MPUA Magazine

FEBRUARY 2026

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improving local quality of life through hometown utilities

MPUA brings together 120 hometown utilities for the collective good. We support community-owned, locally controlled electric, water, wastewater, natural gas, and broadband utilities in Missouri and beyond. MPUA provides utilities with energy supply, training, advocacy, and technical support. We're proud to collaborate with communities to achieve our mission of strengthening hometown utilities and improving the local quality of life.

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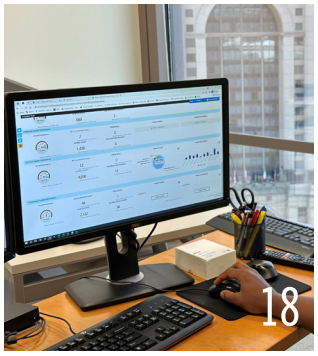
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cover photo

In December, major equipment units were delivered and lifted into place at the site of the Marshall Energy Project.

from the president's desk

Charting the course for 2026: Strengthening strategy, service, and sustainability



Steve Stodden,
President & CEO
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As I welcome you to the first edition of the MPUA Magazine for 2026, it makes me reflect on previous years. Some years we sailed into the new year with no worries, while others brought a new level of stress. I can still remember the anticipation that Y2K brought to utilities everywhere. I am sure some of you join me in remembering staffing our utilities on New Year's Eve and wondering what midnight would bring. Y2K turned out to be a non-event, but the anticipation of the unknown still seems to resonate in 2026. What will this year bring, and what challenges are out there? Let's take some time to go through what we see as a few essential items for 2026.

The MPUA Board of Directors used the last part of 2025 and early 2026 to update MPUA's Strategic Plan. This document builds on the firm foundations that were laid out in the 2020 Strategic Plan. It will take us to the next step of enhancing the value of MPUA membership while tackling new challenges. The Strategic Plan has been reviewed several times with the Board of Directors and will be presented for their approval at the March Board Meetings. Hopefully, everyone can join us then to go over the highlights of the Strategic Plan.

I believe that a Strategic Plan must be a living document that forms the basis of everything we do as an organization. As such, we will be working on the initiatives that come from the direction laid out in the 2026 Strategic Plan. In future meetings, you will continue to hear about all the work being done to accomplish this long list of goals.

We are also working on an assessment of our training services. John Williams announced his retirement effective February 1. If you haven't wished JW well, please do so. One of John's duties was managing much of the training area. Over the years, MPUA's training curriculum has grown from primarily a Lineworker Apprentice Program to now including many offerings in the Water and Wastewater fields, as well as Workforce Development.

One of our key goals is to create a sustainable MPUA training model that will guide us for years to come. We want to ensure that each training session has a coordinated approach that encompasses all functions to meet your local needs. Therefore, we will consider reorganizing all the training offerings into a single functional area to help align education with the local needs of utilities, marketing, and operational efficiency.

> "We want to ensure that each training session has a coordinated approach that encompasses all functions to meet your local needs."

On the generational front, we are making great progress on the first two Marshall natural gas turbines, which will be online later this year. We are now turning our focus toward the Fulton gas turbine project. Later this spring, we will hold a groundbreaking event at the Fulton site. We will let you know as we finalize plans there, and we would love to have everyone there to celebrate. These projects are such an impactful long-term investment in the future, and we really value celebrating these significant milestones with everyone. It will be great to look back at these events many years down the road when these units are still providing power to the member cities, long after the debt for those units is paid off.

We continue to hear about affordability for our member cities and, ultimately, your customers' bills. There is a great cost pressure on our industry from power generation project cost increases, as well as transmission cost increases. It seems we hear every year about the billions of dollars approved for transmission projects within SPP and MISO. As utility leaders, we need to do everything we can to minimize the customer bill impacts for these projects and also prepare customers for those bills.

There is also much discussion across America about Data Center load driving increasing customer costs. While it is true that the incremental cost to serve new load is expensive, it is important to figure out how to implement rates to protect your customers from increases caused by those large new loads. If a data center contacts you, please reach out to us - especially if you are in an MPUA power pool. We will start the discussion on how to handle these loads in the next round of power pool meetings. For non-pool cities, MPUA can help direct you to resources

Calendar of EVENTS

February 2026

17-18	Water & Wastewater Tech Summit
18	SPP RTO Committee Meeting
19	MISO RTO Committee Meeting
24	High Voltage Capacitor Class
26	Intro to Equipment Operation
27	Closing Direct Pay Window for Solar (Webinar)

For the latest information and registration, visit MPUA.org/Events

March 2026

3	Gas Leak Response & Investigation
4	Intro to Equipment Operation
9	MoPEP Services and Rates Meeting
10	Legislative Committee Meeting
10	Water and Wastewater Professionals Appreciation Day
11	MPUA Board of Directors Meeting
11	Member Services Committee Meeting
12	MPUA BOD, MJMEUC, MAMU, & RSC Meetings
12	MPUA RTO – MISO & SPP Committees Meeting
16	Underground Pipe Locating & Confined Space Training
16-20	Water Treatment & Distribution Certification Bootcamp Part 1
19	Utility Roundtable (Macon)
19	HR Roundtable
24-26	Water Treatment & Distribution Certification Bootcamp Part 2
31	Water Treatment & Distribution Certification Bootcamp Part 3

April 2026

13	Lineworker Appreciation Day
13-17	Wastewater Entry Level Certification Bootcamp Part 1
14	Legislative Committee Meeting
15	MGC Board Meeting
16	MISO RTO Committee Meeting
21	MoPEP Committee Meeting
22	Water Distribution - Underground Lab
22	MMMPEP Committee Meeting
22	SPP RTO Committee Meeting
22	Utility Roundtable (Rolla)
23	SWMPEP Committee Meeting
29	Leadership Lab Part 1

May 2026

4	Underground Pipe Locating & Confined Space Training
5	Legislative Committee Meeting
5	Wastewater Entry Level Certification Bootcamp Part 2
7	MPUA Water Council
14	Utility Roundtable (Nixa)

to protect yourself. While increased revenue can look attractive, we want to help everyone protect themselves from any increased costs and potential concerns with stranded costs incurred by the data centers.

