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A project 20 years in the making

In Alexandria, ALP Utilities recently relocated to its new facility, specifically designed to meet ALP's growing need for space, sustainable energy, and a consolidated campus for operations.

Ted Cash, ALP general manager, says the decision to build a new, all-encompassing campus was motivated by the inefficiency of the old headquarters, which were constructed on an ad hoc basis. "Our former facilities were probably 20 years past their prime. We kept patching them together to get by into another year and finally came to the realization that we were going to have to build something," said Cash.

Improved efficiency wasn't the only goal. Another key objective for the build was to create more storage. Previously, ALP used several storage spaces, including



The outside of ALP's new building, located on 16 acres near the southern edge of Alexandria.

sites near the airport, at the north side of town, and at the south side of the town. In addition to the new building, the new campus includes a four-acre pole yard that can later serve as a

site for a water tower if needed. ALP's previous pole yard was three-quarters of a mile away.

With ALP's new 16-acre campus on the southern edge of Alexandria, the foundational

work for future projects is already in place. Building from the ground up allows for future-proofing the utility. For example, "We're already positioned to put

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New federal guidance on DEI has implications for utilities

On July 29, 2025, the US Attorney General (AG) issued a sweeping memorandum to all federal agencies redefining the boundaries of lawful conduct for recipients of federal funding under existing antidiscrimination laws.

The guidance places particular scrutiny on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, warning that practices involving race-, sex-, or identity-based preferences—even if well-intentioned—may violate federal law.

For municipal utilities, which often receive federal grants and operate public-facing programs, this memo could have implications in several areas. While utilities may not be primary targets of enforcement, any hiring practices, community outreach initiatives, or vendor selection processes that incorporate demographic preferences or proxy criteria must now be carefully reviewed to ensure compliance.

Overview of the memorandum

The AG's memorandum marks a significant shift in federal policy. The communication indicates a move from promoting equity through group-based initiatives to enforcing strict individual-based nondiscrimination. This change could potentially reshape how organizations approach hiring, training, contracting, and public engagement. Issued to all federal agencies, the guidance reasserts the primacy of federal antidiscrimination laws and warns recipients of federal funding—including educational institutions, employers, and state/local governments—against engaging in practices that could be construed as discriminatory, even if framed as promoting equity or inclusion.

What has changed?

Historically, federal agencies, especially under prior administrations, encouraged DEI programs as mechanisms for addressing systemic inequality and promoting representation.

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MMUA's 2025 award winners

The Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association (MMUA) has proudly recognized excellence in the state's public power and water community by presenting its annual awards during the 2025 MMUA Summer Conference Utility Leadership at the Speed of Change, held August 18-20 at the Kahler Grand Hotel in Rochester, Minnesota.

The awards honor individuals in the municipal utility sector who demonstrate exceptional service, innovation, leadership, and commitment to community values. This year, nine MMUA members were recognized within the community.

"Our award recipients represent the best of public service—committed professionals and community-focused utilities working tirelessly to serve Minnesota residents with safe, reliable, and affordable services," says MMUA CEO Karleen Kos. "This year's winners embody the spirit of public service and remind us why municipal utilities remain so vital to our state."

Rising Star Award

The Rising Star Award recognizes future leaders who have demonstrated dedication to the goals and principles of municipal utilities through problem-solving, creativity, and job knowledge. This year, MMUA recognized three rising stars.

Brian Riggleman, business analyst engineer at Owatonna Public Utilities (OPU): Riggleman joined OPU with limited data reporting experience but quickly became an essential resource for the organization. He enthusiastically approaches every challenge and has a genuine passion for his work.

Riggleman has collaborated across all departments of OPU, significantly enhancing utility operations from EV detection to load management devices. Many colleagues commend his impressive work, describing it as "raw talent with unlimited passion."

Easton Dale, superintendent of North Saint Paul Electric Utilities: Dale has led the

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A project 20 years in the making

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up a water tower, a substation, and still have room for new generation if we decide to move in that direction," said Cash.

Cash has been with ALP for seven years, but just six weeks into his start, employees were requesting a new facility. He mentioned how important this new facility is to the community and to the utility workers. It was designed to meet safety standards and expand with the town and its utility needs.

Alexandria is a growing city. Since the original ALP buildings were constructed, the population has grown from 7,000, to approximately 15,000 residents. "We had to build so that we can serve this community for the next 50-plus years. And that's what we're doing with this strategic campus and new operations center," says Cash.

ORB Management's role

No capital project can take shape without proper planning. Alexandria-based real estate consulting firm, ORB Management, was crucial in planning, sourcing, and steering the progress of the ALP project. Cash described ORB's involvement as "invaluable" to the entire process.

Tom Walchoz, the project executive, took charge of the ALP rebuild after two ALP commissioners recommended ORB Management. ORB took the lead on complex aspects of the project such as contracts, financial transactions, daily project management, and selecting the location.

Cash praised ORB's role in the process, crediting them with helping save \$150,000 on a roof, a possibility that would have been missed without ORB's oversight. He strongly recommends that other communities engage owner representatives, stating they will "save you so many headaches in the long run."

With the assistance of ORB, the project was completed on time and below budget.

Walchoz reviewed the extensive list of key deliverables when creating a public utility's campus. Factors such as operational efficiency, safety, staff culture, and the ability to expand and modernize were all important considerations.

Walchoz explains that ORB was so involved in the ALP project that ORB became pseudo-staff for ALP during the course of the project, helping ALP to make smart and informed decisions with ORB's background knowledge of capital projects. For example, locating the headquarters adjacent to Highway 115 was a crucial decision because it will help to reduce future expenses. "They (ALP) have a lot of answers in their head. They just need somebody to ask them the right questions," says Walchoz.



Alexandria Public Utilities' new building includes a custom garage fit to store all utility trucks perfectly.



The office is filled with natural light in Alexandria Public Utilities' new facility.

ORB works with many non-profit and publicly-owned sites, and it takes pride in delivering data-driven results while providing the best value for its dollar. Compared with the past, capital projects have become much more complex and involve numerous moving parts.

What makes the new facility unique?

As a public utility, energy efficiency and sustainability are always top of mind, so the new ALP facility was constructed with an eye on the state's 2040 carbon-free goal. This new building includes cutting-edge energy-efficiency characteristics to lower some cost-stressors. For example, in the operations center, a new skylight feature allows the lights to be off all day, saving on electricity. In addition, one hallway running through the entire building is illuminated by solar tubes. Cash commented the area is so bright it feels as if you are outside in daylight. Another window element provides every employee with access to natural light.

The new facility also features hydronic heated floors in both the garage and the administrative wing. Cash wanted the ALP employees to experience a positive work setting, combined with a superior work climate. "It's a very nice environment for people

to come to work in and visit," says Cash.

All for Alexandria

The bottom line: the new ALP Utilities campus has secured a future for Alexandria's public power utility so it can effectively serve the community for decades. The new campus will help staff provide better service to their customers, as the new building streamlines operations across the board.

Even the parking area has been upgraded. As the water crew parked the largest dump truck and trailer with an excavator perfectly into its new parking spot, a crew member commented, "This is going to be really nice."

ALP Board of Public Utilities President Richard Rentz was on site for the grand opening of the new building. The board members, who are part of the Alexandria community, were not just involved to rubber stamp approvals. They were actively engaged with the entire planning process, often posing difficult questions and focusing on the community's long-term needs.

As the project reached completion, Cash has a message for the people of Alexandria: "I hope the community can be proud of this for the next 50 years."

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Insights from research someone else paid for

I am a child of small-town Minnesota.

I grew up searching for deals on the sidewalk racks during Crazy Days, eating sandwiches made of bread from the day-old store, and watching my mom split the weekend rental cost of a carpet cleaning machine with our neighbor. In other words, I love a good bargain. So this month, I thought I'd share some data from research related to utilities that others have paid a lot of money to gather and analyze. While the studies were not specific to municipal utilities in most cases, I believe there is plenty we can learn from this information without replicating the work and expense.

Let's start with electricity. By now everyone understands the demand for power is going to be growing considerably over the next 25 years. Under the previous administration, most thought the increase was going to be driven by a climate-friendly push for electrification and away from fossil fuels. This framing of the issue has dropped into the background since the new administration took office on January 20. Now, the push for onshoring businesses and

meeting the energy needs of data centers has moved front and center.

The *Ember US Electricity 2025 Special Report* suggests that data centers will consume around nine percent of US power by 2030. By the time 2050 arrives, estimates from various sources suggest that between 12.5 percent and 15 percent of all US energy will be used by data centers, and these numbers are being revised all the time. The North American Electric Reliability Corporation's most recent forecast says overall electricity demand will grow 25 percent by 2030 and 78 percent by 2050 compared to 2023 levels. How this growth will be accomplished and paid for is one of the hottest topics in our industry.

ICF's 2025 report *Rising current: America's growing electricity demand* takes a look at this demand growth and the implications for reliability. Here are a few items of interest from that research and related sources.

Insight: Overall demand is growing faster than peak demand. Data centers, industrial users, and crypto miners tend to run "always on" operations, flattening the load profile in their areas. Compared to 2023, peak demand is

expected to grow 14 percent by 2030 and 54 percent by 2050. Experts point out that peak times also may shift as electrification moves forward. Hence, grid operators and utilities will need to adjust to higher demand and new use patterns.

Question: What, if anything, would need to change in your operation if peak times shift? Does your town have a strategy for dealing with the impact of data center development whether they locate in your community or not?

Insight: The US is unlikely to run out of electricity, but the pace of generation capacity growth needs to nearly double from 1.8 percent per year between 2000 and 2025 to at least 3.3 percent per year between 2025 and 2050. New generation capacity is a high priority everywhere, and utility-scale generation with an "all of the above" approach is understood to be an urgent necessity. Large entities like Google and Alphabet are undertaking their own energy production, adding a new twist to the future energy mix. In our region, the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) is working to speed up projects that are intended to address capacity deficits.

