



Save these Dates!



**PMEA Spring Superintendents/ Foremen Meeting –
April 11 & 12, 2024 @ The Graduate, State College**

**PMEA Reception – June 2, 2024
@ PSAB Conference, Hershey Lodge**

**PMEA 2023 Annual Conference – September 4 – 6, 2024
@ Omni Bedford Springs, Bedford**

PMEA Business & Governance Workshop (formerly Finance Workshop*)
– September 4, 2024 @ Omni Bedford Springs, Bedford**

2024 Training for Line Crews – ** TENTATIVE DATES **

Advanced Transformer

March 18 & 19 - Lansdale
March 20 & 21 - Chambersburg
March 25 & 26 - Grove City

Crew Leadership

July 15 & 16 - Lansdale
July 18 & 19 - Chambersburg
July 22 & 23 - Grove City

HotStick

May 2 & 3 - Lansdale
May 6 & 7 - Chambersburg
May 9 & 10 - Grove City

Digger

September 23 & 24 - Lansdale
September 26 & 27 - Chambersburg
September 30 & October 1 - Grove City

Substation 101

October 28 & 29 - Lansdale
October 30 & 31 - Chambersburg
November 4 & 5 – Grove City



Stay tuned for more details about the 2024 schedule of classes!

Communicating the Value of Public Power

It is important for the community to understand the benefits of owning a public power utility and the non-utility services your utility provides, such as payments-in-lieu of taxes, hanging holiday decorations and participation in community events. In doing so, you develop goodwill before an outage occurs, a rate increase is proposed, or the sale of the utility is suggested.

All stakeholders—including elected officials, utility management, municipal employees and unions, residential and business customers, and the news media—should be included in the communication process to ensure they understand the benefits of public power and the utility's contributions to the community.

Most importantly, develop a reputation for presenting information in a clear and straightforward manner, including both good news and bad. If your customers know they can trust the information you provide, then they will listen to your arguments in a sellout discussion.

A. Crafting Your Message

When communicating your utility's value, crafting the right message is essential. Effective messages focus on these areas:

- Values of the community, and how the electric utility upholds these values.
- Values of the utility, and how these values benefit your community.
- Strengths of the utility, and how these strengths reinforce your values.

One at a time

In building your utility's brand, you want a message that is clear, concise, and memorable. If you put out too much information at once, you will create information overload. When that happens, people will remember only one or two of your messages—or may tune out your communication entirely, absorbing none of it.

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Communicating Value (continued)

1. Values of the Community

What does your community value? And how does your utility uphold and support these values? Focusing on community values is a great way to show that the utility is an integral part of the community and reminds citizens that the utility is a community asset.

A few examples of community values, and how the utility might support these, include:

- **Independence and self-reliance.** Do your citizens pride themselves on being self-reliant? You might want to emphasize local control—your community meets its own energy needs because you have a public power utility.
- **Environmental stewardship and leadership.** Is your community “green”? Talk about ways your utility supports those goals—through conservation, energy efficiency or renewable energy programs, or through efforts to help minimize the impact you have on parks and waterways in your community.
- **Friendly, being good neighbors.** Does your community take pride in the fact that residents are friendly and always helping each other out? That’s a perfect opening to highlight your customer service and community engagement activities. Talk about your customer outreach, and the community activities you sponsor or participate in. You are not just another nameless corporation; you are a neighbor.
- **Future-looking and forward-thinking.** Is your community up to date on current events and fast to adopt new technologies? You could talk about what your utility is doing to prepare for the future—whether through new technologies, or other changes to help the utility (and community) succeed over the next 10, 20 or 30 years.

2. Values of the Utility

Tell your utility’s story. Define your utility’s values and what they mean for the community.

You may think your community already knows who you are and what you do—after all, you have been doing it for years—but you cannot assume your customers know who you are.



Clearly, public power utilities

can and must do better at telling our story—and we have a good story to tell. Themes you may want to emphasize include:

- **Service-oriented** – The utility is owned by its customers, and exists solely to serve those customers.
- **Community-owned** – Because it is owned by the community, the utility helps to advance the good of the whole community.
- **Local control and decision-making** – Decisions are made locally, reflecting the community’s needs and values.
- **Not-for-profit** – Since it does not have separate shareholders to please, the utility can focus on its core operations of providing safe, reliable electricity to its customers with no divided incentives.
- **Responsive** to the community because you are part of the community.

