



Building strong communities through a well-trained workforce

A publication of the Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma

November 2021

Annual Meeting of the Association

Members vote to return association’s name to MESO (Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma)

At the Annual Meeting of the Association Thursday, October 21, members unanimously voted to return the association’s name to Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma (MESO).

“In 2019, we became the Oklahoma Municipal Alliance, and our goal was to expand the training we are known for into other municipal services,” said Keith Skelton, Sallisaw City Manager and out-going Association President. “Our efforts started well, until this little thing called COVID came along.”

“As the pandemic has changed many things in our daily lives, it also changed our plans. We soon came

to realize that our association identified as a Public Power organization.”

“This clarity came about following discussions with members and those we serve. This clarity from our members, prompted the board to refocus our efforts and restore the Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma brand as who we are and who we want to be.”

“Being MESO assures us that Public Power will always be a priority for our organization. But also know, we are also there for non-electric municipal

(see MEMBERS VOTE, page 4)

Fall Conference

Tabletop Exercise provides extensive list of recommendations

One of the main topics of discussion at the 2021 OMA Fall Conference was the severe weather events beginning with the October 2020 Ice Storm.

The conversation included a tabletop exercise with public professionals to lay the groundwork for better planning and response to future events. The session was facilitated by OMA’s Director of Job Training and Safety, Tom Dougherty, and OMA Safety Trainer, Rusty Brown.

“Our public power crews respond well when we call on them,” Dougherty said. “We held this tabletop exercise to make sure that we continue our excellent response and look for ways to improve.”

The scenario for the tabletop exercise was a scenario our members have seen time and time again. A sudden severe winter weather incident.



GRDA’s Trent Fittje and OMA’s Tom Dougherty during the tabletop exercise

(see TABLETOP EXERCISE, page 8)

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“Our Facebook page reflects our name change, follow us!”



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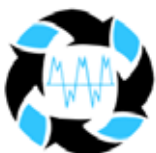
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MESO at 50

MESO refines/defines Oklahoma's Public Power community

This is the third in our series covering the evolution of the Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma over its 50-year history.

With the successful passage of legislation establishing the Oklahoma Municipal Power Authority (OMPA), Chuck Smith left MESO and Shane Woolbright, a circuit rider city manager at the time, was hired as MESO's third executive director, a relationship that would last for 30 years.

"From 1983 to 1986, new wholesale power contracts were in place for most MESO members," Woolbright said. "Significant saving resulted from the creation of OMPA and the freeing of the Grand River Dam Authority from the onerous provisions of the Markham-Ferry Agreement which tied the GRDA to PSO generation."

At the same time, and throughout the 90s, Woolbright's and member efforts focused on strengthening public power's position and recognition with legislators, regulatory agencies, and citizens.

Public power was threatened on a regular basis by Investor-Owned Utilities (IOUs) trying to undermine the individual public power communities. To combat this, MESO members needed to identify a central concept that would unite them.

"The first step was a meaningful and binding mutual aid agreement," Woolbright said. "MESO's Mutual Aid Agreement became a template for public power communities in other states, and the Mutual Aid Program worked. Disaster outage restoration times were superb compared to IOUs.

"Training and certification were the next steps to professionalize electric distribution staffs and create better salaries for lineworkers," he added. "This was done by establishing IBEW-approved apprentice training and backstopping that with on-site training and safety programs that continue today."

To improve system reliability for members, Woolbright and Roger Farrer, OMPA, developed software to allow cities to track reliability and show how well they were doing against IOUs and electric cooperatives.

"The reliability software showed how having local crews cut outage times and improved the system reliability," Woolbright said. The MESO reliability tracking software became the founding program for the American Public Power Association's (APPA) eReliability Tracker program.

With more focus on programming, MESO continued its presence at the state capitol utilizing former Speaker of the House Jim Barker and Andy Keith as lobbyists.

MESO played key roles at the national level also through Woolbright's tenure. He served on the APPA Board of Directors and was an initial member of APPA's PowerPAC, serving on its board for 28 years.