Modeling based on MISO-published data, ICF reports, and the US Energy Information Administration suggest MISO will be in a shortfall situation by 2030. Consequently, projects need to be identified, permitted, and financed as expeditiously as possible. MISO will also have to continue working to streamline its cumbersome interconnection process. Municipal utilities and joint action agencies will need to be creative, tireless, and willing to take calculated risks to develop new projects too. Otherwise, they will likely be at the mercy of larger players or become increasingly irrelevant. Either scenario makes municipal utilities takeover targets.

Question: Does your commission understand the choices ahead and the implications of each course?

Insight: Residential retail rates will likely increase between 15 percent and 40 percent between 2025 and 2030. All of this capacity building on such a short timeline means there will be competition for funds and material resources. This will drive up wholesale electricity prices considerably, likely doubling them by 2050. With this backdrop, utility costs for the average ratepayer will rise faster than their incomes. Municipal utilities may be able to avoid the worst of these costs, but they won't be able to avoid all of them due to the market-level issues at play.

From My Desk to Yours

Karleen Kos
MMUA CEO



Question: How are you preparing your commission and customers for these increases? What local mitigations and demand-side programs are you considering?

Turning to gas and water utilities, we find some additional data to make you think. JD Power's *Gas Utility Residential Customer Satisfaction Study 2024* released last December, its *Utilities Intelligence Annual Report 2024* released earlier this year, and the firm's *Water Utility Satisfaction Study* released in May, provide some interesting stats regarding ratepayer attitudes toward their utilities. While these reports focus primarily on investor-owned providers, it is likely we can learn a lot about ratepayers' priorities and attitudes in general from these studies.

Insight: More than 40 percent of water customers do not feel their tap water is safe to drink. Even though the US has some of the safest drinking water in the world, around 41 percent of water customers don't think their water is clean enough to drink out of the tap. In some cases, this is probably true. In most cases, though, it is likely only a perception due—in part—to the beverage industry's aggressive marketing of bottled water.

Proactive communication with customers is an important step utilities can take to counter this perception. Among customers who understand what their utility is doing to maintain their water infrastructure and deliver drinkable water, satisfaction rises 229 points on a 1,000-point scale compared with those who don't have this information.

Question: What are you doing to make sure your customers know about the quality of your community's drinking water and to explain issues such as odors or discolorations that some experience?

Insight: When water and gas bills stabilize after a period of increases, so does satisfaction. On the water side, the data show that people are less satisfied with the utility overall when prices fluctuate. A \$6 per month average fluctuation in cost led to an eight-point decline in cost satisfaction and to a two-point drop

in satisfaction with the utility. On the gas side, once bills stabilized after years of rising natural gas prices, customers' price satisfaction also stabilized.

We ought to consider two ideas as the result of this data. First, how people feel about the amount of their gas and water bills correlates with how predictable the bill is, not only how much it is. Second, when bills are going up, satisfaction with the utility itself will likely go down.

While this data focused primarily on water and gas utilities, it is likely to hold true with electricity as well. Nobody wants to pay a high amount for utilities. But the data shows that people will adjust to higher costs if their bills are predictable, staying at a given level for a while rather than fluctuating or continuing to rise with no end in sight.

Question: With this in mind, how can your utility make rate, billing, and communication decisions to help customers predict and cope with their bills?

Insight: Ratepayers link strong brand appeal to management effectiveness. Brand appeal is a utility's ability to engage customers with and advocate for the utility, its service quality, its key initiatives, and its offerings. It is a function of the utility's reputation, trust, and marketing effectiveness. When people like the utility's brand, they tend to think it is well run. On the other hand, the data show that when customers are turned off by the utility, they think it is poorly run—especially financially. According to the July 2025 *Utility Brand Appeal Index Report*, also published by JD Power, "Utilities with appealing brands also enjoy higher customer loyalty, an increase in support for rate increases, and a significantly higher percentage of customers willing to advocate for the utility."

As a born and raised Minnesotan, I am very aware of the reasons municipal utility leaders may be reluctant to "toot their own horn" or spend money on initiatives to build their utility's brand. But these days, I believe it is an essential part of utility leaders' duties to

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New federal guidance on DEI

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These initiatives often included:

- Race-conscious scholarships and hiring practices
- Diversity statements in applications
- Targeted outreach to under-represented groups
- Safe spaces and affinity groups based on identity

While these programs were framed as legally permissible under Title VI, Title VII, and Title IX, they often operated in a gray area—balancing affirmative action goals with nondiscrimination mandates.

The 2025 memorandum reframes common DEI practices as potentially unlawful under federal law. Key changes include:

- Strict prohibition of preferential treatment: Any use of race, sex, or other protected characteristics in hiring, admissions, scholarships, or program eligibility is now presumed unlawful unless it meets narrow judicial exceptions.
- A ban on proxy criteria: Terms like “cultural competence,” “lived experience,” or geographic targeting are flagged as proxies for protected traits and are subject to legal challenge if used to advantage or disadvantage individuals.
- Segregation and safe spaces: Programs that separate participants by race or sex—even for inclusion or healing—are considered discriminatory unless narrowly justified.
- Sex-based boundaries: The memo emphasizes the importance of maintaining biological sex-based separation in intimate spaces and athletic competitions, framing policies that allow gender identity-based access as potentially unlawful.
- Third-party accountability: Federal fund recipients are responsible for ensuring that contractors and grantees also comply with nondiscrimination laws.
- Retaliation protections: Individuals who object to DEI programs they believe are discriminatory are protected from adverse actions.

Legal Foundation

The memo draws heavily on several recent Supreme Court decisions, including:

- **Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue (2020):** The US Supreme Court ruled that

Montana’s exclusion of religious schools from a state scholarship program violated the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. The Court held that once a state decides to subsidize private education, it cannot disqualify schools solely because they are religious. This decision reinforced the principle that government programs must treat religious entities equally, and any discrimination based on religious status is subject to strict scrutiny.

- **Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard (2023):** In this case, the US Supreme Court struck down race-conscious admissions policies at Harvard University, ruling that they violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Court held that using race as a factor in college admissions—even with the goal of promoting diversity—was unconstitutional unless it met the highest level of judicial scrutiny. The decision emphasized that admissions policies must treat applicants as individuals, not as representatives of racial groups, and that racial classifications must be narrowly tailored to achieve a compelling interest. This landmark ruling significantly curtailed affirmative action in higher education.

- **Ames v. Ohio Department of Youth Services (2025):** The US Supreme Court unanimously ruled that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act protects all individuals from discrimination, regardless of whether they belong to a majority or minority group. The case involved Marlean Ames, a heterosexual woman who alleged she was denied a promotion and later demoted in favor of LGBTQ+ colleagues. Lower courts had dismissed her claim, applying a “background circumstances” rule that required majority-group plaintiffs to meet a higher evidentiary burden. The Supreme Court rejected that rule, holding that Title VII’s protections apply equally

to “any individual” and that courts cannot impose additional hurdles based on group membership.

Best Practices Moving Forward

While the memo does not ban DEI programs outright, it offers recommendations to help entities avoid legal risk:

- Use merit-based criteria for selection
- Avoid demographic quotas or benchmarks
- Ensure inclusive access to all programs
- Include nondiscrimination clauses in contracts
- Establish anti-retaliation policies and safe reporting mechanisms

This guidance signals a paradigm shift. Organizations receiving federal funds must audit existing initiatives and eliminate race-, sex-, or identity-based preferences. The decision also requires organizations to reframe inclusion efforts around universal access and objective qualifications.

When it comes to municipal utilities specifically, here are some steps to consider in light of the AG’s guidance.

- Don’t bar anyone from participating in energy programs as long as they meet the same criteria as everyone else.
- Make sure messaging to customers and staff focuses on lawful goals such as antibiotics, safety, or service, without differential treatment.
- If you offer a local scholarship, use eligibility rules that allow students to study at “any accredited program” and selection criteria that are both objective and tied to the mission of the scholarship.
- Be cautious about any type of preferences you may have in your vendor selection and outreach programs. If you use small-business status,

local residency, new-entrance status, or type-of-ownership status as criteria, make sure they are race, sex/gender, and identity neutral.

- Focus workplace trainings on respectful workplaces, anti- harassment, and customer service objectives that do not call out specific identity criteria.
- Review and update any policies or practices that either codify treating people differently or imply that you could potentially treat people differently in order to increase or balance representation. Instead, emphasize equal opportunity, fairness, and business-need competencies.
- If you have not already done so, standardize interview practices and tie any requirements of applicants to business needs that are necessary and neutral.

Conclusion

Together, the recent Supreme Court decisions form the legal

backbone of the Attorney General’s memorandum. Each case reinforces the principle that federal law prohibits discrimination based on protected characteristics—whether the affected individual belongs to a majority or minority group—and that policies must be evaluated based on their impact, not their intent.

For organizations moving forward, this means a shift toward strictly merit-based, individual-focused decision-making. Programs must be reviewed and redesigned to ensure compliance with non-discrimination laws. Organizations will need to audit hiring, contracting, training, and outreach practices to eliminate any use of protected traits as selection criteria. The objective impact is clear: legal risk increases for any entity that continues to use demographic preferences, and compliance will now require a more rigorous, legally defensible approach to inclusion.

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Ann Arbor voters push to break DTE's grip; seek public power

Residents of Ann Arbor, Michigan, may soon face a historic choice on whether to replace DTE Energy with a city-owned electric utility. A grassroots campaign, Ann Arbor for Public Power (A2P2), has launched a ballot initiative to establish a public utility, arguing that municipal ownership would deliver cleaner energy, lower costs, and greater accountability.

