



# Building strong communities through a well-trained workforce

A publication of the Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma

February 2022

## 2022 Public Power Conference

### Register today for the 2022 MESO Public Power Conference

Both Attendee and Sponsorship registrations are now open for the 2022 MEO Public Power Conference scheduled for April 24-26 in Norman, Oklahoma at [www.meso.org](http://www.meso.org).

General Sessions speakers include Dr. Chuck Jackson, Colin Hansen, and Kevin Sesock.

Jackson, a highly respected and dynamic motivational speaker, brings his unique and entertaining style to every session he presents. Hansen is the Chairman, American Public Power Association Executive Director, Kansas Power Pool, and one of the nation's leading experts on locally owned and controlled municipal electric utilities. And Sesock, OMAG's Chief Information Officer, will discuss "how you hold the key to cybersecurity in the palm of your hand."

The 2021 Public Power Conference breakout sessions provide something for people in all areas of municipal operations including Customer Service, Human Resources, Electric Utility Operations and Linework, and Power Generation.

Breakout sessions include:

- Changing/Developing Workplace Culture
- The Ins and Outs of Severe Weather Management
- Lessons Learned from an Emergency: the Leader's Perspective
- Basic Lockout/Tagout and Switching
- Grow House Loading
- New Technologies & Funding Opportunities

(see REGISTER, page 2)

### Congratulating Dean Sherrick for an Outstanding Career

After a long career in Public Power, Dean Sherrick, Distribution Superintendent for Edmond Electric and longtime MESO and OMUSA Board member will retire.

"Dean has been a tremendous asset to Oklahoma's public power community," said Tom Rider, MESO General Manager. "I personally will miss his insight, wisdom and calming demeanor. All of us at MESO wish him the very best for a long and happy retirement."

Dean was born and raised in Edmond, OK and as he stated, "Edmond was still a small town back then and now it is the largest City with its own municipally-owned electric utility in the State of Oklahoma."

After graduating from high school in 1975, he started working for the City of Edmond in its Electric Department, which later became known as Edmond Electric, on March 22, 1976.

(see DEAN SHERRICK, page 3)



#### In This Issue

<p>Nominations for MESO Public Power Recognition Awards are due March 1 Page 3</p>	<p>MESO Electric Supervisor Development Course returns in March 2022 Page 4</p>	<p>South location helps expansion of OMPA's Field Services Department Page 6</p>	<p>Applications for Mike Nunneley Scholarship are due by March 1 Page 7</p>
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## Register

(continued from page 1)

- Communications: Awareness Beyond Your Own Department
- Rooftop Solar – Is It Right For You?
- How to be a Public Power Ambassador
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Reducing Stress & Burnout

Attendee registration is available at [www.meso.org](http://www.meso.org).

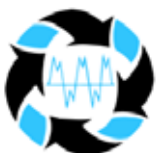
For potential sponsors: The annual Public Power Conference brings together leaders of municipal electric systems across the State of Oklahoma and neighboring states. By participating in the 2022 conference, you will have the opportunity to connect with key decision-makers. This is a great marketing opportunity for any company that wants to partner with and serve municipalities.

Public Power Conference participants represent municipally owned electric systems in Oklahoma, Kansas, and Arkansas. This annual event draws city managers, supervisors, lineworkers, and customer service professionals, so regardless of who you are looking to partner with, they may be at this conference.

Due to the ongoing COVID 19 Pandemic, MESO continues to monitor the situation. “We will work with the hotel and take reasonable precautions to help keep our members safe,” said Tom Rider, MESO General Manager.

For all sponsorship details, click here: [2022 Public Power Conference Sponsor Packet](#).

Registration questions may be directed to MESO Director of Administration and Finance, Deborah Gonzales, at [deborah@meso.org](mailto:deborah@meso.org) or at 405-528-7564 ext. 1.



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## 2022 Public Power Conference

# Nominations for MESO Public Power Recognition Awards are due March 1

Submit nominations for MESO Public Power Recognition awards by March 1 to recognize the outstanding employees at your utility. The annual awards include:

### **Clarence Fulkerson Electric System Achievement Award**

Awarded to an MESO member (city/town/utility/joint action agency) that has distinguished itself during the year for its exemplary system enhancement, improvement, reliability or other innovative efforts to improve municipal power in Oklahoma. The Clarence Fulkerson Electric System Achievement Award was named for the utility director in Ponca City who was

an early board member at MESO and proponent of municipal power plant ownership.

