

IMEA THE MUNI LINE

IPEA • IMUA

Spring 2022 Edition



2022 IMEA-IMUA-IPEA Conference

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Read more on page 2.



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Read more on page 5.



New Law Opens Up Grant Opportunities

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Read more on page 7.

Live and in Person – It's the 2022 IMEA-IMUA-IPEA Conference

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Registration and Accommodations

The conference is free to attend for all IMEA-IMUA-IPEA member municipal utility personnel and elected and appointed officials from IMEA-IMUA-IPEA member municipalities. Conference registration forms are available on the Annual Conference Web Page: http://www.imea.org/IMUA_AnnualConference.aspx.

There is a room block for the conference at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel in downtown Springfield. Call 217-544-8800 to make your reservations. Use code “MEA” to assure you receive the conference rate of \$117.00.

If you have questions about conference registration or hotel reservations, contact **DeeDee Bunch** at dbunch@imea.org or 1-800-243-4632.

Events Scheduled for June 2

Events will begin at 9:15 a.m. on Thursday, June 2 at the Piper Glen Golf Club with the annual Members golf outing sponsored by the IMUA Associate Members who provide goods and services to the municipal utilities industry.

A reception in the vendor hall at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel will begin at 4:00 p.m., followed by an awards dinner at 6:30 p.m. The evening tops off with a casino night and other entertainment.

Speakers Slated for June 3

We have lined up an estimable and entertaining group of speakers for the morning of Friday June 3. We will provide Members with a finalized schedule soon, but the speakers already confirmed to join us will provide a program that appeals to – and will be useful for – elected and appointed officials, utility managers and frontline personnel. We urge you to bring as many people from your utility as possible to these presentations.

Here is a preview of just some of what we have in store:

“Conference Welcome/Year in Review” Kevin M. Gaden, President & CEO of IMEA, IMUA and IPEA

For yet another year, our organizations and its Member utilities faced challenges related to the COVID crisis. The pandemic reinforced the need for public utilities, their associations and their joint action agencies to redouble their efforts to bring top-quality services to their customers today, while, at the same time, planning for a reliable and sustainable energy future. Kevin Gaden will provide a look at our organizations’ accomplishments over the past year and our goals for the coming years of recovery.



Kevin Gaden has served as President & CEO of the IMUA, IMEA and IPEA since January 2012. He has been in the municipal utilities business since 1987 in various operational, power marketing and executive leadership roles. As President & CEO, he oversees the operations of the Illinois Municipal Electric Agency (IMEA), the Illinois Public Energy Agency (IPEA) and the Illinois Municipal Utilities Association (IMUA). Prior to coming to Illinois, Gaden served as the Director of Wholesale Electric Operations for the Municipal Energy Agency of Nebraska (MEAN), the wholesale electricity supply organization of the Nebraska Municipal Power Pool (NMPP Energy). He earned a BS in construction management from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and holds a master's degree in community and regional planning from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

“Speed Traps, Potholes and Idiots” Jay Gubrud

Using the metaphor of cars and driving, this lighthearted but definitely not lightweight presentation is designed to challenge audience members to eliminate the everyday roadblocks to their success.



Jay Gubrud is a catalyst for performance improvement. He is a dynamic professional speaker, trainer, author and consultant who has been presenting across industries and audiences for more than 17 years. He has never been afraid to have a difference of opinion or shake up the status quo. He believes that regularly moving out of your comfort zone and improving your performance are key to personal and professional success and satisfaction. He values the contribution of *all* peoples' personalities and characteristics at the office and at home. Because of his experience in a variety of industries, Jay Gubrud brings a fresh and diverse perspective.

“Federal Grant Funding for Municipal and Coop Natural Gas Systems” Stuart Saulters, Vice President of Government Relations, APGA

The new federal [Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization Grant](#) program offers federal funding specifically for municipal or community owned utilities to repair, rehabilitate or replace natural gas distribution pipeline systems (or portions thereof) or to acquire equipment to (1) reduce incidents and fatalities and (2) to avoid economic losses. This session will offer you the latest information on the program and how to access these funds for your community.



Stuart Saulters serves as the American Public Gas Association's Vice President of Government Relations. He joined the trade association in April 2019. He manages APGA's engagement in legislative and regulatory affairs aiming to advance the goals of public natural gas utilities. He also serves as the staff executive for the Direct Use Task Group, which guides the association's efforts in messaging and advocating for balanced energy solutions around the US. Prior to joining APGA, Stuart served as a Senior Policy Advisor at the American Petroleum Institute (API). Before his time at API, Stuart was a Design and Facility Engineer for Chevron. He graduated with a civil engineering degree from Mississippi State University.

“Funding and Best Practices for Planning the EV Future” Jeff Gorrie, Director of Energy Services, IAMU

Electric vehicles are coming, often faster than utilities anticipate. This session will explore how utilities and their customers can benefit by adapting to, and effectively controlling, EV-related load growth.



Jeff Gorrie is the Director of Energy Services for the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities (IAMU) and the lead author of the [APPA’s Charging Forward EV Toolkit](#) (available in the [APPA Products Store](#)). At IAMU he provides educational opportunities for members regarding energy efficiency, renewable energy and other relevant topics. Prior to joining IAMU in 2020, he was an Energy Engineer at Efficient Technologies in Cedar Falls, Iowa and at CLEAResult. A native of Pekin, Illinois, he earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from Iowa State University.