3. Strengths of the Utility

Another effective message is to focus on your strengths: let your community know what you do best. This type of messaging is most effective when paired with the values-based messaging discussed above, but even without that, promoting your strengths is a good way to communicate your value to the community.

Strengths-based communication may emphasize:

- **Electric rates** – If your rates are lower than other utilities—particularly compared to your neighboring utilities—let your customers know. Make sure you put the message in terms your customers can easily understand. Most customers think about their utility bill; they do not think about the rate they pay per kilowatt-hour. Identify the average monthly savings your customers realize because they are served by your public power utility.
- **Reliability** – If your service is more reliable than nearby utilities—you have fewer outages, and restore service faster—you have bragging rights. Customers think their electric bill is the most important thing they care about from their electric utility only until the lights go out. If you are providing more reliable service, let them know.
- **Customer service** – You pride yourself on your outstanding customer service, but if your customers interact with you only when they pay their monthly bills, they may not appreciate the value of your service. Let your customers know about the high-caliber customer service you offer—including what programs you offer and options for how customers can reach you.
- **Awards** – Winning an award or getting a utility-wide recognition is a perfect opportunity to reach out and let your customers know what you have done to achieve it. Whether it is recognition for your reliability, safety record, customer service, community service activities, or for your sound governance or financial management, let your customers know about your achievement.

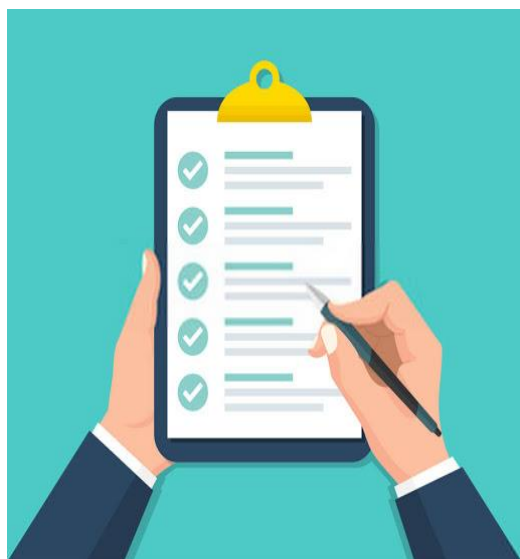
Excerpt from The Future of Your Utility: Positioning Your Community to Succeed in a Sellout Evaluation, American Public Power Association.

NEF Annual Report Available

New Year, New NEF Annual Report! The National Energy Foundation is pleased to present its 2023 Annual Report. Unlike a traditional business report, NEF is enhancing our message by highlighting the empowering stories behind our programs. In this report, you will learn how we are elevating energy literacy. Read the report at <https://nef1.org/annual-reports/>.

Participate in APPA Survey

Please participate in [APPA's 2022 Survey of Payments and Contributions to State and Local Government](#). The information collected on this form is used by APPA to quantify the benefits public power utilities provide to their state and local communities. The direct payments, free services, and other contributions municipal electric utilities provide to local government can be a significant portion of their electric operating revenues. However, these services are commonly under-reported or not reported at all. One purpose of this survey is to help public power utilities recognize and account for all the contributions they are making to their communities. This is essential information to have available to demonstrate to customers and the local government the full benefits of public power. In addition, the information collected on this form will help APPA counter arguments of competitors and opponents that public power utilities do not pay taxes, and therefore do not contribute to local communities.



Results from this survey will be used to create [APPA's Public Power Pays Back report](#), which is a free report that highlights public power's contributions to their communities through property-like taxes, payments in lieu of taxes, transfers to the general fund, and free or reduced cost services provided to states and cities. This data is also used in [APPA's Statistical Report](#) to highlight public power's benefit to the community.

For us to summarize the survey results in a timely manner, submissions are due **March 21, 2024**. Utilities can save their progress in completing the survey by clicking a link at the top of each survey page.

APPA Legislative Rally

It is not too late to register for the APPA Legislative Rally on February 26 – 28 in Washington, DC. Issues critical to public power will be highlighted through sessions and visits with Congressional members. PMEA is arranging meetings with members of the Pennsylvania delegation who represent our public power communities. If you are unable to join us in DC, consider arranging a meeting with your Congressional members in your community or at his district office. APPA and PMEA are happy to provide resources and talking points for your meetings. PMEA staff is also happy to come to participate in your meetings.

