



# Building strong communities through a well-trained workforce

A publication of the Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma

June 2023



## NEW MESO Lineworker Apprentice Program Begins July 1

The MESO Lineworker Apprentice Program offering member utilities the path to advance the careers of their lineworkers to Journeyman status begins July 1.

The program fee is \$925 per year and includes a comprehensive 78-title online video-based training program with up-to-date, safety-related work.

### Student Features

- All 78 modules include videos, digital workbooks, and final exams accessible online
- Field Performance Requirements (FPR) for each course, documenting skills proficiency
- Courses typically segmented with the progress of completion for each course
- Section quizzes at the end of each major segment

### Instructor Features

- Flexible assignment of courses in line with the MESO Lineworker Apprentice program requirements
- Review student performance in real-time, both with knowledge tests and skills assessments
- View student access logs, including courses accessed, and tests taken
- “Over the Shoulder” functionality, allowing an instructor to view a student’s account as if they were the student

Anyone currently in the MESO Apprentice Lineworker Program may transfer into the new program for a one-time \$200 fee or finish the year in the current program with no additional charge. The following years will be billed at the annual rate of (see LINEWORKER APPRENTICE, page 2)

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## Cheryl Adams named MESO General Manager

At the May 31 Board of Directors, the board named Cheryl Adams MESO's General Manager to replace Tom Rider who is retiring June 30.

"Cheryl brings a tremendous amount of experience in association management and working with municipalities to this role," said Tyler Cline, MESO Board President. "We look forward to working with her as we look for ways to improve operations and to better serve our members."



Adams joined MESO in January of 2022 as Assistant General Manager and took over day-to-day operations on July 1, 2022.

As Tom Rider said in January of 2022, "I expect Cheryl to hit the ground running, and she has done just that." Under her leadership, MESO has added new programs and refined other ways the organization operates.

"I found a great staff here at MESO, and I'm proud of what we've quickly accomplished," Adams said. "As I tell them and our board we will have 'growing pains,' regardless I'm looking forward to best serving our members."

"The MESO Weekly started in September 2022 to capture relevant information for members in a single weekly email.

The MESO CDL/ELDT Program is designed to help members save time and money while helping their employees obtain a Commercial Driver License. To date, MESO has presented six total training sessions with 69 attendees.

The new MESO Lineworker Apprentice Program begins July 1, 2023. The program offers member utilities the path to advance the careers of their lineworkers to Journeyman status. It is a comprehensive 78-title online video-based training program with up-to-date, safety-related work practices and technical skills.

"As I continue serving public power, I look forward to meeting more of our members," Adams added.

You may contact her at [cheryl@meso.org](mailto:cheryl@meso.org).

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## Lineworker Apprentice

\$925. All participants in the current program are required to enter the new program after completing their current year.

Contact Michelle Monaghan at [michelle@meso.org](mailto:michelle@meso.org) or 405-528-7564 ext. 3 with any questions. For more information, click on either of the following links: [MESO Lineworker Apprentice Program Overview](#) or [MESO Lineworker Apprentice Program Q&A](#).

### MESO BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

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Tyler Cline, Miami

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Tom Dougherty

#### Director of Administration & Finance

Deborah Gonzales

#### Director of Communications & Professional Development

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Rusty Brown

Richard O'Connor

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## MESO schedules Mutual Aid Workshop

The MESO Mutual Aid Workshop – from the big picture to all the required small things – will be July 18th at the Oklahoma Municipal Assurance Group offices in Edmond.

“Are your utility and your people prepared for a severe weather, mutual aid event,” asked MESO General Manager, Cheryl Adams. “When a crisis hits, it’s time go to work. Join us for our Mutual Aid Workshop to help you before, during and after the event.”

The event is free of charge, however registration in advance is required, and seating is limited.

### Scheduled topics and presenters:

- MESO Mutual Aid – Cheryl Adams, MESO - A brief overview of the MESO Mutual Aid Program and APPA Mutual Aid.
- APPA Mutual Aid – Giacomina Wray, APPA - An overview of the national mutual aid response, the process, what you need to know, and what to expect.

- The Nitty Gritty Details – David Hefner, GRDA, and Tom Dougherty, MESO – Learn about everything that is involved when you are called on mutual aid. From what to pack to record-keeping.
- FEMA Requirements – to be announced
- OMAG Employee Assistance Program – Monica Coleman, OMAG – Mutual aid events can be stressful, learn more about OMAG's Employee Assistance Program.

“We thank our friends at OMAG for hosting this event and providing lunch,” Adams added. “And we appreciate their support of MESO and public power.”

The event begins at 10 a.m. and will be held at 3650 S Boulevard, Edmond, OK. Even though the event is free of charge, registration is required. Click here to register: [MESO Mutual Aid Workshop – July 18](#).

