



Save these Dates!

PMEA Spring Superintendents/ Foremen Meeting
March 26 & 27, 2026 @ The Nittany Lion Inn, State College
Registration now open

PMEA Reception – June 1, 2026
5:00 – 7:00 pm @ PSAB Conference, Hershey Lodge

PMEA 2026 Annual Conference – September 9 – 11, 2026
Omni Bedford Springs, Bedford

PMEA Business Workshop
– September 9, 2026 @ Omni Bedford Springs, Bedford

2026 Training for Line Crews
Registration opens prior to each class

Customer Service (*open to all municipal departments*)
March 10 – Grove City
March 12 – Chambersburg
March 13 – Lansdale

Overhead Troubleshooting
April 9 & 10 – Grove City
April 13 & 14 – Chambersburg
April 15 & 16 – Lansdale

Advanced Transformer
June 4 & 5 – Grove City
June 8 & 9 – Chambersburg
June 10 & 11 – Lansdale

Underground Troubleshooting & Grounding
September 14 & 15 – Grove City
September 21 & 22 – Chambersburg
September 23 & 24 - Lansdale

Safety for Lineworkers
October 22 & 23 – Grove City
October 26 & 27 – Chambersburg
October 28 & 29 – Lansdale



Longtime Borough Manager Honored at Final Council Meeting

Harold Pudliner, Weatherly Borough Manager, was celebrated by state and local officials at his final borough council meeting in December as he prepared to retire after nearly 30 years of service.

Pudliner, who joined the borough in 1997, will officially step down on December 31. His last meeting brought an outpouring of recognition, with resolutions and citations presented by representatives from state, county, and municipal government.

An Air Force veteran with backgrounds in architecture and electronics, Pudliner brought 25 years of business experience when he assumed the roles of borough manager and treasurer 28 years ago. His responsibilities expanded to include zoning officer and code enforcement officer. Beyond his official duties, he founded and directed the Weatherly Events Committee and Weatherly Ambulance Board, chaired the Audubon Auto Tour, and served in leadership positions with the Tourist Promotion Board, county Redevelopment Authority, Planning Commission, and Northeast Pennsylvania Alliance.



L-R State Representative Doyle Heffley, Senator David Argall, Harold Pudliner, Carbon County Commissioner Michael Sofranko, Carbon County Commissioner Wayne Nothstein and Weatherly Borough Mayor, Norman Richie.

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Pudliner Honored (*continued*)

In 2023, Pudliner received the **Seven Hats Award from American Municipal Inc.**, which honors utility managers from smaller communities whose responsibilities extend beyond typical large-system roles. He followed this achievement by receiving the **American Public Power Association's Larry Hobert Seven Hats Award** in 2024, a national leadership honor.



Weatherly Borough Mayor Norman Richie with Harold Pudliner

Pudliner was recently featured in Land & People Magazine's article "Fish Tales Come True," which documented how improved water quality has brought fish back to a local stream, enhancing recreational opportunities along the trail to the gorge.

When presented with honors, Pudliner deflected credit to his team and community. "I am really honored, but I couldn't do this work alone," he said. "I have a wonderful staff and the people of the town that volunteered for the committees and everything else, they made it happen. I just showed them the way."

Weatherly Mayor Norman Richie presented a proclamation recognizing Pudliner's dedicated service and congratulating him on his retirement.

In his final remarks, Pudliner again emphasized the collaborative nature of his work. "A person can't do this alone," he said. "It takes the people behind you. I have to salute my borough councils that I have worked with, and again my staff, and the people of Weatherly, that help make us achieve what we did achieve. I am very humbly grateful for this."

Source: [Times News \(tnonline.com\)](https://www.tnonline.com), December 26, 2025. Photos courtesy of the Borough of Weatherly.

PUC Votes to Advance Rulemaking to Modernize Electric Interconnection Regulations

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) voted 5-0 to advance the development of a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NOPR) aimed at modernizing the Commission's electric interconnection regulations to reflect today's evolving energy landscape.

