radar for 2024.

#1: The Continuing Transition to Cleaner Energy Generation
With utilities throughout the world under increasing pressure to reduce carbon emissions and improve their environmental performance, renewable energy and cleaner energy sources will again take center stage in 2024. The PSC continues to approve new renewable energy projects proposed by Wisconsin utilities, including new, utility-scale wind and solar generation, and utility-scale battery storage projects.

#2: Further Development of Energy Storage Technologies
Thankfully, the industry has made some progress in finding energy storage solutions. And we expect the development of new storage technologies to continue to grow in 2024.

In a September 2023 report published by Deloitte, analysts noted that capacity projections for energy storage have

Upcoming seminar to highlight “Everything Solar”
It’s no secret that there’s been a significant uptick in interest in solar energy over the past several years. Customers have a lot of questions, and so do municipal utility providers. What are the various options when it comes to solar installations? What impact will solar energy have on the grid and to utility operating assets? What are the rules, regulations and best practices associated with solar installations?

INSIDE THIS ISSUE
Start your year at EOCES 2024 Page 3
MEUW News Monitor Page 4
Evansville is in the Community Spotlight Pages 6-8
Two new safety-related offerings debut in 2024 Page 8
PSC is focused on strong partnerships Page 11
Event calendar Page 12

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

A monthly publication of Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin, Inc. | 725 Lois Drive • Sun Prairie, WI 53590 | www.meuw.org
“increased dramatically”, with the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) raising its forecast for 2050 by 900% (to 278 GW) in the agency’s 2023 Annual Energy Outlook. According to EIA, roughly 111 GW of energy storage projects were in various stages of development across the country as of July.

While Wisconsin utilities have already seen utility-scale battery storage projects approved by the PSC, non-battery storage technologies continue to show promise in delivering long-term, utility-scale energy storage solutions.

One example of “cutting-edge” stored energy technology is a closed-loop energy storage system, which was created by Energy Dome, a company based in Milan, Italy. This past September, the construction on the Columbia Energy Storage Project could begin construction in 2025, with a completed dome in 2026.

Another innovative, large-scale storage technology is under consideration by La Crosse-based Dairyland Power Cooperative, which is exploring the potential to use abandoned mines in Northern Michigan to create a pumped hydropower storage system for its Wisconsin customers to release power to complement its renewable energy generation sources.

“New technologies and innovative ideas are giving rise to utility-scale energy storage options that go beyond traditional battery storage,” said Gilkes. “With federal funding and market incentives for energy storage, Wisconsin utilities will be well positioned to take advantage of new storage technologies to make cleaner energy affordable and reliable.”

#3: More Electrification = More Energy Demand

According to a recent report from the non-profit North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), growth rates of forecasted peak demand and energy have risen significantly over the last year, reversing a decades-long trend of falling or flat growth rates.

This rise in demand is partially due to the explosion of the electric vehicles (EV) industry and the electrification of other systems, including heating systems. Further adding to the potential need for more capacity in Wisconsin is the push to bring more high-energy use customers — including data centers — to the state.

Gilkes said legislation being debated by state lawmakers in the new year could have an impact on the number of EV fast-charging stations available to Wisconsin motorists.

Billing by the kilowatt-hour is a requirement to participate in the federal National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program (NEVI), which has promised Wisconsin more than $78 million and the chance to apply for a pot of $2.5 billion in competitive funding if it meets the program requirements.

Wisconsin may be the only state left that could lose federal funding for EV corridors if it doesn’t pass new laws on EV charging. This issue is currently being discussed in legislative hearings.

Gilkes said she can’t predict if this legislation will pass in 2024. However, if it does, EV chargers will become more commonplace throughout the state.

Another factor in increasing electricity demand in Wisconsin is the use of tax incentives to attract new data centers to the state. Gilkes said these facilities are very high energy users. Microsoft is one of the first to take advantage of Wisconsin’s tax incentives and has recently announced it will construct new high-energy data centers in Mount Pleasant.

“While relocating data centers to Wisconsin brings the obvious perks of more jobs and revenue growth for surrounding communities, it will also spur more energy consumption,” Gilkes said. “Utilities need to be adequately prepared to take on these new customers.”