“Professional Engagement for Safety Concerns and Renewable Energy Technologies” Joe Kilcoyne, Business Representative, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 134

What concerns do building departments, fire departments and first responders have concerning safety when working around renewable energy technologies installed at homes and businesses in our communities? What have been the changes to our industry based on these concerns and how do we avoid future tragedy? How can we work together to recognize hazards, encourage discussion and implement best practices? This session will focus on ways to accomplish safer conditions for the current and future generations of public service professionals.



Joe Kilcoyne is a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 134 out of Chicago. He spent 20 years in the field as an inside wireman, from Apprentice, Journeyman, Foreman and General Foreman before taking on his current role as a Business Representative. He also serves as Treasurer and a Trainer for the Illinois IBEW Renewable Energy Fund and an Adjunct Professor at Triton College. Joe's focus in the electrical industry is with renewable energy technologies, and he works with those entering a career in the field. In addition, his focus is with allied professionals, such as fire departments and building departments who have a stake in these systems, including proper construction and safety concerns when responding to sites that have incorporated these technologies.

“A Legislative Review” Staci Wilson, Director of Government Affairs for IMEA, IMUA and IPEA

In this presentation, our Director of Government Affairs will discuss state energy-related measures that follow last legislative session’s historic Illinois Clean Energy Jobs Act, as well as the evolving energy-related federal policies.



Staci Wilson joined IMEA, IMUA and IPEA in October 2016, when she was hired as Director of Government Affairs. She is responsible for the development and implementation of legislative and regulatory strategies to benefit the municipally owned and operated utilities in Illinois at both the state and federal levels. She focuses on issues related to municipal utilities engaged in electric generation, transmission and distribution, natural gas transport and distribution, water and waste water system operation and telecommunications matters. Wilson came to IMEA, IPEA and IMUA from the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, where she was Vice President for Legislative Relations and Executive Director of the Chamber’s Health Care Council. Prior to that, she spent 19 years on staff at the Illinois General Assembly. Her duties included assignments as a legislative analyst, staff to the Senate Environment and Energy Committee, the Senate Executive Committee, and as Deputy Director of Committee Staff. She is a graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, Illinois.

We look forward to having you join us for the annual conference in June. ■

IMEA's Electric Vehicle Charging Station & Electric Vehicle Program will Launch in May

Under a newly improved Electric Vehicle Charging Station & Electric Vehicle Program, IMEA Member communities will have a total of \$250,000 for each of the next three years to use for incentives for electric vehicle charging stations and for the purchase or lease of electric vehicles for their municipal and/or municipal electric utility's fleet.

Funding

Starting this May, IMEA Member cities will have a total of \$250,000 of new funding (divided on a load-share ratio basis) to use for incentives for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and for payments for city-owned or leased EVs.

Program funding will replenish in May 2023 and May 2024. Any funds that an IMEA member municipality has remaining at the end of a fiscal year can roll over to the next fiscal year until April 30, 2025. On that date, any unused funds will be transferred to the IMEA Rate Stabilization Fund.

IMEA Program Administrator Rodd Whelpley (rwhelpley@imea.org) will contact IMEA Board Members prior to the start of the program with details about program operations and the amount of funding set aside for each IMEA member municipality for FY2022-23.

How Cities May Use their Program Funds

The program has been designed to be nimble and flexible to meet the individual needs and goals of IMEA member municipalities. Cities can elect to:

1. Use funds for EV charging stations.
2. Use funds to purchase or lease EVs.
3. Transfer funds for the city to use in the IMEA Electric Efficiency Program.

Options for EV Charging Stations

Cities have three ways to incentivize EV charging stations:

- **Establish a locally administered program to provide incentives for level two or better electric vehicle charging stations to retail customers.** Incentives are \$200 for a private-use charging station (e.g., in a residential garage) and \$500 for chargers available for public use (e.g., at a restaurant's parking lot). This measure requires city resources and personnel to manage the program at the local level, including verifying proper installations and collecting required data points. The city will pay incentives to retail customers (either by check or bill credit) and will be reimbursed by IMEA up to the funding level the city has available to use for the program.
- **The city can purchase a level 2 or 3 EV charging station** and make it available for public use. Program funds can be used for 80% of the total cost of the project, up to \$20,000 per EV charging station.
- **The city can lease a level 2 or 3 EV charging station** and make it available for public use. Program funds can be used for 80% of the annual lease cost of the project, up to \$20,000 per year per station. *Note:* If the lease period outlasts the length of the IMEA EV charging station program, then cities need to be prepared to pick up the full costs of the remaining years or exit the lease agreement on terms agreed to by the vendor and the city.



Options for EVs

Municipalities and municipal utilities have two ways to use incentive funds for EVs:

- **The city or city electric department can purchase an EV** for city or for electric department use. Program funds can be used for 80% of the purchase price of the car, up to \$20,000 per EV.
- **The city or city electric department can lease an EV** for city or for electric department use. Program funds can be used for 80% of the annual lease cost of the EV, up to \$20,000 per EV per year. If the lease period outlasts the length of the IMEA EV program, then cities need to be prepared to pick up the full costs of the remaining years or exit the lease agreement on terms agreed to by the vendor and the city

Cities must publicize their acquisition of the EV as a way to demonstrate the viability of EVs in their community. Any costs not specifically covered in the vehicle purchase or lease agreement are not eligible for an incentive under this program.

