



Building strong communities through a well-trained workforce

A publication of the Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma

May 2022

MESO members gather for 2022 Public Power Conference

More than 150 Public Power professionals recently gathered in Norman, OK for the 2022 Public Power Conference.

“We are pleased with our 2022 Public Power Conference,” said Tom Rider, MESO General Manager. “We offered something for everyone from a learning perspective and continued some great traditions such as the board grilling steaks for the Monday night dinner.”

Dr. Chuck Jackson opened the conference with his session titled "I Am Their Leader – Which Way Did They Go?" The other two general sessions – of a strong lineup – included OMAG’s Kevin Sesock presenting Cybersecure & Aware – How you hold the key to cybersecurity in the palm of your hand and Colin Hansen, Chairman, American Public Power Association Executive Director, Kansas Power Pool, discussing Small Public Power: The Backbone of APPA.

New for the 2022 Public Power Conference was an All-hands-on-deck tabletop exercise. Recognizing the possibility of severe weather, the exercise simulated a “Spring Storm Outbreak.” With lineworkers, customer service representatives, city managers, and utility and electric superintendents in the room, teams were presented a series of timeline events. The groups discussed both operational and customer service responses. A report of the exercise will be made available soon.

“We wanted everyone in a utility to think about what they do during a storm response situation, understand what other departments are doing or might need, and how to best work together to serve customers,” said Tom Dougherty, MESO Director of Job Training & Safety.

Breakout sessions offered something from every area of a locally owned municipal electric utility.

(see PUBLIC POWER CONFERENCE, page 4)



First of MESO’s Regional Supervisor Training Series Set

MESO’s first regional Supervisor Short Course will be hosted by the City of Fairview with others to follow.

As a MESO membership benefit, each member municipality receives one free enrollment for the regional training in their area. Registration information will be sent to members in July.

The program will meet one day a week with six

meeting dates. The course consists of 12 modules, two presented each training day.

The dates of the Fairview Course are September 13, 20, 27 and October 4, 11, 25.

For more information about the Supervisor Short Course or the topics covered, please contact Tom Rider at tom@meso.org.

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GRDA retiree, Mike Waddell, honored for a distinguished career

The Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma (MESO) has recognized Mike Waddell who recently retired from GRDA for his long and distinguished career.

He received MESO's Marvin Hicks-Al Middleton Meritorious Service Award. The annual award is presented to an individual employee from a MESO member who has 25 years of employment as a good employee and is or has been very active in their community.

Waddell began his nearly 40-year career as an apprentice lineman, progressing as a journeyman to becoming a general foreman. While working as a contractor, he identified incorrectly designed transmission systems for his current employer. Impressed with his knowledge and commitment to accuracy, GRDA offered him the position of Assistant Construction Inspection, a position he accepted in 1984.

For more than 30 years, he has served Public Power as a field construction inspector, inspection supervisor, and construction project manager. His commitment to safety and doing each and every job correctly has ensured the success of the crews he supervises as well as an enviable safety record.

His commitment to Public Power extends beyond his organization. He was a primary contact for Mutual Aid support with the American Public Power Association. Additionally, he has been instrumental in developing his organization's Storm Response Plan and Contractor Safety Book.

He closed out his career as Vice President for Transmission and Distribution Operations.

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MESO honors Dean Sherrick with lifetime achievement award

Recently retired Edmond Electric Distribution Superintendent, Dean Sherrick, was recognized by MESO for his outstanding career of service.

“Dean’s service to not only Edmond Electric but to public power in Oklahoma, has helped Edmond and other municipalities build more reliable and safe electric systems for the communities they serve,” said Glenn Fisher, Director of the Electric Utility for Edmond Electric.

MESO’s Pruett-Lamb Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes an individual who has contributed to the growth of their organization and/or Oklahoma’s Public Power community over the lifetime of their professional career.