## MESO CDL/ELDT Program keeps rolling on

Earlier this year, MESO began a program to help members save time and money while helping their employees obtain a Commercial Driver License (CDL).

The program is registered with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and includes two distinct training sessions. These two training sessions cover part of the process to obtain a CDL.

“Acquiring a CDL is similar to obtaining a regular license with more detailed steps,” said Cheryl Adams, MESO General Manager.

The applicant needs to begin by passing the state-required written test to obtain a “permit.” The MESO ELDT Training session covers the theory, prepares attendees for the written test, and includes a practice test. This training is for anyone seeking to obtain a CDL.

Once the attendee passes the practice test, MESO submits their name into the Trainer Provider Registry

which will be required for the final test. The program currently has a 100 percent pass rate for the practice test.

Once the “permit” is obtained, the driver must complete practice driving with a credentialed instructor. The MESO Behind the Wheel Training session provides your employee with the information required to work with a co-worker in their community covering the practice (or behind the wheel, over the road driving).

The next step after the behind the wheel training is completed, the individual is required to pass the state driving test at one of the 15 testing locations in Oklahoma.

To date, MESO has presented six total training sessions with 69 attendees. And the next training sessions will be in August, click on the next training dates to register: [August 2nd for BTW](#) or [August 3rd for ELDT](#).

## MESO Job Training & Safety

# MESO holds Basic Lineman School in Fairview, planning for the next school in Cushing in October

Nearly 30 public power lineworkers gathered in Fairview to learn new or hone old skills at the MESO Basic Lineman School.

“Thanks to OMPA for hosting our Basic Lineman School,” Tom Dougherty, MESO Director of Job Training and Safety. “I know the guys took a lot away from this training, and I look forward to our school in Cushing in October.”

The three-day course included classroom training sessions covering the basics of electricity, lively discussions, and each student received a supporting workbook loaded with reference material. Hands-on instruction was performed outdoors, where a variety of conventional and not-so-conventional equipment was placed in the hands of workshop participants.

While this course covers basic materials and is designed for Apprentice Linemen, approximately 30 percent of the attendees were journeymen.

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

“Our plan is to have this event in Fairview and Cushing every year,” Dougherty said. “It will be a great way to learn new skills or serve as a refresher.”

This training assists workers whose job assignments may require pole climbing, assisting journeymen, and operating mechanical equipment. Lineworkers regardless of experience, skill level, or knowledge will benefit by participating.

(see FAIRVIEW, page 5)



## MESO Affiliate / Associate

Allgeier Martin Consulting Engineers  
Altec  
Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc.  
Automated Energy  
Bashlin Industries  
Bevins  
Border States Electric  
Buckingham Manufacturing  
Center Phase Energy  
Clifford Power Systems, Inc.  
Davis H Elliot  
Deloney Company  
EHV Solutions  
Elgin B Robertson  
Equity Technical Services  
ESC Engineering Evergy  
Evergy  
GRDA  
Grand Truck Equipment  
Green Equipment Company  
GridLiance  
Guernsey  
Hometown Connections  
Industrial Truck Equipment  
INNER-TITE Corp  
Innovative Systems LLC  
Integrity Tools & Safety  
Jelco  
JJ Kane Auctions  
J.L. Matthews  
Jones Power Products  
K D Johnson Inc  
Kiewit Infrastructure South Co.  
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Oberlender & Associates  
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Institute of Technology  
Olsson  
OMAG  
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Osmose  
Sunbelt-Solomon Solutions  
T&E  
T&R Electric Supply Co  
Techline Inc  
TESCO  
Toth & Associates  
TSTM Inc.  
Universal Field Services, Inc.  
Utilismart Corporation  
Utility Sales Agents of North Texas  
Utility Sales Agents of Oklahoma  
Utility Solutions, Inc.  
Utility Technology Services  
Wesco Distribution

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

## Ponca City Crew wins APPA Rodeo Event

In miserable cold and windy conditions, Oklahoma was well represented by crews from Ponca City and Edmond at the 2023 APPA Lineworkers Rodeo in Kansas City, with the Ponca City crew earning First Place in the Journeyman Competition – Hurtman Rescue.

The winning team included Tomas Alvarez, Austin Fry, and Keenan Pappan (who stepped in last minute to replace Chris Crain who was unable to compete due to unexpected circumstances). Their winning time was two-tenths ahead of the second-place team.