Please remember that we are only here to serve our members. So, as issues might come up, we want to be that easy button when you need help. Feel free to reach out any time. I, personally, am not expecting any Y2K-type of emergencies this year.

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Staff updates



Brayden Copeland started as a Student Engineer Assistant at MPUA on January 2. He assists with new power generation projects and works closely with the Senior Power Generation Project Manager. Brayden is studying Electrical Engineering at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He is excited not only to learn about the industry but also to make a difference in local communities.

Dominic Fernandez started as a Student Engineer Assistant on January 20. He assists with new power generation projects and works closely with the Senior Power Generation Project Manager. Dominic is studying at the University of Missouri, pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering, and was raised in Verona, Missouri. Dominic is excited to work with different engineering departments to help make hometown utilities more efficient.





Steve Boggiano started in the accounting department on January 29 in the role of Controller. Prior to MPUA, he spent 16 years in public accounting and most recently served as the CFO of a group of media marketing agencies. Steve is a licensed CPA and earned Bachelor of Science degrees in Accounting and Business Administration from Hannibal-LaGrange University.





John Williams, Director - Energy Supply Services, retired on February 1 after nearly 10 years of service to MPUA.



Cathy Susa, MPUA's Administrative Assistant - Training & Events, has announced her retirement on March 31 after more than 22 years of service.

SAVE THE DATE: 2026 Lineworker Rodeo

MPUA will host its 3rd Annual Lineworker Rodeo on Friday, September 11. View last year's winners and check back for updates this summer at MPUA.org/lineworkerrodeo.



CocoSolar:
Practical solar solutions for local communities

Submitted by MPUA Associate Member: CocoSolar

Competitive Community Scale Solar, known as CocoSolar, was founded with a clear purpose: to help smaller utilities and large industrial users capture the long-term cost advantages of solar energy through right-sized, community-scale projects. Based in Springfield, Missouri, the company focuses exclusively on ground-mounted solar plants ranging from approximately 1 megawatt to 5 megawatts, a niche that often falls between rooftop installations and large utility-scale developments.

CocoSolar is led by founder and owner Mark Treat, who took early retirement in December 2022 after decades in the power industry. Much of Treat's career was spent working for electric cooperatives, where he managed complex capital projects, including serving as project manager on a combined-cycle power plant build and working on coal and gas facilities. That experience now directly informs CocoSolar's approach to solar development, blending utility-grade project discipline with a focus on practical, cost-effective solutions.

The idea for CocoSolar was not a sudden career pivot for Treat. In 2017, he developed a 10-year plan to retire and start his own company, focusing on solar development. That plan came to fruition in 2023, allowing him to launch CocoSolar while maintaining long-standing relationships with many of the same contractors, engineers, and industry partners he worked with during his utility career. This continuity gives CocoSolar a deep understanding of how utilities evaluate risk, cost, and long-term asset performance.

CocoSolar pursues turnkey engineering, procurement, and construction projects for utilities, primarily within Missouri and neighboring states that are within about a four-hour drive of Springfield. The company offers both fixed-tilt and single-axis tracking systems, allowing projects to be tailored to site conditions, budgets, and production goals. By focusing on the 1–5 MW range, CocoSolar targets projects that are large enough to deliver meaningful energy cost savings, yet small enough to remain manageable for local utilities.

One of the key advantages of this project size is interconnection. In many cases, a 1–5 MW solar plant can interconnect directly to a utility's distribution system, avoiding the lengthy and expensive regional transmission organization generator interconnection agreement process. This can significantly reduce both timelines and costs, making solar more accessible for smaller utilities and public entities.