Sherrick began his career as an apprentice lineman in 1976, and he served his entire 46-year professional career with Edmond Electric. His efforts, experience, and ability to work effectively with others were the basis for his being selected as his system’s Distribution Superintendent in 1992, a position he held until his retirement in February.

During his career, he constantly worked to improve Edmond Electric’s and Oklahoma’s Public Power professionals. His passion for operational excellence and safe work practices led to his service as the chair of MESO’s Job Training and Safety Oversight Committee. Under his leadership, MESO’s apprentice program, on-site training, and comprehensive multi-day training events continually improved to ensure the latest safety and operational best practices are taught to all lineworkers.

Additionally, his service to Oklahoma’s Public Power community led him to serve on the MESO Board of Directors since 2010, including a term as Board President, and on the Board of Trustees for the Oklahoma Municipal Utility Services Authority, serving as Trustee and OMUSA’s Chairman, a position he held until his retirement.



Dean Sherrick (center) with MESO Board Member Mike Doublehead (left) and President Mike Villareal (right).

Collinsville’s Polk and Stephens earn MESO

The Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma (MESO) has recognized two Collinsville employees – Pam Polk and Lori Stephens – for their outstanding service.

Polk, City Manager, for her service as a leader in her profession and an advocate for the Public Power Community was awarded MESO’S 2022 Champion for Public Power Award.

The award recognizes an individual whose efforts have contributed to the improvement or advancement of Public Power through a specific action or continuously advancing the value of Public Power within their sphere of influence.

She has served Public Power communities throughout her career as a City Clerk and as City Manager. She is a vocal advocate for the value of Public Power. A former MESO Board member, she represents Public Power, and all municipalities, on the Oklahoma Municipal Assurance Group Board of Directors and the City Management Association of Oklahoma’s Board of Directors.

Under her leadership, the City of Collinsville continues to grow and offer vital services to the citizens and visitors to the community.

MESO also honored Stephens, City Treasurer, with the association’s Marvin Hicks-Al Middleton Meritorious Service Award.

The Marvin Hicks – Al Middleton Meritorious Service Award recognizes an individual who has committed their professional career in service to Public Power or municipal government.



MESO Board Member Dave Sleziicki (left) presenting the award to Pam Polk with President Mike Villareal.

(see COLLINSVILLE, page 8)

OMPA's Jennifer Rogers Smith earns award named for her mentor, Drake Rice

The Oklahoma Municipal Power Authority's Jennifer Rogers Smith was recognized by MESO for her outstanding service to Public Power with the Drake Rice Customer Service Award.

The award is named after her former supervisor and mentor, Drake Rice, who served Public Power utilities tirelessly during his career. The award recognizes individuals who best exemplify the qualities of a true customer service professional.

Smith is a constant advocate for both Public Power and the issues that concern OMPA members, her career has taken her before municipal professionals, governing bodies, the state legislature, and in front of national leaders.

Always available, in times of emergency, she works to coordinate electric crew responses through the MESO Mutual Aid program. While doing so, she maintains an ongoing engagement with her members who have been affected by a natural disaster or power outage.

During Winter Storm Uri in February 2021, she played an integral role by making regular contact with her members, releasing regular updates, helping to secure diesel when needed for emergency generation, as well as directing curtailments directed by Southwestern Power Pool to minimize significant impacts.



Left to right, Jared Crip, Jennifer Smith Rogers, Mike Villareal, and Drake Rice.

Public Power Conference

(continued from page 1)

Operational oriented sessions included The Ins and Outs of Severe Weather Management; Lessons Learned from an Emergency: the Leader's Perspective; Basic Lockout/Tagout and Switching, New Technologies & Funding Opportunities, and Rooftop Solar – Is It Right For You?

Soft skills sessions were Changing/Developing Workplace Culture, Reducing Stress & Burnout, and Communications: Awareness Beyond Your Own Department.

The 2023 Public Power Conference returns to Tulsa April 23 -25.