More Details are on the Way

In the coming weeks IMEA will reach out to all board members with further details about the specific amount of funding available for each municipality and the process for accessing the funding. In the meantime, if you have any questions about this program, always feel free to contact **Rodd Whelpley** at 217-789-4632 or at rwhelpley@imea.org.



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New Law Opens Up Grant Opportunities for Municipal Utilities

Signed by President Biden in mid-November of 2021, the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act \(IIJA\)](#), which is often also referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, has touched off a slew of federal government grant programs, many of which are aimed at shoring up the nation's energy infrastructure.



The Illinois Municipal Utilities Association encourages all its utility members to explore programs that might provide funds for projects that fit into their city's capital improvement plans. Toward that end, we offer below some web resources that provide information about these options.

The White House Guidebook to New Infrastructure Funding

To help communities across the country know what to apply for, who to contact, and how to get ready to tap into federal funding opportunities made available from the IIJA, the White House has released [A Guidebook to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#).

The book is a roadmap to the federal funding made available under the law, as well as an explanatory document that shows program-by-program information. It will be updated regularly. The guidebook and more information is available at the Building a Better America website at: www.build.gov. The book is accompanied by a data file (also housed on www.build.gov) that allows users to quickly sort programs funded under the law by such fields as "agency," "amount," "eligible recipient," or "program name."

Along with the guidebook, the White House has released a [Fact Sheet on Competitive Infrastructure Opportunities for Local Governments](#), which summarizes 25 programs related to transportation, energy, cyber preparedness and other areas for which local governments can apply.

US Department of Transportation's National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

Under a new federal program, Illinois is set to receive nearly \$22 million in FY 2022 and more than \$148 million over the next five years for electric vehicle charging.

On February 10, the US Department of Transportation rolled out the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program. Much of the funding is to be used along the [Alternative Fuel Corridors](#) that nearly every state has designated over the past six years. (A partial listing of Illinois corridors may be found [here](#)). Requirements for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations eligible for program funding include:

- EV charging infrastructure is installed every 50 miles along the state's portions of the Interstate Highway System within one travel mile of the Interstate, unless a discretionary exception has been granted.
- EV charging infrastructure has minimum station power capability at or above 600kW and supports at least 150kW per port simultaneously across four ports for charging.
- A state may use funds provided under the NEVI Formula Program for EV charging infrastructure on any public road or in other publicly accessible location.
- Publicly accessible locations may include public parking facilities, parking at public buildings, public transportation stations, Park-and-Rides, public schools, public parks, private parking facilities available for public use and more.
- The federal cost share for NEVI Formula Program projects is 80 percent. Private and state funds can be used to provide the remaining cost share.
- Funds made available under the NEVI Formula Program may be used to contract with a private entity for acquisition, installation, and operation and maintenance of publicly accessible EV charging infrastructure, and the private entity may pay the non-federal share of the cost of a project funded. States can own or lease EV charging infrastructure.

[Click here](#) for more information on the program, including [a guide to the NEVI program](#). The Illinois Department of Transportation is currently working on its plan to pass through the NEVI program funding in Illinois.

U.S. Department of Transportation's Rural Electric Vehicle (EV) Toolkit

Later this year, the U.S. DOT will make available an additional \$2.5 billion in discretionary grant program funding for charging and fueling infrastructure focused on supporting rural EV charging, infrastructure resiliency, climate change and increasing EV charging access to underserved and overburdened communities.

IMUA will pass on to members more information on this funding opportunity as details become known. In the meantime, the U.S. DOT has released a free resource to help rural communities take advantage of new and existing federal funding for electric vehicle charging stations. [Click here to obtain this guide, titled *Charging Forward: A Toolkit for Planning and Funding Rural Mobility Infrastructure*](#).

This manual can help connect community members, towns, businesses, planning agencies and others with partners needed for these projects. The guide is one of many resources on the U.S. Department of Transportation's website concerning the funding that the DOT will make available to states through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. For more details, see www.driveelectric.gov.

PHMSA Will Administer a Gas System Safety and Modernization Grant Program Aimed Specifically at Assisting Municipal Natural Gas Systems

The [Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization Grants](#) are a new initiative that will be administered by the [Pipeline Hazardous Materials and Safety Administration](#) (PHMSA). These grants are specifically for municipal or community-owned utilities to repair, rehabilitate or replace natural gas distribution pipeline systems (or portions thereof) or to acquire equipment to (1) reduce incidents and fatalities and (2) to avoid economic losses.

In mid-March PHMSA distributed a letter to all publicly and community owned natural gas distribution systems. [The letter introduces the \\$1 billion grant program](#) and lays out two requests of potential grant applicants.

1. PHMSA invites potential applicants to provide PHMSA with information and suggestions in response to a list of questions they have provided. They hope that this information will assist them as they prepare to implement and administer the grant program.
2. PHMSA encourages potential applicants to proactively:
 - a. Register with Grants.gov to receive the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) publication notice;
 - b. Register with FedConnect; and
 - c. Register with SAM.gov and obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) before submitting the application.

