



Building strong communities
through a well trained workforce

A publication of the Oklahoma Municipal Alliance

November 2019

OMA, OMAG Developing Model Policy for Municipal Gas Systems

The Oklahoma Municipal Alliance (OMA) is working with the Oklahoma Municipal Assurance Group (OMAG) to develop a new model Anti-Drug Program policy for municipal natural gas systems.

Federal regulations, which municipal gas systems must follow, require that natural gas systems have a strong anti-drug program in place for all employees in "safety sensitive" positions. In general, safety sensitive personnel are those who are actively involved in the maintenance and operation of a gas system as well as the control of gas into or through a system. Other personnel, as determined by the utility, may also be covered by the policy.

Municipal gas systems have had an anti-drug program policy since the federal regulation came out. This updated model is intended to ensure that everyone has access to current requirements and guidelines. Once available, systems can use the model to ensure their existing policy is current or adopt (with local revisions) the model to ensure compliance. OMA and OMAG expect to make the policy available before the end of November.



Winter Weather Preparedness Part 1

From the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

Editor's Note: This is part one of a three-part series from information made available by OSHA. To read the entire piece today, go to the OSHA website at www.osha.gov.

Outdoor work requires proper preparation, especially in severe winter weather conditions. Although OSHA does not have a specific standard that covers working in cold environments, employers have a responsibility to provide workers with employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards, including winter weather related hazards, which are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to them (Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970). Employers should, therefore, train workers on the hazards of the job and safety

measures to use, such as engineering controls and safe work practices, that will protect workers' safety and health.

Employers Should Train Workers

At a minimum train workers on:

Cold Stress:

- How to recognize the symptoms of cold stress, prevent cold stress injuries and illnesses
- The importance of self-monitoring and monitoring coworkers for symptoms
- First aid and how to call for additional medical assistance in an emergency
- How to select proper clothing for cold, wet, and windy conditions

Other winter weather related hazards that workers may be exposed to, for example, slippery roads and (see WINTER WEATHER, page 2)

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UPCOMING OMA & APPA EVENTS

ON-GOING PROGRAMS:

Electric Supervisor Development (ESD) Sessions

- Tuesday, December 3, 2019

Confined Space Basics

November 13 – Perkins
December 4 – Blanchard
December 5 – Woodward

Supervisor Short Course

Day 6 – November 12, 2019

Winter Weather *(continued from page 1)*

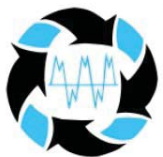
surfaces, windy conditions, and downed power lines.

- How to recognize these hazards
- How workers will be protected: engineering controls, safe work practices and proper selection of equipment, including personal protective equipment

Employers Should Provide Engineering Controls

Engineering controls can be effective in reducing the risk of cold stress. For example, radiant heaters may be used to warm workplaces like outdoor security stations. If possible, employers should shield work areas from drafts or wind to reduce wind chill.

Employers should use engineering controls to protect workers from other winter weather related hazards, for example, aerial lifts or ladders can be used for safely applying de-icing materials to roofs, to protect workers from the hazard of falling through sky lights.



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OMA Members Can Benefit from Affiliated Alcohol and Drug Testing Program

All employers can benefit from an efficient, effective alcohol and drug testing program to build culture of safety and accountability and/or meet government regulations.

LGTC (Local Government Testing Consortium) is an OMA member affiliate program providing comprehensive and convenient alcohol and drug testing services. For example, our certified testers can travel to your location to administer testing.

"If you are uncertain if your alcohol and drug testing program meet regulations, please contact us," said Deborah Gonzales, OMA Director of Administration and Finance. "We are ready to help you understand where you are and offer solutions to help."

Beginning with pre-employment to random testing for current employees to post accident tests, LGTC can meet your needs.

LGTC collaborates with St. Anthony North Toxicology, overseen by Dr. Richard Morgan, a board-

certified physician, to provide you with the kind of quality assurance that can keep your mind at ease.

In addition to testing, LGTC offers several training opportunities. Training is available for employees, supervisors or "Designated Employee Representatives." The training events are designed to both provide an understanding of the testing program and to help develop strategies in successfully dealing with on-the-job drug & alcohol abuse.