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See "Associates" @ meso.org

Job Training & Safety

Underground Residential Distribution (URD) Problem Solving 101 training scheduled

The MESO Underground Residential Distribution (URD) Problem Solving 101 training will be July 26-27 in Kingfisher. Registration is open at meso.org.

Underground Residential Distribution (URD) Problem Solving 101 is a two-day class designed to help Public Power professionals who work on URD System Faults.

Participants leave the training with improved skills in three areas: locating faulty cable using different methods, for example, radar and sonar equipment; testing isolated cable to ensure proper grounding; and, repairing damaged or faulty cable

The course schedule is Tuesday, July 26 – 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Registration begins at 8 a.m.) and Wednesday, July 27 – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

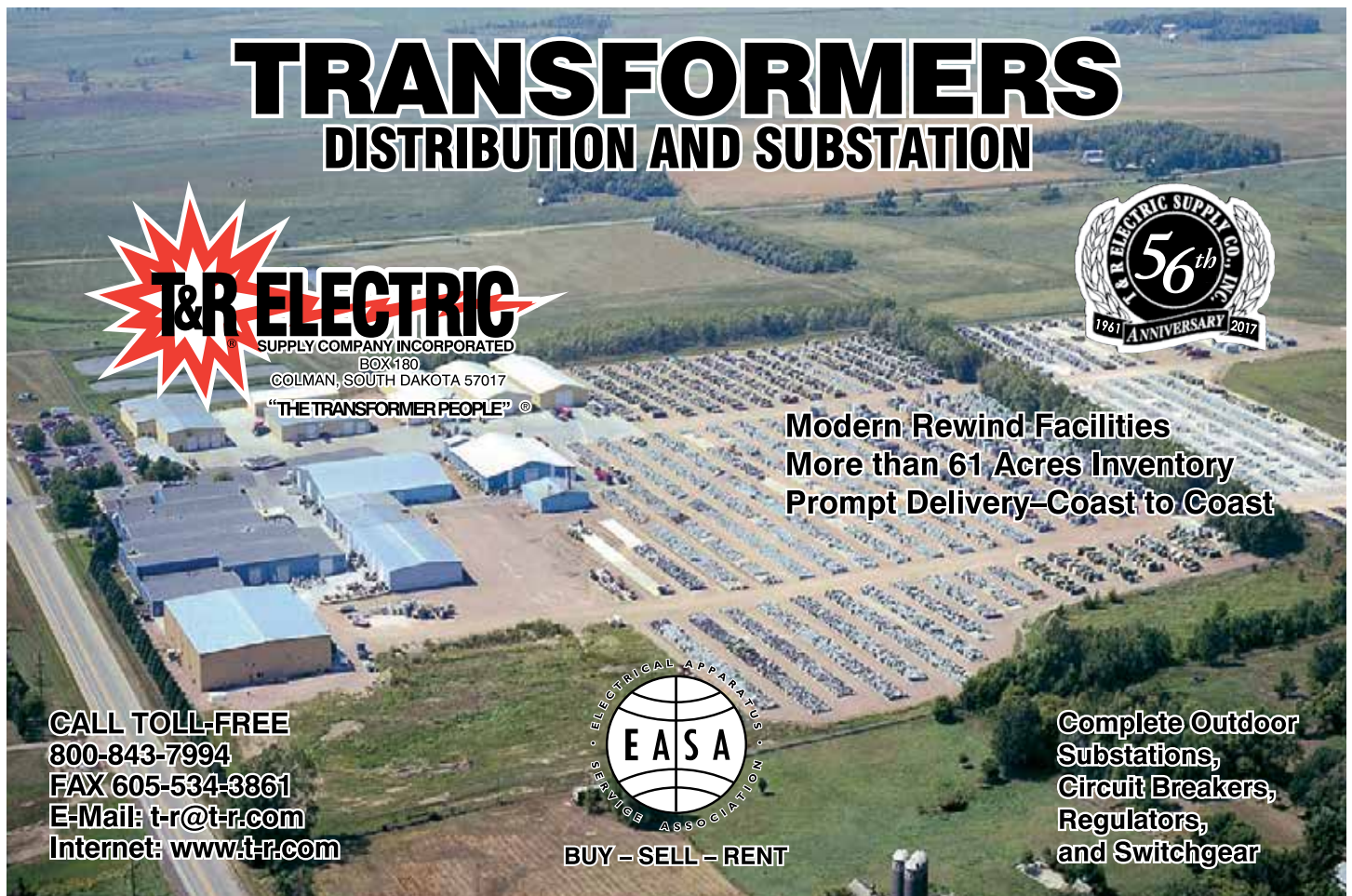
The registration fee for the training is \$199 per person (includes lunches and book). The training will be held at 313 South 3rd Street, Kingfisher Oklahoma.