The case for public power

Supporters contend a public utility could help Ann Arbor meet its ambitious climate goals. The city aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, but critics say DTE's reliance on fossil fuels makes the target unattainable under private ownership. In addition, DTE's customers experienced an average of 1,542 minutes without power in 2023, ranking it among the worst utilities in the US according to the Citizens Utility Board of Michigan.

Proponents point to the success of municipal utilities in other cities, including Lansing and Traverse City, which boast lower rates and higher renewable energy portfolios than their investor-owned counterparts.

City Council's role and the municipalization study

Ann Arbor City Council has

already begun grappling with the question of municipalization. Earlier this year, members debated whether to fund a feasibility study to examine the legal, financial, and operational requirements of taking over DTE's infrastructure. The proposed study would have analyzed acquisition costs, financing strategies, and potential rate impacts for residents.

Advocates of the study stressed that independent, city-commissioned data was critical to ensure voters had accurate information. Without it, they argued, DTE's own estimates, which peg municipalization at up to \$2 billion, would dominate the public conversation. Councilmembers sympathetic to public power said a rigorous study could provide transparency and inform both policymakers and residents.

The measure, however, narrowly failed, as opponents expressed concern over committing taxpayer dollars to research they saw as speculative. Some argued the city's recently launched Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU), designed to provide clean power through local solar and storage projects, offers a more practical path forward.

The Council's hesitation has sharpened the strategy of A2P2. Organizers insist if elected

officials will not lead on the issue, voters must take charge. The ballot initiative, they argue, would establish a public power authority that could commission studies, negotiate with DTE, and eventually transition the city to municipal ownership. This way, the grassroots movement sees the ballot box as the most direct route to energy reform.

Benefits of public utilities

Nationally, municipal utilities provide power to about 49 million people, according to the American Public Power Association. These locally owned utilities often deliver electricity at lower rates, reinvest revenues into community priorities, and accelerate renewable energy adoption. Lansing's Board of Water and Light, for example, has expanded wind and solar capacity while maintaining rates below those of Michigan's investor-owned utilities.

"Public power means local control," said one A2P2 organizer at a recent rally. "Instead of profits flowing to shareholders, the money stays in Ann Arbor to build a sustainable future."

Critics claim municipalization imposes steep financial and legal risks. They warn of prolonged litigation with DTE, uncertain acquisition costs, and the chal-



lenge of managing a complex utility. Still, advocates spotlight the many successful public utilities nationwide that demonstrate the model's viability.

What comes next?

To qualify for the November 2025 ballot, A2P2 must gather thousands of valid signatures from registered voters. If approved, the measure would create a public power authority with the ability to study, negotiate, and eventually acquire DTE's infrastructure. The decision would not immediately sever ties with DTE but would set Ann Arbor on a path toward local ownership.

The campaign has already ignited passionate debate. Environmental activists view it as a once-in-a-generation chance to realign the city's energy system with its climate commitments. Some business leaders and skeptics, meanwhile, urge caution, pointing to the complexity of separating from a regional provider.

For now, Ann Arbor stands at a crossroads. With the City Council divided and voters preparing to enter the fracas, the push for public power highlights a broader national debate over who should control America's energy future: profit-driven corporations or the communities they serve.

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MMUA's 2025 award winners

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After the annual awards luncheon, the award winners posed for a picture. From left to right: Sarah Youngs, Mark Nibaur, Scott Thoreson, Ed “Doc” Evans, Vernell Roberts, Easton Dale, Brian Riggelman.

utility crew through a period of momentous change, advocating for innovative technology to enhance daily operations. Under his leadership as superintendent, communication has notably improved, with the implementation of mapping, hazard analysis technologies, safety tailboards, and job briefings that encourage open dialogue and shared safety concerns.

With a background as a lineworker, Dale maintains a strong connection with the crew, prioritizing their safety and spearheading initiatives to reduce risks. Known for his approachable and composed demeanor, Dale effectively guides crews during storm responses, swiftly restoring power. He assumed the superintendent role amid a time of transition in North Saint Paul, and he has confidently navigated challenges posed by new city leadership and an evolving electric department.

Sara Youngs, assistant director at Elk River Municipal Utilities: Youngs is dedicated to providing the best experience for her team, colleagues, and customers. She revamped the ERMU rebate program in collaboration with the communications team and implemented new software to monitor rebates and expenses. In 2024, Youngs helped achieve the first annual kWh savings goal in more than seven years.

Youngs is a strong advocate for mentoring others, helping them to see how their roles can evolve. Her leadership resulted in recognizing the need for a lead customer service rep and improved cross-training for consistent service.

As a lifelong learner, Youngs attends conferences such as MMUA, APPA, and NISC, sharing insights to improve billing, collections, and customer service. Originally the Elk River customer service manager, Youngs was promoted to administrative director in under a year. Her proactive approach helps her identify issues, find solutions, and seek resources, making her vital to Elk River’s success.

Public Service Award

Don Martodam, former commissioner for Hawley Public Utilities, received MMUA’s Public Service Award, given to a local, state, or federally elected or appointed official who has been an ardent supporter of MMUA and its members.

Martodam was a steadfast advocate for public power through more than three decades of service on the Hawley Public Utilities Commission. His long-standing commitment to MMUA and to the advancement of locally owned utilities throughout Minnesota has had a positive impact on the entire utilities industry.

Martodam encouraged participation in MMUA training events and leadership development opportunities. He also served on the MMUA Board of Directors member for many years, acting as board president in 2022–2023. Martodam set the standard for serving with integrity, purpose, and a true belief in the value of hometown utilities.

Community Service Award

Madalyn Sukke, commissioner on the Detroit Lakes Public Utilities Commission: The Community Service Award is given to an individual in recognition of their many years of outstanding service supporting a municipal utility at the local level.

Sukke’s commitment to public power is reflected throughout the Detroit Lakes community. She has served the city for more than 16 years, holding positions on the city council where she has promoted public works, economic development, and public safety. In 2017, Sukke was named council liaison for the Public Utilities Commission, and in 2022, she was named a member of the Commission. Sukke attends legislative rallies in Saint Paul and Washington, DC, advocating for public power. Sukke is a true supporter of Detroit Lakes Public Utilities’ needs.

Distinguished Service Award

Ed “Doc” Evans received the Distinguished Service Award, which honors a leader demon-

strating outstanding service in support of MMUA and its goals. With more than 35 years of service at Anoka Municipal Utilities, Evans currently serves as the utility advisory board president.

A strong advocate for MMUA and public power, Evans is unafraid to raise issues he believes will benefit the Association, its members, and its broader efforts.

Known for his active participation, Evans rarely misses MMUA events, often attending multiple meetings in various locations to stay informed. He has also been a key figure in organizing the association’s Summer Conference bike tours and participates in the Conference hikes.

Honorary Lifetime Membership Award

Two people were honored this year with the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award.

Mark Nibaur was recognized for his extensive career dedicated to advancing municipal utilities both locally and statewide. Since 2010, Nibaur has led Austin Utilities through significant growth, including consolidating multiple sites. Under his leadership, the utility has fostered a caring, curious, and committed culture, earning several industry awards.

Beyond his organizational leadership at AU, Nibaur played an active role in MMUA. He served on the Board from 2018 to 2024, including a term as president during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021. He participates in numerous committees and regularly attends legislative meetings in Minnesota and Washington, DC. Mark also supported the staff leadership transition from Jack Kegel to current CEO Karleen Kos in 2021 and remains a steadfast advocate for MMUA.

Scott Thoreson, retired line crew foreperson at Elk River Municipal Utilities, also received MMUA’s Honorary Lifetime Membership Award, recognizing his long-standing commitment to municipal utilities and the

broader energy industry. The award highlights a career dedicated to improving local utility services and advancing industry standards across the state.

With 32 years of experience as a lineworker and public power advocate, Thoreson has demonstrated leadership, technical skill, and a positive attitude at Elk River Municipal Utilities. He played a key role in supporting the utility’s expansion efforts.

Thoreson has been a consistent supporter of MMUA’s safety and training programs, often volunteering as an instructor for both overhead and underground schools. He has also served as a judge at the organization’s annual lineworker rodeo multiple times.

Known for championing safety, mentoring colleagues, and fostering community engagement, Thoreson has built lasting relationships with public power professionals nationwide through mutual aid efforts.

President’s Award

Vernell Roberts, general manager at Detroit Lakes Public Utilities, received MMUA’s 2025 President’s Award, recognizing exemplary contributions as an

individual, to MMUA, or the industry as a whole. The MMUA Board of Directors President, Scott Grabe, selected the President’s Award recipient.

Roberts has served on multiple boards of directors, including the MMUA Board, with a term as president. He has instructed classes at MMUA conferences and schools, and has been a regular presence in Saint Paul and Washington, DC.

Roberts served as an MMUA safety coordinator and job training and safety instructor. He mentored young lineworkers, helping them learn how to navigate projects, personnel, budgets, and politics. Roberts’ impact on municipal utilities and the individuals serving them is widespread and long-lasting.

These winners truly embody the top qualities of Minnesota’s public power community. Their hard work, dedication, and positive attitude set a glowing example for all industry professionals. While the conference is one occasion to honor them, they consistently perform this work daily to ensure utilities operate at their best.

Congratulations to all the winners.



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Virtual power plants: A new frontier for municipal utilities

By Blaine Chaulklin, MMUA Grant Development and Technical Support Coordinator

As distributed energy resources (DERs) like solar panels, batteries, and smart thermostats become more common, municipal utilities are exploring innovative ways to harness their collective power.

One such innovation is the virtual power plant (VPP)—a transformative model that aggregates these resources into a coordinated network capable of delivering grid services traditionally provided by centralized power plants.

