



# Building strong communities through a well-trained workforce

A publication of the Oklahoma Municipal Alliance

May 2020

## OMA COVID-19 Update — May 1, 2020

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, the OMA staff continues working from home and the office remains closed until further notice.

To begin, we are a very small staff and having one person out of commission for an extended period due to an illness impacts our ability to serve our members.

More importantly, as we spend much time in our member locations, it is important we do not bring any potential risks to you.

We continue to work on your behalf, and if you need anything at all, please contact us.

## New Benefits Available with 2020-2021 OMA Membership

Beginning with the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year, OMA members will have access to new benefits as a part of their membership.

“We’re excited about the new benefits we can offer members beginning July 1,” Tom Rider, OMA General Manager said. “These benefits provide our members more opportunities to connect with each other, learn from their peers, and continue the professional development of their municipal professionals.”

Previously, the OMA Board of Directors approved a two-part membership dues structure for OMA members with electric distribution. The first portion of the dues covers the electric operations.

“I’m pleased that OMA has not raised dues for our electric members in four years, and that will be the case for 2020-2021,” Rider said. “We’ve been able to do this through a continuing focus on cost management and offering value-enhancing programming for our members.”

The second part of membership covers all other municipal operations.

Rider noted, “One of the key values of OMA membership is being able to participate in our Mutual Aid Program. With our ‘all operations’ membership, participating cities and towns can join the Mutual

Aid program for public works which covers water, wastewater, streets and other departments.”

Additionally, the “all operations membership” provides free Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) renewal training for member workers who hold an ODEQ water or wastewater license. OMA began year-round training for water and wastewater personnel in August 2019 with its Confined Space Basics training events across the state.

Other membership benefits include Quarterly Connections, a series of regional 2-hour meetings to discuss topics of mutual interest and concern. These gatherings will be held around the state and lunch will be provided for up to two people.

Perhaps the most valuable membership benefit will be OMA’s Peer-to-Peer Information Exchange. This is an online platform for members to ask questions, share information and stay in touch. Municipal professionals will have the opportunity to connect with people in like positions across the state.

Rider finished by saying, “as we continue to grow and expand our operations, we will continue to look

(see NEW BENEFITS, page 5)

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## FCC Opens 6 GHz Bandwidth

On April 23, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved a Report and Order that allowed unlicensed use of the 6 gigahertz (GHz) microwave band for wireless communications and devises the American Public Power Association reported on April 24.

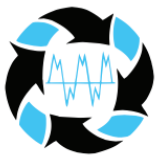
"OMA members who use a communication system operating in the 6 GHz band are encouraged to monitor their networks for interference, including interruptions, loss of contact, and other events that could restrict or prohibit communications," said Tom Rider, OMA General Manager. "If you experience communications issues while operating your communication system, please document and report them to me."

The order defines unlicensed users as technology companies including wireless phone companies and internet providers. Previously, these companies used the 4 GHz (4G) and 5GHz (5G) bandwidths. While claims are made that access to the 6GHz band could usher in new devices and uses, unlicensed users could also impact municipal operations and other infrastructure users.

For years, users of the 6 GHz band were required to register. These users include electric, gas, water and wastewater utilities. These utilities use the 6 GHz band to monitor facilities, maintain services and for emergency communication.

The FCC has stated that current registered users of the 6 GHz band will be protected through the Automated Frequency Coordination (AFC). This system is unproven, and the safeguards are theoretical. Its intended to work as a communication traffic cop to direct wireless traffic when interference occurs.

Communications problems and questions may be directed to contact Rider at [tom@okmainc.com](mailto:tom@okmainc.com).



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## OMA Introduces Safety Videos, Weekly Safety Messages Continue

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the OMA staff are unable to travel to member cities to deliver in-person training sessions. To fill the immediate gap, the association has produced several safety videos for members.

"A commitment to a regular, on-going safety program is an evidence-based way to create a safer work environment," said Tom Rider, OMA General Manager. "While we prefer to be with our members at their locations, we believe these short videos can help with a continued focus on safe work practices."

The three videos currently available are [Arc Flash Safety](#), [Office Safety Awareness](#), and [Tornado Safety](#). They have been emailed to members and are available on the OMA website – [www.okmainc.com](http://www.okmainc.com).