The motion offered by PUC Vice Chair Kimberly Barrow directs the PUC's Law Bureau, in consultation with the Bureau of Technical Utility Services, to develop a proposed rulemaking that would conduct a **universal review of interconnection regulations**, including how new electric load, upgrades to existing load, and distributed energy resources are connected to the distribution system.

The initiative builds on the Commission's earlier work responding to **Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Order 2222**, which opened wholesale electricity markets to distributed energy resources, while recognizing that Pennsylvania's interconnection rules serve a broader range of purposes beyond wholesale market participation.

"At the end of the day, this work is about giving Pennsylvanians clarity and confidence as they navigate a rapidly changing energy system," said Vice Chair Kimberly Barrow. "Whether a family is adding new electric equipment, a small business is expanding, or a community is exploring new energy technologies, clear and modern interconnection rules help ensure those investments can move forward safely, fairly, and with the consumer in mind."



Why This Matters

Pennsylvania's current interconnection regulations were adopted in 2006 as part of the Commonwealth's implementation of the **Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards (AEPS) Act**. While those rules helped support early growth in alternative energy, the PUC noted that significant changes in technology, load growth, and grid use over the past two decades warrant a comprehensive update.

Among the issues the proposed rulemaking is expected to examine:

- **Modern energy technologies:** Existing interconnection rules focus on alternative energy systems as defined under the AEPS Act and do not fully account for the growth of battery storage and other emerging technologies.
- **Changing grid demands:** Increasing electrification and new electric loads are placing additional demands on the distribution system, underscoring the need for clear, consistent interconnection standards.
- **Wholesale and distribution coordination:** Ongoing efforts by PJM Interconnection to revise interconnection policies may place greater responsibility on states for projects connecting at the distribution level, highlighting the importance of up-to-date state regulations.
- **Clarity for consumers and businesses:** Clear interconnection rules can help individuals, families, and businesses better plan for new electric uses, on-site generation, and system upgrades.

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PUC Interconnection (*continued*)

“As our energy system evolves, the Commission has a responsibility to make sure our rules keep pace in ways that protect consumers,” said PUC Chairman Steve DeFrank. “By continuing to advance this work, we are focused on maintaining reliability and affordability while providing the regulatory certainty that households and businesses need as they plan for future energy use.”

The Commission emphasized that this effort is **separate from and does not replace** the PUC’s active proceeding addressing FERC Order 2222. Instead, it is intended to ensure that Pennsylvania’s broader interconnection framework reflects current technologies, customer needs, and grid conditions.

Next Steps

The Law Bureau and Bureau of Technical Utility Services will begin drafting a proposed Notice of Proposed Rulemaking consistent with today’s action. Once issued, the proposal will be published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin, opening a public comment period and providing stakeholders an opportunity to provide input.

Additional information will be posted on the PUC’s website as the rulemaking moves forward.

Source: PUC Press Release, December 18, 2025.

Electric Industry Outlook: 6 Trends to Watch in 2026

The electric power industry faces a pivotal year in 2026, marked by dramatic policy shifts and unprecedented demand challenges. The recently passed One Big Beautiful Bill Act has eliminated most clean energy and electric vehicle subsidies, forcing utilities and energy developers to rapidly adjust their strategies.

1. Data Centers Drive Unprecedented Demand Growth

The surge in artificial intelligence has created intense pressure on the electric grid, particularly in markets like Texas and the Mid-Atlantic. Data centers seeking to power AI programs are flooding interconnection queues, prompting states to introduce new large load tariffs designed to filter out speculative connection requests.



The Department of Energy has asked federal regulators to establish new rules by April 30 governing how these massive loads connect to the grid, potentially setting up conflicts between state and federal authorities. However, some experts warn this

could mirror the early 2000s tech bubble, when the power industry overestimated internet electricity needs and built unnecessary infrastructure that left ratepayers burdened with underutilized assets.

Early signs suggest data center demand may grow more slowly than projected. Some utilities with stricter interconnection rules have seen their large load queues shrink by over 50 percent. The Energy Information Administration has already revised down its 2026 generation growth forecast, and PJM Interconnection, the nation’s largest grid operator, indicates its upcoming load forecast could be significantly lower than previous estimates.

