



Fall 2022

Willmar Municipal Utilities

Willmar Municipal Utilities will provide safe, reliable & quality utility services at competitive rates for their customers.

WMU Board of Commissioners

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October 2-8

700 Litchfield Ave SW
PO Box 937
Willmar, MN 56201
320-235-4422
www.wmu.willmar.mn.us

A Message from the General Manager



Energy shortages are frequently in the news these days, including our local news from the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) and Willmar Municipal Utilities regarding energy shortages and conservation. **Who is MISO?** MISO manages all the generation and energy needs for 42 million customers, in 15 states and Manitoba, including Minnesota. **Why the energy shortage?** Due to environmental regulations, coal and gas plants are being shut down and replaced with wind, solar and other resources. Coal and gas plants can be started to meet real time changing energy needs, wind and solar are considered intermittent resources and depend on wind and sun and cannot be started to meet real time changing energy needs.

Why do we receive notice of potential energy shortages? MISO needs to maintain enough generation to meet the energy needs plus a reserve margin. 36041001 When MISO's energy availability drops below the max reserve margins, MISO sends out an alert to conserve energy. **Will an energy shortage continue?** MISO is continuously assessing current and future needs. 26706001 They are analyzing and incentivizing ways to maintain reliable energy through additional power sources, such as wind, solar, battery storage, hydro, nuclear, etc. I would like to thank everyone for their cooperation to conserve energy when requested and having a conservation mindset, as these efforts will help to minimize or eliminate the potential for rolling blackouts.

Power Plant Abatement and Demolition Project and the Northeast Water Treatment Plant Improvement Project Bid Opening—Willmar Municipal Utilities was pleased when bids were opened for the Power Plant Abatement and Demolition Project and the Northeast Water Treatment Plant Improvement Project, both coming in under budget. Cost for the Power Plant Abatement and Demolition Project is estimated at \$4.4M and the Northeast Water Treatment Plant Improvement Project at \$19.5M. **Electric and Water Rates**—WMU works hard to operate your local utility efficiently to keep costs down. We are pleased to note that electric rates will remain unchanged for 2023. The last rate increase for electricity was in 2015.

A water rate increase will be required to pay for the Northeast Water Treatment Plant Improvement Project. As the Municipal Utilities Commission and staff are sensitive to rate increases, Willmar Municipal Utilities is analyzing multiple options to finance the project to minimize the rate increase for our customers. 20847001

New Willmar Municipal Utilities Building—In 2010, the Municipal Utilities Commission and community supported the need for a new facility due to inefficiencies in being in different locations and aging buildings. The vision was to be in the new facility by 2020, however, with higher priority projects such as the Water Treatment Plant, Priam and Willmar Substations, along with other substation upgrades, etc., the new facility has been delayed. With the completion of those projects, WMU is ready to move forward with a new facility and the first steps will be to determine location and land availability and purchase. WMU's goal is to have the funds set aside for the building prior to construction.

I would like to thank the community for putting your trust in me to serve as your General Manager. It truly is a pleasure.

John Harren, General Manager

Public Power Week is October 2-8, 2022

As your local public electric and water utility, we value your business. There are 24 account numbers hidden in this newsletter, if you find your account number call the office to claim your prize!

