

Fall 2023

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700 Litchfield Ave SW
PO Box 937
Willmar, MN 56201
320-235-4422

www.wmu.willmar.mn.us



A Message from the General Manager

Welcome to the 2023 Willmar Municipal Utilities Newsletter, where we hope to bring you up to date with the many changes that are happening. This newsletter is filled with exciting information, so please take the time to read the entire newsletter to get caught up on the numerous projects in progress and near completion. You will find it all here, from rate adjustments, new water treatment plant, software conversion, and other exciting changes. Find your account number and claim a prize!

As General Manager, I would like to address rate adjustments required to sustain the quality, reliable, and timely service that the Willmar community has come to expect.

WMU has not had an electric rate adjustment since 2015. Rising costs have impacted WMU like every industry. 39550001 Cost increases on purchases like wire, transformers, meters, energy, transmission, along with federal and state mandates are all contributing to the need for a rate adjustment. The anticipated 2024 rate adjustment for electricity is 5% with a rate study planned for forward looking years to monitor and plan for upcoming infrastructure projects. The impact on a standard residential bill will be an increase of approximately \$7.50 per month.

The water rate adjustment is required to fund the water main replacement associated with the City of Willmar's 10-year Street Replacement Program, and bonding for the NE Water Treatment Plant. After much discussion and consideration, the Municipal Utilities Commission is considering a 20% water rate adjustment in 2024 and continue with the current rates adjustments that are in place of 4% in 2025, and 3% in 2026. The water rate adjustment in 2024 will increase the average residential billing by approximately \$7 per month.

The utility rates are set by City Ordinance, and WMU's goal is to have the ordinance in place by January 1, 2024. 36839001 If we can assist you in managing your utility needs through rebates, budget billing, EV connections, please reach out to us.

As the General Manager of Willmar Municipal Utilities, "Thank You" for your past support and ask for your continued support as we strive to provide high quality, reliable, and efficient service.

John Harren, General Manager

WMU Awarded RP₃ Diamond Level Recognition as a Reliable Public Power Provider!



In 2023, Willmar Municipal Utilities once again was recognized for its outstanding reliable service by American Public Power Association, receiving the RP₃ Diamond Level Award. This is the third consecutive time WMU has received the award. 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. 25255003 Criteria includes sound business practices and a utility-wide commitment to safe and reliable delivery of electricity.

Public Power Week is October 1-7, 2023

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!

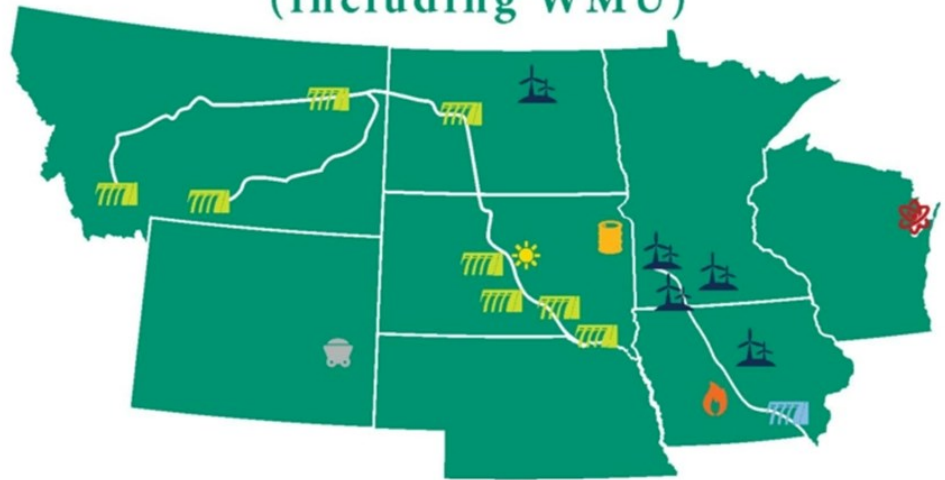
Residential and Business Rebates available!



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/>

29434001

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. 31256001 Bring your WMU statement (or access it on the SmartHub app!).

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

CREATING A CLEANER ENERGY FUTURE

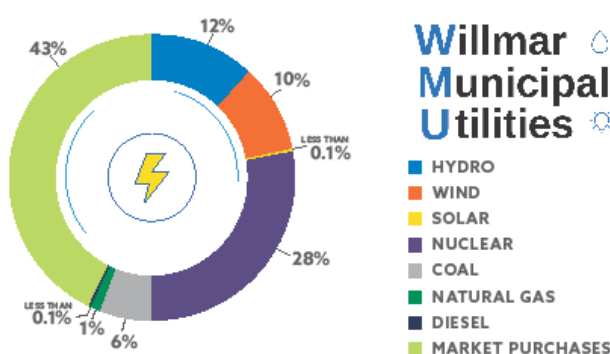
WILLMAR'S POWER SUPPLY MIX

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

Willmar purchases 100% clean, carbon-free energy through the purchase of Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs). RECs are proof that electricity was generated by qualifying clean and renewable facilities – such as wind and solar farms – and fed into the electric grid. These REC purchases offset the portion of your energy that comes from fossil fuels and, in effect, allows all Willmar Municipal Utilities customers to enjoy 100% clean, carbon-free energy.