View the letter, statement of interest, and helpful information on registering with these entities on the American Public Gas Association's Grant Program webpage at www.apga.org/resources/phmsa-grant. PHMSA anticipates the Notice for Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to be published in mid-May. Applicants will have only 45 days to apply but will be able to amend their application if necessary. PHMSA has set up a dedicated webpage for this program at <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/grants/pipeline/natural-gas-distribution-infrastructure-safety-and-modernization-grants>. Questions can be directed to PHMSAPipelineBILGrant@dot.gov.

The APPA's Online Guide to New Federal Grant Opportunities for Public Power Utilities

American Public Power Association members can access information related to IIJA implementation at www.publicpower.org/InfrastructureFunding. (NOTE: To access this page, you need to be logged in to the APPA website.) The APPA updates this web page regularly but also encourages members to use the [Federal Register](#) and [Grants.Gov](#) to make specific searches for programs that are of interest. ■



From The Corner Office

by Kevin M. Gaden

President & CEO

Making Our Voices Heard

Our meetings with legislators are a way to form relationships that can extend beyond office visits and phone calls.

Once again, Covid and caution curtailed our plans to take our usual delegation of municipal power professionals to Washington, DC, for the American Public Power Association's Legislative Rally held in late February. But I'm happy to report that – thanks to many of you – those circumstances did not prevent us from presenting our messages to our Illinois Congressmen and Congresswomen and our U.S. Senators.

Specifically, I'd like to thank the mayors, utility professionals and city council members from Batavia, Breese, Carmi, Farmer City, Freeburg, Highland, Ladd, Oglesby, Marshall, Metropolis, Mascoutah, Naperville, Rantoul, Red Bud, Rock Falls, Springfield, St. Charles, Sullivan and Waterloo who signed up to join IMUA staff on Zoom calls in late February and early March. Of course, I'd also like to thank U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth and Dick Durbin, as well as U.S. Representatives Mike Bost, Cheri Bustos, Rodney Davis, Bill Foster, Darin LaHood, Brad Schneider, Jan Schakowsky and Lauren Underwood for making themselves and/or their staff members available for our Zoom discussions.

Our Discussions with Legislators

Our meetings gave us the chance to personally thank legislators for working to pass the bipartisan [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act \(IIJA\)](#). That measure is opening up opportunities for municipal utilities to get extra funding to improve their systems (see page 7 of this issue of the *Muni Line* for more details.)

We discussed with legislators how direct payment of refundable tax credits for public power would be beneficial to our efforts to build such assets as our behind-the-meter utility-scale solar generation projects. As you may be aware, because we are public entities, neither municipal utilities nor the IMEA can benefit directly from the Investment Tax Credit (ITC) or the Production Tax Credit (PTC) that many developers rely upon to assure the economic viability of solar generation projects.

For example, as it currently stands, when IMEA commissions solar arrays in our communities, the Agency, in order to get the best price possible for the energy output, seeks a developer to build and own the array and then sell the output to the Agency. The

developer (a for-profit entity) passes only part of the tax savings onto the Agency in the form of reduced energy prices. A refundable tax credit incentive would allow developers with little or no tax liability (such as tax-exempt organizations) to receive their tax "credit" in the form of a direct cash payment. The result for entities such as IMEA would be that, in order to achieve the best deal, we would no longer need to seek a tax-paying partner with whom to develop a project. Instead, we could own the project outright at a greater cost savings, resulting in even lower power costs to our Members.

The discussion of the Agency's behind-the-meter solar generation projects led us to a second topic: The need to bring regulatory certainty to federal climate change policy. In our meetings, we gave an overview of the [American Public Power Agency's newly adopted resolution](#) calling for a federal clean energy standard that reduces greenhouse gas emissions to address climate change while keeping electricity affordable and reliable.

We offered our support for a climate change policy that would come from Congress, rather than from the executive branch, pointing out that the extreme changes from one Administration to another have had a whipsaw effect on utilities' ability to plan for the future needs of their customers. IMUA favors a climate change policy that is economy wide, sets clear targets and provides flexibility to achieve its goals. We contend that the climate change policy must be crafted in a way that allows the electric sector to reduce CO₂ emissions while maintaining a reliable grid and assuring affordable retail rates. In addition, to prevent rate increases to customers, assistance should be allowed for public power utilities that own fossil-fuel fired generation units that may become stranded assets due to premature retirement for compliance.

Our final discussion topic was on cybersecurity, an issue made sharper by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which occurred shortly before our legislative visits. Legislators were keen to hear of the steps we have taken – and continue to take – to protect our electric utilities' cyber assets. We pointed out that the energy sector works closely with the Department of Energy, the Department of Homeland Security, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on matters of security and that we understand the need to do so. We favor coordination between government agencies and the electric industry to better manage risks and that any additional cyber incident reporting requirements be harmonized with reporting requirements that are already in place.

Meetings with FERC

Concurrent with the meetings with the Illinois Congressional Delegation, I served as a member of a select group of American Public Power Association representatives that held a series of Zoom meetings with the [FERC Commissioners](#) to discuss issues of particular concern to municipal utilities.

Chief among our concerns were matters of resource adequacy; the burdens that transmission costs often place on load serving entities (LSEs), including public power utilities; and the transmission interconnection queue backlogs.