MESO, working with the Southwestern Power Resources Association (SPRA) also helped craft positive legislation affecting the Southwestern Power Administration.

Additionally, MESO aided in coordinating annual meetings between MESO-member city council members and mayors and Oklahoma's Congressional delegation. This often included working closely with SPRA, GRDA and OMPA in hosting field trips for Congressional staff members to show them public power-owned power plants and generation facilities in Oklahoma.

Throughout Woolbright's tenure, programming that improved and enhanced the professionalism and skills of municipal employees were fundamental in solidifying MESO's value to its members. With his retirement at the end of 2012, a new chapter was to begin for MESO.



Save the date

2022 MESO Public Power Conference

April 24 – 26 • Norman, Oklahoma

For providing mutual aid following Hurricane Ida GRDA receives national commendation for electric restoration efforts

The Grand River Dam Authority has received a national commendation from the American Public Power Association for providing mutual aid electric power restoration efforts to the Lafayette (Louisiana) Utilities System as well as the Terrebonne Parish Utilities Department.

In late August, GRDA sent 20 employees to assist these public power utilities in Louisiana, which suffered widespread outages because of Hurricane Ida.

For approximately three weeks, GRDA powerline maintenance, vegetation management, mechanics and law enforcement personnel worked to help local utility crews repair the electric distribution systems that had been damaged by the hurricane.

“We are very fortunate to have the resources and expertise to provide mutual aid to our public power neighbors in their time of need,” said GRDA President/CEO Dan Sullivan. “Mutual aid is foundational to public power, and we know that if the roles were reversed, these neighbors would provide the same kind of aid to GRDA.”

GRDA participates in the American Public Power Association’s Mutual Aid Network, which coordinates with utilities and authorities during widespread power outages.

GRDA is Oklahoma’s largest public power electric utility; fully funded by revenues from electric and water sales instead of taxes. Each day, GRDA strives to be an “Oklahoma agency of excellence” by focusing on the 5 E’s: employees, electricity, economic development, environmental stewardship, and efficiency.



Members Vote

(continued from page 1)

governments as well, and we welcome them to join our organization,” Skelton added. “As we proceed, our goal is to continue to recruit non-electric communities to join our organization for the safety and employee enhancement programs we offer.”

Immediately following the vote, the MESO team began working diligently to update many things, for example, the website, Facebook page, business cards, etc.

“We are excited about restoring our MESO identity, and we anticipate having 'all things MESO' by January 1, 2022,” said Tom Rider, MESO General Manager.

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See "Associates" @ okmainc.com.

Municipal Professionals meet exhibitors at Suppliers Show

OMA's first-ever Suppliers Show – held October 19 in Midwest City, OK – provided municipal professionals the opportunity to meet with suppliers and attend informational sessions.

The entire day was devoted to offering utility professionals opportunities to discuss products and services at length with suppliers. Nineteen suppliers combined to present seventeen product demonstrations.

“For our first effort at a Suppliers Show, we are pleased with our results, and we took away areas of improvements for future events,” said Tom Rider, MESO General Manager.

MESO plans to conduct future one-day Suppliers Shows.

(See page 6 for sponsors and exhibitors)



Skiatook's, Trey Harper, visits with exhibitors at the Suppliers Show.

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OMA Fall Conference

Public Power Professionals attend Fall Conference

Critical issues – severe weather planning, project funding, and cybersecurity – were on the agenda for OMA Fall Conference held recently in Midwest City, OK.

There were multiple sessions addressing severe weather planning.

Lanny Nickell, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer of the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) reviewed lessons learned from the February 2021 Severe Winter Weather event, changes and what utilities can do to prepare.

SPP oversees the bulk electric grid and wholesale power market in the central United States on behalf of a diverse group of utilities and transmission companies in 17 states including Oklahoma.

In July, the SPP Board of Directors approved [“A Comprehensive Review of SPP’s Response to the February 2021 Winter Storm.”](#) The report recommends 22 actions, policy changes and assessments related to fuel assurance, resource planning and availability, emergency response, market

design, operator tools and other critical areas.