2. Renewables Continue Growth Despite Policy Headwinds

Despite the change in federal policies under the Trump administration, renewable energy sources continue dominating new generation capacity additions each month. Industry sources expect renewables to expand their share of the power system due to immediate electricity demand.

The sector faces significant obstacles, including rollbacks of clean energy tax credits, new foreign entity restrictions affecting supply chains, additional approval layers for projects, and frozen construction on all offshore wind farms. The administration has explicitly stated its preference for oil, gas, coal, and nuclear power over wind and solar.

3. Load Flexibility Emerges as Grid Management Tool

With new generation capacity requiring years to build, utilities and large customers are exploring innovative solutions. Some are examining ways for data centers and other major loads to connect faster by agreeing to reduce consumption during peak demand periods through operational shutdowns, on-site generation, or compensating other users to curtail usage.

This flexibility concept extends beyond data centers. The proliferation of rooftop solar, home batteries, electric vehicles, and smart appliances, combined with sophisticated management tools, has enabled virtual power plants where thousands of individual customers can participate in grid balancing.

4. Massive Infrastructure Spending Faces Scrutiny

Investor-owned utilities have entered an infrastructure investment surge, with industry analysts projecting spending between 1.1 trillion and 1.4 trillion dollars by 2030, roughly double the previous decade’s expenditure.

However, utilities face growing challenges including ratepayer backlash and regulatory skepticism. Deloitte analysts warn that traditional funding mechanisms through rate cases and debt or equity issuance may prove inadequate for planned investments. Rising electricity bills in recent years could limit room for additional rate increases. Public power and cooperative utilities face similar pressures, with analysts projecting a negative outlook for 2026.

Energy Trends (*continued*)

5. Electricity Prices Continue Climbing

Despite President Trump's 2024 campaign promise to halve energy prices within 18 months, electricity costs continue rising. The Energy Information Administration projects that the national average residential price will reach 18 cents per kilowatt hour in 2026, representing a 37 percent increase from 2020.

Price increases vary significantly by region. Research from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory found that after inflation adjustment, 31 states experienced real price declines from 2019 to 2024, while 17 saw increases. The study also found that load growth generally reduced retail electricity prices.

However, residential rates, regardless of how they compare to inflation, have risen faster than commercial and industrial rates, shaping public perceptions about fairness regardless of inflation comparisons.

6. Energy Storage Becomes Standard Practice

Energy storage has evolved from a niche renewable energy supplement to a core component of utility planning. The industry saw record storage additions in 2025 as battery prices declined.

Utility-scale storage systems primarily serve price arbitrage functions but increasingly support frequency regulation, peak shaving, load management, and backup reliability. This trend will likely accelerate as data centers face incentives or requirements to reduce usage during peak demand or grid instability.

Storage emerged relatively unaffected by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act compared to renewables, though it faces supply chain complications from tariffs and foreign entity restrictions. Industry projections estimate 92.9 gigawatts of storage capacity will be installed over the next five years, despite near-term declines in utility-scale and residential segments.

Source: Meris Lutz, Robert Walton, Ethan Howland, and Diana DiGangi. [Utility Dive](#), January 8, 2026

PJM Governors and National Energy Council Announce Agreement on Data Centers

The National Energy Dominance Council announced an agreement today with 13 Mid-Atlantic governors to urge PJM to make electricity more affordable for residential customers and strengthen grid reliability.

According to the statement of principles, the Trump administration and the governors agree to urge PJM to hold a special "Reliability Backstop Auction" by September 2026 that would provide a 15-year price guarantee for new capacity resources, and the cost of this new auction would be allocated to load serving entities with new data centers that have not self-procured new capacity or agreed to be curtailable. The governors also agree to use their available authorities to ensure that load serving entities allocate their share of the costs from the new auction to data centers, not to other customers.

The agreement includes several other principles to urge PJM to take actions including: improving load forecasting, continuing speeding up generator interconnection studies, and reforming the capacity market.