There is a need for transmission planning reform to help assure reliability and affordability in the future. With older fossil fuel-fired generators leaving the market, transmission and sub-transmission projects need to be undertaken. New projects mean increased costs for those who use the transmission lines. However, as things stand now, entities such as IMEA have done an admirable job of keeping energy costs to members flat, only to see transmission and RTO costs rise 208% since 2014. We suggested that public LSEs be allowed to be minority owners of transmission assets, perhaps up to the percentage of the load they serve, as a way to curb these escalating costs.

We discussed the critical need for coordination among regulators and the industry in supporting the development of flexible ramping and load-following resources. In addition – as the events in Texas in February 2021 clearly showed – there is a need to develop weather-ready gas pipeline infrastructure to backstop the intermittent generation.

Finally, a barrier to bringing on additional renewable generation is the current backlog of projects in the interconnection study queues. We requested that FERC find ways to discourage speculative interconnection requests, perhaps by requiring payment obligations when proposed projects achieve pre-construction regulatory milestones and/or adopting a “first-ready, first-served” approach to greenlighting new generation projects.

A Seat at the Table

A popular adage concerning advocacy says, “If you are not at the table, then you are on the menu.” While that sounds extreme, there is truth in that statement. If we don't alert policymakers to our concerns on a regular basis, then there is a chance that our concerns would remain unknown, and therefore not considered in any legislation or rulemaking.

Just as important, our meetings with legislators are a way to form relationships that can extend beyond office visits and phone calls. Often, during our meetings this spring, legislators recalled their experiences touring a member municipality's generation plant, or cutting the ribbon at a newly constructed solar array. When we can involve legislators in what we do, when they can see, first-hand, the caring and professional way we serve residents, then our messages fall on more receptive ears. Over the past 12 years, it has been gratifying to see how meetings in Washington have become a catalyst for some stronger relationships between our municipal utilities and the members of Congress who represent them.

Let's keep that momentum going and keep building those relationships when, we all hope, we return to Washington in

person next spring for the 2023 APPA Legislative Rally. ■



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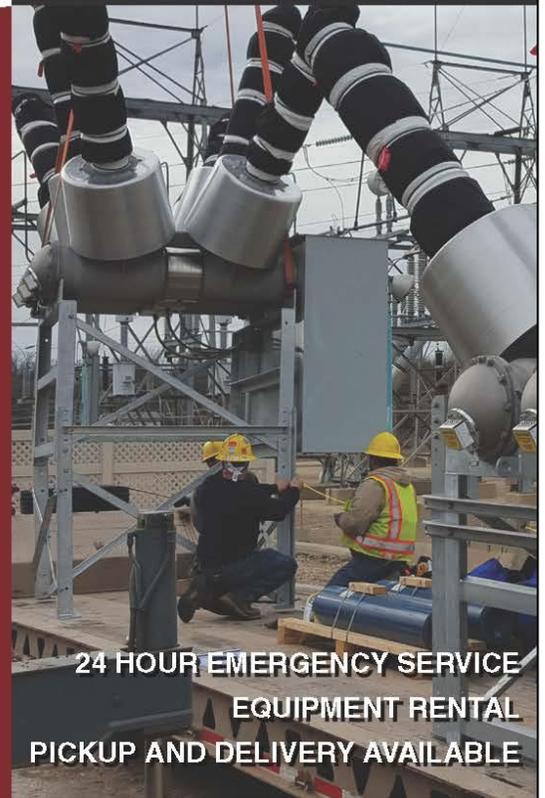
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IMEA Electric Efficiency Program Gears Up for FY2022-23

The fiscal year 2022-23 IMEA Electric Efficiency Program will begin taking applications for projects starting in May. See the program's Web page (<http://www.imea.org/EEIncentives.aspx>) for program guidelines and pre-applications. IMEA Board members will receive an e-mail before the program begins for the fiscal year, detailing their funding status for FY2022-23.

Funding

On May 2, 2022, IMEA Member cities will have a total of \$1 million of new funding (divided on a load-share ratio basis) to use for incentives for electric efficiency projects for their public sector, commercial/industrial and residential customers in FY2022-23 (from May 1, 2022 to April 30, 2023). A municipality's FY2022-23 funding will be added to any unallocated, rolled-over FY2021-22 funding to arrive at the total amount of funding available for the city to use for electric efficiency program incentives.

However, Members should be aware that any leftover funds from FY2021-22 that roll over into FY 2022-23 must be allocated for incentives for electric efficiency program projects by April 30, 2023. Otherwise, those funds will be transferred to the IMEA Rate Stabilization Fund.

Commercial/Industrial and Public Sector Projects

Member cities and businesses in those cities that want to take advantage of the commercial/industrial offerings must make a pre-application and get a Notice to Proceed, issued by the IMEA and the member city, before beginning the electric efficiency project. Program rules and applications for FY2022-23 will be posted on the program Web page (<http://www.imea.org/EEIncentives.aspx>) as soon as possible after May 1. Those familiar with the program will find that it will operate almost exactly the same in FY2022-23 as it did in FY2021-22.

Commercial/Industrial measures incentivized through the program will include:

- **Lighting**
- **Air Compressors and Compressed Air Nozzles**
- **Refrigeration Measures**
- **Variable Speed Drives for HVAC Pumps and Motors**
- **Custom Projects**
- **Power Factor Correction (cities only)**

Tips for Electric Efficiency Program Applicants

If commercial/industrial or public-sector customers from your city wish to apply for Electric Efficiency Program incentives, here are some tips you may want to pass on to them.