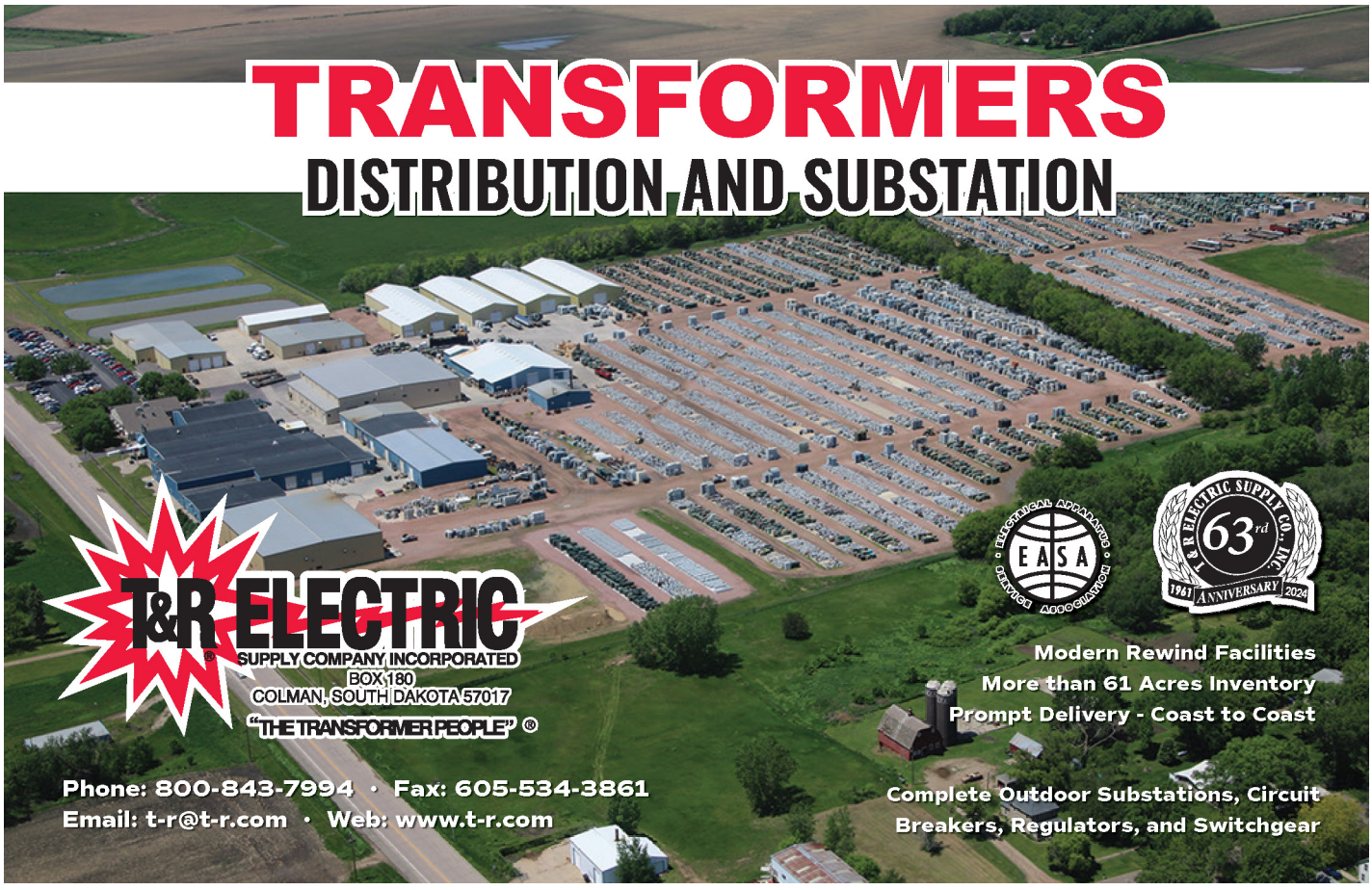
The current market presents both opportunity and urgency. There is a national boom in solar development as utilities seek to place projects into service before significant federal tax incentives begin to phase out. However, in Missouri, smaller utility-scale solar projects in the 1–5 MW range are not being bid as frequently as larger developments. At the same time, utilities are heavily focused on capacity needs, driving substantial activity in combustion turbine projects. Treat is currently working as a resident engineer on a combustion turbine build. While that work is rewarding, CocoSolar's goal is to move community-scale solar projects into construction before tax credits expire.

Federal incentives are a major part of CocoSolar's value proposition. Using American-made components and starting construction before the tax credit deadlines can qualify projects for a 40 percent "direct pay" incentive from the federal government, with some locations reaching as high as 50 percent. For public power and water utilities, this direct pay structure can dramatically improve project economics.

CocoSolar does not market directly to electric utilities that are on 100 percent power supply contracts. In those cases, the company works through wholesale suppliers like MPUA. With few exceptions, CocoSolar is already in communication with most Missouri electric utilities that are not fully supplied under long-term contracts.

An emerging focus for the company is outreach to water and wastewater utilities. These utilities often have large, steady electrical loads and, when served by investor-owned utilities, frequently pay higher electric rates than municipally owned electric systems that buy power at wholesale. For this reason, Treat believes the solar value proposition for water utilities can be especially strong.

CocoSolar encourages interested utilities to explore whether solar is a good fit for the property they already own. The company offers no-cost evaluations to assess site suitability and potential savings. For more information, visit cocosolar.com, email mark.treat@cocosolar.com, or stop by CocoSolar's booth at the Water and Wastewater Tech Summit.





Ashton Day,
Manager - Communications
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Keeping affordability at the center of customer support

Municipal utilities take pride in serving their communities, not just by delivering reliable service, but by being a trusted local partner when customers need help. As national discussions surrounding affordability continue, many utilities are beginning to ask an important question: How can we best support customers if additional financial assistance is needed?

While that answer is up to each utility, it's clear that preparation matters. Hometown utilities that begin planning now will be better positioned to help customers manage their energy costs, stay connected, and weather financial challenges. To support those efforts, MPUA has developed and updated several resources designed to help members assist customers through education, conservation, and local assistance programs.

Empowering customers through energy efficiency and conservation

One of the most effective ways utilities can help customers is by empowering them with tools and information to reduce energy usage. Even small changes, such as weatherizing a home, upgrading lighting, or adjusting daily habits, can make a meaningful difference in monthly bills.

MPUA has updated a collection of public outreach resources focused on energy efficiency and conservation, available at MPUA.org/PublicOutreach. These materials are designed to be easy for utilities to use and adapt, whether that means sharing tips in a newsletter, posting on social media, or incorporating information into bill inserts and community events.

By proactively promoting efficiency and conservation, utilities can help customers stretch their dollars further, reduce energy demand, and gain a greater sense of control over their usage, which are benefits especially critical for households facing financial pressure.

Planning for local assistance programs

In addition to conservation efforts, many hometown utilities are exploring ways to strengthen or help establish local assistance programs that can serve as a safety net for customers in need. These programs can be particularly valuable if federal funding and assistance becomes more limited or harder for customers to access.

While an assistance program should be administered by a qualified third party, it's valuable for the utility to help share the program's design to ensure it aligns with local needs. To help members navigate this process, MPUA has developed a Utility Assistance Program Guide, available at MPUA.org/MemberResources. This guide walks utilities through key considerations for creating or enhancing a local assistance program, including program structure, funding options, administration, and communication strategies.