What Is a virtual power plant?

A virtual power plant is a cloud-based network of decentralized energy assets—such as rooftop solar, battery storage, electric vehicles (EVs), and smart appliances—that are aggregated and managed to behave like a single power plant. VPPs use smart controls and two-way communication to monitor, dispatch, and optimize energy production and consumption across participating devices.

Unlike traditional power plants, VPPs don't rely on a single physical location. Instead, they leverage the flexibility and responsiveness of distributed systems to support grid stability, reduce peak demand, and integrate renewable energy more effectively.

Why VPPs matter for municipal utilities and joint action agencies

Municipal utilities face increasing pressure to modernize their infrastructure, improve resilience, and meet clean energy goals. VPPs can help address some of these issues.

- Grid reliability and resilience: VPPs can respond quickly to grid stress, helping prevent outages and stabilize voltage.
- Cost efficiency: By reducing the need for expensive peaking plants and infrastructure upgrades, VPPs offer a more affordable path to reliability.
- Renewable integration: VPPs facilitate the use of solar,

wind, and other renewables by balancing supply and demand in real time.

- Customer engagement: Utilities can incentivize customers to participate in VPPs, creating new revenue streams and fostering community involvement.

Implementation challenges

Despite their promise, VPPs present several challenges for utilities:

- Program design complexity: Effective VPPs require thoughtful planning, including technology integration, customer enrollment, and performance metrics.
- Regulatory hurdles: Outdated policies may limit DER participation or restrict compensation models.
- Cybersecurity and data privacy: VPPs rely on real-time data exchange, raising concerns about device security and user privacy.

- Customer skepticism: Some customers may be hesitant to allow utilities control over their devices or may not understand the benefits of participation.

Customer and industry perspectives

From the customer's point of view, VPPs offer financial incentives and the opportunity to contribute to grid stability. However, concerns include:

- Loss of control: Customers may worry about utilities adjusting thermostats or discharging batteries without consent.
- Device wear and tear: Frequent cycling of batteries or appliances could reduce lifespan.
- Equity and access: Not all customers have access to DERs, potentially excluding lower-income households from VPP benefits.

Industry stakeholders, including aggregators and technology pro-

viders, are working to address these concerns through transparent program design, opt-in participation models, and robust data protections.

Current application

Xcel Energy is proposing a new approach to powering the grid in Minnesota by building a network of solar-powered energy storage hubs. These hubs would be strategically located on the grid and linked with technology to operate in concert with each other, creating a VPP. The proposal aims to replace retiring fossil fuel generation and reflects the evolving economics of clean energy. The VPP would save ratepayers money, improve reliability, accelerate clean energy development, and reduce energy disparities by placing assets in underserved communities.

Another current example of a VPP is in Dakota County, where about 44,000 farm and homeowners have signed up for a program that allows their local electric cooperative to control their air conditioners. By linking together thousands of air conditioning units, the cooperative can reduce electric usage during periods of peak demand, essentially preventing the need to build a traditional fossil fuel-fired power plant.

Minnesota's legislative efforts

In a pivotal meeting of the House Energy Finance and Policy Committee on April 1, 2025, Minnesota lawmakers discussed the potential of VPPs to meet the state's growing electricity demands. The proposed legislation requires investor-owned utilities (IOUs) to source 10 percent of their peak load from VPPs. This target aligns with successful models from other states and aims to enhance the resilience and reliability of Minnesota's energy grid. The discussions highlighted the urgency of adopting VPPs, especially in light of anticipated electricity demand driven by data center developments. While some utilities expressed concerns about the potential cost impacts of VPPs on ratepayers, proponents argued that VPPs could ultimately provide lower-cost energy compared to large-scale utility projects.

Moving forward

For Minnesota's utilities, the path to VPP adoption involves:

1. Assessing local DER potential: Utilities will need to take steps to understand what resources exist within their service areas.

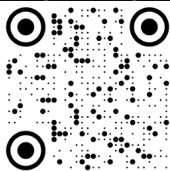
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Preparing for the 2026 legislative session

In the September issue of *The Resource*, it was forecast that a second special session of the Minnesota Legislature in 2025 appeared highly unlikely.

The State's budget for the next fiscal biennium was balanced and passed during the First Special Session. Concerns regarding a drastic reduction in federal aid dollars, especially for healthcare, have been put off until 2027. Then the unspeakable heartbreak of the August 27 shooting at Annunciation Catholic School occurred, and talk of a second special session quickly shifted from if one would be called to when it would be called.

In the aftermath, Governor Walz expressly stated that he intended to call the legislature back after he had had a chance to talk to at least some of the members. As of this writing, the Governor has not yet set a date, and despite his desire to act quickly, the reality is that the politics surrounding the issues—gun control, school safety, and public safety—make it difficult to predict when or if a special session will actually be scheduled. Meanwhile, possible changes in control of both the House and the Senate as the result of pending special elections to fill open seats add to the complexity of calling a second special session to respond to the tragedy.

By the time this issue is being read, the outcome of the special election for District 34B will be known. This is the election to fill the vacancy in the House created by the assassination of Rep. Melissa Hortman. Should the DFL hold the seat, the House would be tied again at 67–67. But should the Republicans flip

the seat, they would gain a 68–66 majority. That would be enough votes to pass bills out of the chamber on a pure party-line basis, something that is bound to be a factor in both scheduling a special session and what changes to State laws could garner the votes to be passed.

On the Senate side, two vacancies are set to be filled on November 4. Until then, the DFL holds a 33–32 majority. One of the vacant seats is considered a safe hold for the Republicans, which would create a 33–33 tie, putting control of the Senate squarely in the outcome of the third special election, which will be in a district that leans DFL but for which a flip is not out of the question. Should the DFL win the seat, it would give them a 34–33 majority, the same as they had at the end of the 2025 regular session. But if the Republicans win the seat, control of the Senate will flip to a 34–33 Republican majority.

If the House has also gone Republican by then, the DFL Trifecta will be a distant memory, and Governor Walz will be dealing with a Republican legislature, which would dynamically change the tones of negotiations related to the issue at hand and whether a special session would prove productive. Going a step further, the DFL candidate for the Senate seat that could swing is currently a House member. That means if she wins, another vacancy will be created, and another special election will be needed. That leaves the ultimate makeup of the House unknown for the 2026 session.

In any event, if a special session occurs between now and the regular session, it will be focused

on the intertwined issues of gun control, school safety, and public safety. While MMUA will closely watch the special elections, the Association is unlikely to have a role in any special session convened for the issues currently at hand.

We will, however, be actively preparing for the next regular legislative session, which is slated to begin February 17, 2026. This starting date could, but is unlikely to, be changed if a new concurrent resolution is adopted during a special session. The chance of a new starting date increases slightly if, after the special elections, the Republicans gain control of both chambers and the change in control occurs before or during a special session.

Pursuant to MMUA policy, the Government Relations (GR) team is reviewing past years' legislative priorities in order to make recommendations on

whether or not they should continue to be priorities. We are also soliciting input from members for ideas on additional priorities for 2026. If your utility has an issue that could potentially be better addressed with different statutory or regulatory provisions, please let Kent Sulem (ksulem@mmua.org) or Bill Black (bblack@mmua.org) know as soon as possible.

The GR team will be meeting with the Joint Power Agencies in October and is hoping to meet with League of Minnesota Cities lobbyists, as well as lobbyists for the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities, to identify areas of common concern. Meetings with State agencies and other groups with energy/utility interests are also likely as part of our planning practices.

At least one meeting of the MMUA Government Relations Advisory Group (GRAG) will be held in November before the GR

staff compiles the final list of legislative recommendations for the MMUA Board of Directors to consider. Board members will be asked to give a weighted score to each proposal by the December Board meeting, at which the issues will be voted on to determine if they will move forward as a legislative priority for 2026. The issues adopted by the Board as MMUA's legislative priorities for 2026 will be published in February issue of *The Resource*.

Looking ahead, save the dates of March 24–25, 2026, for the MMUA Legislative Conference. This will be a critical opportunity to talk to legislators about municipal utilities and our legislative priorities. The 2026 Legislative Conference will be held at the Drury Inn in downtown St. Paul. Registration will open early in 2026.



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Insights from research

Continued from page 3

tell their story well. If you don't, your most disgruntled customers and most avaricious competitors will tell it for you. If that happens, I'm betting you won't like the plotline.

Question: Do you have a strategy, an action plan, and a budget to help your ratepayers understand your utility's story and how the decisions you make are in their best interest?

A bargain at any price. I always get a kick out of reading reports and data like the ones I've relied on for the content of this article. Sometimes they provoke my thinking in new ways, and some-

times they lead to thoughts like, "Well duh, Captain Obvious, ... anybody could have told you *that* without a fancy study."

I share the above not so much because I think you didn't know a lot about it already, but because it's good to be reminded. It's good to have something to point to when you meet with your commission and staff to make plans, focusing your energies on how you will deliver value for your ratepayers in these changing times. I hope it is helpful to you in communicating to your stakeholders that their local utility is a better deal than the Ho Hos at the day-old bread store—it's a bargain at any price.

Connecticut fights for water control

A coalition of 26 municipal leaders across Connecticut has formally united to oppose the proposed \$2.4 billion sale of Aquarion Water Company by Eversource Energy to the Regional Water Authority (RWA) via a newly created nonprofit entity called the Aquarion Water Authority (AWA).

The proposed sale would transfer Connecticut's largest water utility, serving more than 722,000 people in 62 municipalities, from investor-owned Eversource to the AWA, a quasi-public nonprofit entity created specifically for the acquisition.

Connecticut municipal leaders have expressed strong opposition to this sale, arguing that it could lead to higher water rates, eliminate independent oversight, and transfer control of local water systems to a politically unaccountable body.