### **Marvin Hicks – Al Middleton Meritorious Service Award**

Awarded to an individual employee from a MESO member city/town/utility who has 25 years of employment as a good employee and is/ has been very active in their community. This award is named for two of MESO's original Board members – Marvin Hicks, Tahlequah and Al Middleton, Pryor. Hicks and Middleton both helped to grow MESO membership and were committed to the success of their respective  
(see NOMINATIONS, page 10)

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## **Dean Sherrick**

*(continued from page 1)*

He recalls playing foosball at a place called Papa Foos in the summer of 1975 and saw a young lady across the room on the pay phone who he just had to meet. He asked her, "When are you and I going to get married?" and her reply was, "When are you going to ask me out?"

Little did he know that he had met the love of his life and they would marry on December 29, 1978. Dean and his wife (Pam) recently celebrated their 43rd wedding anniversary and are happier than they ever thought possible. The couple has two daughters and four grandchildren who are the light of their lives.

We visited with him to look back on his career in Public Power with Edmond Electric:

### **Q: How did you get your start in Public Power?**

A: It wasn't long after high school that I went looking for a job and found one at Edmond Electric. I started working there roughly 46 years ago. I didn't really know what I was getting myself into, but I have thoroughly enjoyed every minute of my life here.

### **Q: As you wrap up a long, successful career in Public Power, what are some things you've learned that you would like to share with others?**

A: Live your life by starting each day with reading your Bible and believing in God's Word, say a prayer that God would watch over, protect, and keep everyone safe, and always remember that safety comes first. If you do this, you will learn, grow, and become stronger with each and every passing day.

### **Q: If someone asked you about pursuing a career in Public Power, what would you tell them?**

A: Public Power has been very good for me and my family. You are part of the community, your work is local to where you live, and you can take great pride in helping your neighbors when they are in need. The pay, benefits, and pension plan have always been something we could count on and not worry about what would happen tomorrow. I would highly recommend it to anyone.

### **Q: MESO has benefitted from your service, what did you find most rewarding about your efforts on behalf of the association?**

A: I have thoroughly enjoyed being on the MESO and OMUSA boards. There is great fellowship with the other board members, and we all learn from each other as we share our knowledge and decision making with every municipal electric utility throughout the State.

### **Q: What do you consider as your biggest career accomplishment or accomplishments?**

A: I'm a simple man who is happy in having confidence that actions rooted in good character will yield the best outcome, even when I cannot see how. My accomplishments were and are a team effort. My favorite saying is, "Teamwork divides the task and doubles the success."

MESO Professional Development

# MESO Electric Supervisor Development Course Returns in March 2022

The MESO Electric Supervisor Development (ESD) Course provides Journeyman Lineworkers with the skills necessary to lead high-performing teams while enhancing critical on-the-job skills. The program kicks off with its first classroom training session on March 24, 2022, and the final session will be in November 2023.

The course combines 16 Development (PD) topics (1/2 day per topic for a total of eight classroom days) focusing on Leadership, Teambuilding, Customer Service, and Communications. It also includes and three Electric Utility (EU) Classroom sessions over two classroom days.

To successfully complete the program, participants will be required to complete additional EU work including serving as a judge at the MESO Lineworkers Rodeo; coaching at MESO JT&S Specialty events such as Climbing School - Level 1 or Lineman Basics School; and, serving as a reviewer at an Apprentice Program at Apprentice Skills Assessment for two days.

All ESD Course details including topics covered, dates, etc. are online at [2022-23 MESO Electric Supervisor Development Course Information](#).

The cost of the program is \$899 per attendee per year and \$799 for each additional attendee per year. Class size is limited.

Registration is available for Journeyman Lineworkers at [www.meso.org](http://www.meso.org) or by clicking here: [2022-23 MESO Electric Supervisor Development Course Registration](#).

GRDA & OMPA have slots in the course as part of their respective MESO membership agreements. After participants have registered online, MESO will work with GRDA & OMPA to determine eligibility for financial support for individuals in the course.

Questions about the Electric Supervisor Development Training Program can be directed to Jeff Kaufmann, MESO Director of Communications and Professional Development, at [jeffk@meso.org](mailto:jeffk@meso.org). Registration questions may be directed to Deborah Gonzales, MESO Director of Administration and Finance, at [deborah@meso.org](mailto:deborah@meso.org).