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

WHERE DOES YOUR ELECTRICITY COME FROM?



100%
net-zero carbon power supply through purchase of RECs

93%
carbon-free power supply without RECs

22%
renewable power supply

Willmar Municipal Utilities
700 Litchfield Ave SW
PO Box 937
Willmar, MN 56201

October 2022

Northeast Water Treatment Plant Improvement Project

We are a year into construction of a new addition at our NE Water Treatment Plant (NEWTP). Like many projects today, construction has been delayed due to supply chain challenges (awaiting delivery of equipment and materials). Therefore, the overall construction is behind schedule.

The exterior walls and ceiling have been erected with much of the underground work completed around the new building. 26004001 Several of the steel filter tanks are scheduled to be delivered and installed in September and early October. Winter will primarily consist of indoor work associated with process equipment assembly and electrical work. Pending material availability, the NEWTP is currently scheduled to be operational by the end of 2024 or early 2025.



- **Hydrant Flushing**

To maintain water quality throughout our community, flushing of hydrants is required. This task is completed in the spring and fall. Staff have begun the annual fall flushing process. If you see a fire hydrant flowing water or water pooling on the street, please be cautious when driving through these areas. 18473002

- **Tank Cleaning**

Periodically, the outside of water storage structures require cleaning. In August, the Water Department cleaned the exterior of the steel 3-million-gallon storage tank located near the Swansson Ballfield area. 16419001

New Downtown Street Lights

WMU is excited to have completed the installation of 190 new LED decorative streetlights in the 31580001 downtown area. This multi-year installation project illuminates a much nicer, brighter light giving the downtown area a new vibrant look. Replacing the high pressure sodium street lights from the early 1980's, these new LED street lights are energy efficient, all the same style and height giving a pleasant uniform look.



Residents can assist WMU in keeping the streetlights shining bright throughout the city by reporting streetlight outages. Please call our office at 320-235-4422 or visit our website at www.willmar.mn.us and look for the streetlight outage reporting under contacts. Please have an address or the nearest intersecting street available 23750001 to help us locate malfunctioning streetlights in the daylight.

Willmar is fortunate to see strong growth in our community, in new businesses, existing businesses and additional housing. The team at WMU stays very busy powering the growth in the community. 39711001

The need for electric vehicle charging stations is increasing. Willmar businesses have made available public charging stations available located at Goodwill at 100 19th Ave SW, Mills Toyota Auto Center at 3700 Hwy 71 South, Cub Foods at 2201 1st St SE, and planned for the fall of 2023 at Mills Ford at 4100 Hwy 71 South.

Willmar Municipal Utilities is proud to receive national recognition from American Public Power Association for achieving exceptional electric reliability again in 2022, with high reliability and minimal outage time. We would like to thank the entire community for your support while we serve your electrical needs with reliable power.

Power Plant Substation

This summer, WMU completed construction of a new substation adjacent to the former Power Plant site. The facility allowed us to consolidate equipment spread across three blocks to one location. Unfortunately, the new substation came at a cost. During the 7-month construction shutdown, 95% of WMU's customers 40383001 experienced reduced reliability. With the substation offline, every outage affected roughly twice as many customers. We are very happy to be back at full strength.

Willmar Power Plant Demo & Facilities

The Willmar Power Plant served the community well on this site for over 95 years, creating electricity and steam for the community heating system. Throughout the years as the community grew, the plant was unable to keep up with the electrical needs of the community therefore, electricity was purchased from the grid. As far back as the 1950’s, more power was purchased from the grid than generated at the Power Plant. The discontinuance of the aged heating system, changing environmental regulations, costs to operate and maintain aged equipment, and the 12-24 hours from standing cold to generating electricity for standby generation all spelled the end of the facility. 25972001

Over the past year, the Utility has moved forward with the abatement and demolition of the plant. Cost to abate and demolish the plant was \$4.4 million dollars.

Demolition drew a good deal of attention to the site. On any given day, many onlookers stood by and watched or took photos, wide-eyed children (and a few adults) stared in awe as the equipment reached high in the air to surgically remove pieces of the plant, while other equipment snipped through steel beams and crushed 17371001 concrete like twigs, virtually all of the debris was sorted and recycled as able. Finally, the massive void was filled and a stormwater retention pond took shape and new sidewalks and driveways were constructed.