Attendees work closely with professionals from other communities in both field and classroom settings. Both journeymen and apprentice lineworkers will gain valuable information to help deal with situations that will come up in their city.


Participants must bring a hard hat, work gloves, long-sleeved shirt, safety glasses (eye protection), hand tools (lineman pliers, 10" adjustable wrench, screwdriver and hammer), rubber gloves (with glove protectors), and utility uniform.

Tom Dougherty, MESO Director of Job Training and Safety, and Rusty Brown, Retired Line Foreman (Duncan) and MESO Safety Trainer are the instructors for the course.


For more information about the training, contact Dougherty at tomd@meso.org. Registration questions may be directed to Deborah Miner-Gonzales, MESO Director of Administration and Finance at deborah@meso.org.




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*-NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Two City of Kingfisher employees recognized for their service

The Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma (MESO) has recognized two Kingfisher employees — Mark Gambill and Denise Payne — for their outstanding service.

Gambill, Electric Director, earned MESO's Ray Duffy Personal Service Award. He has spent his entire professional career in Public Power and the electric distribution field.

The award recognizes an individual for his or her contributions to their city's operations and the community. Their contributions must have improved municipal operations and aid in enhancing the quality of life or future sustainability in a leadership or other significant role.

Since being promoted to his current position as Electric Director, Gambill has used creative and engaging methods to recruit quality individuals to work for the city's electric services. While those he recruited didn't have an electric background, each demonstrated a strong work ethic and commitment to doing their very best, in addition to being rooted in the community.

While developing his crew members into seasoned electric professionals, each reaching journeyman status, or actively working towards this designation, he led his department in developing and maintaining an aggressive system maintenance and upgrade program. These efforts led to the department receiving the American Public Power Association's Excellence in Reliability Award in 2021.

His commitment to a "safety first" work culture, the professional development of his crew members, and working to improve Public Power across Oklahoma sets his efforts at the pinnacle of professional excellence.

Payne was presented with MESO's Drake Rice Customer Service Award. The award recognizes individuals who best exemplify the qualities of a true customer service professional.

During her 20-year career with the city, caring for her customers has been a trademark of her service. When engaging with angry and upset customers, her calming demeanor and focused attention convey her willingness to help. She always listens first, then walks the customer through their options. She willingly seeks ways for the customer to continue their utility service while ensuring utility payments to the city are received.

During times of emergency, she volunteers her time in the Emergency Operations Center, helping with incoming phone calls and organizing what often seems to be a mountain of data.



Board member Keith Skelton with Mark Gambill (center) and President Mike Villareal.



Left to Right, Brett Griffin, Denise Payne, Mike Villareal, and Drake Rice.

Join us in congratulating Laverne's Juan Martinez for earning his Journeyman Lineworker Certificate



Martinez with MESO's Director of Job Training & Safety, Tom Dougherty.

Collinsville

(continued from page 3)

Our first recipient of the 2022 Hicks-Middleton Award is known for her commitment to her community's citizens.