"Our current plan is to produce a video weekly," said Tom Dougherty, OMA Director of Job Training and Safety. "We will do this until we can get back on the road, and we will consider doing it beyond that."

In addition to the safety videos, OMA recently introduced Weekly Safety Messages every Wednesday. These short messages include links to more detailed information from sources such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Recent messages include:

### **Young workers may face unique safety challenges**

Young workers get injured on the job for many reasons, including inadequate training or supervision,

pressure to work fast, and stressful conditions. Workplace hazards associated with specific jobs are another major cause of injuries. We – along with OSHA – recommend employers work to minimize hazards in the workplace and train employees how to work safely. **Read more by clicking here:** [Young workers may face unique safety challenges](#)

### **Investigating Worksite Incidents**

Investigating a worksite incident - a fatality, injury, illness, or close call - provides employers and workers the opportunity to identify hazards. Incident investigations that focus on determining and correcting root causes, not on finding fault or blame, also improve workplace morale and increase productivity, by demonstrating an employer's commitment to a safe workplace. **Read more by clicking here:** [Investigating Worksite Incidents](#)

### **Beware of Ventilation Hazards**

Proper ventilation may be deficient in confined spaces, facilities failing to provide adequate maintenance of ventilation equipment, facilities operated to maximize energy conservation, windowless areas, and areas with high occupant densities (and confined work areas associated with water and wastewater services). OSHA provides several resources to help recognize and evaluate  
(see SAFETY VIDEOS, page 8)

## Oklahoma Public Power Utilities Honored by the APPA

Three Oklahoma Public Power Utilities were recently honored by the American Public Power Association for their achievements in 2019.

The City of Perry, the City of Marlow and the City of Edmond received national recognition.

Perry was recognized for reliability numbers from 2019, while Marlow was honored for its safety practices during the same year and Edmond once again received a Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) designation.

The association helps utilities track power outage and restoration data through its eReliability Tracker service and compares the data to national statistics tracked by the U.S. Energy Information Administration for all types of utilities.

Based on that data, Perry was in the top 25 percent of utilities for System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI), which divides the total number of outages by the number of customers served. That

allowed Perry to qualify for the 2019 Certificate of Excellence in Reliability.

Nationally, the average public power customer has their lights out for less than half the time, compared to other types of utilities.

Marlow earned the APPA's Safety Award of Excellence for safe operating practices in 2019. The utility earned a first-place award in the category for utilities with 15,000 worker-hours of annual worker exposure.

The RP3 designation, which lasts for three years, recognizes public power utilities that demonstrate proficiency in four key disciplines: reliability, safety, workforce development, and system improvement. Criteria include sound business practices and a utility-wide commitment to safe and reliable delivery of electricity. Edmond was designated "Platinum". The American Public Power Association has offered the RP3 designation for 15 years now.

## Water Utilities Taking Steps to Prevent Disruptions, Assist Households, According to New AWWA Survey

From the American Water Works Association

With water and wastewater critical to fighting the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, water utilities are swiftly employing plans to prevent service disruptions and assist households struggling to pay water bills, according to a recent [survey](#) conducted by the [American Water Works Association](#) (AWWA).

Ninety-seven percent of the 532 responding utilities have measures in place or in development to keep essential field workers on the job. Ninety-five percent of the responses indicate they are assessing options for staff shift change policies to incorporate social distancing at the workplace.

The two most pressing challenges reported by utilities are social distancing of workforce and supply chain issues for personal protective equipment (PPE). Nearly 40 percent of utilities reported disruptions in the supply chain for PPE, and nearly three quarters are expecting disruptions in the future.

(see WATER UTILITIES TAKING STEPS, page 6)

## On-Site Professional Development Training & Electric Supervisor Development Course Updates

With all on-site and in-person meetings postponed until May 31, all On-Site Professional Development Training dates and Electric Supervisor Development Course dates will be rescheduled.

"We are confident we can complete the planned On-Site Professional Development sessions with some simple scheduling changes," said Jeff Kaufmann, OMA Director of Communications and Professional Development. "I intend to look at scheduling changes as soon as we gain more clarity on when in-person meetings can begin."

As part of the OMA/GRDA membership agreement, GRDA customers may participate in the OMA On-Site Professional Development Program. All sessions are directed towards leadership, communications, teambuilding and customer service.