"Our program was developed to assist our clients in meeting rules and regulations, and we built a program to meet those requirements in an affordable manner," Gonzales said. "We do this by pooling public and private sector clients into a large consortium, and travel the state systematically for testing which allows us to keep our costs low through an 'economies of scale' approach."

To learn more about the LGTC, contact Gonzales at deborah@okmainc.com.



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Exceeding Expectations

Everyday Preventive Actions Can Help Fight Germs, Like Flu

From Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CDC recommends three actions to fight flu.

1. The first and most important step is to get a flu vaccination each year.
2. If you get sick with flu, take prescription antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them. Early treatment is especially important for the elderly, the very young, people with certain chronic health conditions, and pregnant women.
3. Take everyday preventive actions that may slow the spread of germs that cause respiratory (nose, throat, and lungs) illnesses, like flu.

How does flu spread?

Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze, or talk. Less often, a person might get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching his or her own mouth, nose, or possibly eyes. Many other viruses spread these ways too. People infected with flu may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5-7 days after becoming sick. That means you may be able to spread flu to someone else before you know you are sick as well as while you are sick. Young children, those who are severely ill, and those who have severely weakened immune systems may be able to infect others for longer than 5-7 days.

What are everyday preventive actions?

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you or your child gets sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you (or your child) stay home for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs that can cause respiratory illnesses like flu.
- If an outbreak of flu or another illness occurs, follow public health advice. This may include information about how to increase distance between people and other measures.
- If an outbreak of flu or another illness occurs, follow public health advice. This may include information about how to increase distance between people and other measures.

For more information, visit: www.cdc.gov/flu or call 1-800-CDC-INFO

GRDA Credit Rating Affirmed by Fitch

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 Monday, October 14.

Additionally, the rating agency noted that GRDA's "very low rate anchors its competitive position and provides customers with an economic incentive to continue purchasing from the Authority." Fitch also noted GRDA's diverse electric generation portfolio and involvement in the Southwest Power Pool as key reasons for its ability to meet customer energy demands in the years ahead.

"We were very pleased to receive this rating affirmation from Fitch," said GRDA President/Chief Executive Officer Dan Sullivan. "For GRDA, it is a

reflection of all the efforts of our board, management and staff in recent years to keep efficiency as a primary goal. It also reflects the strong and beneficial partnerships we have with our customers."

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

Headquartered in Vinita, GRDA is Oklahoma's state-owned 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: electricity, economic development, environmental stewardship, employees and efficiency.

OMA Continues Confined Space Basics Training Sessions

OMA has several Confined Space Basics Training sessions scheduled. These sessions are geared towards municipal water professionals.

The "Confined Space Basics" course covers the proper usage of equipment required for entry into a qualified confined space. Participants will review proper entry techniques, observe the proper setup of equipment, and can practice a limited entry.

Sessions currently scheduled include:

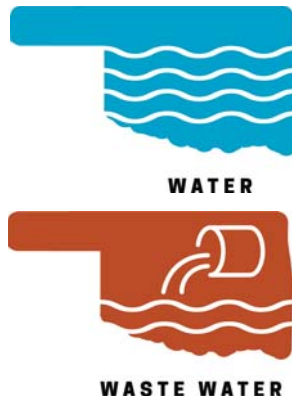
- November 13 – Perkins
- December 4 – Blanchard
- December 5 – Woodward

The training will qualify for four hours of Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality re-certification training for individuals holding an ODEQ water or wastewater license.

Seating is limited to 30 for each session. To register for any location, go to the OMA website – www.okmainc.com.

Questions about the training sessions are to be directed to Tom Rider — who will be presenting the training – at tom@okmainc.com. Registration questions can be directed to Deborah Gonzales at deborah@okmainc.com.

Municipalities wishing to host the training should contact Kelly Danner at kelly@okmainc.com or call (405) 528-7564, ext. 7.



OMPA to Conduct Rate Review in 2020

The Oklahoma Municipal Power Authority Board of Directors approved a 2020 rate review at its October meeting that includes a reduction in overall wholesale cost for the upcoming year. As such, most member cities and towns should expect to see their wholesale power bills slightly reduced.