Whether a community is starting from scratch or looking to refine an existing program, the guide provides practice insights and examples that reflect the unique role municipal utilities play in their communities.

MPUA is here to help

MPUA remains committed to supporting members as they navigate affordability challenges. The resources available on our website are designed to be practical, adaptable, and responsive to evolving needs. As conditions change, MPUA will continue to update and expand tools that help members serve customers effectively. Don't hesitate to reach out to MPUA staff if additional or specific materials are needed.

By planning ahead and making use of available resources, hometown utilities can continue doing what they do best: keeping essential services affordable, accessible, and rooted in communities they serve, no matter what lies ahead.

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Rebecca Eichelberger,
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MPUA's 2026 policy priorities:

Strengthening local utilities, empowering communities

Missouri's locally owned utilities play a vital role in powering, connecting, and sustaining communities across the state. They power homes, connect schools and keep communities running smoothly with electricity, water, wastewater, natural gas, broadband, and more. These services are not just infrastructure. They are the lifeblood of towns, keeping people safe, healthy, and connected.

In 2026, the Missouri Public Utility Alliance will continue its work to protect local control, strengthen infrastructure, and ensure every Missourian has access to reliable and affordable services. MPUA's 2026 Policy Statements outline the issues the organization advocates for across every utility sector.

Local control and community accountability

Local control remains central to MPUA's mission. Utilities governed by local boards or city councils answer directly to the people they serve, rather than distant investors or regulators. MPUA supports policies that protect that authority, recognizing that one size does not fit all when it comes to Missouri communities. Every town has its own story and its own needs, and maintaining space for local voices is a priority.

Infrastructure investment and financing tools

Maintaining and upgrading utility systems requires sustained investment. MPUA supports grants and low-interest loan programs that help communities reinvest in their infrastructure. At the federal level, this includes protecting municipal bonds, tax credits, and key funding sources. At the state level, MPUA backs programs that help utilities plan for growth and reinvest in essential systems. Strong infrastructure today supports stronger communities in the future.

Reliable, affordable energy

Energy reliability and affordability remain essential. MPUA supports an all-of-the-above approach that allows communities to balance energy resources based on local needs, including coal, hydropower, natural gas, and emerging technologies such as next-generation nuclear. The organization also supports thoughtful expansion of transmission, fair integration of distributed energy, and policies that keep rates affordable for customers.

Safe drinking water and clean, safer systems

Clean water is fundamental to public health. MPUA supports science-based policies that protect Missouri's water resources while recognizing the operational and financial challenges local utilities face. The focus remains on practical policies that safeguard public health and help communities provide safe and reliable water without placing unnecessary burdens on residents.

Regulatory policy

Regulations play an important role, but they must be workable at the local level. MPUA advocates for rules that are practical, achievable, and grounded in real-world conditions. By working with lawmakers and regulators, the organization seeks to ensure utilities can comply effectively while still protecting health, safety, and the environment.

Climate and environmental policy

MPUA supports progress on climate and environmental goals while maintaining reliability and affordability. Local utilities need flexibility to adopt solutions that fit their communities. Sustainability efforts are most effective when they are practical, locally driven, and responsive to community needs.

Security and resilience

Missouri's utilities face growing challenges, from cybersecurity threats to severe weather. MPUA supports efforts to strengthen critical infrastructure through funding, technical assistance, and reasonable security standards. The emphasis remains on practical measures that enhance resilience and keep communities safe.

Broadband for all communities

Reliable broadband access is now as essential as electricity and water. MPUA supports expanding affordable, high-quality broadband service across Missouri, particularly in rural and underserved areas. By prioritizing local decision-making and flexible funding, communities can strengthen economic development, education, and access to health care.

Every policy priority pursued by MPUA ties back to a single goal: empowering Missouri communities to deliver reliable, affordable, and sustainable utility services through local ownership. The organization engages at both the state and federal levels to ensure local perspectives are represented, reinforcing that hometown priorities belong in every conversation about utility policy.

New member resources available online

MPUA always represents your interests in the Capitol, but it makes a huge difference when local utilities tell their side of the story. MPUA put together a set of instructions for city utility staff members to testify online. View these resources at MPUA.org/ legislative-updates.

How MPUA advocates for you

MPUA combines local expertise with a statewide and national presence to advance policy priorities.

- At the state Capitol, MPUA meets with lawmakers and agencies to support programs that strengthen Missouri utilities and protect local control.
- In Washington, D.C., MPUA works with Missouri's congressional delegation and federal partners to advance policies that benefit municipal utilities.
- With members, MPUA equips local utilities to share their stories and participate in advocacy through real-world examples, letters, and grassroots engagement.
- Together, these efforts amplify the voice of Missouri's public utilities and ensure local priorities are represented in every policy discussion.



Utilities prepare for incoming data centers

by Lindsay James, MPUA Communications Coordinator

Across the region, municipal utilities are increasingly being approached by data center developers drawn to reliable public power systems and available land. For hometown utilities, these projects can feel both promising and daunting. They often represent loads unlike anything a community has served before, raising questions about reliability, rate increases, and threats to local resources.

At MPUA, more members are asking the same fundamental question: How do we engage in these conversations in a way that protects our communities while still leaving room for opportunity?

Recent projects in West Memphis, Arkansas, and Independence, Missouri, offer practical insight into how municipal utilities can navigate that balance.

Opportunity meets preparation

In West Memphis, the city's partnership with Google grew not from a targeted recruitment effort, but from readiness. Bob Atkins, General Manager of West Memphis Utilities, said the city happened to have a site that piqued Google's interest. The result is a $4 billion data center campus spanning roughly 1,100 acres, with construction underway and full completion expected in 2027.