Pennsylvania Microgrids Study

Webinar: Pennsylvania Microgrids For Resilience Study - Microgrid Deployment Strategy
Identifying opportunities for deploying microgrids to increase the overall resilience of Pennsylvania

The Energy Programs Office of the PA Department of Environmental has commissioned the Smart Electric Power Alliance (SEPA) to develop a study that defines statewide resilience needs and evaluates potential microgrid solutions to provide enhanced resilience. The Pennsylvania Microgrids for Resilience Study development will run through June 2024 and EPO is asking for input to best align the results with the needs of people in the Commonwealth.

Continuing off of the landscape review meeting held in December, which kicked off the SEPA / PA DEP Microgrids for Resilience Study, SEPA and PA DEP are hosting another stakeholder meeting to discuss the strategy for deploying microgrids. With the help of stakeholders, they have identified the natural hazards, energy equity metrics, and the types of critical facilities most relevant to the people of Pennsylvania. This next webinar will help prioritize the inputs collected and to continue keeping interested parties updated on this project.

Join PA DEP and SEPA on March 7th from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. ET for the second stakeholder virtual webinar to discuss the microgrid deployment strategy that will inform how to prioritize locations based on the inputs collected from stakeholders in the first stakeholder webinar.

Stakeholders participating in this webinar will be provided an opportunity to:

- Learn about the types of microgrid deployment scenarios and applications
- Provide input on how the data collected will shape the prioritization of sites
- Hear about real-world microgrid examples in Pennsylvania

You can find details about the meeting below:

Date: March 7th, 2024 (11 am to 12:30 pm ET)

Virtual Meeting Instructions: [Zoom Meeting Link](#)

- ID: 97391677110
- Passcode: 896137
- (US) +1 301-715-8592
- Passcode: 896137



PA Opens First Federally Funded EV Charging Station

Last week, federal and state officials announced the completion of the first electric vehicle charging station in Pennsylvania built as part of a \$2.5 billion program to improve EV infrastructure across the country.

The charging station at the Pilot Travel Center on Route 315 in Pittston, Luzerne County is the first of 56 projects in 37 counties slated for construction under the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program.

The U.S. Department of Transportation [awarded Pennsylvania \\$171.5 million](#) for EV charging stations under the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in 2022.

Like the Pilot Travel Center charging station in Luzerne County, the projects administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation are located at gas stations and other businesses directly off major interstate highways.

The milestone project in Pittston, one of the first in the nation under the EV infrastructure project, will help to grow Pennsylvania's economy and ensure the commonwealth is prepared for the next generation of transportation, which will be cleaner, more affordable and more reliable than before, the Shapiro administration said in a statement.

Open to the public since Dec. 21, the \$610,393 Pilot Travel Center charging station was built in collaboration with General Motors. The chargers, installed by electric vehicle charging provider EVgo, allow four vehicles at a time to recharge while drivers have access to restrooms, food, and other conveniences.

The federal EV infrastructure funding helps Pennsylvania and the federal government move toward its goal of expanding EV charging facilities along 1,800 miles of interstate highways in the commonwealth designated as Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFCs). Under federal guidelines, the funds must first be used to build charging stations no more than every 50 miles along the designated routes.

Once the AFCs are fully covered, PennDOT will shift to expanding EV charging infrastructure in communities. A second round of funding will make \$22 million available to fill the remaining gaps in the AFC charging network, the Shapiro administration said in a statement.

** Excerpt from Peter Hall, [Pennsylvania Capital-Star](#), republished online or in print under Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.*

Associate Member Spotlight

NovaTech Automation designs and manufactures automation solutions for the evolving power grid, inside and outside the substation. We provide solutions for SCADA, substation automation, grid automation, power metering, and precision timing. Our rugged Orion, Bitronics, and Kronos product lines deliver reliable performance in demanding power environments. All are made in the USA and supported by a 10-year warranty. NovaTech

products can be combined with professional services for configuration, packaging, installation, commissioning, and training to reduce the time to implement your projects. The company was founded in 1982 and you can learn more by visiting the website at <https://www.novatechautomation.com/>. You may also contact Mark Matassa, Northeast Regional Sales Manager, mark.matassa@novatechautomation.com.



2024 Will Be Better If You Share Your News....

Please share with us your exciting new projects, photos, personnel updates, and any other news you want to spread the word about. We know there is much happening in our member communities! Your submissions should be sent to bosak@papublicpower.org at any time and we will use them in upcoming editions. We also welcome your suggestions for topics of interest for our newsletters.

Pennsylvania Municipal Electric Association

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