## Fairview

*(continued from page 4)*

Participants gained proficiency in the following areas:

- Basic Knots
- Bucket Rescue
- Digger Derrick and Bucket Truck Operation
- Meter Base Inspection
- Line Design & Construction
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Truck Grounding
- Pole Climbing
- Pole Hardware Knowledge
- Pole Top Rescue

The MESO Basic Lineman School in Cushing will be October 3-5, 2023. Click here to register: [Basic Lineman School-Cushing – October 3-5, 2023 Registration](#), and to learn more about the school, click here: [Basic Lineman School-Cushing – October 3-5, 2023 Information Sheet](#).

Questions about the school may be directed to Dougherty at [tomd@meso.org](mailto:tomd@meso.org) and registration questions are to be directed to Deborah Miner-Gonzales, MESO Director of Administration and Finance, at [deborah@meso.org](mailto:deborah@meso.org).



## 2023 Public Power Conference Public Power Gathers in Tulsa

More than 200 Public Power Leaders attended the MESO Public Power Conference at the Renaissance Tulsa Hotel & Convention Center. And 34 companies demonstrated their support for MESO and Public Power by agreeing to be conference sponsors.

“We had a great Public Power Conference in Tulsa, where old friends and new ones were made,” said Cheryl Adams, MESO General Manager. “I appreciate the hard work of our team, the planning committee, and our board of directors who made this conference happen.

“And I hope all of our attendees and exhibitors found the conference educational and beneficial.”

In the crammed-packed one-and-a-half day of

training sessions, attendees heard about how to improve their memory and the most current updates from Washington, D.C. on cyber grid security. Other sessions covered a wide range of topics including Generations at Work, Understanding the PCA, Basics of Grant Writing, Using Social Media, Understanding the Supply Chain, and more.

The MESO Board of Directors continued the longstanding tradition of grilling steaks for the Monday night dinner.

And MESO recognized outstanding contributions to Public Power during the Tuesday Awards lunch. (See Outstanding contributions and service to public power honored -- page 7.)



## Outstanding contributions and service to public power honored

At the 2023 MESO Public Power Conference, the association recognized individuals – selected by the MESO Board of Directors – for their unique contributions and service to public power and community.

“This is an amazing group of distinguished individuals who have done so much throughout their career,” said Cheryl Adams, General Manager. “I thank them for everything that they have done, and we all can view them as an inspiration.”

### Champion for Public Power Award & Tom Rider Professional Development Award – Tom Rider

Long-time MESO General Manager and public power advocate, Tom Rider was recognized with two awards.

He earned the Champion for Public Power Award for the “many accomplishments and contributions” he made over the years.

Rider’s leadership has provided countless industry professionals with training and guidance through the years. His years of service are filled with second-to-none integrity providing both leadership and tireless advocacy of Public Power. His work will leave a large imprint on Public Power and the State of Oklahoma.

And, Rider was presented with a new award recognizing an individual or organization demonstrating a commitment to promoting and/or participating in professional development for themselves or their organization, the Tom Rider Professional Development Award.

Rider’s legacy will most certainly prove difficult to match. He has worked closely with Oklahoma cities and towns and the non-profit sector for more than three decades providing exceptional - consistently receiving high marks from participants - professional development training focusing on leadership, customer service, and personal growth.

Throughout his career, he has dedicated countless hours to enhancing the skills of MESO members, traveling across the state numerous times to deliver his wisdom, and having a significant impact on many people.

### Ray Duffy Personal Service Award – Dave Slezicky

The Ray Duffy Personal Service Award recognizes contributions to the city’s operations and the community. While former Kingfisher City Manager, Dave Slezicky, insured needed infrastructure investments and moved forward with technology helping to revitalize the community.

Slezicky is known as an advocate for the interests of municipalities and municipally owned electric utilities. He served on the OMPA Board of Directors and is a past president of the MESO Board of Directors. In 2017, he received the prestigious 7 Hats Award from the APPA which recognizes a City Manager that performs various duties in their community.



Left to right: Mike Villareal (Altus), Linda Rider, Tom Rider (MESO), Keith Skelton (Sallisaw), and Jared Crisp (Pryor Creek)



Left to right: Mike Doublehead (Tahlequah), Dave Slezicky (formerly with Kingfisher), and Mike Villareal (Altus)

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

The Marvin Hicks – Al Middleton Meritorious Service Award recognizes an individual who has committed their professional career in service to Public Power municipal government. Mike Doublehead, TPWA General Manager, has dutifully served public power for nearly three decades in multiple capacities.

Doublehead served on the board of directors and then became general manager of Stillwell Utilities and TPWA for more than a decade. He serves as the voice for his peers with his wholesale electric supplier. He serves on the MESO and OMUSA Board of Directors – having served as President of each.



Left to right: Loren Smith (Stillwater), Mike Doublehead (Tahlequah), and Mike Villareal (Altus)



Left to right: Tyler Cline (Miami), Vernon Hall (Stillwater), and Mike Villareal (Altus)

### **Pruett-Lamb Lifetime Achievement Award – Vernon Hall**

The 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.