The OMA/OMPA membership agreement includes a series of regional professional development training sessions. These training opportunities help OMPA members participating their CUP program accumulate the required training hours.

The first session of the Electric Supervisor Development (ESD) Course – a two-year program providing journeyman lineworkers the skills necessary to lead high performing teams while enhancing critical on-the-job skills – is now scheduled for June 24.

For more information on either program, contact Kaufmann at [jeffk@okmainc.com](mailto:jeffk@okmainc.com).

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## Utility Workers — A New, Unsung Hero Emerges During Times of Crisis

By Dan Sullivan, President and CEO of the Grand River Dam Authority

During the difficult time we are currently facing, our societal “norms” are challenged. In a recent interview, a pundit expressed his belief the changes we are making today may become the “new norm” of the future. Working from home and changing our social patterns will likely become the new way we interact once this crisis has diminished.

Another change likely to emerge is who society typically labels a “hero.”

My definition of a hero is an ordinary person willing to do something extraordinary to have a positive impact on others. We have always thought of our first responders and military personnel as heroes because they charge toward the threat rather than retreat.

In the crisis today, the hero label certainly extends to the thousands of health care workers waging this war in our hospitals. Each one knowingly is subjected to harm and, yet, returns day after day to face the challenge.

Today, as we sit in our homes in some form of social isolation, we must consider another unsung hero during this crisis — utility workers.

Each time we turn on a water tap or flip a light switch, we automatically expect it to work. Now, possibly more than ever in our nation’s history, a simple resource we take for granted every day is a vital lifeline, whether it’s running water to wash hands or ensuring citizens remain connected to work and critical news or, most importantly, ensuring the power supply for hospitals and clinics is not disrupted.

As we move into our season of severe weather, planning and preparing for all scenarios means we also must be ready with a healthy team of workers to respond. The majority of typical workforces are able to remain in the safety of their homes, but a portion of our employees must report to work, in person, to maintain our utility services. At the time of this writing, plans are being finalized to retain many critical positions sequestered at his or her work stations for days at a time.

A great deal of personal sacrifice from electricians and line workers is required. These heroes will spend days and weeks away from their own families to protect our critical infrastructure and ensure essential, life-saving resources are available.

These are uncharted waters and require extraordinary steps to keep the lights on. The capable men and women being called upon to take extraordinary steps are prepared and ready to do so. Each and every worker recognizes the value of the service they provide to citizens in our communities.

Today, when you flip the electric switch or turn on the water tap, please keep these families in your thoughts and prayers as they encounter the stress of being away from loved ones during these difficult times. In the future, when you see a utility worker, take the time to say thank you and share your appreciation of these unsung heroes.

**Editor’s Note:** This piece appeared in the April 12, 2020 edition of the Tulsa World.



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- Utility Analysis and Optimization

## Member Benefits *(continued from page 1)*

for opportunities to better serve all our members and their professional staffs.”

Members have been informed of the new membership dues structure in mailings sent out beginning in January. For more information, or if you have specific questions about the 2020-2021 membership dues, contact Deborah Gonzales at [deborah@okmainc.com](mailto:deborah@okmainc.com) or (405) 528-7564, ext. 1.

## Water Utilities Taking Steps

(continued from page 5)

Conducted online from March 25-30, this marks the second in a series of surveys of how AWWA member organizations are adapting to the coronavirus impact. The second survey of AWWA member organizations generated 615 responses, including from 532 different utilities and 81 non-utility responses (consultants, manufacturers, service providers and others). The responses offer a near real-time assessment of how water sector organizations are currently managing risks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To assist customers impacted by the economic fallout of COVID-19, more than 90 percent of responding utilities have suspended water shut-offs and about 67 percent are waiving late fees. Additionally, some utilities indicate they are providing payment plan options, waiving charges like service fees, and a few are considering rate reductions or forgiving payments for one billing cycle.

The survey also showed utilities are concerned about potential revenue challenges, with 64 percent of utilities expecting financial implications in the coming months and about 10 percent are already seeing revenue reductions. AWWA and other water sector organizations are advocating for the inclusion of water sector funding in future stimulus bills.