700 Litchfield Ave SW, Willmar, MN 56201 320-235-4422 www.wmu.willmar.mn.us

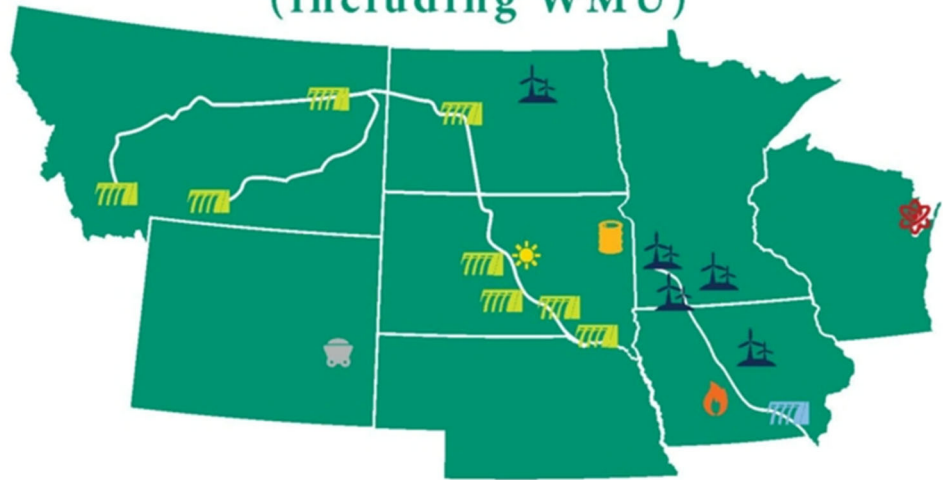
Residential
and Business
Rebates
available!



For information about WMU's rebate programs, contact our Energy Services Representative at 320-235-4422 or visit <https://wmu.willmar.mn.us/energy-programs/rebates/>

21042001

GENERATION FACILITIES SERVING MRES MEMBERS (including WMU)



- WAPA Federal Hydroelectric Resource
- MRES Hydroelectric Resource
- Nuclear Resource
- Natural Gas Resource
- Wind Energy Resource
- Coal Resource
- Diesel Resource (Excludes Municipal Capacity)
- Solar Resource

Recycle fluorescent light bulbs for FREE!



WMU customers can recycle their fluorescent light bulbs for free! Bulbs can be brought to Kandiyohi County Household Hazardous Waste at 1400 22nd St SW in Willmar during their business hours. Bring your WMU statement (or access it on the SmartHub app!).

For more information, visit <https://wmu.willmar.mn.us/energy-programs/conservation/>

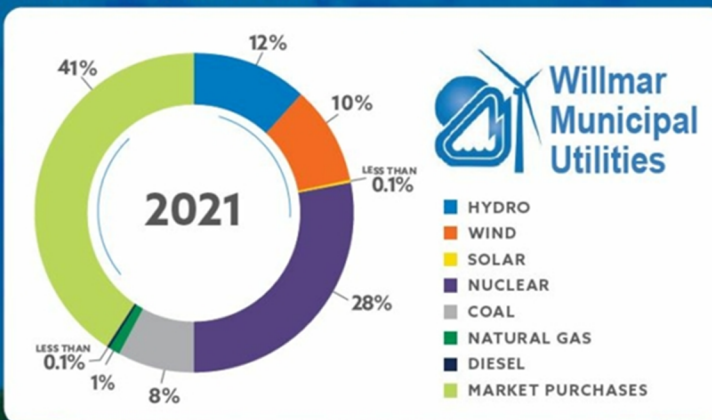
CREATING A CLEANER ENERGY FUTURE

WILLMAR'S POWER SUPPLY MIX

Our diverse mix of power supply resources results in reliable, affordable and environmentally friendly electric service for Willmar's citizens and businesses.

For 2021, Willmar has committed to purchasing Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) to offset the electricity in our power supply mix that comes from fossil fuels. RECs are proof that electricity was generated by qualifying carbon-free, renewable facilities – such as wind and solar farms – and fed into the electric grid. These REC purchases help Willmar Municipal Utilities and its customers move to a net-zero carbon future, which means that all emissions from electricity used in Willmar are counterbalanced by an equivalent amount of carbon-free, renewable generation.

For more information about how our power supply percentages are calculated, go to renergy.com/energy-resources/generation.



91%
carbon-free power supply
2021

100%
net-zero carbon power supply
2021

22%
renewable power supply
2021

Willmar Municipal Utilities
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Northeast Water Treatment Plant Improvement Project

Recently you may have heard news of a new Northeast Water Treatment Plant (NEWTP) project and several news articles regarding proposed water rate increases necessary to finance it. Let's review the project and answer some questions you may have. 26953001 Approximately 10 years, ago WMU staff along with Carollo Engineers began a pilot project to explore water system options and future needs for the city, specifically looking at the challenges of meeting the community's water demands (system capacity) and meeting ever-changing EPA guidelines. Multiple options have been vetted by staff and engineers, ultimately resulting in a responsible plan to rebuild the NEWTP.