"We didn't really pursue this data center," Atkins said. "We were blessed with having a site that was perfect for their needs. We decided to work with Google because we saw the vision and the future benefits that this development had for the community."

That decision has already produced ripple effects beyond the data center itself. Construction is expected to span three years and involve hundreds of workers, driving business to local hotels, restaurants, and suppliers.

"You cannot buy concrete in West Memphis because they are so busy supplying the project," Atkins said. "That is huge for a local business."

Atkins noted that the Google project represents the largest single private investment in Arkansas history, a reality that was initially overwhelming for a city the size of West Memphis. The key, he said, was treating the project as a long-term partnership rather than a short-term win.

"Our approach was that we wanted Google to be in West Memphis for a very long time," Atkins said. "We wanted to be thorough in our negotiations and collaborate to arrive at equitable solutions that worked for West Memphis and Google."

When the conversation gets real

In Independence, discussions followed a different but equally instructive path. Joe Hegendeffer, Director of Independence Power and Light, said early conversations focused on whether a data center project might be possible. The hypothetical became reality when Nebius, a European corporation that develops cloud management systems for AI, proposed plans for a 2.5-million-square-foot data center on 400 acres of land.

"We shifted from discussion on power availability and schedule to terms and conditions with a team of lawyers," Hegendeffer said. "Instead of discussing possibilities, we started talking about promises, delivery, and cost."

The negotiations that followed required intense coordination across city leadership, economic development staff, and the utility department. Hegendeffer said city leaders were engaged throughout the process as final decision-makers, while negotiations on the power side fell directly to the utility.

Designing agreements that protect ratepayers

Through well-planned agreements, both utilities emphasized the importance of protecting existing customers. Data centers often bring public concern that rates will rise, or resources will be stretched thin. Atkins said this narrative surfaced early in West Memphis, but the project has unfolded differently.

"From the beginning of this project, both the City and Google had a desire to not have any negative impacts on reliability and rates for our citizens," he said. "Google has been financially responsible for all infrastructure that is required to serve their facility."

In Independence, Hegendeffer noted that similar fears surfaced among residents. Many worried that the project would increase their electric bills and consume all of the community's water resources. Addressing this required careful rate design and transparency.

"One of the biggest things was understanding what we were willing to bend on and what was non-negotiable," Hegendeffer said. "The number one thing is don't promise a rate. Make it so the rate is adjustable as future energy prices move, transmission costs move, and you can account for inflation."

Hegendeffer also noted that the data center will utilize a closed-loop system to reuse the same supply of water in a continuous cycle.

Up to $100 million in transmission upgrades will be included in the



(left): Detailed renderings of the data center in Independence and more planning documents can be viewed by interested parties at independencemo.gov/data-center-faqs.

generation project. These costs are covered by the project developers and passed through the Power Purchase Agreement and Energy Service Agreement, meaning the data center ultimately pays for them through those agreements. If the required upgrades exceed the $100 million allowance, all parties will return to negotiations to determine how to handle the additional costs.

The long-term positive community impacts can be significant when data center agreements are structured well. Independence leaders are optimistic that the data center, when completed in 2028, will provide direct benefits to residents.

Hegendeffer said Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) funding tied to the data center could add $30 million to $45 million to the city's general fund by 2030, along with tens of millions more for local schools. In West Memphis, Atkins said new revenue streams and infrastructure investments are already helping stabilize electric, water, and wastewater rates.

"Our motivations are ensuring that our customers have the most reliable and cost-effective utility service," Atkins said. "We tend to approach issues from a different perspective than utility providers that have other motivations, such as shareholder return and profit. This has enabled us to collaborate and arrive at a solution that creates great benefits for our community."

Sharing what works

These experiences underscore the value of shared knowledge between MPUA members. To support members navigating similar opportunities, MPUA regularly points utilities to national resources, including the American Public Power Association's guide, What Public Power Needs to Know About Serving Data Centers, which is available on APPA's member website. The guide provides a broader industry framework, but as these projects show, local decision-making, strong partnerships, and clear protections should remain at the heart of every successful approach.

For hometown utilities, data centers are not a one-size-fits-all proposition. But with preparation, transparency, and support, they can be evaluated not as a risk to be feared, but as a possibility to be managed on the community's terms.

When a data center comes knocking: Key steps for municipal utilities

Start with MPUA.
Before making commitments or responding to timelines, contact MPUA for guidance. We are here to help members think through the technical, financial, and community impacts and connect you with resources and peer utilities that have navigated similar projects.

Do your homework on the developer.
Research the company thoroughly. Understand its reputation, track record, and financial stability. Ask whether the project is real or speculative, who is backing it, and whether similar facilities have been successfully completed elsewhere.

Protect your community first.
Always prioritize reliability, rate stability, and long-term impacts for existing customers. Ensure the developer pays for the infrastructure required to serve the project and that costs are not shifted onto residents or small businesses.

Build flexibility into agreements.
Avoid locking in fixed rates or assumptions that may not hold over time. Contracts should account for future changes in energy markets, transmission costs, and inflation to minimize risk to the utility and the community.

Ask about design and neighborhood impacts.
Engage early on facility design. Ask about techniques to reduce environmental and community impacts, including 90-degree downward-facing lighting, sound-dampening construction, water reuse, and thoughtful site layout to limit noise and visual disruption.

Engage city leadership and the public early.
Coordinate with city leadership, economic development staff, and other departments from the start. Transparent communication helps utilities and cities stay ahead of community concerns and shape the narrative.

Remember: walking away is an option.
Not every project is the right fit. If risks outweigh benefits or protections are insufficient, it is always acceptable to pause or walk away. The right project will align with your community's values, capacity, and long-term goals.