Sixty-seven percent of utilities reported that they have business continuity plans in place, and another 20 percent are currently developing them. AWWA is encouraging utilities to take advantage of the [Business Continuity Planning for Water Utilities: Guidance Document](#) (AWWA, Water Research Foundation, U.S. EPA, 2013) in assessing their plans.

AWWA is offering resources to assist utilities with dealing with the challenges that arise during the pandemic at [awwa.org/coronavirus](http://awwa.org/coronavirus).



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## OMPA Board Officers Selected

The Board of Directors voted at its April meeting to re-elect its current officers.

Those officers include Robert Johnston of Frederick as Chairman, Homer Nicholson of Ponca City as Vice Chairman, Dale Bunn of Purcell as Secretary and Jim Greff of Prague as Treasurer.

Johnston, the City Manager for Frederick, has been on the Board since 2014 and was originally elected as

the Chairman in January of 2019.

Nicholson, who serves as Ponca City's mayor, has been on the Board since 2007. He also was originally elected as Vice Chairman in January of 2019.

Bunn, the City Manager for Purcell, has been on the Board since 2011.

Greff, the City Manager for Prague, has been on the Board since 2014.



Robert Johnston



Homer Nicholson



Dale Bunn



Jim Greff

## What We Know About Recycled Water and COVID

### From the WaterReuse Association

Wastewater travels through sewers and pipelines to community wastewater treatment plants. There, it is either cleaned to a level where it is safe to return it to the environment, cleaned further to be used for non-drinking applications, or sent to a water purification facility for additional cleaning to meet drinking water standards.

### Do wastewater and recycled water treatment plants treat COVID-19?

Yes, wastewater treatment plants treat viruses and other pathogens. Coronavirus, which causes COVID-19, is a type of virus that is particularly susceptible to disinfection. Standard treatment and disinfectant processes at wastewater treatment plants are expected to be effective. [Source: US EPA](#)

### Can I get COVID-19 from wastewater or sewage?

The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) has

indicated that “there is no evidence to date that COVID-19 virus has been transmitted via sewerage systems, with or without wastewater treatment.”

### Should recycled water and wastewater workers take extra precautions to protect themselves from the virus that causes COVID-19?

No, standard practices associated with wastewater treatment plant operations should be sufficient to protect wastewater workers from the virus that causes COVID-19. These standard practices can include engineering and administrative controls, hygiene precautions, specific safe work practices, and personal protective equipment (PPE) normally required when handling untreated wastewater. No additional COVID-19-specific protections are recommended for workers involved in recycled water or wastewater management, including those at wastewater treatment facilities. [Source: CDC](#)

## Ditto Says Pandemic Highlights Issues That Need To Be Addressed for Power Sector

*From the American Public Power Association*  
By Paul Ciampoli

While public power utilities and the broader electricity industry have successfully responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis highlights several issues that need to be addressed once the immediate threat of the pandemic has receded, said Joy Ditto, President and CEO of the American Public Power Association, on April 15.

Those issues include access to testing and personal protective equipment (PPE) and recognizing the essential role that utility workers play in such crises, Ditto said during the Energy Bar Association's 2020 Annual Meeting & Conference. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, EBA turned the event into a virtual conference.

Ditto participated on a panel, "Managing Through COVID-19: How Utilities Are Grappling with the Health Crisis," along with Tom Kuhn, CEO of the Edison Electric Institute, and James Matheson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, which was moderated by Emily Fisher, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary at EEI.

While plans for a pandemic have been in place for quite some time, "given the panoply of issues that we have to cover on a daily basis, we still had to learn some things as we've gone along in response to COVID-19," Ditto pointed out.

"I remember when I was at APPA previously having conversations with our engineering team about pandemic response," she said.

Prior to being named president and CEO of APPA, Ditto was the president and CEO of the Utilities Technology Council and before that she was the senior vice president for legislative and political affairs at APPA.

The Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC), which serves as the principal liaison between the federal government and the electric power industry on national level response issues such as pandemics, has been extremely useful for the power sector as it strategizes ways in which to respond to COVID-19, Ditto said.

The ESCC is comprised of the CEOs that represent all segments of the industry, including investor-owned electric companies, electric cooperatives, and public power utilities in the U.S. and Canada. Kevin Wailes, Administrator and CEO of Lincoln Electric System, serves as co-chair of the ESCC, and several other public power members also sit on the group. Ditto serves on the ESCC Steering Committee.