1. Applications and information about the program are found on the program Web page: <http://www.imea.org/EEIncentives.aspx>.
2. Funding can go fast. Each IMEA Member will have funding available as of May 2, 2022. However, funds in many cities go fast (sometimes in as little as one month). If you'd like to check on the funding availability in your city, contact the program administrator, Rodd Whelpley, at 217-789-4632, or at rwhelpley@imea.org.
3. Follow all the guidelines for making your pre-application. Each application contains a program summary on page 2 and a pre-application checklist on page 3. These will help you make a complete pre-application.
4. Submit pre-applications to the program administrator, Rodd Whelpley, at rwhelpley@imea.org. **Only one application per e-mail**. Each application should be a single PDF.
5. Applications that are incomplete or improperly submitted will not be reviewed or processed but will be returned to the applicant to be fixed.
6. Contact the program administrator, Rodd Whelpley, at 217-789-4632 or at rwhelpley@imea.org if you have questions.

Residential Measures

In FY2022-23, cities can split their electric efficiency program incentive funding between commercial/industrial and residential measures in any manner they want. For example, a city can choose to use all of its funding on residential measures or none of its funding on them. (*NOTE:* Residential measures require hands-on management from city personnel.)

Residential options include:

- **Advanced Thermostat Program** – This measure offers an incentive for residents who install qualified thermostats, such as a NEST or Ecobee-type thermostats that can adjust HVAC units remotely. This measure will require city resources and personnel to manage the program at the local level. The city will set aside a specific amount of its Electric Efficiency Program funding for the locally managed program. The city will pay incentives to residents (either by check or bill credit) and will be reimbursed by IMEA up to the funding level the city has set aside for the program. IMEA member utilities that want to set up an Advanced Thermostat Program will find a starter kit at <http://www.imea.org/EEIncentives.aspx>.
- **Central AC and/or Air Source Heat Pump Program** – This measure offers incentives based on the Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) of replacement AC units or based on the Heating Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF) of replacement air source heat pumps. This measure will require city resources and personnel to manage the program at the local level, including verifying proper installations and collecting required data points. The city will set aside a specific amount of its Electric Efficiency Program funding for the locally managed program. The city will pay incentives to residents (either by check or bill credit) and will be reimbursed by IMEA up to the funding level the city has set aside for the program. IMEA member utilities that want to set up a Central AC and/or Air Source Heat Pump Program will find a starter kit at <http://www.imea.org/EEIncentives.aspx>.

IMEA may also bring back the **LED Lightbulb Giveaway** option. Although this measure was not used often in FY2021-22, IMEA staff are working with a vendor to see if this program is one that we can bring back for FY2022-23. Watch your e-mail for details.

Have Questions?

Those who have questions about the IMEA Electric Efficiency Program – or about specific measures or applications – can find information on the IMEA Electric Efficiency Program Web page at: <http://www.imea.org/EEIncentives.aspx>. However, always feel free to contact Rodd Whelpley (217-789-4632 or at rwhelpley@imea.org) about anything related to the IMEA Electric Efficiency Program. ■



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After 29-plus years of service

IMEA's Kevin Wagner Retires

One of the longest-serving employees in IMEA history –Vice President of Engineering **Kevin L. Wagner** – officially retired on March 31 after more than 29 years of service with the Agency.

During the February 28 IMEA Board of Directors meeting, IMEA President & CEO **Kevin Gaden** recognized Wagner for his service and expressed his appreciation “for his many achievements, contributions, dedication and exemplary service over these past years.” He also noted that Wagner “is one of the most dedicated and knowledgeable engineering professionals I’ve ever known.”

“Kevin is the kind of person who follows through on every project he’s ever undertaken,” Gaden added. “He gives it his all. IMEA is very fortunate to have had him on staff all these years. He is a treasure trove of experience and knowledge, an *Encyclopedia Britannica* of sorts, one who truly understands the engineering process and the role it plays in the utility and public-power industries.”

Wagner served under three Agency heads throughout his career with IMEA, beginning with IMEA’s first General Manager, the late **Frank Madonia**; continuing with former General Manager and now retired President & CEO **Ronald D. Earl**; and, concluding with current IMEA President & CEO **Kevin M. Gaden**. During that tenure, Wagner served as an Agency liaison during the construction and operation of IMEA’s main power-generation assets, including the Trimble County Station (Trimble County Units 1 and 2) in Louisville, Kentucky and the Prairie State Generating Station & Campus, located near Marissa in Washington County in southwestern Illinois. He also was highly involved with the siting and commissioning of the Highland 138-kv transmission line and substation.



IMEA Vice President of Engineering **Kevin L. Wagner** (center) was honored with a congratulatory retirement cake by IMEA President & CEO **Kevin M. Gaden** (right) at the February 28 meeting of the IMEA Board of Directors. Accompanying Gaden with the presentation was IMEA Vice President & General Counsel **Troy Fodor** (left).

“Engineering and IMEA have been my life’s work. It always has been and always will be,” Wagner said.

A native of Jackson, Missouri, Wagner joined IMEA in 1993 as Staff Electrical Engineer. He served in that capacity until being named Manager of Engineering in 1994, a post he held until his promotion to Vice President of Engineering.