> **"We tend to approach issues from a different perspective than utility providers that have other motivations, such as shareholder return and profit. This has enabled us to collaborate and arrive at a solution that creates great benefits for our community."**
>
> -Bob Atkins, General Manager, West Memphis Utilties

Building MO Power:
Marshall Energy Center advances on schedule

Work continues to move steadily forward on the Marshall Energy Center, a cornerstone project of MPUA's Building MO Power initiative which broke ground in July 2025. Over the past several months, significant construction, engineering and procurement milestones have been reached as the project transitions from early site work into major equipment installation and detailed design.

Recent project milestones include:
- Completion of the affected system study for Phase 1 and Phase 2 transmission interconnection.
- Site work and installation of foundations for the two Titan 250 combustion turbines.
- Award of bids for a general contractor to install the turbines and associated electrical and mechanical infrastructure.
- Relocation of the natural gas main serving the site.
- Ongoing transmission line rating study led by Toth and Associates.

Major equipment deliveries began in early December, with more than 40 semi-tractor loads arriving at the site. While one turbine skid sustained damage during transport, Solar Turbines' field service representative team is scheduled to complete onsite repairs, including replacement of the unit's roof assembly, in spring 2026. Building undergrounds have been installed, procurement has been finalized for general service pumps, underground tanks and air compressors, and the final building slab is to be poured this month. The main building structure will be completed in coordination with turbine repairs.

Phase 2 progress includes:
- Release of electrical construction specifications.
- Completion of water balance, underground mechanical detailing and pipe support design issued for review.
- Solicitation of bids for generator step-up transformers to be used at both the Marshall and Hannibal projects.
- Approximately 10 percent completion of the engineer-of-record scope.

The Marshall Energy Center remains on track for a targeted commercial operation date of December 2028.

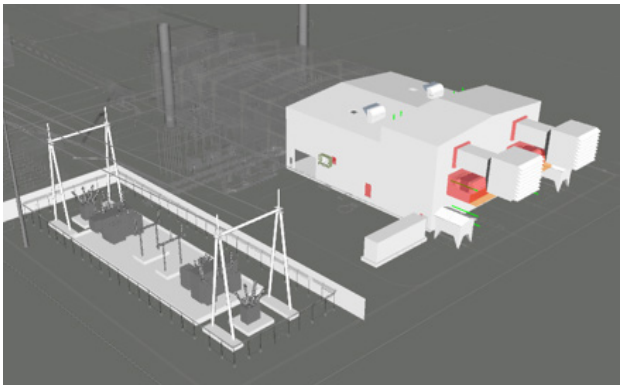




left: In December 2025, major equipment units were delivered and lifted into place at the project site.
top right: One turbine skid sustained damage during transport. Repairs will be made in Spring 2026.
bottom right: Design renderings depict plans for Phase 2 of the Marshall Energy Project.

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MPUA expands hands-on training and services for Missouri's water and wastewater utilities

Training and hands-on support are more critical than ever for Missouri's water and wastewater utilities as systems age, regulations evolve, and workforce challenges continue. At MPUA, training is designed to be practical and directly applicable in the field, with a strong focus on meeting utilities where they are. This approach has been further strengthened since July 2025, when Kevin Wiggins joined the MPUA Member Services team as Manager - Water and Wastewater Services.

Wiggins brings decades of firsthand utility experience to the role, most recently serving as the City of Columbia's Water Production Manager. Before that, he worked as the Water and Wastewater Superintendent and Chief Water Plant Operator for the City of Marceline, gaining experience with both small and mid-sized systems.

His background also includes leading advanced metering and GIS mapping programs, managing staff and capital projects, and working closely with regulators. In addition, Wiggins serves as chair of the Missouri section of the American Water Works Association.

This professional experience shapes how he approaches his work at MPUA, particularly in understanding members' needs. Rather than assuming what utilities need, Wiggins emphasizes listening first.

"One of my top priorities has been getting to engage with and know the members, finding out what their needs are and how we as an organization can help," Wiggins said. "We know who our points of contact are, but we also need to know who the operators are and who's actually running the system."

Focusing on operators and their day-to-day realities directly impacts how MPUA delivers its water and wastewater services. Understanding what happens in the field helps guide offerings like the Technical Assistance program, which supports utilities with operational knowledge, asset management, capital improvement planning, and infrastructure funding. As the program continues to grow, the emphasis remains on practical tools that members can use immediately, whether they are responding to an urgent issue or planning for long-term system needs.

An aging workforce and increased competition for skilled employees have made training and retention more critical than ever. In response, MPUA supports utilities with recruitment, retention, and career development while also paying close attention to how and where training is delivered.

"We're trying to take as much training on the road to our members as we possibly can," Wiggins said. "For operators, this can significantly reduce time spent away from their systems and communities."

A collaboration with Wichita State University's Environmental Finance Center brought "Leading Your Water Utility" workshops to communities across the state in 2025, with more to come in 2026. These half-day classes provide technical, managerial, and financial training for council members, city administrators, clerks, and water utility managers. The goal of these sessions is clarity and relevance, not complexity.

"We focus on explaining in layman's terms what's going on in the industry and what you should be looking at in your water utility," Wiggins explained. "They like the way that we're able to deliver it in easy-to-understand language and not trying to overrun them with technical jargon."

For those able to travel to the MPUA Office and Training Center in Columbia, additional opportunities are available through the Utility Workforce Training Program. Supported by a grant from the Missouri Department of Economic Development, the program offers free courses with travel expenses and tuition covered.

One of the cornerstone offerings is the 10-Day Water Treatment and Distribution Certification Bootcamp, held multiple times each year for current and aspiring operators preparing for Missouri drinking water treatment and distribution certification exams. Advanced wastewater, water distribution, and water treatment courses are also in development.

Training support can also be customized at the local level. MPUA offers tailored, on-site exam preparation for member cities interested in localized group training.