GRDA’s Jeff Wells reviewed the SPP’s request to shed load during the February Winter Weather event.

Electric professionals conducted a tabletop exercise where participants discussed what to do at various points of a severe winter weather event: Before storm season, When severe weather is forecast in your area – checklist phase; When a storm hits your service area; and, After the storm passes.

Jody Harris, from the Oklahoma Finance Authority, discussed grant and loan opportunities available to municipalities to fund projects. OMAG’s Kip Prichard discussed the various opportunities available to their members including grants for project funding.

Recognizing October is National Cybersecurity Month – an effort between government and industry to ensure Americans have the resources needed to stay safer and more secure online – Chad Kliewer reviewed cyber security threats. Kliewer is the Chief Information Security Officer at Pioneer Telephone and President, InfraGard Oklahoma Member Alliance.



Opening Speaker, Dr. Chuck Jackson, gathers attendees during his presentation on Positive Leadership.



Former MESO General Manager, Shane Woolbright, visits with current MESO team members Michelle Danner, Deborah Gonzales, and Tom Dougherty.



Three MESO General Managers, Chuck Smith, Tom Rider and Shane Woolbright.



Jody Harris, OFA, reviews project funding opportunities for municipalities.

Tabletop Exercise

(continued from page 1)

The recommendations from the exercise are:

Before storm season:

- Hold an exercise drill or tabletop planning session in your area and include all departments and any other appropriate partners, for example, county officials. Include current system mapping.
- Develop a plan including who does what and what items are anticipated that need addressing during the weather incident. For example, incident manager, media/public spokesperson, and plan to communicate with the general public and key stakeholders. Include a checklist for storm prep when a severe weather is in the forecast.
- Maintain an up-to-date contact list for all anticipated needs, for example, local hotels, food vendors, fuel and supply sources, etc.

When severe weather is forecast in your area – checklist phase:

- Hold the appropriate meetings – department heads with management and supervisors with crews (include warehouse personnel).
- Communicate with the public and key stakeholders that the utility is monitoring the situation and is prepared to respond, or “emergency response plan” is in place.
- Conduct a winter weather supply check including but not limited to anti-freeze gel, deicing washing fluid, and tire chains.
- Conduct weather gear review for employees including but not limited spare clothes dry gloves, raingear, boots, and sleeping bags.
- Conduct an equipment check for low-use equipment, for example chainsaws for some line crews.
- Test communications devices including handheld radio and review storm communications plan.
- Assess needs for extraordinary supplies, for example inventory and increase supplies on trucks and in the warehouse. Include coffee, snacks, Gatorade, etc. for workers during breaks.

When a storm hits your service area:

- Safety first – hold tail board meetings and ground every job.
- Take care of your crews - keep hot food and drinks available for employees. Take frequent breaks, keep dry gloves-clothes. And shift work after first 24 hours. (NO more than 16-hour

days). Make sure crews break for snack and food times. Stay hydrated.

- Consider only working in daylight hours.
- Concentrate initial response work on main feeders and key accounts (hospitals, shelters, etc.)
- Keep management and public updated about restoration progress or deterioration.
- Mutual Aid
 - o Get your assessment done and see if you need additional crews.
 - o Call for Mutual aid as soon as need is identified
 - o Once you call for help, secure hotel and food for crews coming.
 - o Prepare information packet for incoming crews: detailed mapping, phone contacts, area hospital information, etc.
 - o Assign an employee from your utility to be with (or birddog) on out-of-town crews.
 - o Keep Mutual Aid Contacts (MESO-OMPA-GRDA) updated on restoration efforts.
- Make sure ALL crews are clear of area before energizing circuits.
- Ask street and/or park department to clear areas of damage so electric crews can access. (Make area safe – no energized areas)
- Maintain detailed list of outage areas to eliminate return to the same area where work has been assigned or completed.
- Keep updated on weather conditions and tackle jobs in a safe, well-staffed way.
- Remember cell phone service may affected, be prepared to go to backup plan.
- Keep detailed records (material and employee hours} for FEMA

After the storm passes:

- Hold a post-storm meeting (what went right, what went wrong) with both employees and management. Address all issues as soon as possible.
- Suggest employees take time off for resolve their own storm-related problems and challenges, particularly to get appropriate rest.
- Have all trucks and equipment cleaned and checked for any necessary repair. Make all necessary repairs as soon as possible.