#4: Artificial intelligence Continues to Expand

Another 2024 trend for utilities is exploring Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Thirty-three percent of utility and energy companies worldwide have already begun to pilot generative artificial intelligence — algorithms capable of generating text, images, computer code and other content — in their operations, according to a 2023 survey released by the digital think tank Capgemini.
Research Institute. Nearly 40% of those companies have already established a dedicated team and budget for generating AI technology, the report said.

The potential uses of AI are endless, Gilkes said. “Utilities may explore using AI to respond to customer complaints, forecast energy consumption, or detect problems on the distribution grid. And that’s just the tip of the iceberg.”

Heinrich agrees that adding AI and other smart technology applications will be important to explore in 2024. “AI has the potential to gather data to improve productivity, limit expenses, and reduce environmental costs. Striking the right balance for using AI — at least for the customer service experience — will require research and planning,” he said.

#5: An Emphasis on Keeping Rates Affordable

In late 2023, the PSC ruled in rate cases from five investor-owned utilities (IOUs) that sought adjustments for reasons ranging from funding construction of renewable energy projects to grid modernization. In the end, the Commissioners scaled back the utilities’ requests and asked the IOUs to come up with plans to keep costs in check.

“Many customers — whether they are low- to moderate-income customers, residential customers, business customers, commercial customers — have begun to actively engage in the regulatory process at the PSC, putting increased pressure on regulators to look at innovative ways to keep costs lower for customers,” Gilkes noted. The increased engagement has put an increased spotlight on energy affordability, and that trend will likely continue moving forward.”

While predicting what will happen in 2024 is a challenge, it’s good to know what trends and issues are at the forefront of our industry, Heinrich said. “If Ben Franklin were alive today, he’d probably add ‘change in the energy industry’ to ‘death and taxes’ being the only certainties in the world.”

Start your year at EOCE 2024 in Wisconsin Dells

There are still a few days left to register for the 2024 Electric Operations Conference and Expo, which will be held Jan. 10–12 at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells. This annual conference attracts municipal and cooperative utility leaders and employees from throughout Wisconsin. Nearly 200 people have already registered to attend the event.

The MEUW-only general sessions on Wednesday afternoon features the newest member of the Public Service Commission, Summer Strand. There will also be sessions discussing safety, including the updated APPA Safety Manual, and recently adopted changes to Wisconsin’s Electric Lineworker Apprenticeship program, as well as the benefits of electrification and the expansion of the electrical vehicle charging network in Wisconsin.

Thursday’s program will offer sessions on the shifting dynamics in the utility supply chain and the challenges of utility locates from Diggers Hotline. Attendees can select from three rounds of breakout sessions on a wide variety of topics and check out the trade show, where more than 100 suppliers will showcase their products and services and be available to discuss the latest utility trends.

Thursday’s program concludes with a keynote presentation from bestselling author Scott Welle, who will outline strategies used by high achievers and athletes to take their “game” to the next level.

On Thursday evening, 50 individuals who recently became journeymen lineworkers or meter technicians will be honored at a special banquet.

Full details and registration info is available at meuw.org/oece.
Workshop to focus on design applications and compliance

MEUW will host a one-day workshop covering design applications and decisions designers must consider when preparing designs that are safe, reliable, and in compliance with National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) requirements, including the most recent changes. Attendees of this one-day Utility Line Design and Code Compliance Seminar will return to their work better prepared to help their utilities adopt design practices that comply with applicable professional engineering laws and regulations. Dave Krause, P.E. will lead the training. The training will be held Wednesday, Jan. 31, at the Glacier Canyon Lodge in Wisconsin Dells. A full agenda and registration information is available here. The MEUW-negotiated room block is available through Jan. 6 — make your reservation today!

Participate in the upcoming Apparatus Workshop

MEUW and Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) have organized an Apparatus Workshop to be held Feb. 13–14. Held at CVTC’s campus in Eau Claire, this workshop will cover topics like: jobsite safety, capacitors, voltage regulators, reclosers, trip savers, meters, and streetlights. (Final topics may change depending on presenter availability.) Details and registration information are located here.