## 2022 Public Power Conference

April 24-26, 2022  
Norman, Oklahoma

Register today at [www.meso.org](http://www.meso.org)

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- Wesco Distribution

See "Associates" @ [www.meso.org](http://www.meso.org)

From the American Public Power Association

# DOE Announces \$18 Million In Grants To Enhance Its Weatherization Program

By Peter Maloney

The Department of Energy (DOE) has announced an \$18 million funding opportunity made available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to help enhance the impact of the DOE's existing residential Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).


The Enhancement and Innovation Funding Opportunity Announcement will provide \$18.6 million this year and up to \$25 million each subsequent year through 2025. Each award will provide a maximum of \$2 million over a three-year performance period.

Two-thirds of low-income households have high energy burdens and spend more than 6 percent of their income on utility bills and Black households spend 43 percent more of their income on energy costs, Hispanic households spend 20 percent more, and Native American households spend 45 percent more, the DOE said.

The DOE says the selected projects will focus on:

- Making homes weatherization and electrification-ready: Projects must assist in reducing barriers to equitable delivery of WAP services, by performing necessary updates and panel replacements to incentivize fuel switching, and to enable the safe installation of clean energy technologies such as heat pumps and solar PVs. Applicants must describe measures that will make homes electrification ready and how proposed electrification measures will support the goal of reducing energy burden for low-income households;
- Increasing WAP eligibility for multifamily, single family, and manufactured homes: The projects may develop new methods and partnerships to shorten the timeframe for moving buildings and homeowners through the retrofit process, for

(see DOE ANNOUNCEMENTS, page 6)



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## South location helps expansion of OMPA's Field Services Department

South location helps expansion of OMPA's Field Services Department

Operations for the expanded OMPA Field Services Department are now officially underway, with a three-man crew working out of member city Marlow.

The department was founded in 2016 as a way to assist members with their distribution systems and long-term maintenance. It was funded by a revenue pool, with five members in the northwest part of the state combining forces to hire an original two employees out of a location in Fairview. Over time, more members have become interested, so the crew expanded employees. Finally, the Board of Directors told OMPA staff to move forward with opening another home base for the department.

That location is on the south side of the city of Marlow, off Highway 81. OMPA reached a deal to purchase the property, which was formerly a car dealership, last year. They've spent this year finalizing the closing and hiring a three-man crew for that part of the state.

The crew will be led by journeyman Ryan Ray, who previously worked for the location in Fairview. Ray joined OMPA in December of 2017 after being employed in Texas and received journeyman status in 2019. Anthony Hale will continue to supervise the four-man crew in Fairview.

The south crew was recommended after a need in that part of the state surfaced and the logistics of serving that area with a crew based out of Fairview became inefficient. The crew has the ability to assist members with all of their distribution needs, including substation work and quarterly substation inspections. Like the Fairview crew, they will serve members who contribute to the revenue pool on a regular basis, while also being available to other members on a contract basis.

The building in Marlow is 18,000 square feet, making it capable of hosting all the linecrew's trucks and equipment with room to spare. It is situated on a 4-acre lot directly off the highway, giving the crew quick access to respond to emergencies. The size of the lot also gives them room to host lineman training, which the Field Services Department in Fairview does on an annual basis.



*The OMPA Crew at Marlow built this unique mailbox. It is similar the mailbox at OMPA's Fairview office.*

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## DOE Announces

*(continued from page 5)*

- bringing previously unserved homes off deferral/waitlists and into the weatherization pipeline by addressing high-cost repairs and health and safety hazards, and protocols for identifying and preparing homes to become all-electric or electrification-ready;
- Expanding America's weatherization workforce: In support of the Biden Administration's priority to increase workforce diversity, applicants may propose workforce development initiatives and activities including outreach and recruitment, job readiness programs, innovative approaches to mentoring, counseling, and coaching, stipends and wages for trainees. Project initiatives may

also include developing formal partnerships with workforce development organizations, labor organizations and unions, trade schools, technical colleges, as well as local agencies and community-based organizations dedicated to reducing barriers to employment of underrepresented populations.

DOE's WAP program will also receive \$3.5 billion in additional funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to increase the energy efficiency, health, and safety of low-income households and to reduce their energy costs.

Additional details are available [here](#).