The design for system improvements was 90% completed and an engineer's cost estimate was brought forward to the Commission in 2019. At that time, the project was set aside for several reasons - cost, our system capacity would still meet the needs of the community for 3-4 years and WMU Commission and staff wanted to explore multiple funding opportunities including federal and state grants and bond financing.

Fast forward to 2021 - Willmar has continued to grow and our system capacity has further diminished causing the Utility to implement watering restrictions for the first time in many years. Furthermore, federal and state grant opportunities were unsuccessful and state funding through a bonding bill failed in 2022. The reality is this project needs to move forward to accommodate community growth. 36904001 WMU tasked Carollo Engineers with completing the NEWTP design and putting the project to bid. A water rate study was completed to assist with financing options to cover the project costs.

We are pleased to report that bids for the project came in below the engineers estimate. The total cost for the NEWTP Improvement Project is \$19.5M. Commission is vetting out all options to finance the project, of which those details are still emerging. 23746001 There will be some tough conversations about water rate increases, but in the end, we feel that the financing plan brought forward will be well thought out, conservative and responsible for rate payers.

The new plant will use less chemicals in the treatment process, help meet EPA guidelines and boost our system capacity to meet Willmar's growing needs for the foreseeable future. 21532001 Plans are to break ground in late 2022 with completion of the project slated for summer of 2024.

Alan Neer, Water Department Supervisor



Photo Credit: Jennifer Kotila, West Central Tribune

WMU Commissioners and City Council being briefed on the new NEWTP

Substation Improvements

As power generation transitions from fossil fuels to renewable energy, the electric grid must evolve to ensure electricity is in the right place at the right time. WMU, along with area electric transmission system owners, strategically and cooperatively study the regional grid and develop mutually beneficial projects to meet the needs of our customers in a safe, reliable, and cost-effective way. 38153001 In November, WMU expects to complete a joint transmission project with Great River Energy at the Willmar Substation that will increase reliability and load serving capacity in the area.

Construction of a new substation is underway near WMU's Power Plant. Presently, the downtown substation equipment is spread over three different locations, one of which is inside the retired Power Plant. The new substation will consolidate equipment to one site and allow the Power Plant to be completely vacated preceding its demolition. 29882001 Jeron Smith, Staff Electrical Engineer

Lights, Lights, Lights

Downtown lighting takes on a new vibrant look. The Line Department is busy installing new decorative streetlights in the downtown area. 33012001 The new lights are LED, illuminating with a nicer, brighter light giving the downtown a new "vintage" look. The downtown light replacement project has been years in the making as the existing lights are from the early 1980's and parts are no longer available.

WMU would like to thank the City of Willmar and the Downtown Business Owner's Group for their excellent choice in selecting the new lighting fixture. 26943002 WMU plans to finish the project in early 2023, and we hope you enjoy the new look.

Speaking of streetlights, you can assist us in keeping the streetlights shining bright throughout the city by reporting streetlight outages by either calling the office or visiting the streetlight outage link at: <https://wmu.willmar.mn.us/contact/street-light-outage-reporting/>.

2022 has been an extremely busy year for the Line Department, and we are fortunate to see growth in new and existing businesses along with increased housing complexes underway to give our community lots of new options. 19593001

As always, we would like to thank the entire community for supporting and allowing us to serve your electric needs the best way possible while staying up to date with our responsibilities.

Ed Zurn, Line Distribution Supervisor



Saying Goodbye to an Old Friend

The end of an era is upon us. The first brick was laid at the current Power Plant location in 1924, since then numerous additions and improvements to the Plant have been completed, the last being in 1991. 16924001 Many dedicated employees have punched a timecard and continuously kept the lights and heat on 24/7 for 95 years - from “flipping the switch” at midnight on May 16, 1925, until the last Operator ended his shift and turned the key on the evening of June 30, 2020. Power Plant operations have evolved and adjusted over the years. 33851001 The discontinuance of the aged district heating system, and aged equipment in the power plant subject to changes in environmental regulations were a factor. With the ability to generate only a fraction of the power necessary to serve our city, purchasing power from the grid remained the most feasible option.