Underground Facility Locating Workshops planned

In March, MEUW will host a one-day workshop designed to cover the National Utility Locating Contractors Association (NUCLA) Professional Competency Standard Manual Units 1-3. Material is first covered in the classroom and then applied in the field. Attendees learn locator theory, how to use a transmitter and receiver, how to overcome common obstacles, and how to evaluate difficult situations encountered in the field. To sign up, please choose one of the two available dates; March 14 in Marshfield, or March 19, in Two Rivers.

Six Customer Service Roundtable sessions set for March, April

Member utilities will gather to exchange ideas and learn from one another about leading practices, service trends and emerging issues affecting municipal electric utility customers. Everyone is welcome! A member of MEUW’s Accounting and Customer Service Committee moderates each session, which are once again being sponsored by Focus on Energy. There is no cost to attend; lunch is provided. View the full schedule at meuw.org/csr •

Watt-Hour Metering Workshop scheduled for March 25–28

Electric utility employees of all experience levels are invited to gather at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College in Green Bay to review the essentials of electric metering. The annual Watt-Hour Metering Workshop, scheduled for March 25–28, promises in-depth discussions related to meter installation and troubleshooting, as well as timely insights about how solar installations and electric-vehicle chargers are impacting metering. Workshop attendees will benefit from networking and the chance to learn from one another, including opportunities to engage with vendors who offer metering equipment. Full details are available here. Registration passes are available to attend all or select portions of the four-day workshop.
Solar seminar set for late February in Madison

Continued from page 1

MEUW is hosting a new “Everything Solar” session to help answer your questions and give you the information you need to make decisions and meet regulations as you’re integrating solar into your infrastructure. Led by Dave Krause, P.E., who has extensive experience working on and with solar projects, this session offers something for utility employees of all skill levels. Representatives from the Public Service Commission will also be present to help explain rules and recommendations.

This new two-day workshop takes a deep dive into what municipal utilities need to know and do when it comes to solar projects, including:

- Configurations of solar projects
- Standardized service application process
- Retail customer-driven projects
- Impacts of grid-connected renewables to utility operating assets
- Utility-scale solar projects
- PSC solar interconnection rules and regulations
- Inspection considerations

Details are available here. Registration is now open and includes a volume discount for multiple registrants from the same utility. Celebrate Leap Day by joining us on Feb. 29 (and March 1) to learn about all things Solar!

Utility suppliers: MEUW can help you connect with municipals

In 2023, more than 100 utility suppliers from Wisconsin and around the country joined the Wisconsin Utility Suppliers Association (WUSA) and took advantage of the opportunity to connect their products and services with municipal electric utilities throughout Wisconsin. All WUSA members are automatically Associate Members of MEUW. Here are a few ideas to help suppliers leverage their WUSA membership and connect with MEUW member utilities:

- Advertise in this monthly newsletter. LIVE LINES reaches more than 1,200 readers, including many of the decisionmakers among municipals.
- Sign up to featured in the periodic “Supplier Showcase” section of LIVE LINES. This new option allows WUSA members to share a company profile or highlight a product or service through a one-time, half-page “advertorial.”
- Sponsor MEUW events and conferences. Put your company’s name and message in front of members attending training sessions, workshops, and conferences put on by MEUW, including our 94th Annual Conference in May 2024.
- Share your company’s expertise by providing story ideas for MEUW publications and suggesting speakers or presentation topics for MEUW events. We’re always on the lookout for innovative services and trends impacting the utility industry, and your company might have just the right info to share.
- Advertise in (or enhance your listing for) our 2024 Membership Directory produced by E&M Consulting. Check out options and sign-up here.

We’d enjoy helping you achieve your marketing goals. To get the conversation started, contact MEUW’s Sharon Wolf at (608) 837-2263.
Evansville is a community that continues to grow expectations

By Bridget Cooke

In Evansville, the utility’s goal of service to the community has always been about combining the present with the past to make a better future.

“This city is such a mix of the old and the new,” said City Council President Jim Brooks. “There is a quest to continue providing reliability while also keeping the older, historical pieces. The people who make it all work know the importance of that.”