OMPA rates are based on three components. Production demand collects fixed costs, such as debt service, administrative costs, capacity and other fixed generation. The energy component collects for fuel and other variable plant and production expenses, while the transmission component collects for transmission related expenses.

All three of the billing components show a decrease in revenue requirements in 2020, with an overall reduction of \$2.7 million, or 1.56 percent. The rates also allow for a \$300,000 contribution to the rate stabilization fund.

OMPA is structured as a cost-of-service organization, which is what allows decreased revenue requirements to result in lower costs for the member utilities.

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GRDA Recognized as "Champion in Workforce Development"

For the second time in three years, the Grand River Dam Authority has been recognized for its support of workforce development by the MidAmerica Industrial Park.

On Thursday, October 3, GRDA was presented with the "Champion in Workforce Development" Award during the "Manufacturing Day" luncheon at the Rogers State University (RSU) Pryor campus. The award follows GRDA's ongoing partnerships with MidAmerica and others, to provide the resources and training needed to promote future successes in manufacturing and industrial careers in MidAmerica and across Oklahoma.

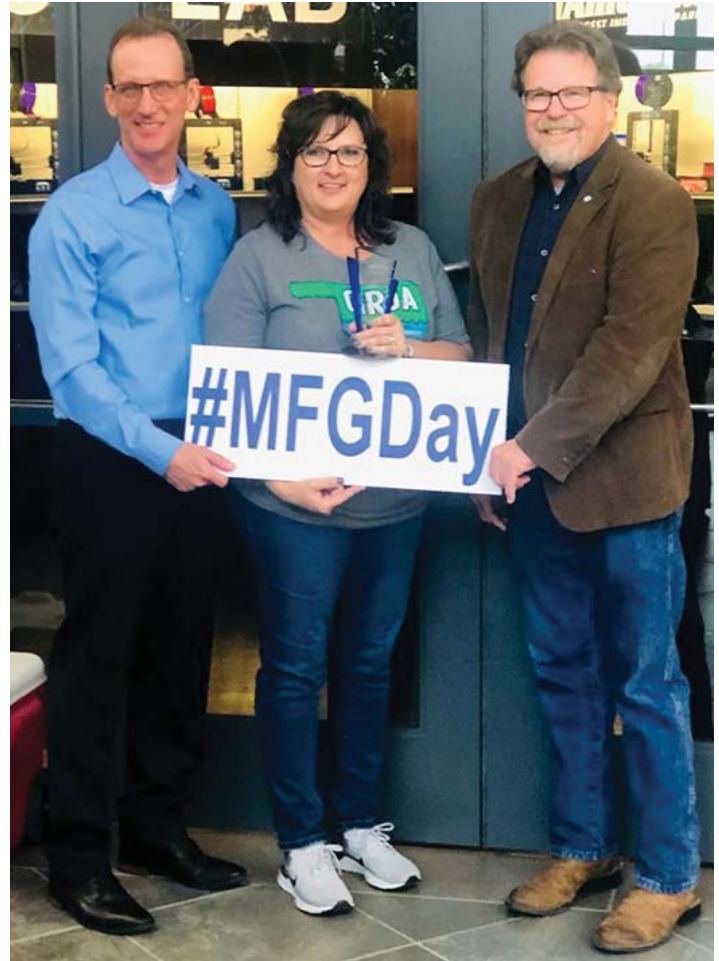
"We have committed to work with the MidAmerica and our industrial customers in the park to help develop these training programs, some in very technical areas," said GRDA President/Chief Executive Officer Dan Sullivan. "This also benefits us as it provides a pipeline for our future workforce as well."

GRDA supplies power to approximately 80 industrial customers located in MidAmerica. Collectively, those customers employ nearly 4,000 people, many in ever-developing manufacturing areas.

"No matter what the industry is, technology is driving the future of manufacturing for our customers here," said Sullivan, adding that GRDA supports workforce development in several ways, including the planning and production of training and education tools. MidAmerica also recognized GRDA for its workforce development support in 2017.