Aquarion Water Company is currently investor-owned by Eversource Energy and regulated by the Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA). Selling to the RWA via the AWA would take away the governance of PURA, causing the concerns the municipal leaders are having.

The leaders are not opposing



publicly owned water systems, but they are fighting for regulation within the ownership of Eversource. Without the oversight of PURA, these municipal leaders believe costs would rise significantly and would give disproportionate control to the RWA.

Leaving behind oversight

In a letter to PURA, the municipal coalition urges the regulatory agency to reject the proposed sale and "uphold its responsibility to protect the interests of Connecticut consumers."

The coalition argues that current RWA customers pay 30 percent more for water than Aquarian customers. They also project that rates could increase by 65 percent over the next decade to keep up with costs if the acquisition happens.

In a recent testimony before PURA, Senator Tony Hwang publicly opposed the sale. "A transaction involving a critical public resource like water must be guided by transparency, public accountability, and environmental responsibility, not rushed through a closed-door legislative process," says Senator Hwang.

Senator Hwang also defended municipal revenues, highlighting that the sale could greatly undermine funding for education, emergency services, and infrastructure in towns across Connecticut.

PURA has until October 2025 to determine whether the transaction serves the public interest.

Why should Minnesota care?

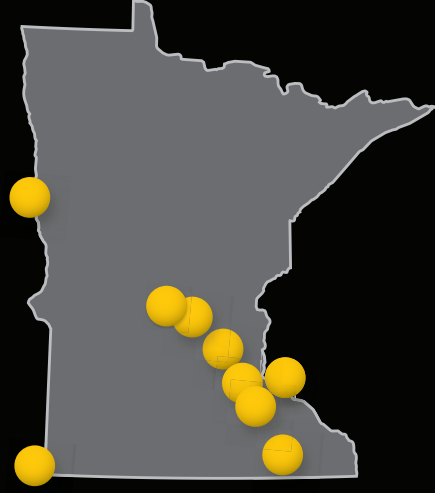
Like Connecticut, Minnesota is facing a similar debate over the \$6.2 billion sale of ALLETE's Minnesota Power to BlackRock and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board. Critics argue that this sale could lead to issues such as rate hikes, decreased transparency, and conflicts of interest.

Connecticut opponents emphasize the dangers of handing over public water systems to entities with limited oversight. Minnesota's case with the proposed Minnesota Power sale demonstrates that even regulated utilities can encounter issues with transparency and affordability when private equity enters the scene. Drury Inn in downtown St. Paul. Registration will open early in 2026.



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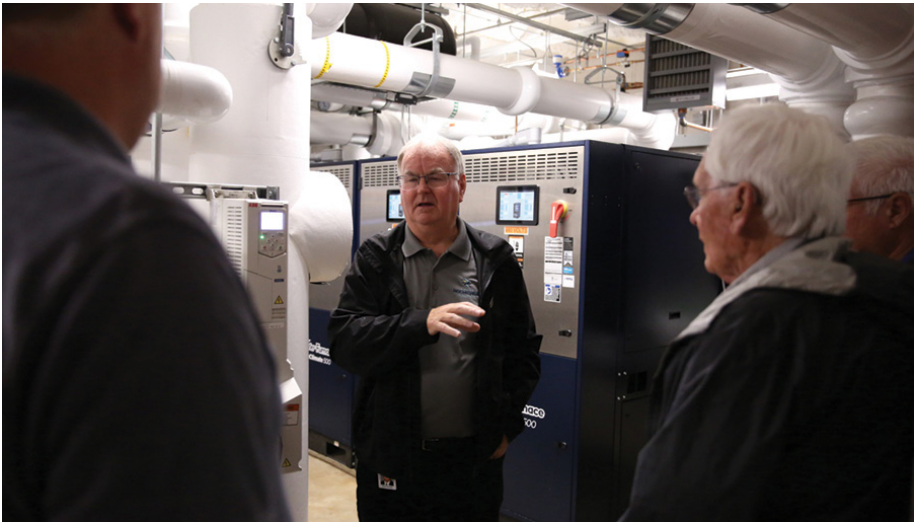
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2025 Summer Conference



The week's events at the 2025 Summer Conference began with a meeting of the MMUA Board of Directors on Sunday evening, August 17. Business on the agenda included the annual update of organizational policies, approval of the updated strategic plan and operating priorities for 2026, and approval of the recommendation on dues for member consideration at the annual meeting,



Scot Ramsey, Manager of Facility and Properties for the City of Rochester, gives a tour of Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) during a pre-conference activity Monday morning. The attendees visited the Rochester Government Center, the utilities facility, and RPU's West Side Energy Station.



The RPU Tour group poses for a picture at the Rochester Public Utilities building. They included (left to right): Jake Shones—Regional Energy Advisor RPU, Victor Hoerst—Onsite Partners, Del Van Cura—Anoka, Bruce DeBlieck—Willmar, Doc Evans—Anoka, Harold Langowski—Ely, and Scott Nickels, RPU Director of Power Delivery.



Some MMUA members started their week on Monday afternoon at the Willow Creek Golf Course in Rochester, playing a friendly best ball tournament for prizes and bragging rights. The golfers braved the rain toward the end of the 18 holes but got in some good, friendly competition and exercise on Monday afternoon.



The calm before the storm. Willow Creek Golf Course saw 24 teams of MMUA members playing for the Dave Berg-sponsored prizes while networking and enjoying a late summer day.



Opening keynote speaker Dr. Mark DeVolder engages his audience with a one-hour talk on confidently and enthusiastically navigating change. He provided a framework for understanding potential changes, and a plan for navigating each stage, then described the skills and mindset necessary to boldly move through disruptive change to achieve goals.



During the Tuesday morning networking sessions, human resources (HR) professionals came together to talk about shared experiences and concerns in their workplaces. For the first time at the Summer Conference, a focus on HR and administrative professionals saw learning tracks, roundtable discussions, and plenary sessions available to this new group of attendees.



Roundtable sessions offered valuable networking time between attendees and MMUA staff members.

2025 Summer Conference



Scott Grabe (right) transfers the gavel to Pete Mouton (left) at the end of the annual awards ceremony, signifying the change in the MMUA Board's presidency, which took effect at the end of the conference.



Ted Cash, the general manager at ALP Utilities, discusses planning and executing capital projects with Tom Wacholz and Pat Connolly from ORB Management. They used ALP's new building as a case study to give the audience a practical example of their topic.



A session entitled Leadership at the intersection of operations and the utility customer included input from panelists including (left to right) Tim McCollough from Rochester Public Utilities, Sylvia Davis from the City of Topeka, Luke Peterson from Hibbing Public Utilities, and Mike Smith from Utility 2030.



Cody Faulk from Spencer Fane discussed the new tariffs impacting the industry and their implications for the future of utilities.



Genevieve Frazier from Maguire Agency and Evon Spangler from Spangler and de Stefano discussed and answered questions about Minnesota's Paid Family Leave Act. Theirs was one of the new HR sessions added to the conference this year.



Members talked with more than 60 utility vendors during a two-hour trade show packed with exciting conversations and a buzzing conference hall.



At the 2025 annual meeting Wednesday morning, members voted on a change to the bylaws, an updated dues structure, and selected MMUA's Board. The 2025-26 directors include (front, left to right) Jeremy Carter—Hutchinson, Bruce DeBlicke—Willmar, Cassie Heide—Fosston, Mark Hanson—Elk River, Pete Moulton—Saint Peter, Jay Lutz—Austin. In the back (left to right) are Roger Warehime—Owatonna, Keith Butcher—Princeton, Greg Drent—Shakopee, Kevin Lee—Marshall, Harold Langowski—Ely, and Tim Stoner—Blue Earth.



Closing keynote speaker Lisa Ryan spoke to the membership about the rapid technological and environmental shifts in the utility sector. She emphasized the importance of engaging and retaining top talent. The session offered actionable strategies to foster a workplace where employees feel valued and empowered to succeed.

FERC approves NextEra waiver needed to restart Duane Arnold nuclear plant

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approved a waiver request allowing NextEra Energy to restart the Duane Arnold Energy Center nuclear power plant in Iowa by the end of 2029.

The plant was shut down in 2020 by NextEra due to challenging economic conditions. NextEra expects to link the nuclear plant to solar farms using its interconnection.

After the initial shutdown, NextEra planned to divide the grid connection into four solar projects. To date, only one of these projects has been completed. With FERC waiving the grid connection process rules, NextEra plans to reuse and combine the remaining solar agreements with a nearby grid connection to reactivate the nuclear plant.

The commission ruled NextEra Energy is free to combine interconnection service and modify a point of interconnection, bringing the company closer to reopening the nuclear plant by the end of 2029. This will restore Duane Arnold to its historical peak winter net capacity range of 600–619 megawatts (MW).

The delayed start date of December 31, 2029, was accepted provided NextEra Energy would accommodate “unexpected delays resulting from challenges driven by the complexity of a



project of this nature, including parallel supply chain activities, physical site work, and regulatory processes that will be required to return the plant to power operations.”

NextEra and the Midcontinent Independent Service Operator (MISO) also agreed that a change to a point of interconnection would not have material adverse impacts on the grid or other MISO customers.

Numerous Minnesota utilities participating in MISO will benefit from the grid reliability boost this restart would provide. Nuclear power is also a carbon-free energy

source, aiding Minnesota in meeting its goal to be carbon-free by 2040.

FERC stated that NextEra “acted in good faith in investing significant capital and securing interconnection rights in order to pursue a consolidated [generator interconnection agreement] necessary to recommission Duane Arnold.” NextEra indicated it could spend between \$50 and \$100 million in 2025 to restart the plant within three to four years.