### Testing, PPE and sequestering mission-essential workers

With respect to the question of access to testing and PPE for the electricity industry, Ditto said that the power sector "is being forced to be innovative and getting creative," particularly with respect to PPE.

The sector has developed its own scenarios for sequestration "and making sure that the most critical workers can continue to work even without testing. But that's not ideal. It certainly puts more risk on our system than we'd like to bear and surely that the American public would like to bear," she said. "We need to continue to deal with this issue until it's resolved."

Once the pandemic threat dissipates and there is a review as to what can be done more effectively in future crises, more interaction between the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Energy and the Centers for Disease Control at the

(see PANDEMIC HIGHLIGHT ISSUES, page 9)

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## Safety Videos

(continued from page 3)

hazards associated with ventilation in the workplace.

**Read more by clicking here:** [Beware of Ventilation Hazards](#)

### Beware of Tree Care/Trimming Hazards

Many hazards in the tree care industry including trimming are potentially hazardous or fatal. Overhead power lines, falling branches, and faulty safety equipment are just a few of the dangers. OSHA

provides references to aid in recognizing some of the hazards that may be encountered by tree care professionals. **Read more by clicking here:** [Beware of Tree Care/Trimming Hazards](#)

Any questions regarding safety or Job Training and Safety may be directed to Dougherty at [tomd@okmainc.com](mailto:tomd@okmainc.com).



## Pandemic Highlights Issues

*(continued from page 8)*

very beginning about criticality, essential workers and creating guidance that is appropriate is warranted, Ditto said.

A lessons-learned exercise could look at “how we ensure that we can get our work done in order to keep the ventilators running, to keep the hospitals up and running,” as well as electricity flowing to other segments of the economy, she said.

“I think that’s something we’ll need to bring forward even after this immediate crisis is over.”

APPA and several other energy industry trade associations and unions on April 3 [sent a letter](#) to organizations representing state and local governments asking them to give mission-essential workers a higher priority when it comes to testing and PPE. APPA and the power sector acknowledge that healthcare workers should have first access to PPE.

While utility sector supply chain issues have typically involved big equipment like transformers or in more recent years, cybersecurity and components imported from other countries, the COVID-19 pandemic presents a new type of supply chain challenge involving PPE, testing and cleaning disinfectants, Ditto noted.

“It’s an interesting shift in terms of our short-term supply chain focus,” she said.

There may be a longer-term conversation and retrenchment of domestic manufacturing in general, Ditto said. “That could be a benefit to our sector in the longer term.” If the U.S. ramps up manufacturing of things like communications components that could help lessen concerns about cybersecurity issues and the importation of components.

Meanwhile, public power utilities are sequestering mission-essential workers, Ditto noted. Those utilities include the New York Power Authority and the City of Tallahassee’s utility. California public power utility SMUD and the City of Grand Island Utilities Department in Nebraska [have made similar moves](#).

Ditto said that public power utility workers have been “very happy to do their jobs for the good of the public. Even when they might have families they’re leaving behind and they’re concerned,” these workers are stepping up and “doing their duty, which is really heartening.”

### Helping customers deal with financial fallout from the pandemic

Public power utilities and the rest of the power sector are taking a number of actions to help their customers who are facing financial hardships during the pandemic.

Among the steps taken by public power utilities is suspending customer disconnects and reducing customers’ electric bills.

Ditto pointed out that the size of APPA’s members varies widely, “so their ability to absorb these types of fluctuations in revenue are very different.”

Another variable is the fuel mix of a public power utility. If a utility has the benefit of having excess revenues because of its fuel mix “they may have some excess revenue that they can really contribute back and take care of their communities a little bit more aggressively than others are maybe able to absorb.”

“This is not a one size fits all for every utility in terms of how they’re going to be able to respond to their community’s needs,” she said.

“Our number one focus is to be able to provide reliable, affordable electricity as safely as possible,” she noted.

Ditto said that “it’s a hard conversation to have around the financial implications but looking a little bit longer term we certainly want to make sure that our electric service continues to be reliable, affordable and safe and so this conversation does need to occur.”

As part of its advocacy efforts in response to the pandemic, APPA may ask “in the short term for some bridge loans to enable some of our members to perhaps get past this squeeze.”