"We'll actually travel to that location and have a one-day, tailored sit-down class with them," Wiggins said. "We can give them the knowledge that they need to take and pass their certification tests."

Beyond training, regulatory compliance and awareness remain a constant need for utilities navigating an increasingly complex environment.

"Regulatory changes are occurring all the time," Wiggins said. "Our legislative team tracks updates from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Natural Resources to help members understand how those changes affect their systems."

Wiggins has played a key role in developing practical outreach templates and standard operating procedures for members, which are accessible online at MPUA.org. "We've done valve and hydrant SOPs, as well as lead and copper," he said. "Our templates are easy for members to fill with their own information and remain compliant."

Wiggins brings a mission-driven mindset to his work at MPUA, with a focus on service, accountability, and operational excellence. That approach resonates with utilities facing growing demands and limited resources. He encourages members to reach out whenever questions arise.

"Just pick up the phone and give me a call or drop me an email," Wiggins said. "I will always make myself available. That's what we're here for."

Looking ahead, MPUA's water and wastewater training and technical assistance will keep growing and adapting as member needs change. With more training opportunities, a stronger focus on workforce development, and leadership rooted in real-world experience, the goal stays the same: giving Missouri's utilities the tools and knowledge they need to succeed.

Meet Kevin Wiggins

- United States Marine Corps veteran
- Chair of Missouri's AWWA section
- Over 20 years of experience working for hometown utilities



Take advantage of these upcoming free classes while grant funding is available.

Underground Pipe Locating and Confined Space Competent Person Training and Rescue
- March 16
- May 4

Wastewater Entry Level Certification Bootcamp
- Part 1: April 13-17
- Part 2: May 5-7

Water Distribution - Underground Lab
- April 22

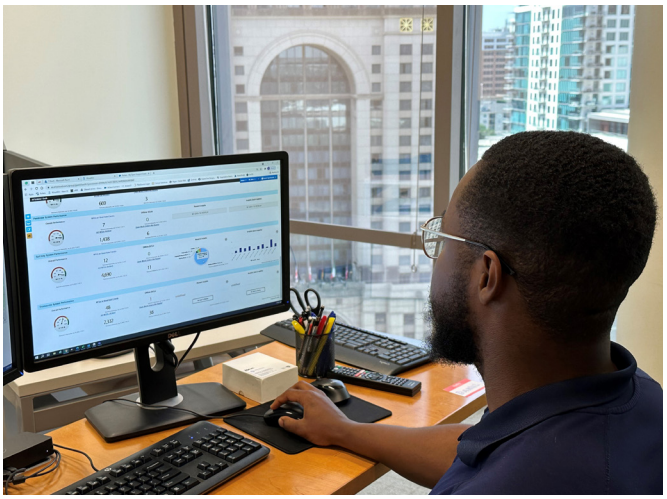
10-Day Water Treatment and Distribution Certification Bootcamp
- 3-part class in June

MPUA.org/Workforce

Advanced Metering Infrastructure plays critical role in future-proofing water utilities

Submitted by MPUA Associate Member: USG Water Solutions

Asset management specialist since 1963, USG Water Solutions is the #1 infrastructure asset management solution provider in the municipal water industry. Our 600+ employees and 11 service centers are located throughout the U.S., serving water utilities in rural and suburban communities, and small cities across the country—offering proprietary and value-creating solutions spanning water and wastewater treatment plants, water storage tanks, water quality, distribution pipeline, concrete infrastructure, and metering applications.



As communities' infrastructure continues to age, one of our most important services for clients—including small- to mid-sized utilities—is the implementation and ongoing management of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) systems that meet their present and future needs, all managed by USG Water throughout the course of each engagement. Our AMI systems consist of smart meters, communications networks, and data management software that enable two-way communication between the utility and its customers' meters. Unlike older manual or drive-by automated meter reading (AMR) programs, AMI provides near-real-time data on water usage and system performance, enabling immediate access to important information such as abnormal usage patterns and/or leaks—data that enables the identification of anomalies such as continuous flow that point to leaks or apparent losses. AMI also offers significant operational efficiency and cost control by eliminating labor, fuel, and vehicle costs associated with AMR. In addition, reducing billing errors and freeing staff to focus on other important jobs from maintenance to customer service can have significant positive impact on operations and ROI.

USG's AMI solutions are designed to be within reach of small- to mid-sized utilities. Our system is fully turnkey, providing the water meters, transmitters, communications network, software and installation with testing. To date, we have installed more than 50 AMI networks and oversee their operations in our Visio Center, where our expert analysts monitor AMI systems 365 days a year, analyzing real time data, troubleshooting potential problems as they arise, and issuing work orders to the field crews to manage and maintain these AMI assets.

Leveraging the power of AMI

An example of our AMI system at work is Raytown Water Company (RWC), a private water company that services the City of Raytown, Missouri. A Missouri corporation, the Raytown Water Company was established 1925 to provide water utility service to industrial, commercial and residential customers primarily in the City of Raytown and certain surrounding areas. A suburb of Kansas City, Raytown has a population of 30,000. Of this, Raytown Water Company serves approximately 6,700 connections, which translates into 13,000 people. Raytown Water Company operates with a staff of 17 employees, 10 of whom are in the field. "We have a limited number of people in the office, who do everything. We wear many, many hats here," says Chiki Thompson, Raytown Water Company vice president.

Raytown decided to implement an AMI system a couple of years ago since it had been manually reading all its meters, walking house to house. This was very time consuming and labor intensive, and it was difficult to find reliable people who want to do a physical job like that on a daily basis, according to Thompson.

In addition to helping alleviate the labor force issue, utilizing the power of AMI also helps relieve the possibility of human errors in reading the meters. This saves time, which in turn also saves the company and rate payers money. Importantly, it also enables Raytown Water's team to tackle other things that need to be done in the field.