Pamela Mackey Taylor, director of the Iowa Chapter of the Sierra

Continued on page 20

Electric ambition on shaky ground: US EV production and sales in 2025

The United States finds itself at a crossroads in its electric-vehicle (EV) transition. Production ramps up, consumers charge forward, but policy changes and patchy infrastructure threaten the EV momentum.

Sales surge before the sunset

EV sales climbed sharply in mid-2025. In August, EVs accounted for a record 12.8 percent of US auto sales as buyers rushed to claim the \$7,500 federal tax credit that expires September 30, sparking a final sprint before incentives evaporate. Automakers sweetened deals with discounts averaging \$6,700 and even offered free home charging units.

Yet analysts warn of a looming “payback effect.” The EV sales surge may front-load demand, potentially triggering a steep drop in sales once the credits disappear.

Mixed sales signals

In early 2025, EV performance varied. The Alliance for Automotive Innovation reports that EVs represented 9.6 percent of new light-duty vehicle sales in Q1, a slight decline from 10.9 percent in Q4 2024, though total volume rose 9 percent year-over-year to roughly 375,000 registrations.

Cox Automotive tallied 128,000 EVs sold in Q1, down 26 percent from its spring 2023 peak. In Q2, the US moved 310,839 new EVs, up 4.9 percent from Q1, but down 6.3 percent year-over-year. Still, the first half of 2025 saw a cumulative record of 607,089 EV sales, growing 1.5 percent over the previous year.

Market shift winners and losers

Tesla lost ground, with US sales down approximately 9 percent in Q1 and close to 12 percent in Q2. Meanwhile, General Motors doubled its EV volume from 2024 and claimed 12.9 percent of the U.S. EV market in the first half of 2025, becoming the number two player behind Tesla.

Legacy brands such as Chevrolet, VW, Toyota, Honda, and Porsche gained momentum, posting significant year-over-year growth. Porsche EV sales soared by 250 percent, although from a modest baseline.

GM’s Chevrolet Equinox EV became its top-selling EV in early 2025, with 17,420 US units sold in Q2, marking impressive performance in the mainstream compact crossover market.

Continued on page 13



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Electric ambition on shaky ground

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How resilient are automakers?

Policy changes are likely undermining consumer and auto maker confidence. The government scrapped EV tax credits, ZEV credits, and eased fuel economy penalties, moves analysts expect could shave EV market share to as low as 8.5 percent in 2025 and further depress demand in 2026.

A *Washington Post* analysis warns such shifts may slash EV sales by 40 percent by 2030, derail factory investments, and reverse climate-related gains.

Still, several automakers are holding firm. Ford doubled down, unveiling a new, affordable EV platform and targeting a \$30,000 electric pickup by 2027. GM's CEO Mary Barra reaffirmed that company's commitment to electrification, while scaling some internal-combustion production to manage market variability.

The cautious outlook

The US EV market entered 2025 with energy and uneven momentum. Consumers surged to claim credits; automakers rolled out ambitious new models;



production scaled; yet infrastructure, policy stability, and price sensitivity remain formidable limitations.

As the EV tax credit disappears, the industry faces a crucial test. Sales may spike in Q3 of 2025 and then stall. Major manufacturers such as GM and Ford could capitalize on affordability and volume play, but others may falter.

The US teeters between a breakthrough era and a plateau. Whether the electric vehicle revolution is sustainable hinges on government policy, broad infrastructure, and the auto industry's ability to deliver compelling, accessible, affordable vehicles across market segments.

Russia and China forge landmark energy alliance as Power of Siberia 2 pipeline gains traction

In a strategic pivot that threatens to reshape global energy dynamics, Russia and China signed a legally binding memorandum to construct the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline and boost gas shipments via existing routes.

Gazprom and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) finalized the accord during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Beijing, securing a diplomatic win for Moscow as Europe's gas market shrinks. The deal also highlights Beijing's expanding leverage in energy negotiations.

Shifting pipelines

Gazprom CEO Alexei Miller confirmed the existing Power of Siberia pipeline will see a supply increase of between 38 and 44 billion cubic meters annually, as shipments via the Far Eastern route are expected to grow from 10 to 12 billion cubic meters per year. The new memorandum commits both parties to a 30-year project delivering up to 50 billion cubic meters annually via Mongolia. However, commercial terms—including pricing, con-

struction financing, and timeline—remain unresolved.

Strengthening position versus the US and the Middle East

China stands to gain a reliable alternative to US liquefied natural gas (LNG) and Middle East supply routes. Analysts from Columbia University and S&P Global note instability in the Middle East and rising tariffs on US LNG make Russian pipeline gas more appealing to Beijing. Anne-Sophie Corbeau, a Columbia gas analyst, believes China can forego US LNG in favor of this long-term arrangement.

Who wins in the deal?

Strategically, the deal strengthens the so-called "no limits" partnership between the two countries. Chinese officials secured a long-term gas supply without public pressure from Western powers, while Russia gains a substantial energy outlet to cushion losses from sanctions-triggered European decline. Pundits caution China likely retained the upper hand in negotiations, as the open-ended core terms reflect China's

ability to influence final project conditions.

Experts note this memorandum marks a crucial milestone but not the final word. Gazprom must still negotiate final pricing, investment details, and construction phases to secure its future. Until then, China retains significant leverage.

A global energy shift

This development signals a pivotal shift in global energy politics. Russia's retreat from European markets opens space for China, reinforcing the growing Eurasian energy axis. As the deal evolves, competition among energy exporters will likely intensify, and the long-term consequences for US LNG projects, European energy markets, and global supply chains will unfold.

The bottom line

Russia and China crafted a landmark energy pact. Now, they face the challenging work of turning a memorandum into a multi-decade pipeline—and in doing so, they could potentially reshape the architecture of global energy diplomacy.



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As General Counsel to MMUA, Kaela advises multiple municipal utilities and government entities in key areas:

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Virtual power plants

Continued from page 7

2. Engaging stakeholders: Utilities will need to collaborate with customers, regulators, and technology providers to develop a model structure that is appropriate for their area.
3. Piloting programs: Utilities will need to start small to test the technology and customer response.
4. Advocating for policy reform: Utilities, associations, and advocates will need to work with state agencies to modernize regulations and support VPP growth.

Virtual power plants represent a powerful tool for municipal utilities to enhance grid performance, reduce costs, and empower communities. By embracing the possibilities in this model as part of an "all of the above approach," MMUA members can lead the way in building a cleaner, more resilient energy future.

Sunshine surge: US solar experiencing unprecedented growth

The US solar sector faces a year of heavy upward momentum as it powers past records and into a promising horizon.

The Energy Information Administration (EIA) projects solar energy will account for nearly half of all new electricity generation capacity added in 2025, as developers plan to deploy roughly 33 gigawatts (GW) of large-scale solar projects, a record high for the industry.

The growth shows no signs of slowing. Analysts at SEIA and Wood Mackenzie estimate the US solar industry will sustain an average of 43 GW of new additions annually through 2030.

Those projections align with federal forecasts: EIA's Short-Term Energy Outlook predicts utilities and independent power producers will add 26 GW of solar capacity in 2025 and 22 GW in 2026.

Tesla-scale demand from data centers, artificial intelligence, electrified manufacturing, and homes drives much of this expansion. City planners and economists alike view solar as the fastest deployable clean energy source capable of meeting surge needs.

Everything is bigger in Texas

Texas continues to dominate solar deployment. It claimed about 27 percent of this year's additions, approximately 3.2 GW in the first half of 2025, and plans another 9.7 GW for the remainder of the year. Projections forecast Texas will install 11.6 GW of utility-scale solar in 2025, nearly four times the amount expected in California.

Capacity is still soaring

Cumulatively, solar installations are set to climb from 153 GW to 182 GW of utility-scale capacity between the end of 2025 and the end of 2026, doubling the total from 2023's 91 GW. Solar generation itself rose 28 percent year-over-year, reaching 321,830 gigawatt hours (GWh) for the 12 months ending March 2025, compared with 250,539 GWh in the prior 12-month span.

Electric power generation from solar (both utility-scale and small-scale) totaled 303 terawatt hours in 2024, contributing to a 239 GW installed photovoltaic capacity by year's end.

The road ahead is steady but challenging

Even amid bullish forecasts, analysts anticipate modest softening. Wood Mackenzie estimates the industry will compress at about two percent annually between 2025 and 2030 for new installations, although the industry will still average 43 GW of additional projects per year.

This cautious outlook reflects volatility in policy, particularly the proposed reduction of clean energy tax credits, potentially

creating a chilling effect on investor appetite.

The impact on jobs

Beyond capacity, the solar business shapes the labor market and the broader economy. The sector supported 279,447 jobs as of December 2023, an annual rise of 5.9 percent, and created 15,564 new roles compared to the prior year.

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) was a central driver in that growth. Within its first year, the IRA triggered \$20 billion in new solar manufacturing and spurred incentives for 155 GW of generating capacity, quadrupling US solar manufacturing capacity to 31 GW by late 2024.

Industry leaders debate whether solar offers the fastest and most

scalable solution to meet the fast-rising demand (for example, from data centers) compared with slower-to-build sources like nuclear or natural gas.

Conclusion

The US solar industry charts a sharply ascending arc, from record-breaking installations this year to sustained expansion

through 2030. States such as Texas power that growth, while strong policy support girds manufacturing and installation capacity.

Still, the industry navigates a delicate future. Tax-policy shifts, supply-chain disruptions, and slower cost declines could decelerate momentum. Yet for now, the sun shines brightly on America's solar future.



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Peak Energy strikes gold with a cool, revolutionary battery

Peak Energy is disrupting the energy storage market today by shipping the first grid-scale sodium-ion battery system to the US electric grid. This landmark deployment in Colorado marks a turning point in battery technology, rejecting complex cooling systems in favor of a groundbreaking, fully passive design.