## 2022 Public Power Conference

# Applications for Mike Nunneley Scholarship are due by March 1

The Mike Nunneley Scholarship is awarded annually to a deserving governing body official, appointed official, or staff member from an Oklahoma Public Power community who has not attended a past MESO Public Power Conference.

The scholarship was established in 2018 to honor the late Mike Nunneley. He served the Public Power communities of Granite and Mannford, promoting not only Public Power but also the value of professional management for Oklahoma's cities and towns. He was committed to the continuing professional education of municipal officials at all levels of government.

The 2022 MESO Public Power Conference will be held April 24-26, 2022 in Norman, OK. The scholarship covers conference registration, meals, and 2 nights lodging. The recipient is responsible for transportation to and from the conference.

An applicant may apply directly, or an individual may apply on behalf of another person, with the understanding that the person being submitted meets scholarship criteria.

Below are the submission requirements to be

considered for the scholarship. Applications must be received by March 1, 2022 to be considered for the 2022 MESO Public Power Conference.

To be considered the application (a one-page letter) must include:

- Who they are.
- How long they've served their Public Power community and/or Public Power communities in Oklahoma.
- What they hope to gain by attending the MESO Public Power Conference.

To apply for the scholarship, address applications to the MESO Board of Directors, attention General Manager. Applications should be submitted to MESO in one of the following methods:

1. Mail: Tom Rider, GM; 308 NE 27th Street; Oklahoma City, OK 73105
2. Fax: (405) 524-5095
3. Email: [tom@meso.org](mailto:tom@meso.org)

Nominations received after February 1, 2022 may not be considered. Questions should be submitted in writing to [tom@meso.org](mailto:tom@meso.org).

## It's time to update Mutual Aid Agreements

Mutual aid is just what it sounds like — utilities helping each other in times of need.

MESO has notified members by email to review and adopt the 2022 Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma Inc. Mutual Aid Agreement (MAA).

The updated MAA reflects the return of the Association's name to MESO (Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma). There also are changes to the dispute section of the agreement. These changes were approved by the MESO Board of Directors.

"As always — having a current, active Mutual

Aid Agreement in place is essential in the event your utility suffers in a federally declared disaster," said Tom Rider, MESO General Manager. "Without a current Agreement in place, your utility would not be eligible to receive FEMA or state reimbursement."

Current agreements will be honored through April 1, 2020. Following that date, a completed 2022 Agreement must be on file with MESO.

Questions may be directed to Deborah Gonzales, MESO Director of Administration and Finance, at [deborah@meso.org](mailto:deborah@meso.org).



## GRDA provides Non-emergency Mutual Aid to Cushing

On January 18, GRDA's Cushing-based powerline maintenance crew provide non-emergency mutual aid to the City of Cushing (a GRDA customer and public power partner since 1953) by changing out an overhead guy pole. First estimated to be a 10-hour task, GRDA's crew completed the work in 5 hours.

## MUB Pryor rolls out new kiosk payment tool – J.A.C.K.

It was at an OML Meeting in 2019 where members of the Municipal Utility Board (MUB) Pryor Creek’s team first began the journey to replace their “traditional” drive-up window with J.A.C.K. (Justified Automated Collections Kiosk), an “Anytime Bill Pay with a Receipt Kiosk.”

“As with any change, there comes a bit of uncertainty. So remain calm, stay positive, know you have options, and remember we are still available Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm if you need help making payments or establishing/changing services!,” MUB told customers in a Facebook post.

We wanted to learn more, so we asked a few questions.

**MESO:** With any project, the question “what does success look like” must be considered, what things was MUB trying to accomplish?

**MUB:** We expect to see the following results: streamlined cash collections, more payment options for customers, timely collection processes, and a good return on investment to allow other projects to move forward.

**MESO:** Looking back at this project, what lessons did you learn from the idea phase to installation to making the kiosk operational?

**MUB:** If you are planning a project like this, consider making sure key personnel are included in the planning process; work to get all employees on board and have the attitude for success; and, make sure your developer understands your desired end result and main goal. It is also important to have a good knowledgeable team to troubleshoot problems, particularly during the initial roll-out. We reminded ourselves that both customers and our own team members may not accept change easily, so we considered that in each and every step we took.

**MESO:** For an average-sized utility considering a system like J.A.C.K., what is the approximate investment?

**MUB:** In our case, the purchase price was \$35,000, and our construction was approximately \$30,000. Our initial annual maintenance is just under \$6,000 but with feature upgrades and added services that will enhance the customer experience, it is roughly \$10,000. While it is a significant investment, we believe it will deliver the kind of return on investment we expect and beyond.