For more than a century, Evansville Water & Light has been working to keep the lights on and continuously improve the municipally-owned infrastructure over time. One recent project in coordination with local business owners is tackling intermittent outages and other issues in a well-trafficked area. Work has been underway to change overhead transmission lines running along an alley to underground lines in a northern section of the city’s downtown. The utility began evaluating the need for a change in 2011, then began adding loops to become more resilient.

“It’s good to grow expectations,” Brooks said. “Dedication and reliability have been the focus of the project over the last 15 years.”

The transition to automated metering for all of Evansville’s 4,200 electric meters has also been an ongoing upgrade for utility staff. The work began in 2015 and is nearly complete, despite the pandemic slowing the timeline.

Evansville Water & Light is member of the joint action agency WPPI Energy. According to Energy Services Manager Darren Jacobson, along with the implementation of automated metering, the utility will deploy “MyAccount,” an online customer-engagement tool and account center offering details like billing and electric usage and real-time bill pay.

“MyAccount will be a huge benefit in helping people understand everyday energy use,” Jacobson said.

Evansville residents did not always benefit from the work of public power and a municipally controlled water supply. Evansville Water & Light began more than a century ago, after people voted for change. In 1885, proposals were created. These advocates shaped ideas for a planned public water and electric supply. Their aims were to better public health, improve local fire protection services, and grow the area industrially. But these plans were not accepted by the village board of the time, falling to the wayside, but not forgotten by early proponents.

Cisterns continued to be used until 1901, when residents took to the polls to voice their desire for municipal utilities and take control of the electricity that they were just starting to use. Until then, the power was overseen by a company called Baker Manufacturing. In July 1901, citizens voted to create a public electric and water utility. It was a step in establishing the foundation of what the city continues to provide today.

“Reliable water and electricity for all of our residents; that’s what we have and what we will continue to supply for many years to come,” he said.

Today, Baker Manufacturing employs 150 people and continues its tradition of building products that support both municipal and industrial water system, something the company has done since its founding in 1873. Brooks said the company continues to be a “great city partner.”

There is more industrial business in the small southern Wisconsin city. Harvard Corp., a company that develops, manufactures, and markets filter and purification systems for com-

Continued on page 7
plex engines and manufacturing machinery, came along in 1977 and added a warehouse for its services in the mid-1990s.

The addition of companies continues. Evansville City Council members recently made public that a large soybean plant is planning to break ground in April. Once at its highest operation, the plant would add eight megawatts to the utility load.

“It would change the way the city looks, the way we act and would really bolster the utility,” Brooks said.

The city is changing already. Officials have finalized a plan for “Growing Our Parks: Recreation for Generations.” The public swimming pool installed in 1958 that had outgrown its lifespan has been removed and a splash pad will be built instead at Leonard-Leota Park. A neighboring park will become a waterpark, and new baseball and soccer fields will offer space for safe and functional recreational events.

Residents are changing as well. Billing Clerk Donna Hammett said citizens are embracing solar power in what feels like a high number for a small city of just over 5,700 people. The utility serves 66 solar customers, most of which are homeowners, but also include a small array on a commercial business and panels at school buildings.

Hammett said people are likely trying to cut costs where possible and that has led to the increase. The addition of more companies going door to door to sell solar panels has gone up as well. Evansville Light & Water staff are available to answer customers’ questions about how adding solar panels to their roof will affect their bills.

“People move here, and they call expecting an automated voice,” she said. “Instead, they’re pleasantly surprised to hear one of us greet them on the phone and answer all the questions they have.”

It’s the personal connection that Hammett said she has been trying to amplify in recent years. In September, the utility held a customer appreciation event with food and prizes for everyone who attended. They hosted a drive for the local food pantry and not only donated 300 pounds of items, but also gave a $250 donation directly from the utility.

Another part of the event was the demonstrations through partnerships with local businesses. Evansville Ford brought in electric vehicles (EVs) to help people learn more about how they work and determine whether an EV is a good option for them or their family.

Lineworkers were on hand to talk about their work. They “love talking about what they do,” Hammett said. A young person who attended the event voiced interest in becoming a lineworker, and the crew of five spent more than an hour helping explain all the steps in education and what the job requires.