"GRDA has made significant strides and investments in developing their workforce to ensure that they have the skills needed to be successful," said Scott Fry, MidAmerica Director of Workforce Development. "This is the type of work that MidAmerica looks for when selecting the Champion in Workforce Development recipient."

Headquartered in Vinita, GRDA is Oklahoma's state-owned 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: electricity, economic development, environmental stewardship, employees and efficiency.



Grand River Dam Authority Senior Training Coordinator Dana Shrum (center) accepts the "Champion in Workforce Development" award, on behalf of GRDA, earlier this month. GRDA received the award from the MidAmerica Industrial Park, during the Manufacturing Day luncheon, held at the Roger State University – Pryor campus. Also pictured are MidAmerica Industrial Park Workforce Development Director Scott Fry (left) and Oklahoma State Senator Michael Bergstrom (District 1). (photo courtesy MidAmerica Industrial Park)

Save the Date
2020 MESO Public Power Conference
Tulsa, Oklahoma
April 26-28, 2020

Severe Weather Impacts Member Electric Utilities



Severe weather moved through Oklahoma Sunday, October 20 including a reported tornado in Siloam Springs. Crews from GRDA, Monett (MO), Claremore, Bentonville (AR), Tahlequah, Skiatook, and Stillwell worked to repair storm damage in Siloam Springs as part of the OMA/MESO Mutual Assistance Program.

Wagoner also suffered storm related damage, and their crews were able to restore power without mutual assistance.

Here are a few photos:



Siloam Springs



Siloam Springs



Wagoner



Wagoner

Study Finds Consumers Ready for Alternative Rates

From the American Public Power Association
By Peter Maloney

A new study by the Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative (SECC) finds that consumers are interested in alternative rate plans, but outreach and education are needed to spur enrollments.

The main takeaway for utilities is “consumers are interested in alternative rates if they are designed in ways they find understandable and they have a reason to do it,” Patty Durand, president and CEO of SECC, said.

The SECC study, *Rate Design: What Do Customer Want and Need?*, analyzed responses from about 1,100 residential customers and 500 small and medium business (SMB) customers. The study was sponsored by the Department of Energy’s Office of Electricity and Commonwealth Edison and conducted for SECC by Opinion Dynamics.

It is the first time the SECC has done a report on rate plans, and it comes at a time when many utilities are exploring new rate designs as a way of better aligning their energy costs to customer usage. California is preparing to move to TOU rates for all customers in 2020, and states such as Illinois, New

York, Pennsylvania and Texas are investigating alternative rate plans.

Among other things, the study found a sharp difference between residential and small and medium business customers in their attitudes toward alternative rates.

For instance, residential consumers are open to trying alternative rates, the study found, even though many had never heard of them. Small and medium business customers, on the other hand, overwhelmingly prefer alternative rates over traditional flat rates.

“I was surprised about the SMBs,” said Durand. “They were already familiar with alternative rates and 88% knew that they were billed by the kilowatt hour. They are ready to be engaged and ready to enroll in plans.”

Small and medium business customers are eager to exert greater control over their energy costs as they seek to find new and inventive ways to reduce operating costs, according to the study. Many small and medium business customers were “surprisingly
(see STUDY FINDS, page 9)



Groups Voice Support for Electric Vehicle Credit Expansion

From the American Public Power Association

The American Public Power Association on Sept. 25 joined a coalition of more than sixty utilities, automakers, and environmental groups in a letter to House and Senate Leadership in support of legislation that would expand the electric vehicle (EV) tax credit.

“The EV tax credit has spurred domestic investments in manufacturing and R&D that have positioned the United States as a leader in advancing and adopting electric transportation,” the groups noted in their letter of support for S. 1094/H.R. 2256, the Driving America Forward Act.

The legislation was introduced in the Senate by Sens. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., Gary Peters, D-Mich., and Susan Collins, R-Maine, and in the House by Representative Daniel Kildee, D-Mich.

The letter was sent to Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., the Senate Majority Leader, Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., the Senate Minority Leader, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., Minority Leader in the House.

The EV tax credit has spurred domestic investments in manufacturing and R&D that have positioned the United States as a leader in advancing and adopting electric transportation, the coalition noted. There are currently more than 1.2 million EVs on the road in the United States, and approximately 85,000 EVs were sold in the second quarter of 2019 alone, a 23 percent increase compared to the second quarter of last year. According to a recent study, there are expected to be 18.7 million EVs on the road by 2030.