Stillwater's Vernon Hall has dedicated his nearly 40-year career to public power and customer service. He works closely and in collaboration with internal and external customers to provide engineering design and support for new developments, relocations, economic development projects, as well as electric system improvements. Always presenting a positive attitude, they've worked tirelessly to complete complex system designs to meet their needs.

### **Pruett-Lamb Lifetime Achievement Award – Phil Stokes**

The second recipient of the Pruett-Lamb Lifetime Achievement Award – Siloam Spring's Phil Stokes – began his career with a wholesale power provider beginning where he was always quick to volunteer their service to municipal customers in order to improve their systems and help them keep the lights on.

After a legendarily short retirement, he joined the crew at Siloam Springs. He is always prepared to customers and their concerns, to work diligently to resolve even the smallest of problems while taking the time to explain the situation to them.



Left to right: Brett Griffin (Edmond), Phil Stokes (Siloam Springs), and Mike Villareal (Altus)



### Champion for Public Power Award – Trey Harper

Trey Harper is a recognized leader within his profession and the Public Power community. He began his 20-year career with Skiatook as a laborer at the age of 19 and served with integrity and loyalty for his entire career.

Moving up the ranks to Apprentice Lineman, Journeyman Lineman, Electric Supervisor, and Public Works Director, he is credited with much of the growth and success of the electric department due to his efforts serving as the main voice for training and safety. He dutifully served on the MESO Job Training & Oversight Committee.

Left to right: Dwayne Elam (Wagoner), Trey Harper (Skiatook), and Mike Villareal (Altus)

### Drake Rice Customer Service Award – Betty Mackey

Marlow's Betty Mackey, the winner of the Drake Rice Customer Service Award, is known throughout city hall and her community for her customer service values and "gold standard" for financial work.

She helped upgrade customer service options by implementing an online payment system for utility payments and later court fees, adding a 24-hour phone payment system and eliminating customer fees from the online payment system. She began her career as City Clerk during a 12-day electric outage, where for two straight weeks city employees worked diligently taking care of customers.



Left to right: Jason McPherson and Betty Mackey



SAVE THE DATE  
**2023 MESO Lineworkers  
and Safety Training**  
September 13-14, 2023  
Bentonville, Arkansas

## MESO Members recognized by the American Public Power Association

For outstanding safety and reliability performance in 2022, the American Public Power Association recognized several MESO members.

“Every day the citizens of our public power communities wake up and turn on the lights, and they are able to do so because of the hard work of the employees of our members,” said Cheryl Adams, MESO General Manager. “Congratulations to everyone who keeps the lights on safely. Your work is appreciated.”

### Certificate of Excellence in Reliability

The APPA honored 219 Public Power Utilities – including 10 MESO members – with a "Certificate of Excellence in Reliability" for reliable performance in 2022. The 10 MESO members earning the distinction are:

1. City of Comanche
2. City of Kingfisher
3. City of Olustee
4. City of Siloam Springs (AR)
5. Grand River Dam Authority
6. Hope Water & Light, (AR)
7. Marlow Electric
8. Monett Electric, (MO)
9. Okeene Public Works Authority
10. Tecumseh Utility Authority.

### Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3)

The association’s Reliable Public Power Provider program recognizes utilities that demonstrate high proficiency in reliability, safety, workforce development, and system improvement. Below is a list of public power utilities that currently hold the RP3 designation. Utilities keep the RP3 designation for three years.

1. Grand River Dam Authority, OK
2. Edmond Electric, OK
3. Hope Water & Light, AR
4. Stillwater Electric Utility, OK
5. City of Monett, MO

### Safety Award of Excellence

The American Public Power Association’s Safety Award of Excellence recognizes utilities' incident rates and the overall state of their safety programs and culture. Groups are determined by worker hours of exposure. One hundred sixty-six utilities have earned the Safety Award of Excellence for safe operating practices in 2022, including three MESO members..

1. Marlow Municipal Authority – First Place – Group A (less than 15,000 worker-hours of exposure)
2. Stillwater Electric Utility – Third Place – Group E (110,000 to 249,999 worker-hours of exposure)
3. Oklahoma Municipal Power Authority – Honorable Mention – Group E (110,000 to 249,999 worker-hours of exposure)

**Register for the**  
**MESO Mutual Aid Workshop**  
From the big picture to all the required small things

10 a. m. to 3 p.m. • July 18, 2023

Hosted by the Oklahoma Municipal Assurance Group  
3650 S. Boulevard, Edmond, OK

Click here to register: [Mutual Aid Workshop](#)