Starting as a meter reader, Stephens' twenty-five-year career has seen a steady progression of both service and responsibility throughout her tenure. She's worked in utility billing, served as the billing supervisor, and was promoted to City Treasurer in 2008.

Her consistent, positive attitude towards customers made her the go-to person for customer billing questions. Her willingness and helpful attitude ensure a cooperative, customer-focused work environment. She understands that the city is service-based and therefore is customer-focused and customer friendly. Her personal commitment to always give her best is ingrained in her DNA.

Congratulations to our member utilities that earned **APPA's Certificate of Excellence in Reliability** for reliable performance in 2021.

- City of Comanche
- Coffeyville Municipal Power & Light
- City of Edmond
- City of Mangum
- Town of Olustee
- Grand River Dam Authority
- Okeene Public Works Authority
- Purcell Public Works Authority
- Tecumseh Utility Authority

Congratulations to **Marlow Municipal Authority** for earning an **American Public Power Association's Safety Award of Excellence** for utilities with less than 15,000 worker hours of exposure.

They are among 138 utilities earning recognition for safe operating practices in 2021.

Job Training & Safety

MESO Basic Lineman School scheduled for June 14-16

The 2022 MESO Basic Lineman School will be held June 14-16, 2022 in Fairview, OK. Registration is open at meso.org.

This course includes classroom training sessions covering the basics of electricity, lively discussions, and a supporting workbook loaded with reference materials and classroom activities. Hands-on instruction is performed outdoors, where a variety of conventional and not-so-conventional equipment is placed in the hands of workshop participants.

This training will assist workers whose job assignments may require pole climbing, assisting journeymen, and operating mechanical equipment. While this course covers BASIC materials and is designed for Apprentice Linemen, professionals at any skill level or knowledge will benefit by participating.

Tom Dougherty, MESO Director of Job Training and

Safety; Rusty Brown, Retired Line Foreman (Duncan) and MESO Safety Trainer; and Anthony Hale, Line Crew Superintendent, OMPA are the instructors for the course.

The registration fee for the training is \$199 per person (includes lunches and book). The training will be held at the OMPA Fairview Field Office (2124 Commerce Street).

Training will begin at 8:30 a.m. each day. Participants are encouraged to arrive early, and lunch will be provided on-site. Training is expected to be completed by no later than 4 p.m. each day.

GRDA and OMPA are sponsors of the training.

For more information about the training, contact Dougherty at tomd@meso.org. Registration questions may be directed to Deborah Miner-Gonzales, MESO Director of Administration and Finance at deborah@meso.org.

Oklahoma Public Power utilities receive “reliable public power provider” designation

The Grand River Dam Authority (GRDA), Edmond Electric, and Stillwater Electric Utility earned Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3)[®] designations from the American Public Power Association for providing reliable and safe electric service.

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.

This year, 54 utilities earned the designation, and, in total, 275 of the more than 2,000 public power utilities nation-wide hold the RP3 designation.

For GRDA, the continued RP3 designation serves to reinforce the organization’s commitment to its mission.

“Operating as efficiently and safely as possible, while also providing reliable electricity at the lowest possible cost is at the center of the GRDA mission,” said GRDA President/Chief Executive Officer

Dan Sullivan. “This RP3 designation reflects the dedication, effort, and expertise of our employees and we are proud to be among the public power utilities recognized by APPA.”

“The RP3 recognition from APPA reflects Edmond Electric’s commitment to providing safe and reliable service to our community,” said Glenn Fisher, Director, Edmond Electric.

“This recognition is a milestone we are very proud of,” said Loren Smith, Director of Stillwater Electric Utility. “Every single person on our team is committed to providing the highest degree of electric and customer service, and I know we will always look for ways to improve.”

The American Public Power Association has offered the RP3 designation for 15 years now. APPA is the voice of not-for-profit, community-owned utilities that power 49 million people in 2,000 towns and cities nationwide. APPA advocates and advises on electricity policy, technology, trends, training, and operations.



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