# COVID-19 COMPARISON

## CORONAVIRUS vs. COLD vs. FLU vs. ALLERGIES

SYMPTOMS	COVID-19*	COLD	FLU	ALLERGIES
Fever	Common (100F or higher)	Rare	High (100-102F, can last 3-4 days)	No
Headache	Sometimes	Rare	Intense	Sometimes
General aches, pains	Sometimes	Slight	Common (often severe)	No
Fatigue, weakness	Sometimes	Slight	Common (often severe)	Sometimes
Extreme exhaustion	Sometimes (progresses slowly)	Never	Common (starts early)	No
Stuffy nose	Rare	Common	Sometimes	Common
Sneezing	Rare	Common	Sometimes	Common
Sore throat	Rare	Common	Common	No
Cough	Common	Mild to moderate	Common (can become severe)	Sometimes
Shortness of breath	In more serious infections	Rare	Rare	Common
Runny nose	Rare	Common	Sometimes	Common
Diarrhea	Sometimes	No	Sometimes**	No

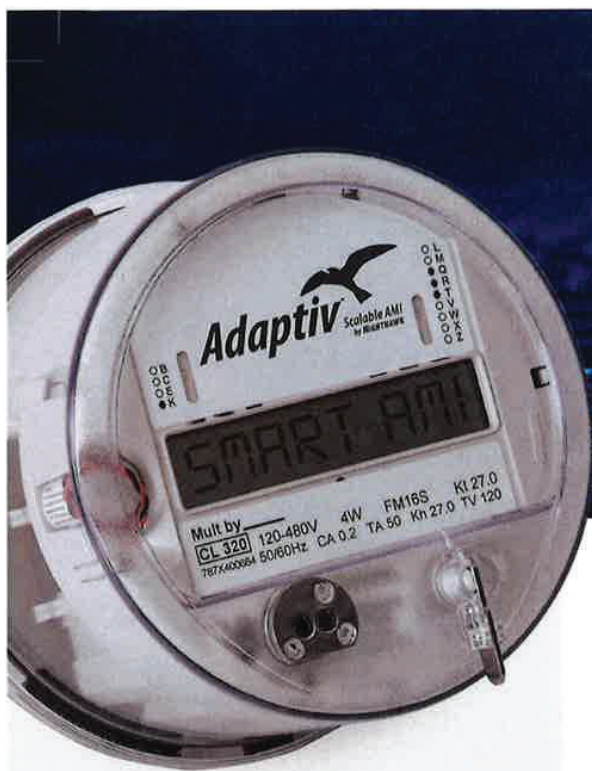
\* Information is still evolving \*\* Sometimes for children



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## What We Can Do Today to Limit the Spread of the COVID-19 Virus:

- Clean and disinfect regularly
  - Be diligent of surroundings and to increase hand washing and personal hygiene techniques
  - Adopt a "no hand-shake" policy
  - Practice "social distancing" by keeping a 6-foot space between individuals when interacting
  - Use telephone calls, video conferencing and/or email will replace "face-to-face" meetings
  - Restrict workplaces to essential staff and service providers only
  - Self-isolate anyone who has been in proximity to anyone suspected or confirmed having the virus for 14 days.
  - [American Public Power Association COVID-19 Update Page](#)
  - [Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management Gov. Stitt's Website](#)
  - [American Gas Association COVID-19 Update Page](#)
  - [American Water Works Association COVID-19 Resources Page](#)
  - [Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration Home Page](#)
  - [US Department of Labor - OSHA COVID-19 Update Page](#)
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- Voltage Monitoring
- Outage Alerts
- Scalable
- User-Friendly
- Prepay Ready
- Net Metering

**Adaptiv™ Scalable AMI is the zero-infrastructure smart meter solution designed to deliver exceptional ROI and a seamless user experience.**

Adaptiv™ Scalable AMI is reliable, easy to deploy and maintain, and provides the lowest cost of ownership of any AMI provider. Our solution avoids the high overhead cost of private networks by using advanced mesh technology and robust public cellular communications, putting AMI within reach of any municipal or electric utility. To learn more about Adaptiv™ Scalable AMI, visit BOOTH 504 or contact your local sales representative.

Mark Thayer  
Nighthawk West Region Sales  
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4273 (2019-10)



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