A video timeline of the demolition work can be found on the Willmar Municipal Utilities Facebook page.

To keep the lights on, the Utility is currently exploring additional fast-start standby generation. WMU currently operates (6) Caterpillar diesel generators which can be called upon when the electrical grid is unstable or short of energy. A partnership with Missouri River Energy Services would add 4 additional generators adjacent to the former power plant site. 16371001 If dispatched, these units can generate power to the grid within minutes.



A new bulk water fill station is being considered and will make use of an existing well on the former Power Plant site. Bulk water is purchased by contractors and others for numerous reasons. The new “pay as you use it” fill station would replace an existing fill station that operates on a manual billing system. 33451001

In 2010, the WMU set a vision to be in a new facility by 2020. With 39700001 several major projects completed, purchasing land for the new facility is currently in process.



2023 Awards!

- APPA Certificate of Excellence in Reliability
- APPA RP3 Diamond Designation Award (2023-2025) 40461001



Employee Service Recognition!

- Joe Johnson, Line Technician-in-Charge: 10 yrs.
- Janell Johnson, Director of Administration: 10 yrs.
- Jordan Stulen, Line Technician-in-Charge: 10 yrs.
- Matt Krupa, Lead Facilities/Maint. Tech.: 15 yrs.



New Logo

We are proud to showcase WMU’s new company logo as part of the Utility’s ongoing evolution. With the changes to WMU’s business model over the past couple of years, a new logo and branding was warranted. 17807001

The new logo was introduced to the community in February 2023.

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:

- **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. 18428001 Any change is subject to WMU's approval.
- **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 Community Outreach

This past year Willmar Municipal Utilities partnered with Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTS) to provide 23755001 energy saving information to our local mobile home parks. With expertise and assistance from CERTS, energy efficiency kits were packaged and distributed door to door at our local mobile home parks, 37696001 serving approximately 130 families. WMU also provided educational services at a City Main Street event, "You Belong Here", providing energy efficiency kits to approximately 75 families. These outreach events gave staff one-on-one opportunities to educate residents and answer questions. All remaining energy efficiency kits were donated to United Community Action Partnership to continue outreach for Willmar's low-income population.

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

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 from your local municipal utility 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 5 trillion kilowatt-hours of electricity, avoid more than \$500 billion in energy costs and achieve 4 billion metric tons of greenhouse gas reductions.

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 7 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 at energyservices@wmu.willmar.mn.us. Rebates are subject to change without notice.

Willmar Municipal Utilities

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Willmar
Municipal
Utilities

REBATES FOR YOUR HOME

brightenergysolutions.com



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 compared to standard models.

*Rebate available for homes with electric water heaters only.

Dehumidifier (portable): \$25

Dehumidifier (whole-home ducted): \$200
ENERGY STAR dehumidifiers have more efficient refrigeration coils, compressors and fans than conventional models, so they use less energy.

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.

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.

HEATING & COOLING REBATES

Air-Source Heat Pump (electric backup):

\$150 – \$400

Air-Source Heat Pump (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: \$150 – \$300

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

Mini-Split Heat Pump: \$250 – \$500 per outdoor unit

Mini-Split Air Conditioner: \$200 per outdoor unit

Mini-split systems use multiple indoor units connected to an outdoor unit via refrigerant lines. 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.

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 Flex charger to your local utility and receive a \$500 rebate. ChargePoint Level 2 residential units charge your EV up to nine times faster than a wall outlet. They are ENERGY STAR certified and update automatically. Use 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.



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.



WMU Scholarship Winners!

Alexis Flaten & Cecilia Buzzeo of WHS and Will Chapin of CCS were the winners of the 2023 Willmar Municipal Utilities Scholarship (\$1,000 each).

Ms. Flaten's essay went on to place 3rd at the state level for the MMUA Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award (\$1,000). 18078001



2024 Customer Calendars are available! Stop in and grab yours today!

Find your account number!
24 WMU account numbers are hidden in this newsletter.

Coming soon! Encode 10, Tyler Technologies Software

WMU is in the process of changing software vendors to Encode 10, by Tyler Technologies. Staff is looking forward to this transition and the features it has available to enhance the services for our customers. With this new software, we will be transitioning our payment website service from SmartHub to My Civic. From there you will be able to sign up for paperless billing, auto pay, view your monthly bill, etc. Please watch for a link in your email if you are on SmartHub or a flier in your utility bill with more details on what you will need to do to set up your account. Automatic payments are the easiest form of payment, and the preferred method is via bank draft. 3039001 This eliminates any issues with credit cards and expiration dates. Your utility bill will be processed by a new vendor in October. Please don't hesitate to call with questions. Our Customer Service staff is here to help you.



Willmar Municipal Utilities
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Valued Willmar Municipal Utilities Customer

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