Prior to joining IMEA, Wagner served in a variety of engineering positions with the former Central Illinois Public Service Co. (CIPS) in Springfield (now a part of the Ameren Corporation), including as Unit Commitment Information Exchange System Supervisor, Resource Planning Engineer, Relay Engineer and Planning Engineer. Prior to CIPS, he served four years as an Assistant Engineer at the former Missouri Utilities Co. in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, and as Assistant Engineer for Bechtel Power Corporation in Houston, Texas.

Wagner graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science Degree in engineering (emphasis in utility/industrial power systems analysis) from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

“My retirement plans include some travel as well as a 30-year backlog of home improvements,” he said. “I may even come back every now and then to attend an IMEA Board Meeting or two.” ■

Bushnell Electric Distribution, Lighting-System Upgrades Completed

Electric crews from IMUA Associate Member and contractor company **Big D Electric, LLC**, of El Dorado, Illinois, recently completed replacement of six electric utility poles and related electric equipment and facilities in Bushnell, Illinois. City of Bushnell Electric Superintendent and IMEA Board Member **Joe Fosdyck** said the work was part of an upgrade of the City of Bushnell’s electric distribution system. Fosdyck said the city is awaiting permission from the local railroad authority to replace a seventh pole.



In addition, city electric crews have changed out 71 lights in the municipality’s Recreation Center and 36 lights in City Hall and the Utility Office to more energy-efficient LED lighting fixtures, Fosdyck noted. Additional municipal electric-system generation and distribution systems improvements are slated to begin later this year and continue through 2023, he concluded. ■

Cybersecurity Firms Offer Munis and Coops Free Threat Detection Help

by Jennifer Runyon

Editors Note: This is a slightly edited version of a story that originally appeared on the [POWERGRID International web site](#) on March 10, 2022 and is used by permission.

In response to a “shields up” notice from the federal government, at least four companies are offering free cybersecurity services to utilities.

As the Ukraine crisis ramped up, U.S. Homeland Security officials issued a notice to all critical infrastructure companies in the U.S. that now is the time to beef up cybersecurity because things are about to get interesting.

This is known as a “[shields up](#)” alert, according to Matt Morris, a digitalization and cybersecurity expert with 27 years of experience protecting OT environments from cyberattacks. Morris said he’s never before seen an alert like that.



Morris is the Global Managing Director of Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity, Risk Management & Compliance at 1898 & Co, an employee-owned company. He said in an interview that in recognition that many small municipal utilities and co-ops don’t have the budget to employ the sophisticated cybersecurity controls and systems that exist today, his company wants to help. That’s why it is offering free 24x7 monitoring & detection services, aka Managed Threat Detection, for six months for municipal or co-op power or water utilities.

“What we do is not cheap. And the fact that we’re doing that for free is a pretty substantial thing,” he said.

After the six months of threat detection, those that want to continue will receive services at a discount, up to 70% off their normal pricing, said Morris. He declined to give specific numbers but said that size, number of assets, complexity of deployment, level of service and number/type of environments being monitored all factor into pricing calculations.

Unlike larger investor-owned utilities (IOUs), munis and co-ops may not be as focused on cybersecurity, said Morris. Every business understands risks and how to mitigate them. That’s why the insurance industry exists, but, to understand a cybersecurity risk, is a little more difficult, said Morris.

So, once they establish a threat-monitoring service and receive reports detailing that threat intelligence, it starts to paint a picture of how big the cyberattack risk really is, said Morris. While he said he understands that budgets will not change much in the six months of free service, he does hope that it will allow them to make cybersecurity a higher priority than it already is. In addition, there’s a pretty decent-sized funding opportunity for cyberthreat mitigation in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

With raised awareness about how huge the cyberthreats are and perhaps a little more budget coupled with some grant funding, Morris hopes these smaller utilities will be able to protect themselves and the public at large more.

“We’re not looking to get rich and famous off of this. We’re providing this as a public good,” he said. “We can’t be completely philanthropic, sadly,” he added.

1898 & Co is owned by Burns and McDonnell. Morris, who has worked for many high-tech companies, said the mindset of an employee-owned company is completely different from his past companies.

“I’m not saying anything bad about them. Those are great companies,” he said. But the client relationship changed when he started with 1898 & Co. “It’s a different level when you design these things for people...there’s this kind of attachment,” he said.

Perhaps that's why the company was very much in favor of heavily discounting cyberthreat mitigation services for smaller utilities and why the offer stands. "Everybody was behind it like mad," he said.

Smaller munis and co-ops that would like to discuss how 1898 & Co can help them with cybersecurity efforts should reach out directly to Matt Morris: matt.morris@1898andco.com.

Other companies offering free cybersecurity to U.S. companies include Cloudflare, CrowdStrike and Ping Identity. Read the announcement about their new Critical Infrastructure Defense Project to provide free cybersecurity services to particularly vulnerable industries [here](#). ■

Jennifer Runyon is a Senior Content Director at Clarion Energy, writing, editing and posting content on POWERGRID International and planning conference sessions for DISTRIBUTECH's live and virtual events. She is the conference advisory committee chair for DISTRIBUTECH International. You can reach her at Jennifer.Runyon@ClarionEvents.com.