“That event is definitely worth it for those moments,” Hammett said. “If you have just one person interested in learning more about what could become a fulfilling career, or even just the gratitude from some of the people who attend.”

The lineworkers also put lights up during the holidays and take them down once the new year comes around. They hang banners on poles downtown for different occasions throughout the year, and in the summer, they water the flowers that hang there to beautify the city.

“The story of our work for the people, it’s a good story and we need to tell it,” Hammett said.

Celebrating the accomplishments of the utility is something they need to do more, Brooks said.

Evansville Water & Light consistently receives accolades for safety and their efforts to keep the lights on. Their lineworkers have received awards for their quick outage response times. The utility has received the Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) designation from the American Public Power Association (APPA) multiple times, achieving the highest, platinum status for the most recent three-year designation.

Evansville’s team has been recognized for its safe operating practices by both APPA and MEUW. Based on 2022 performance, they earned gold-level status from MEUW, acknowledging the utilities’ commitment to ensuring an environment that supports safe operations.

As a member of local government and recent Chair of the APPA Policy Makers Council, Brooks also supports advocating at both the state and federal level to ensure lawmakers

Continued on page 8
MEUW adding two new safety-related offerings for 2024

Results of MEUW’s recent Member Engagement Survey reinforced the idea that member utilities place a great deal of value on the safety services and training the association offers. Members of the MEUW Safety and Education Committee are continually exploring ways to keep safety top of mind and engage members of all sizes to learn from one another and promote safe work practices. Recognizing that municipal utilities across Wisconsin count on MEUW for safety training and leadership, the association is adding two new offerings for 2024 — a monthly safety call and the “Foreman’s Roundtable.”

Beginning Tuesday, Feb. 6 — and continuing on the first Tuesday of every month throughout 2024 — MEUW members are invited to call in for a quick safety update. Each monthly call will begin promptly at 7:15 a.m. Participants will hear about recent near misses and get important alerts to help keep lineworkers safe on the job. While the call will be facilitated by MEUW, the intent is for the discussion to be driven by members.

MEUW Director of Safety Services and Operations Mike Czuprynko will kick off each call, and said, “We promise to keep the call short, focused, and worth your time.”

Details about the Monthly Safety Call, including the call-in number and suggested topics, will be shared in future communications.

Additionally, MEUW is organizing a one-day gathering of municipal utility foremen. The planned session recognizes that foremen are key to a utility’s safety and efficiency. What’s more, the people leading utility line crews typically don’t have an opportunity to talk with others who face the same challenges on the job.

The Foreman’s Roundtable will take place on Wednesday, March 6, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Mauston. The session will enable utility foremen to share ideas, learn from one another, and develop their leadership and communication skills, especially regarding safety. A full agenda and registration information will be released in mid-January. There will be a small fee for each participant in order to help cover expenses.

“MEUW’s Safety and Ed Committee meets regularly to keep the safety program fresh and relevant. We think these new additions meet an emerging need and will help to further strengthen the safety focus our members expect from MEUW,” Czuprynko said.

Evansville  Continued from page 7

understand what is important to municipal utilities and their customers.

“It is important for each utility to advocate for themselves and as part of WPPI Energy, our joint action [agency]. We owe it to each other to show up and build relationships with legislators,” Brooks said. “We can be the resource to help them learn about our issues and then they’ll think of us when a policy comes up and they need to consult on how to move forward.”

The community has great longevity, Brooks said, and everyone is focused on working together to ensure the city thrives in the future.