**MESO:** To be clear, J.A.C.K. replaces the need for an employee to “work the drive-up” window. What has the reaction been from your customers? What was the reaction from your employees?

**MUB:** Our customers are still adapting to the new options. We are seeing them drive up to J.A.C.K. unprepared, however, the system teaches customers they still have the power to choose how they would like to do business. If a customer can use an ATM machine, they can use J.A.C.K. to pay their bill.

Our team is adapting well. We are working hard to train ourselves and our customers. Immediately after roll-out, we experienced an increase in foot traffic which presented both pros and cons. The upside is an opportunity to educate them about J.A.C.K and in many cases set them up for auto draft. The downside obviously was some customers had a less than positive attitude about the change.

**MESO:** Do you expect a shift in how customers pay their bills as a result of J.A.C.K.?

**MUB:** Yes, customers can now pay their bills with cash, check or credit card 24/7, get a receipt and see that their account is credited immediately. By giving our customers these additional payment options, we think delinquent accounts could decrease. Lastly, customers who are not comfortable with the technology are reminded they can choose the auto draft option at no charge. We are still available Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm if you need payment option assistance.



If you have any questions about MUB’s new system, contact Hannah Moore at [mooreh@pryorcreek.org](mailto:mooreh@pryorcreek.org).

## OMPA offers reports on the value member utilities bring to their communities

OMPA staff is ready to prepare reports on the value their local electric utility brings to the community it serves for members. The reports are intended to be used as an educational tool that city staff can have available when discussing the value of their utility with lawmakers, community leaders, and citizens.

Based on completed reports, the financial value of an OMPA utility to the community it serves ranges from \$72,000 a year to more than \$2 million a year. The per meter served benefit averages \$518 a year. When factoring rates at some utilities may be higher than competitors, the benefit comes out to \$275 per meter each year.

There are many ways that these financial values are reached. The majority comes from actual transfers to the general fund, or revenues from the electric utility that are available to be transferred to the general fund. Such revenues are not earmarked for specific purposes, so they can be used to fund all sorts of municipal operations, paying for things such as police and fire departments, street repair or community buildings and parks.

This financial reinvestment that a Public Power utility in Oklahoma puts back into the community is five times the average nationally. This is due to the fact that Oklahoma is the only state in the country that does not allow its cities or towns to collect revenues through property tax. So, these revenues collected by

OMPA members are in lieu of property tax collections and a financial lifeline for the city or town.

There is more direct benefit to having a local electric utility, such as free or discounted electric service for municipal-owned buildings or operations, like community buildings or street lighting. Cities and towns can also benefit by the labor performed by utility staff, such as tree-trimming or hanging signs, that does not need to be contracted out.

Public Power often stacks up well against competitors when it comes to reliability statistics, as well. Locally owned utilities benefit when they are maintained by the people who live in the community. They not only take pride in the system that serves their friends and family, but since they live in close proximity, their response times are shorter.

Public Power utilities, as well, benefit from local control. The people making decisions about the utility are elected by the customers being served. That means they are more likely to understand the needs of the community and weigh them along with the needs of the utility and the city or town. This local connection also gives customers a much greater access to the governance of the utility.

Nineteen reports already have been created for members. Any utility interested in learning more should contact John Vansant at [jvansant@ompa.com](mailto:jvansant@ompa.com) or Ryan Piersol at [rpierzol@ompa.com](mailto:rpierzol@ompa.com).



From the American Public Power Association

## APPA Launches New Member Webpage On Infrastructure Law Implementation

By Paul Ciampoli

Members of the American Public Power Association (APPA) now have access to a webpage dedicated to keeping them up to date on activity and funding opportunities related to implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

APPA is also encouraging members to use the [Federal Register](#) and [Grants.Gov](#) to make specific searches for agencies or programs that are of interest, as it cannot guarantee the webpage will be exhaustive of all funding opportunities.

Additionally, APPA said its members should consider signing up for agency-wide or office specific newsletters based on their areas of interest.

APPA's ILJA webpage is available to members by clicking [here](#).

The ILJA was signed into law by President Joe Biden on Nov. 15, 2021. The law includes \$1.2 trillion in funding, including \$550 billion in new federal spending not previously authorized, for transportation, energy, and water infrastructure.