The system's impressive specs

The system reaches 3.5 megawatt-hours (MWh) and operates without any fans, pumps, or vents, making it both the largest sodium-ion phosphate-pyrophosphate (NFPP) system worldwide and the first fully passive megawatt-hour-scale battery deployed on US soil.

Peak Energy promotes the design as a simpler, safer alternative to lithium-ion batteries. Eliminating moving parts removes more than 85 percent of historical failure modes, according to the company.

Significant savings

Independent tests confirm the passive system delivers remarkable returns. Peak touts a 90 percent reduction in auxiliary power use, translating to at least \$1 million in annual operational cost savings per gigawatt-hour deployed. The system also outperforms lithium-iron-phosphate systems with a 20 percent

reduction in lifetime costs and 33 percent less battery degradation over 20 years.

The global implications

Beyond economics, Peak emphasizes national security. Sodium, unlike lithium, derives from widely available soda ash. The US controls the world's largest reserves of this mineral, permitting an energy storage supply chain that can be sourced domestically or from allied nations.

Landon Mossburg, Peak's co-founder and CEO, says the system is urgently needed: "We see energy storage not only as an economic imperative, but also as a national security priority," he says.

Paul Durkee, Peak's vice president of engineering, calls the technology "dead-simple with no moving parts, no planned maintenance and negligible auxiliary loads." He calls it "the lowest total-cost grid storage technology to be deployed anywhere in the world."

Peak is deploying this pioneering system as part of a shared pilot program with nine utilities and independent power producers (IPPs) this summer. The company expects to secure nearly one gigawatt-hour of additional commercial contracts and implement several hundred



more MWh in the next two years.

To support its plans, Peak backs the development of its first US cell factory, slated for start-up in 2026. The firm posted a \$55 million Series A funding round in 2024, as it emerged from stealth mode in 2023.

Future implications and outlook

Peak's advance signals a new era for grid storage. By shedding complex thermal controls, the company's new system enhances safety, reliability, and cost efficiency—a rare trifecta demanding industry-wide attention.

Analysts point to sodium-ion

batteries' strategic promise. The US's vast soda-ash reserves, potentially undercut reliance on China-sourced lithium supply chains.

Globally, sodium-ion systems still lag behind lithium in energy density, especially for mobile applications. Yet they excel in large, stationary roles, such as peak shaving and frequency regulation, where safety and cost matter more than size considerations.

The race toward energy independence

Peak's US launch follows

early sodium-ion deployments overseas. In August 2023, China commissioned a 5 MW/10 MWh grid battery using sodium-ion technology.

Peak Energy's sodium-ion system mirrors China's launch, and then ups the ante with a home-grown, fire-resilient, and scalable system. As the US refocuses on energy independence, this milestone could prove pivotal.

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Microgrids: opportunities and considerations for municipal utilities

As communities seek innovative solutions for energy reliability and sustainability, the Minnesota Department of Commerce is preparing to launch a grant program focused on microgrids.

This initiative aims to empower municipal utilities to explore and implement microgrid technologies, positioning them at the forefront of resilient and flexible energy systems. With this new funding opportunity on the horizon, municipal leaders have a unique chance to harness the benefits of microgrids and proactively shape the future of local energy infrastructure.

What Is a microgrid?

A microgrid is a localized energy system capable of operating independently or in conjunction with the main electrical grid. It typically includes distributed energy resources (DERs) such as solar panels, battery storage, and sometimes fossil fuel generators. Microgrids can “island” themselves from the main grid during outages, allowing continued power supply to critical infrastructure. Microgrids are designed to serve a defined area—ranging from a single building to an entire community—and are increasingly powered by renewable energy sources. Their ability to maintain operations during grid failures makes them especially valuable in disaster-prone regions or for facilities with high-reliability needs like hospitals, fire departments, and emergency shelters.

Why microgrids matter for municipal utilities

Municipal utilities are uniquely positioned to benefit from and lead microgrid development. Key advantages include:

- Grid resilience: Microgrids enhance reliability by allowing critical services to remain operational during outages.
- Renewable integration: They support local clean energy goals by incorporating solar, wind, and battery storage.
- Economic development: Reliable power can attract businesses and support community growth.
- Operational flexibility: Utilities can use microgrids to manage peak loads, restart generators, and maintain communications during emergencies.

However, implementing microgrids also presents challenges:

- Infrastructure cost recovery: As customers generate their own power, utilities may struggle to recover fixed infrastructure costs, potentially shifting the burden to non-participating ratepayers.

- Regulatory complexity: State and federal regulations determine who can build and operate multi-customer microgrids, affecting utility control and planning.
- Integration and maintenance: Technical hurdles in integrating microgrids with existing systems require expertise and resources.

Customer and industry perspectives

As microgrid technology becomes more accessible, some customers and third-party providers are exploring independent implementations. While this can foster innovation, it also raises concerns:

- Fragmentation and compatibility: Proprietary systems may not integrate well with utility infrastructure, complicating grid management.
- Regulatory barriers: Outdated policies often favor centralized systems, making it difficult for microgrids to gain traction or receive fair compensation.
- Cybersecurity and reliability: New technologies introduce risks that require robust security and oversight.
- Equity and access: Without careful planning, microgrid benefits may be unevenly distributed, leaving vulnerable populations behind.

Current application

Minnesota has become a significant player in the microgrid industry due to the longstanding presence of major multinational companies like Honeywell,

Siemens, IBM, Eaton, and Johnson Controls. These companies, along with specialized firms like Open Access Technology International (OATI) and Syncris, have contributed to the state’s expertise and manufacturing capabilities in microgrid technology. OATI, based in Bloomington, is a leader in microgrid development, providing software solutions that help manage distributed energy resources and ensure grid reliability. The University of Minnesota is also involved in research to harden the US power grid and local microgrids against cyber threats. In addition, The Center for Microgrid Research at the University of St. Thomas is a nationally recognized hub for advanced microgrid development. It is the only institution in North America offering hands-on training for students and professionals in microgrid technologies.

Minnesota Department of Commerce grants

The Minnesota Department of Commerce is soon to roll out a grant to facilitate the development of microgrids in the state. This initiative aims to support the growth of microgrid technology and enhance the state’s energy resilience and sustainability.

Moving forward

For municipal utilities, engaging in the microgrid conversation is essential. Whether a community is developing its own systems or coordinating with third-party providers, utilities must:

- Work with MMUA to advocate for supportive policies and fair cost-recovery mechanisms.

- Educate customers about the benefits and limitations of microgrids.
- Invest in technical capacity to manage integration and reliability.
- Explore partnerships that align with community goals and utility capabilities.

Microgrids represent a transformative opportunity for municipal utilities to lead in energy resilience and sustainability. By understanding the landscape and proactively addressing challenges, MMUA members can help shape a future where local energy solutions serve the public good.



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In **Newport**, the Ramsey-Washington Recycling and Energy Center is launching a \$100 million project to transform food waste into renewable energy using anaerobic digestion. Dem-Con Companies in Shakopee is collaborating with the recycling facility to manage this initiative. The project aims to cut emissions by 30,000 tons of CO₂ each year. The Center processes hundreds of thousands of tons of waste annually, with food waste making up 24 percent of it. Located in Newport southeast of St. Paul, the plant broke ground earlier this fall and is scheduled to open in 2028. Center Point Energy is planning to buy the renewable natural gas created by this new plant.

A mechanical problem nearly drained **Alice Lake in William O'Brien State Park** of all its water. The summer rains caused the lake to overflow into the nearby St. Croix River, prompt-

ing officials to open a valve to release excess water. However, a fault in the water control structure valve caused it to stay open, making it impossible to stop the flow. Despite efforts by volunteers, the result was a fish kill, with dead fish, dried plants, and an exposed lakebed as water continued to flow out of the lake. Officials stated that once the valve is repaired, water levels should return to normal naturally, but there is currently no timeline in place and beaches on the lake are closed. Alice Lake, north of Stillwater, is known for its diverse fish population, including bluegills, largemouth bass, northern pikes, and walleyes, according to the DNR.

The University of Minnesota reports survey findings indicating that a vast majority of Minnesotans are worried about the water quality of the state's lakes and rivers. The data highlights ongoing scientific



efforts to combat threats to clean water. According to the survey, 97 percent of respondents value lake life and Minnesota rivers as vital to their quality of life, with 93 percent expressing concern about water pollution. For many Minnesotans, water is a key part of the state's identity. U of M researchers were encouraged by these results, motivating further research and activism. However, nearly one-quarter of the state's lakes fail to meet water quality standards due to pollution from

agricultural runoff or chloride from road salt.

In **Meeker County**, a Massachusetts-based company has plans to build a large anaerobic digestion facility. The Meeker County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the permit for Vanguard Renewables to construct the facility on approximately 22 acres leased from Wagner Family Dairy. The digester will produce renewable natural gas that will be injected into a CenterPoint natural gas line. It will process up to 115,000 tons of manure and organic food waste annually to generate enough natural gas to heat 1,600 homes.

Spearment Energy's plan for one of its two battery storage projects has received approval. The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission authorized a 150 MW/600 MWh storage facility designed to store solar and wind

energy for peak demand periods. Named Snowshoe BESS, Spearment estimates this project will cost approximately \$214 million and will be located on 27.2 acres of rural land in **Olmstead County**. This marks Minnesota's first approved stand-alone battery storage project, which will serve wholesale customers, including utilities and cooperatives that need additional energy and capacity. Next steps involve obtaining an interconnection agreement from the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), expected in 2026, with the project anticipated to be operational by 2027.