Bridget Cooke is Communications Coordinator for WPPI Energy
PSC approves 2024 rate adjustments for investor-owned utilities

At its Open Meeting on Dec. 20, the three-person Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) issued final orders granting the state’s investor-owned utilities authority to adjust electric rates as of Jan. 1, 2024. The unanimous decisions followed months of regulatory proceedings, including public comment, and concluded with the outcomes shown here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investor-owned Utility</th>
<th>Docket Number</th>
<th>Change in currently authorized rates</th>
<th>Return on Equity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madison Gas and Electric Co.</td>
<td>3270-UR-125</td>
<td>2024: $7,332,000</td>
<td>2024: 9.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2025: $27,472,000</td>
<td>2025: 9.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern States Power Co.</td>
<td>4220-UR-126</td>
<td>2024: + $1,113,000</td>
<td>2024: 0.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Xcel Energy Wisconsin)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2025: + 5.77%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin Electric Power Co.</td>
<td>5-UR-110</td>
<td>2024: + $84.3M (WEPCO)</td>
<td>2024: 9.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(WEPCO) &amp; Wisconsin Gas LLC (WG)</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ $82.2M (WG)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(We Energies)</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 2.48% (WEPCO)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 2.46% (WG)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin Power and Light Co.</td>
<td>6680-UR-124</td>
<td>2024: + $49,425,000</td>
<td>2024: 9.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Alliant Energy)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2025: + $109,108,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2024: + 3.76%</td>
<td>2025: 9.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2025: + 8.27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2024: 9.80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2025: 9.80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin Public Service Corp.</td>
<td>6690-UR-127</td>
<td>2024: - $32.8M decrease</td>
<td>2024: 9.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2025: 2.59% decrease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Half of transmission line comes online

Half of the Cardinal-Hickory Creek Transmission Line that runs from Wisconsin to Iowa came online in December, even as the cost of the project has risen $130 million over initial projections.

The 102-mile line is co-owned by ATC, ITC Midwest and Dairyland Power Cooperative. The portion of the line that runs from a substation near Middleton to a substation near Montfort became operational Dec. 7.

The project was approved by the Midwest grid operator in 2011. It received approval from the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin in September 2019, and the Iowa Utilities Board in May 2020.

Since then, the line has faced multiple legal challenges from environmental groups, who argued the project threatened the Driftless Area of southwestern Wisconsin and the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge. But the utilities say the 345-kilovolt line — running from Dubuque County, Iowa, to Dane County — is critical to delivering cost-effective renewable energy to customers.

The litigation did delay the project, but a July 19 U.S. Court of Appeals decision allowed it to move forward. The utilities behind the line say they’re working to minimize the project’s environmental impact. The second half of the project is expected to be in service by June 2024.

Applications for PSC Refueling Readiness Grant Program now being accepted

The PSC is now accepting applications for the fourth round of Wisconsin’s Refueling Readiness Grant Program. The program is designed to facilitate the fueling of emergency vehicles during a major power outage or declared emergencies. The Commission is expected to award up to $150,000. Funding will be prioritized for facilities located in counties that have not received awards in previous program rounds. Grants will be provided to fund the installation or modification of general electrical panels, labor of electricians, transfer switches, tap switches, and other necessary accessories to maintain access to vehicle fuel during power outages. The application period closes on April 30, at 1:30 p.m. For more information and instructions on applying for funding, visit the Refueling Readiness page on the PSC website.

Compiled from reporting by Wisconsin Public Radio and other news sources

Applications for MEUW’s “Powering Futures” Scholarship are now being accepted. MEUW provides this scholarship annually to support students pursuing careers in electrical power distribution. Applications for this year’s awards will be accepted through Jan. 23. To be eligible, students must reside in a Wisconsin public power community and must be pursuing post-secondary education to become a Field Service Technician, Groundman, Lineman Apprentice, Electric Meter Technician, Substation Electrician Apprentice or Utility Technician. MEUW members are encouraged to share this opportunity with high school seniors in their community! Full details can be found at meuw.org/scholarships.
Throughout 2023, MEUW transformed its long-standing Management Training Program (MTP) into the new four-part Fundamentals of Utility Management Training Series. We also added a three-part Municipal Utility Leadership Certificate Program. We’re very pleased to be able to provide our members with these professional development options, and appreciate the participation we’ve seen in both the old and new offerings.

As a final wrap up of the transition process, we had several people achieve full- and partial-graduation from the legacy MTP program. The full graduates are: Adam Carroll (Shawano), and Carl Deans (Lodi). Those achieving partial graduation did so in recognition of the classes they did take compared to what was offered as we moved to the new programs. They are: Dustin Gruling (Oconomowoc), Jamie Kulkee (Hustisford), and Ryan Micke (Kaukauna).