The question was asked - can we repurpose the Plant? WMU hosted many tours and interested parties to explore those options. Due to the type of construction of the building along with enormous costs to clean up the structure, plans for lofts, breweries, pasta restaurants and business spaces along with many other ideas were set aside.

Since the summer of 2020, environmental studies have been completed and a responsible plan has been put together to clean up the building. It contains large amounts of asbestos and other materials used for insulating boilers, equipment, and miles of pipes. 18727001 After proper removal of these materials, the building will be taken down.

Cleanup work will commence starting on or around November 1st and the building will be removed with site restoration completed in the Spring of 2023. Future plans for the site include a new substation currently under construction to house the controls from the power plant, a new bulk water fill station and space for future utility infrastructure if needed. Willmar’s skyline view is going to change. Goodbye old friend, thank you for nearly a century of hard work to help power our great City. 18951002

Kevin Marti, Supervisor of Facilities & Maintenance



Figure 1- Willmar Power Plant Construction- August 24, 1924



Figure 2- Willmar Power Plant- August 2022

Connect a Wi-Fi-enabled ChargePoint Home Flex charger to your local utility and receive a \$500 rebate. ChargePoint Level 2 residential units charge your EV up to 9X faster than a wall outlet, adding up to 37 miles of range per hour. They are ENERGY STAR certified and update to the latest software automatically.



2022 Awards!

- MN Safety Council Governor’s Safety Award
- APPA Safety Award
- APPA Certificate of Excellence in Reliability

Employee Recognition!

- Brandon Scott, Water Works Operator: 10 yrs
- Brian Hoover, Engineering Tech III: 25 yrs
- Tom Leenstra, Water Works Operator: 25 yrs

New Employees!

- Fabian Tomaschett, Water Works Operator
- Aaron Zosel, Line Technician

The **Cold Weather Rule** is a Minnesota law identified in state statute 216B.096. If a residential customer's account is current as of October 1, a utility must go through certain steps before disconnecting a customer's service. The rule applies from October 1 through April 30. The purpose of this notice is to inform you of your rights and responsibilities under the **Cold Weather Rule**. These rights and responsibilities are designed to help you with winter utility bills. You must act PROMPTLY. If you choose not to assert your rights or choose not to enter into a mutually acceptable payment schedule, your service may be disconnected.

The **Cold Weather Rule** provides you with the following rights and responsibilities: 37114001

THE RIGHT to declare your inability to pay your utility bill. If you do so, you must enter into a payment schedule with Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU) to maintain your utility service. You have the right to appeal any proposed disconnection to WMU. You will have to provide WMU proof that you are unable to pay and were current in payments to the utility. If you appeal a disconnection, your service will not be disconnected until the appeal is resolved. Appeals are resolved locally.

THE RESPONSIBILITY, if you choose to declare inability to pay, to complete the "Inability to Pay" form found on WMU's website or from Customer Service and return it to WMU within 10 days of Notice of Disconnection. If you have proof that you are receiving any form of public assistance, you do not need to fill out the Inability to Pay form, but you MUST contact WMU to arrange a payment plan.

THE RIGHT to a mutually acceptable payment schedule with WMU. This payment schedule will cover your existing arrears plus the estimated usage during the payment schedule period. If you are able to pay but still wish to enter into a payment schedule, contact WMU immediately to arrange a schedule. (This payment schedule may be arranged by your designated Third Party.)

THE RESPONSIBILITY of making payments as agreed or promptly notifying WMU why you cannot keep the agreement. You may then request that the original payment schedule may be changed. Any change is subject to WMU's approval. 28345006

THE RIGHT to request that the utility notify a Third Party if your service becomes subject to disconnection. If you have requested Third Party notification, a copy of this notice has been sent to the third party.