Another key benefit is that with its AMI system in place, Raytown Water is able to see daily—even hourly—consumption for its customers and quickly catch leaks and save money, since with AMI, USG Water receives a report and notifies the customer right away if there is any anomaly.
"Before we implemented AMI, we wouldn't know that a customer had a leak until we went out and physically read their meter. Our team would bring the readings to me

every month; I would look at them, and if we saw a really high water bill, we'd alert the customer and find out what was happening. Unfortunately, that leak could have been going on for quite a while before it was spotted. All that has changed now," says Thompson.

USG Water Solutions' ongoing AMI program consisted of installing new smart meters, installing system software and software for the customer portal, managing ongoing system maintenance and upgrades, and more. The first phase was completed in early 2024.

Thompson notes an additional and important point: "The customer service that we receive from USG Water Solutions helps us be better for our customers. One of our mottos is 'providing safe and adequate drinking water since 1925' and they help us maintain that goal."

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Registration Deadline: February 27, 2026.

The MPUA Leadership Lab is a comprehensive professional development series crafted to help current and aspiring utility supervisors sharpen their leadership skills, deepen their industry knowledge, and confidently guide their teams into the future. Whether you're stepping into a supervisory role for the first time or looking to elevate your leadership impact, this training gives you the tools to lead effectively in the municipal utility sector. The three-part series includes:

Managing People – Total Responsible Person Interactive Training

April 29 at the MPUA Office in Columbia

Learn foundational skills to remain positive, productive, and effective in any circumstance. Understand the impact of mindset, including the consequences of "victim" thinking. Build resilience and lead by example at every level of the organization. Identify growth opportunities and foster a positive workplace culture to support employee retention.

Advocacy, Policy, & Regulation

June 9 at the State Capitol & MoDNR in Jefferson City

Gain an understanding of Missouri's legislative and regulatory environment. Learn how policy affects local utilities. Build advocacy skills and confidence in communicating with elected officials. Strengthen relationships with policymakers and regulatory staff.

Local Government Basics for Management

August 12 at the MPUA Office in Columbia

Strengthen communication with staff, peers, elected officials, and the public. Understand key legal and human resources considerations for supervisors. Learn leadership lessons from current and former utility executives.

Apply today! Visit MPUA.org/LeadershipLab

The MPUA Leadership Lab is open to emerging and current leaders from all member utilities. Applicants must serve in a supervisory, lead, or management role, OR be identified as a future leader by their utility. The training series costs $750.

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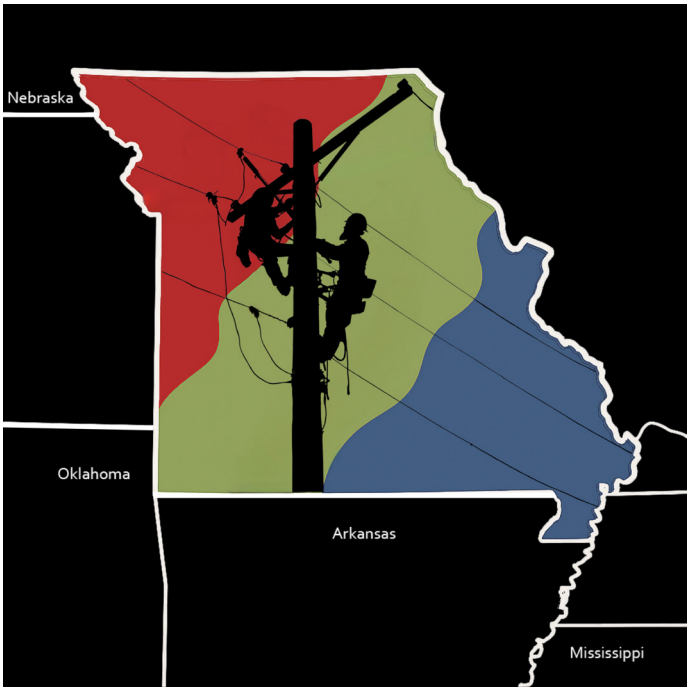
At the end of 2025, 33 Apprentice Lineworkers were certified as Journeyman Lineworkers through MPUA's four-year Apprentice Lineworker Program. Learn more about this program at MPUA.org/apprentice.

Missouri

Brecken Adey, Houston
Trustin Allen, Scobee Powerline
Christopher Bailey, Fulton
Kyle Brewer, Cabool
Caleb Brawley, Scobee Powerline
Jake Brunnert, Carthage
Levi Camp, Sellenriek
Tyler Cantrell, El Dorado Springs
Joseph Carper, Scobee Powerline – advanced program
Joshua Coleman, Nixa
Braden Collins, Scobee Powerline
Richard Curnutt, Waynesville
Connor Dillon, Rolla
Laine Grenier, Scobee Powerline
Tristain Hartman, Carthage
Cole Hoots, Sellenriek
Jarod Hudson, Rock Port
Robert James III, Houston
Nicholas Landreth, West Plains
Ryan Mason, Macon
Jimmy Melton, Ava – advanced program
Donald Moore, Salem
Ethan Morrison, Rolla
Nathan Pace, Centralia
Cody Rowland, Columbia
Drew Rorebeck, Trenton
Hayden Schiller, Kirkwood
Dennis Sherlock Jr, Rock Port
Brandon Slavens, Lebanon
Joseph Stevens, Columbia
Russel Straley, Milan – advanced program
Kristian Terry, Carthage
Heath Williams, Vandalia

Arkansas

Christopher Allbritton, Paragould
Jeffery Chambers, Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative
Logan Douglas, Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative
Cody Jackson, Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative
Wyatt Lowrey, Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative
Casey Lowrimore, Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative
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