APPA Offers Resources on Cyber Security Threats

IMEA and the American Public Power Association (APPA) remind utilities to be extra vigilant with their security measures. You can [click here](#) to review the latest advisories and guidance from the [Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency](#) on cyber threats from Russia.

APPA also offers a variety of [cybersecurity resources](#) for public power utilities, including a [Public Power Cyber Incident Response Playbook](#).

The Welcome Mat . . .

IMUA Welcomes Three New Associate Members

IMUA's newest Associate Members are **MasTec**, **Panoptic Solutions** and **United Energy, Inc.**, companies that span the spectrum of service providers, ranging from engineering consultants and energy efficiency project management to lighting system upgrades and generation, distribution, transmission and substation construction services.

Based in West Chicago, Illinois, **MasTec** is a nationally recognized minority-owned contractor specializing in distribution, transmission and substation construction services for both electric and gas utilities. The company's primary contact is Director of Business Development **Jim Miller**, who can be reached at jim.miller@mastec.com. The company's main office phone is **(262) 408-1163**.

Located in Rochelle, Illinois, and with more than a decade of experience, **Panoptic Solutions** offers utilities a wide-range of testing tools and methods which they claim "help ensure our customers get the most out of their infrastructure and operations." Primary contact is Operations Manager **Caitlyn Ratchkova**, who can be contacted via email at cratchkova@panoptic-solutions.com, or via phone at **(877) 668-6640**.

United Energy, Inc. is based in Carmi, Illinois, and assists clients with developing plans and designs "to ensure their electrical and natural gas power systems are sustainable, reliable, efficient and resilient." According to United's description of services, the company specializes in "energy-efficiency upgrade plans and lighting-system designs for both indoor and outdoor locations." Company contact is Vice President of Engineering **Daniel Kearns**, who can be reached at dkearns@unitedenergyinc.com or via phone at **(618) 382-2280**.

IMUA welcomes **MasTec**, **Panoptic Solutions** and **United Energy, Inc.**, as well as all their employees, to the IMUA family. The Association would also like to thank all its Associate Members for the time, expertise and support they provide year-round. A complete listing of all IMUA Associate Members and vendor companies can be viewed on the [IMUA Members Web Page](#).

Remember, when you do business, think of IMUA Associate Members first! ■





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Serving community-owned utilities of every size and type, Hometown Connections provides products and services to develop all areas of your utility business, including operations, cybersecurity, business strategy, customer care, finance, workforce, and technology.

Some Thoughts About “Near-Misses” and their Relationship to Accident and Injury Prevention

by Ed Cobau, Director-State Association Services & Communications/Safety & Training, IMUA

I recently participated in an APPA webinar, “Defining Safety Excellence,” sponsored and presented by the American Public Power Association’s Public Power Safety Community.

The group is comprised of safety professionals representing various public power communities, as well as from joint action agencies and state associations throughout the country. In short, the group is a collection of safety-minded individuals and experts who all are dedicated to two things:

1. creating a holistic approach to continuous improvement toward a culture of safety, and
2. building an effective delivery system dedicated to training and best practices, including advising APPA’s work on future best practices (e.g., the new and soon-to-be published 17th edition of the American Public Power Association’s *Safety Manual*).

One of this webinar’s topics concerned the various reasons why near-miss reporting systems fail and what can be done to remedy these failures.

These reasons range from an attitude of indifference (and worse yet, negativity) among employees to their fear of repercussions for reporting such incidents. There is also the feeling amongst some personnel that near-miss reporting systems really don’t work and that they’re perceived as a hassle or a time waster that just brings on more paperwork. Some view these programs as a “blame game” or “witch hunt for bad safety behavior” or as a lip-service measure.

Frankly, in some workplaces, a few of these trepidations are warranted. So, what’s to be done?

Among the many suggestions for improvement include more honest, open and two-way communication between and among all employees and at all levels. Both group and individual discussions need to be had, and those discussions need to be focused on ways to avoid and prevent near-miss incidents from recurring. Near-miss reporting needs to occur without the “aim to blame and shame” approach, which is antithetical to safety itself. Near-miss reporting needs to be seen as an objective and unbiased tool that an organization uses to establish safe work practices and procedures.

After all, safety is a team effort, and we all need to learn ways to avoid making the same mistake again. That’s what it’s all about. That, and making sure we go home safely at the end of the day to our families, our loved ones, our friends, and to the various activities and hobbies we enjoy each and every day.

We’re all human. We all make mistakes, and we all would do well to help each other learn how to avoid repeating our errors in this day-to-day journey we call life.



One last thing: For the first time ever, toward the close of the webinar, I heard a participant suggest changing the name of a “near miss” to a “close call.” That’s a change I’ve long advocated for, a much more accurate reflection of its true definition, and to which my response moving forward is, “AMEN.”

Stay safe (always) and have an enjoyable spring! – Ed ■

Illinois Utilities Earn National Recognition for their Safety Records

Six IMEA electric systems were among the 138 utilities that earned American Public Power Association (APPA) [Safety Awards of Excellence](#) for safe operating practices in 2021, the Association announced on March 29.

Entrants were placed in categories according to their number of worker-hours and ranked based on the most incident-free records during 2021.

The City of Carlyle earned second place in its category.

Earning first place awards in their categories were:

- Breese
- Freeburg
- Princeton
- Red Bud, and
- Waterloo.

We congratulate these electric systems for their ongoing commitment to safety. ■



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