(see TABLETOP EXERCISE, page 9)

McPherson elected to APPA Board of Directors

Marlow City Manager Jason McPherson has been elected to serve on the Board of Directors for the American Public Power Association (APPA).

"I am honored and humbled by this appointment and the opportunity to serve public power on the local, state and now national level," McPherson said. "I look forward to this challenge and intend to work diligently to fulfill my role."

McPherson is the first representative of an Oklahoma Municipal Power Authority member to serve on the APPA Board. Those elected to the Board of Directors are eligible to serve three-year terms.

He is also on the Board of Directors for OMPA, having been seated in 2016. He has been active in the industry since, presenting at conferences, and on webinars. He also received the APPA's 7 Hats Award, which goes to those from smaller utilities who go above and beyond in their duties.

McPherson was instrumental in securing funding for the redesign of Marlow's substation, and he was a driving factor in the city installing a second backup transformer to their new substation. He was also responsible for the completion of the city's automatic metering infrastructure. He designed Marlow's CINCH (Caring in Neighborhoods with Cooling and Heating) program, which allows utility rate payers to round up their bill or to donate to a private fund to help those in need pay their City of Marlow utility bills.

A native son of Marlow, he worked in banking in his hometown, as well as the news editor at The Marlow Review, before joining the city in 2012. He spent his first year as the Community Services Coordinator, before taking over the City Administrator position in 2013. He was also named the Marlow Chamber of Commerce Outstanding Citizen of the year in 2013.



The APPA is a national organization, representing the more than 2,000 Public Power utilities in the U.S. They advocate and advise on electricity policy, technology, trends, training, and operations.

More than 49 million customers receive power from the utilities represented by the APPA. The organization was created in 1940 to represent the public policy interest of those customers and their communities, and seeks to provide member services to ensure adequate, reliable electricity at a reasonable price with the proper protection of the environment.

Tabletop Exercise

(continued from page 8)

- Make a detailed review of all your circuits on your system to make sure everything is up to a safe operating standard.
- Organize all records and data for FEMA aid personnel.
- Take a deep breath, and be ready for next storm or mutual aid call.

"As a safety-based organization, the most important thing during an extreme weather event is to have a plan get power restored safely first and quickly second," Dougherty said. "We are ready to work with any of our members to review or help develop a plan."

For more information about the tabletop exercise or storm response plans, contact Dougherty at tomd@okmainc.com.

Save the date
2022 MESO Public Power Conference
April 24 – 26 • Norman, Oklahoma

Fitch affirms GRDA A+ rating, stable outlook

The Grand River Dam Authority's continued strong financial performance and its very low operating costs were among the key reasons that led Fitch Ratings to affirm GRDA's A+ stable rating on Oct. 6.

In its press release, Fitch noted that GRDA's "very low rate anchors its competitive position and provides customers with an economic incentive to continue purchasing from the authority." The release also noted "GRDA's operating flexibility has benefited from a well-diversified resource mix."

That mix includes GRDA's gas, coal, water, and wind generation assets that combine to help keep operating costs low and reliability high. Fitch assessed GRDA's operating costs burden as "very

low based on an operating cost that has remained consistently below 5 cents [per kilowatt-hour] during the past five years."

GRDA currently maintains the highest credit ratings in its history from the three major credit rating agencies: Fitch, Moody's Investor Service and Standard & Poor's.

GRDA is Oklahoma's largest public power electric utility; fully funded by revenues from electric and water sales instead of taxes. Each day, GRDA strives to be an "Oklahoma agency of excellence" by focusing on the 5 E's: employees, electricity, economic development, environmental stewardship, and efficiency.