In addition, several members took full advantage of the new offerings and completed the Municipal Utility Leadership Certificate Program. They are: Julie Brocker (Kaukauna), Lori Ewoldt (Sun Prairie), Jordan Fritche (Fennimore), Kathy Kovach (New Holstein), Brenda Mackey (Rice Lake), John McLain (Waunakee), Kurt Melchert (Menasha), Mark Skubal (Menasha), Marc Stephanie (New Holstein), Amanda VandeVoort (Rice Lake), Ashley Walker (Fennimore).

Moving ahead into 2024, we will continue to offer the classes in the two new programs at different times throughout the year to help match the schedules of those who would like to participate.

The next class in the Fundamentals series – Utility Planning and Risk Management — is planned for Feb. 14 in Mauston. Details and registration information are here.

Above: Carl Deans (left) and Adam Carroll completed their final class to graduate from MEUW’s Management Training Program (MTP). Below: Ryan Micke (left), Jamie Kulkee, and Dustin Gruling attended training in 2023 to achieve the remaining requirements of the legacy MTP.

Recent graduates of the Municipal Utility Leadership Certificate Program were recognized at the training session held Dec. 6 in Mauston. Pictured are (from left) Kurt Melchert, Mark Skubal, Marc Stephanie, Kathy Kovach, John McLain, Amanda VandeVoort, Lori Ewoldt, Brenda Mackey, Jordan Fritche, and Ashley Walker. (Julie Brocker is not pictured)

Professional Development Training Schedule for 2024

Fundamentals of Utility Management Training Series
- Utility Planning & Risk Management: Feb. 14, 2024
- Communications & Project Management: June 5, 2024
- Utility Accounting & Finance: Oct. 9, 2024
- Regulation, Compliance, & Safety: Feb. 12, 2025 (tentative)

Municipal Utility Leadership Certificate Program
- Leading With Consistency: April 3, 2024
- Leading Through Coaching: Aug. 7, 2024
- Leading Through Collaboration: Dec. 4, 2024

Check MEUW’s website for full details. Registration for training courses will open six weeks prior to each of the scheduled dates.
By Rebecca Cameron Valcq

As I traveled across the state this past year, I was reminded what our work at the Public Service Commission (PSC or Commission) means for Wisconsin’s future. While attending community events and meeting state, local and tribal leaders, and industry professionals, I saw the ways we are working together to ensure safe, affordable, reliable, and environmentally responsible utility services and equitable access to telecommunications and broadband services in our state.

We had ambitious goals that we set out to reach at the start of the year. The PSC’s Wisconsin Broadband Office advanced President Biden’s Internet for All initiative by organizing a statewide listening tour, which included nine in-person and two virtual interactive meetings to gather public input about the ways we can improve broadband access, affordability, and adoption in the state.

Following this tour, we learned Wisconsin will be receiving more than $1 billion to ensure all homes and businesses have access to high-speed internet. The public input gathered during the tour helped develop the plans we will use to guide the deployment of broadband funds in the following years.

I also had the opportunity to celebrate how far we have already come in getting Wisconsinites connected. In June, I visited Boulder Junction in Vilas County to celebrate the completion of their fiber optic broadband construction. Like many communities, Boulder Junction lacked access to high-speed broadband, but thanks to investments delivered by Gov. Evers, PSC awarded $3.9 million to provide 1,349 homes and businesses access to fiber internet in Boulder Junction beginning this year.

In September, I joined local leaders at a ribbon cutting in Waukesha to recognize the completion of a historic project that now brings clean drinking water from Lake Michigan to Waukesha. The PSC approved these construction plans in recent years, making this project possible. I am proud to share that in 2023 alone, the PSC approved 42 water utility infrastructure construction projects, totaling $192 million, for improvements to wells, water treatment facilities, and more, including the first PFAS treatment facilities to be authorized.

I had many opportunities throughout the year to highlight the exciting work being led by the PSC’s Office of Energy Innovation (OEI). In March, the Commission awarded $10 million under the Energy Innovation Grant Program to implement a wide variety of projects related to energy efficiency, renewable energy, energy storage, and energy planning. In November, we began accepting applications for historic clean energy programs to help upgrade and strengthen energy infrastructure in the state, which will support Gov. Evers’ goal of zero-carbon electricity consumption by 2050.