Disputes regarding the previously listed options can be appealed to Willmar Municipal Utilities during regular business hours at 700 Litchfield Ave SW, Willmar, MN 56201.

Willmar Municipal Utilities Earns High Marks in Customer Satisfaction Survey

How are we doing? 37544001 WMU commissioned Q Market Research to do a random survey of our customers in November and December of 2021 and rate the utility on the service it receives. We were pleased to learn that the satisfaction with our service rated in the excellent range.

Our Net Promoter Score was 47.7 at the upper end of the "good" range, just shy of the Excellent rating. The Net Promoter Score measures the likelihood of customers recommending WMU. 22157001 Satisfaction with our service was rated excellent. Our score was 6.15 out of 7, which demonstrates that customers are satisfied or pleased after interacting with our staff. Our customers prefer to contact WMU by phone and speak to a live person. We pride ourselves in our customer service and will continue to answer our phones to communicate with our customers without automation during business hours. Familiarity with WMU rebate programs was rated low. 31423001 This finding has encouraged staff to enhance outreach and involvement in the community through educational avenues, social media, community events and activities to promote our energy rebate program, Bright Energy Solutions, partnered through Missouri River Energy Services.

Q Market Research noted that the response rate of 15% is very high for a first-time customer satisfaction survey being performed. We thank all who responded to the survey. WMU staff strives to provide safe, reliable, and quality utility services at competitive rates for our customers. 32155002 The survey indicated we are doing a good job and we will always strive to do better.

Janell Johnson, Director of Administration

Local Energy and Utility Assistance Options

United Community Action
Partnership (UCAP)
200 SW 4th St
Willmar, MN 56201
320-235-0850

Kandiyohi County
Family Services
2200 23rd St NE, Suite 1020
Willmar, MN 56201
320-231-7800

Salvation Army
HeatShare Program
521 4th St SW
Willmar, MN 56201
320-235-2033

Payments can be made 24/7 by calling 855-386-9902.

To make payment arrangements on your utility account, please contact Customer Service at 320-235-4422, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Get Your REBATE

1. Purchase and install qualifying equipment.
2. Complete a rebate form, available at wmu.willmar.mn.us or at brightenergysolutions.com.
3. Within 90 days of purchase, send the completed form to your local utility along with the sales receipt and any other required documentation.

Please dispose of used appliances in an environmentally friendly way.

WHAT IS ENERGY STAR

ENERGY STAR is the government-backed symbol for energy efficiency, providing simple, credible and unbiased information that consumers and businesses rely on to make well-informed decisions. Since 1992, ENERGY STAR and its partners have helped American families and businesses save more than 4 trillion kilowatt-hours of electricity and achieve over 3.5 billion metric tons of greenhouse-gas reductions — that's equivalent to the annual emissions of more than 750 million cars.

ENERGY STAR is the simple choice for energy efficiency, making it easy for consumers and businesses to purchase products that save them money and protect the environment. It's that integrity that has led Americans to purchase more than 6 billion ENERGY STAR products since 1992. For more information on ENERGY STAR products and energy-saving tips, visit energystar.gov.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional information or to inquire about rebates, please contact:

Willmar Municipal Utilities

700 Litchfield Ave SW
PO Box 937

Willmar, MN 56201
320-235-4422

wmu@wmu.willmar.mn.us

www.wmu.willmar.mn.us

OR

Bright Energy Solutions

3724 W Avera Dr

PO Box 88920

Sioux Falls, SD 57109

605-338-4042

info@brightenergysolutions.com

REBATES FOR YOUR HOME

brightenergysolutions.com



May 2022

ENERGY STAR® APPLIANCES

Air Purifier: \$25

Room air purifiers remove fine particles, such as dust and pollen, from indoor air. An ENERGY STAR model could save about \$144 in energy costs over its lifetime.

Clothes Washer: \$25

ENERGY STAR clothes washers use 25% less energy and 33% less water per load compared to standard models.

*Rebate available for homes with electric water heaters only.