PJM was not a party to the new agreement and was not present at the announcement. PJM has already put significant effort in 2025 to develop a Critical Issues Fast Path process, which was intended to address many of the same issues identified in today's agreement between the Trump administration and the governors. FERC had ordered PJM to provide a status update on that Critical Issues Fast Path process by tomorrow, January 17.

To the extent that PJM ultimately agrees to carry out the principles that were agreed to, changes to its tariff must be filed at FERC which must find the changes to be just and reasonable.

Source: American Association of Public Power

PJM Board Calls for Backstop Auction & Possible Price Collar Extension

PJM Board Approves Reliability Backstop Auction

The PJM board said the reliability backstop procurement should be a "transitional measure" for acquiring new power supplies while "the industry and government collectively work to bring more supply to the system to meet an unprecedented growth in demand."

The board directed PJM staff to consider mechanisms that assign costs of a backstop auction to utilities and other load-serving entities that are short on power supplies because of load growth in their service areas. PJM intends to discuss the backstop auction at the next Members Committee meeting. It defines large load as at or above 50 MW at a single point of interconnection.

Although PJM's board views the auction as a temporary measure, Jefferies equity analysts said Tuesday they expect this "to snowball into more." The equivalent of more than 12.5 GW of gas-fired, combined cycle capacity could be built to offset shortfalls for PJM's 2028/29 and 2029/30 capacity auctions, the analysts estimated.

PJM Board (*continued*)

Trump Administration and Governors Intervene

Before the board's announcement, the Trump administration and PJM-state governors issued a joint statement calling for an emergency data center auction and extending price collars on capacity auctions—an "unprecedented action" unveiled at the White House without PJM representation.

Board Directs Market Reforms

The PJM board's broad plan is based on proposals PJM stakeholders offered last year during a Critical Issue Fast Path process aimed at developing rules for large load additions in the grid operator's footprint. PJM initiated the process amid rising data center demand forecasts and tightening supply conditions in its capacity market.

As part of its plan, the board is seeking comments on whether PJM should extend a temporary price collar on its capacity auctions that was in place for the last two auctions.

"A price collar may obscure the market's underlying clearing price and, as a result, could dampen signals needed to support the entry of new supply," the board said. "On the other hand, ... there are legitimate questions regarding whether the current capacity market construct, on its own, is sufficient to incentivize new resource development."

Also, the board directed PJM staff to establish a fast-track interconnection process for large loads that bring their own new generation, rules for curtailing large loads that do not provide their own new power supply, and measures to bolster the grid operator's load forecasts.

Deeper Market Study Ahead

In addition, the board called for a stakeholder process this year to consider changes to PJM's capacity market framework. PJM's system of holding auctions to procure a year's worth of capacity three years ahead of time may no longer be adequate, according to the board.

"On its own, this structure may not provide the stable revenue streams needed to justify new investment in today's volatile and uncertain investment environment, particularly when elevated costs are combined with external constraints or intervention," the board said.

The board directed the PJM staff to assess how the grid operator's energy, reserve and capacity markets can "evolve in a coordinated manner to provide appropriate incentives for both investment and performance."

Source: *Ethan Howland, Utility Dive, January 20, 2026.*

Mark Your Calendars

Mark your calendars for an exceptional networking opportunity this June! PMEA is pleased to host an exclusive reception on **Monday, June 1, at the Hershey Lodge** during the PA State Association of Boroughs Annual Conference.

Whether you are attending the full PSAB Conference or simply available that evening, we extend a warm invitation to all elected and appointed officials to join us. This is your chance to connect with fellow municipal leaders, exchange insights, and strengthen relationships.

We look forward to seeing you there! Complete event details, including time and location within the lodge, will be shared as the date approaches.

Associate Member Spotlight

Lekson Associates Inc. has served the electric utility industry as a premier manufacturers' representative since 1972. The company is dedicated to providing reliable products by representing only those manufacturers in whom we have the highest level of confidence. The Lekson team has many years of experience and understands the changing needs of the electric utility industry. Their experience and technical backgrounds allow them to be of service to our customers and manufacturers both before and after the sale. To learn more, visit lekson.com, or contact Bobby Keating at Bobby.Keating@lekson.com.



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