The entire PSC team made tremendous strides toward our agency goals. Highlights from this year include touring the Forest County Potawatomi’s energy efficiency projects in Crandon, which received support from Focus on Energy; celebrating the development of a community solar project that received OEI funding in Vernon County; visiting a residential construction site in Stoughton to learn about pipeline safety efforts; meeting with representatives from the state’s municipal utilities at conferences in the Wisconsin Dells and in Sheboygan; touring renewable energy project sites in southern Wisconsin; and hearing about the benefits of broadband access for the state’s workforce from economic development leaders in La Crosse.

Public participation is a critical component of our work. Public input submitted before the Commission ensures we can reach the most fair and reasonable decision possible. During this year’s rate cases, we heard customers loud and clear. As a result, the Commission voted to save customers of the five largest electric and gas utilities an approximate $190 million dollars on bills over the next two years, balancing the needs of customers and utilities.

In 2023, we built strong partnerships, achieved important milestones, and moved critical projects forward to prepare for another successful year ahead. As we look to 2024, we remain committed to working with a diverse network of stakeholders to further our mission.

Rebecca Cameron Valcq currently serves as Chairperson of the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, having been appointed to the role by Gov. Tony Evers in January 2019. The views expressed in this column are her own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the PSC or any other individual Commissioner.

The Public Service Commission has two YouTube channels for the public to follow its official proceedings —
- Live and recorded broadcasts of PSC hearings can be viewed at youtube.com/@PSCWI-Hearings
- Live and recorded broadcasts of PSC open meetings can be viewed at youtube.com/@PSCWI
**Calendar of Events**

Jan. 10-12 Electric Operations Conference & Expo Wisconsin Dells
Jan. 31 Line Design and Code Compliance Seminar — Wisconsin Dells
Feb. 6 Monthly Safety Call — 7:15 a.m.
Feb. 13-14 Apparatus Workshop — Eau Claire
Feb. 14 Fundamentals of Utility Management: Utility Planning and Risk Management Mauston
Feb 29-Mar 1 “Everything Solar” Seminar — Madison
March 5 Monthly Safety Call — 7:15 a.m.
March 6 Foreman’s Roundtable — Mauston
March 12 CS* Roundtable — Wisconsin Rapids
March 14 Underground Locating — Marshfield
March 19 Underground Locating — Two Rivers
March 19 CS* Roundtable — Cameron
March 25-28 Watt-Hour Metering Workshop — Green Bay
March 26 CS* Roundtable — Oconomowoc
March 28 CS* Roundtable — Kaukauna
April 2 Monthly Safety Call — 7:15 a.m.
April 3 Municipal Utility Leadership Program: Leading with Consistency — Mauston
April 9 CS* Roundtable — Waunakee
April 16 CS* Roundtable — Evansville
April 23-25 Overhead Workshop — Eau Claire

* Customer Service

---

**LIVELines Classifieds**

MEUW is pleased to promote job openings with its member utilities across Wisconsin. Listed below are the most recent opportunities available:

**City of Columbus** — [Utility Director](#)

**City of Fennimore** —
- Water/Wastewater Treatment Superintendent
- Electric Lineman

**Kaukauna Utilities** — [Project Engineer](#)

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

---

**Stock up now for the new year**

Member utilities may purchase hold cards and warning cards through MEUW’s [Online Store](#). To place an order, visit MEUW.org, click on the “Resources” tab and look for the “Hold Cards and Warning Cards” section.

---

**The OKOguard Advantage**

- Superior performance
- Outstanding reliability
- More flexibility
- All EPR insulation system
- No treeing
- Triple Tandem Extrusion

**T&R Electric**

WE BUY, SELL, RENT, AND DELIVER

PO BOX 180, COLMAN, SD 57017
DIAL DIRECT FREE 800-843-7984
http://www.t-r.com

---

**Mutual Aid Hotline**

1-844-MEUW-911
(1-844-638-9911)

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