Dehumidifier: \$25

ENERGY STAR dehumidifiers have more efficient refrigeration coils, compressors and fans than conventional models, so they use less energy to remove moisture.

LED Lighting: \$1.50 – \$4

ENERGY STAR lighting uses up to 90% less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs and lasts at least 15 times longer.

Room Air Conditioner: \$25

ENERGY STAR room air conditioners use less energy than standard models and often include timers for better temperature control.



Using electricity wisely can reduce energy bills, improve comfort and protect the environment.

The Bright Energy Solutions® program provides cash rebates (or bill credits) to help make your energy choices easier.

Learn more at brightenergysolutions.com.

HEATING & COOLING REBATES

Air-Source Heat Pump (ducted, electric backup): \$200 – \$300

Air-Source Heat Pump (ducted, gas/propane backup): \$800 – \$1,200
Air-source heat pumps provide up to three times the amount of energy they consume. Use a certified Quality Install contractor and receive an additional \$100 rebate.

Central Air Conditioner: \$200 – \$300

High-efficiency models will cut your cooling costs. Use a certified Quality Install contractor and receive an additional \$100 rebate.

Mini-Split (ductless) Heat Pump:

\$250 – \$350 per outdoor unit

Mini-Split (ductless) Air Conditioner:

\$200 per outdoor unit

Ductless heating and cooling systems – widely used in Europe and Asia – use multiple indoor units connected to an outdoor unit via refrigerant lines, avoiding the need for costly ductwork.

These highly efficient systems allow for customized heating and cooling in each space.

Central A/C or Heat Pump Tune-up: \$30

Tune-ups keep your equipment running efficiently and help cut cooling costs. Apply for this rebate every other year.



Geothermal Heat Pump: \$200/ton

Geothermal heat pumps are among the most efficient and comfortable heating and cooling technologies available because they use the earth's natural heat to provide heating, cooling and, at times, water heating.

Heat-Pump Water Heater: \$150

ENERGY STAR qualified heat-pump water heaters can save a four-person household about \$330 per year on electric bills compared to a standard electric water heater.

ENERGY STAR Smart Thermostat: \$25

Smart thermostats automatically adjust to save energy when you are asleep or away. They can be controlled remotely using a smartphone, tablet or computer.

ELECTRIC

VEHICLES (EVs)

ChargePoint® Home Charger: \$500

Connect a WiFi-enabled ChargePoint Home or Home Flex charger to Willmar Municipal Utilities and receive a \$500 rebate. ChargePoint Level 2 residential units charge your EV up to nine times faster than a wall outlet, adding up to 37 miles of range per hour. They are ENERGY STAR certified and update to the latest software automatically. Download the ChargePoint app to schedule and track charging, get reminders to plug in and find places to charge away from home.

EV Survey: \$50

EV owners who do not qualify for the \$500 rebate above can get a \$50 reward simply for sharing their vehicle and charging information with us.



WMU Scholarship Winners!

Jacob Meyer and Max Gatewood of Willmar Senior High School were the winners of the 2022 Willmar Municipal Utilities Scholarship.

The 2023 scholarship materials will be available in December.

The first place winner's essay is forwarded to Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association for consideration of the Tom Bovitz Scholarship. 17333002



October 2-8

2023 Customer Calendars are available! Stop in and grab yours today!



Find your account number! 24 WMU account numbers are hidden in this newsletter. Find yours and call Customer Service at 320-235-4422 to claim your prize!

Tyler Technologies Software, Coming Soon!

WMU will be going through a software conversion and transitioning to Tyler Technologies, Incode 10 in 2023. Tyler Technologies has a proven record to serve municipal utilities nationwide. With this software conversion, we will be enhancing our functionality and capabilities in both the Financial and Utility Billing software to assist our customers. Over the next 12 months, you will be seeing some changes to your account billing and a new customer portal and mobile app will be available. We will do our best to ensure that this change is as seamless as possible for our customers. We are excited for this transition and ease of use to assist our customers.



Willmar Municipal Utilities
PO Box 937
Willmar, MN 56201

Valued Willmar Municipal Utilities Customer

Follow us