The City of **Buffalo** is considering establishing a Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to oversee its electric, water, and sewer services. In August, the Buffalo City Council tentatively approved a plan to create a five-member PUC. The community has the chance to provide public input, ask questions, and participate in discussions before any official decisions are made. The city states that a PUC can focus on utility operations, regulatory compliance, and long-term capital planning, while the City Council will address broader city strategies and more common city issues such as public safety (police, fire), streets, parks and recreation, and planning. Currently, the public utility is governed by the city council.

As tensions grow around the proposed **ALLETE Minnesota Power sale**, Minnesota Senator Jen McEwen (DFL), District 8, spoke at a rally opposing the sale. There were many speakers at the rally, all of whom raised concerns about BlackRock subsidiary Global Infrastructure Partners' interests aligning with the needs of the community. "It is not always going to be in the financial best interest of BlackRock to keep our rates as low as possible, to serve our community the electricity that we need," said Sen. McEwen. "That's not the business that they're in. They're in the business of making profit from as many things as possible." Minnesota Power is assuring that the sale is what's best for their customers, community, and employees. The Minnesota Department of Commerce has voiced support for this sale, but it still awaits approval from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.

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In **Tucson, Arizona**, the city is strongly considering a transition to public power after a recent announcement from Tucson Electric Power (TEP) that it would be increasing rates by 14 percent. The proposal is gaining attention from city leaders, but TEP is against such a change. The utility is facing scrutiny on slow-moving negotiations for a new franchise agreement. City council members are open to the transition to public power, stating that the current situation is not financially sustainable for the residents. A TEP spokesperson said that Tucsonians would reject a public utility despite a city-commissioned draft study finding that a Tucson-run utility is feasible.



The **Energy Information Administration** reported that US power consumption will hit record highs in 2025 and 2026. Power demand will rise to 186 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) in 2025 and 4,284 billion kWh in 2026, up from a record 4,097 billion kWh in 2024. These data centers are dedicated to artificial intelligence and cryptocurrency, as homes and businesses use more electricity and less fossil fuel for heat and transportation. The forecast from the EIA also included gas sales, projecting natural gas sales to increase for residential, commercial, and industrial sectors, reaching 13.1 billion cubic feet per day (bcfd), 9.7 bcfd, and 23.5 bcfd respectively. These figures are close to or slightly below historical highs, with residential use peaking at 14.3 bcfd in 1996, commercial at 9.6 bcfd in 2019, and industrial at 23.8 bcfd in 1973. However, gas consumption for power generation is expected to decline to 35.8 bcfd, down from its all-time high of 36.9 bcfd in 2024. This shift reflects changing energy dynamics from the boon of AI-driven data centers.

To align with the current administration's goals, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) intends to **delay compliance deadlines for owners of coal-fired power plants** affected by zero-discharge wastewater standards. The case centers on updates to effluent limitation guidelines the EPA issued in April of 2024. Power-plant owners must meet the new requirements by December 31, 2029, and file notice of intent to retire plants

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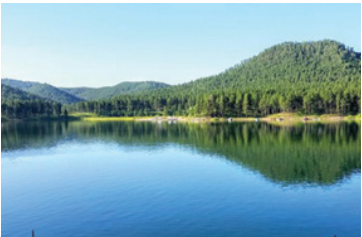


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that cannot meet the new standards by the end of this year. The agency is also considering revising the technology basis for certain discharge limits, particularly for unmanaged leachate from coal ash landfills and impoundments. Critics, including environmental groups represented by Earthjustice, argue that weakening these protections could harm public health and degrade waterways.



Water levels in Pactola Reservoir, a crucial drinking water source for **Rapid City, South Dakota**, dropped so low in spring that the city had to impose water-use restrictions earlier than usual, and the state delayed installing public boat docks. The shortage resulted from the ongoing drought and decreased inflow from nearby sources. In response, support is growing for a proposed \$2 billion pipeline project to move water from the Missouri River to western South Dakota. The idea gained traction after a 2019 study showed that the region could not meet water demand during droughts and might struggle even in average rainfall years. The Western Dakota Regional Water System (WDRWS), established in 2021, is leading the effort, with backing from state and federal funds. The proposed pipeline would stretch 161 miles and serve 47 municipalities and water systems. Although the project could take decades to finish, supporters say it is vital to secure a reliable water supply for the region's future. The project is based on a similar system in eastern South Dakota that supports water systems in South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa.

Iowa remains committed to renewables despite the scaling back of federal energy tax credits. US Energy Secretary Chris Wright told an Iowa audience in August that it's time to phase out tax credits that have positioned Iowa as a wind energy leader, generating about 60 percent of its electricity from wind turbines, the largest share nationally. The Big Beautiful Bill Act set strict deadlines for renewable projects to qualify for this support before they expire. Despite this change, utilities in Iowa, like Alliant and MidAmerican still propose major renewable initiatives. They will need to move fast to meet the new deadlines. The state affirms plans for wind and solar projects, though it anticipates more financial and regulatory challenges ahead. Despite potential cost increases, the commitment to renewable energy remains strong.

Do you want to see your card here?
Contact Jennifer Williams at jwilliams@mmua.org or 763-746-0727.

Younger generations sparking interest in where their energy comes from



A survey by the Smart Energy Consumer Collective (SECC) on consumer attitudes and market segmentation reveals that people aged 55 and under are more focused on the environmental impact and efficiency of their energy use than on reliability.

Gen Z and Millennials are paying more attention to their energy consumption and bills than previous generations. Nathan Shannon, SECC’s president and CEO, explains, “They are making the connection between technology and energy management within their homes, unlike older demographics who haven’t necessarily made that link.”

The survey also highlights a shift in how respondents prioritize their concerns and motivations for pursuing greater energy

efficiency. Traditionally, cost has been the primary concern for energy users, with environmental and household convenience factors trailing behind. Shannon notes, “We are seeing environmental concerns rise closer to their worry about cost.”

Energy efficiency and demand response initiatives are gaining prominence as the country faces new load growth after decades of stagnation. Utilities nationwide are expanding programs to meet rising energy demand.

The report also indicates a growing market for smart homes and appliances. Nearly half of respondents own a smart thermostat that provides insights into energy use and tips for efficiency. Some models enable room-to-room control or detailed scheduling, ensuring energy is

used only where needed.

However, limited customer awareness remains a barrier to wider participation in energy-efficiency programs. The survey shows that about 34 percent of the population are the most “informed and engaged” consumers—those knowledgeable about their electricity providers and actively striving for energy efficiency. Most of these are under 55 and likely have children.

Conversely, the “turnkey comfort” group prioritizes reliability and resilience, preferring their utility companies to handle energy concerns. This group cares least about energy efficiency and is hard to engage, especially in technology-based programs. Comprising well-educated retired individuals living comfortably, they contrast with the broader trend towards energy efficiency adoption among younger generations.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 65 percent of those aged 18–25 see climate change as a global emergency. Young people are increasingly concerned about the origins of their energy. While reliability remains important, knowing where their energy comes from is nearly equally significant.

FERC approves NextEra waiver

Continued from page 12

Club, opposed the waivers, arguing they were unnecessary since they were not caused by unforeseen circumstances. Taylor also noted the restart could eliminate 600 MW of planned solar development.

FERC acknowledged the concern but stated there was no evidence the solar projects would be “wholly abandoned.” NextEra also stressed nuclear energy is vital for data centers’ need for high-capacity baseload generation, which is a major reason the solar plans were modified.

Like Iowa, Minnesota is expected to host a growing number

of data center operations. Access to nuclear power is appealing to customers and data centers seeking clean energy.

The plant is the third and probably the last mothballed reactor in the US capable of returning to service to meet rising electricity needs. Duane Arnold would restart alongside similar efforts at the Palisades nuclear plant in Michigan and Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania, which are scheduled to resume operations later this year and in 2027, pending approval from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.



Upcoming events

Gas School

October 7–9
MMUA Training Center
Marshall, MN

This school offers hands-on instruction on key topics that benefit operators, technicians, and other personnel. Topics to be covered include:

- Hands-on locating and leak field investigation including an overview of one-call law changes, along with best practices to provide the most precise locating accuracy while in the field. Please bring your locator if you want to get pointers or see how it performs in the field. There will also be a variety of locators and experienced instructors to help improve operator abilities.
- 2025 inspections review; 2026 expectations led by Joseph Hauger, Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety.
- Case study, procedures, and documentation during emergency response led by David Zak, AEGIS Insurance Services.

For more information or to register for this valuable training opportunity, visit <https://www.mmua.org/events/gas-2025>.

Crisis leadership in the utilities sector: navigating challenges and ensuring continuity

October 16, 10:00 am–12:00 pm
Virtual

Learn the skills and strategies necessary to effectively respond to and manage a crisis. The course will help you build resilience and readiness at your utility or city, preparing you to navigate difficult challenges.

This is an elective course for those enrolled in the DUEL™ program and counts for one DUEL credit. Not in DUEL? No problem. You can register for this stand-alone course. For more information, visit <https://www.mmua.org/events/duel-crisis-leadership-2025-10-16>.

Technical & Operations Conference

December 9–11, 2025
St. Cloud, MN

The Technical & Operations Conference (or “T&O”) is a not-to-be-missed event for managers, crew leads, lineworkers, and others. This is the perfect venue to join fellow public power and water utility professionals to hear expert speakers on timely topics, participate in discussions, share ideas, and connect with friends old and new. Plus you can learn about new products and services and speak with supplier representatives during the trade show.

Check out the great lineup of speakers, presentations and topics that will be covered during this year’s T&O Conference and register now at <https://www.mmua.org/events/tech-oper-conf-2025>.

Register by October 31, 2025 for the discounted rate. The hotel cut-off date is November 8, 2025.

For more information, see the Events Calendar at www.mmua.org or call MMUA at 763-551-1230.