From the American Public Power Association

Over 60 Percent of Battery Storage Coming Online Will Be Co-located, EIA Says

Most of the battery storage expected to come online in the next five years will be co-located with a solar power plants, according to the Energy Information Agency's (EIA) most recent annual electric generator report.

Of the 14.5 gigawatts (GW) of battery storage planned to begin come online between 2021 and 2024, 9.4 GW, or 63 percent, will be co-located with solar power, the EIA said. Another 1.3 GW of battery storage will be co-located at sites with wind turbines or fossil fuel-fired generators, such as natural gas-fired plants. The remaining 4 GW of planned battery storage will be located at standalone sites.

The EIA's generator report collects information about existing and planned generation projects that are 1 MW or greater.

According to historical EIA data, most of the battery storage deployments in the United States have been done on a standalone basis. Of the 1.5 GW of battery storage that was in operation at the end of 2020, 71 percent was standalone, and 29 percent was co-located with other power generators.

A combination of falling prices for lithium-ion batteries and rising levels of wind and solar generation is driving an increase in renewable energy projects that include battery storage, according to [Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory](#).

Batteries can offset the intermittent nature of renewable resources such as wind and solar power.

Solar power, in particular, can be effectively paired with battery storage because of their relatively regular daily generation patterns, EIA noted.

Predictability works well with battery systems because they are limited in how long they can discharge their power capacity before needing to recharge. If paired with a wind turbine, a battery system could go days before having the opportunity to fully recharge.

The EIA also pointed out that battery systems co-located with renewable energy resources also can take advantage of the [Investment Tax Credit](#) available for solar projects.

EIA data also show that most standalone battery storage sites have been planned or built in power markets that are governed by regional transmission organizations (RTOs) and independent system operators (ISOs). Some RTOs and ISOs have market rules that provide revenue streams for energy storage projects, which encourages developers to site projects there.

Of the utility-scale battery systems announced due online between 2021 and 2024, 97 percent of the standalone battery capacity and 60 percent of the co-located battery capacity are in RTO/ISO regions, EIA said. Outside of RTO and ISO regions, over 90 percent of planned battery storage is scheduled to be co-located with a solar photovoltaic plant, EIA said.



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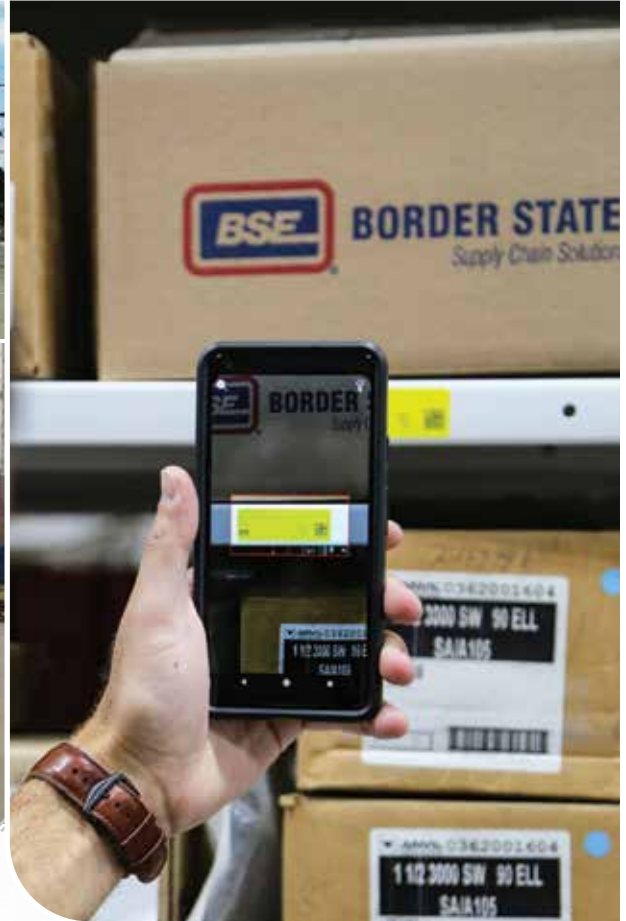
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