“There are still challenges, however, to growing this important market. Expanding the EV tax credit would continue this upward trend in the deployment of these vehicles and is needed to support the increased investments automakers are making in EVs, while ultimately reducing costs for consumers,” the letter said.

Along with enhancing the nation’s energy security and spurring domestic manufacturing, increased EV deployment also will reduce emissions of greenhouse

(see GROUPS VOICE SUPPORT, page 9)

Groups Voice Support

(continued from page 8)

gases (GHGs) and criteria pollutants from the transportation sector, the coalition went on to say.

As of 2018, the electric power sector had reduced its carbon dioxide emissions 27 percent below 2005 levels, a trend that is expected to continue. Additionally, between 1990 and 2017, emissions of nitrogen oxides were cut by 84 percent and sulfur dioxide by 93 percent during a period in which electricity use grew by 36 percent.

“As electric power sector emissions have decreased and are on a long-term trajectory toward further reductions, increased EV deployment will enable further emissions reductions, creating additional environmental benefits,” the letter said.

The Driving America Forward Act, which focuses on both the section 30D EV and the 30B Fuel Cell Tax Credit, is essential to realizing all these benefits, the coalition argued.

“These tax credits are helping to develop this important market and reduce costs. When these tax credits were enacted nearly a decade ago, EVs were just beginning to appear on the market in limited offerings.”

Now, manufacturers are offering over 60 EVs, including a range of battery-only, plug-in hybrid, and fuel cell electric vehicles to meet consumer needs.

The increase in vehicle availability is helping to reduce technology costs and to lower vehicle prices for consumers, the coalition noted. “Expanding and extending these important incentives through the Driving America Forward Act will only continue to fuel EV development and deployment.”

By expanding and extending these credits, “Congress will continue to spur domestic manufacturing investment throughout the supply chain, which will further drive down costs for consumers and put even more EVs on the road—all while enjoying the many environmental, security, and economic benefits EVs bring,” the coalition said.

Study Finds

(continued from page 8)

aware of alternative rate offerings,” meaning that electricity providers may have more latitude to experiment with more advanced rate plan offerings, the report found.

With residential customers, however, utilities “may be wise to utilize a more cautious approach,” the report recommended, suggesting that they be offered simpler alternative rate structures such as two-tier time-of-use (TOU) rates as a first step.

“Residential customers are probably not ready for demand pricing or real-time pricing and may never be ready as these rate structures carry significant risk and little perceived benefit to residential consumers,” the study found.

Residential customers’ rate plan decisions are largely driven by a desire to avoid extra fees and charges with 62% of residential respondents to the survey saying they would choose an alternative plan if it were optimally designed. An optimal residential rate plan would include two-tier TOU rates with no demand charges, a \$50 one-time enrollment benefit and sourced from solar power.

Both residential and small and medium business customers begin to lose interest in alternative rates as extra charges, such as demand charges and green power premiums, are added to the rate offering, the study found.

In contrast to residential customers, small and medium business customers are less concerned about the details of a specific rate plan. They also have slightly different ideas about what would constitute an optimal rate plan.

Up to 79% of small and medium business customers would prefer an alternative rate plan over a standard rate plan, if it were optimally designed, the survey found.

For those customers, an optimal rate plan would include a two-tiered TOU rate with peak and off-peak price blocks and no demand charges or green power premiums. In contrast to residential customers, however, the survey found that small and medium business customers would prefer a one-year price guarantee to a sign-on bonus and would prefer wind, not solar, as their green power source. The difference in renewable power source preferences is probably linked to residential customers’ interest in rooftop solar, Durand said.

One of the strongest messages to come out of the report for utilities is “there has to be an upside or there won’t be movement,” Durand said.

Durand will be speaking at the Association’s Customer Connections Conference in New Orleans on Monday, Oct. 28, participating on the Getting Smart About Customers panel with John Romero, general manager of Colorado Springs Utilities.


Additional storm damage photos:



Siloam Springs



Siloam Springs



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