The law includes several potential funding opportunities for public power including for electric and hydrogen vehicle fueling infrastructure, grid resiliency infrastructure, smart grid investments, physical and cybersecurity infrastructure, incentives for hydropower production and efficiency infrastructure, energy efficiency and weatherization, and broadband infrastructure.



## Nominations

(continued from page 3)

communities. Together, they had almost 80 years of service to their communities.

### Drake Rice Customer Service Award

Awarded to individuals who best exemplify the qualities of a true customer service professional.

For more than 30 years, Rice served as the Director of Member Services for the Oklahoma Municipal Power Authority and many other roles in municipal government. Throughout his career Rice worked tirelessly advocating for customers and promoting customer service.

The Drake Rice Customer Service Award recognizes individuals in Public Power who best exemplify the traits of a quality customer service provider –

- Consistently positive attitude towards customers to assist them as needed;
- A positive and helpful attitude with co-workers to ensure a cooperative, customer-focused work environment; and,
- A personal commitment to always giving his or her best in every situation.

### Ray Duffy Personal Service Award

Awarded to an individual who, throughout their career, has consistently demonstrated a commitment to Public Power and the improvement of services and reliability. Further, has actively promoted Public Power within their organization and the state.

### Pruett – Lamb Lifetime Achievement Award

The MESO 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. The award is named after two of Oklahoma's strongest Public Power proponents – Gary Pruett, longtime General Manager of the Municipal Utility Board of Pryor, and Charles Lamb who served as a councilman then Mayor of the City of Edmond and on the OMPA Board of Directors for 25 years and the last 19 as chairman. To qualify for the award, the person nominated must be able to document how his or her professional contribution has improved the quality of life in the community(ies) in which they served, or Oklahoma's Public Power community as a collective.

To submit a nomination, please complete a nomination detailing the individual's contribution to both their community and Public Power as appropriate. Sufficient detail should be provided so that the Awards Selection Committee is provided a clear understanding of the individual's contributions. Further, each submission should have contact information for the person submitting the nomination.

All Recognition Award nominations are due NO LATER THAN – March 1, 2022.

Nominations should be submitted to MESO in one of the following methods:

Mail: Tom Rider, GM; 308 NE 27th Street;  
Oklahoma

City, OK 73105-2717

Fax: (405) 524-5095

Email: [tom@meso.org](mailto:tom@meso.org)

Questions should be submitted in writing to [tom@meso.org](mailto:tom@meso.org). Nominations received after March 1, 2022 may not be considered.

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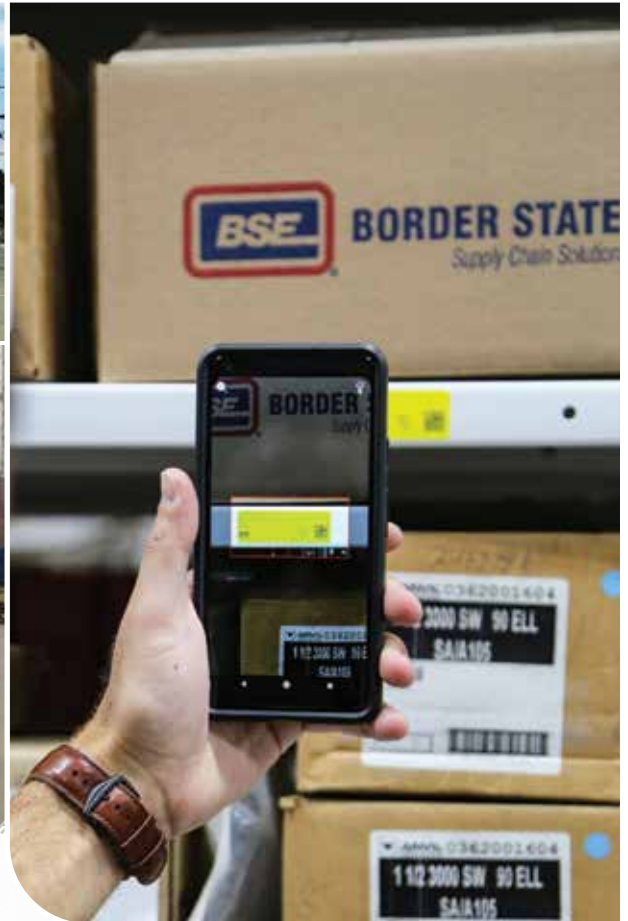
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