

Fall 2024

WMU Board of Commissioners

President:
Shawn Mueske

Vice-President:
John Kennedy III

Secretary:
Dave Baumgart

Treasurer:
Terrill Sieck

Members at Large:
Carol Laumer
Pat Elizondo
Bruce DeBlieck

City Council Liaison
Michael O'Brien

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



A Message from the General Manager

To The Willmar Community,

As I reflect on the past decade and my retirement as your General Manager, I am filled with gratitude for your unwavering support. It has been an honor to serve as your General Manager at Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU). Together, we have achieved significant milestones and maintained a high standard of service.

I want to express my sincere appreciation to the Commission and the entire community. Your trust and encouragement have been instrumental in our success. Our dedicated staff at WMU deserve special recognition. They are not only highly skilled but also passionate about their work. Available round-the-clock, they take pride in serving our community-owned utility.

In light of our commitment to reliability, WMU is currently conducting an electric rate study. While 2024 marked our first-rate increase in nine years, we face challenges due to inflation and rising costs for energy, transmission, and materials like transformers and wire. To ensure continued reliability, we will need additional adjustments in 2025. More information regarding the rate increases will be published in the near future.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of this remarkable community for the past decade. It has been an honor, and I look forward to a bright future for Willmar.

Sincerely,

John Harren, General Manager

Employee Service Recognition

10 Years of Dedicated Service

- Dylan Berg - Line Technician-in-Charge
- John Harren - General Manager
- Nick Hillenbrand - Facilities/Maintenance Tech

15 Years of Dedicated Service

- Aaron Nelson - AMI Technician

20 Years of Dedicated Service

- Zach Larson - Line Distribution Foreman

25 Years of Dedicated Service

- Brian Hoover - Engineering Technician II
- Tom Leenstra - Water Works Operator

30 Years of Dedicated Service

- Mike Sangren - Information Systems Coordinator



New Employees

- John Eggert - Outreach Coordinator
- Christine Johnson - Customer Service

Employee Retirements

- John Harren - General Manager
- Krista Anderson - Customer Service Rep



WMU Awards

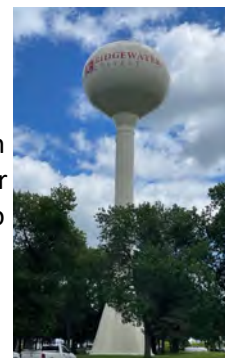
- MRES WattSTAR Award
- APPA (RP3) Diamond Level Award
- APPA Safety Award of Excellence
- APPA Excellence in *Reliable* Electric Service
- MN Governor's Workplace Safety Award

Northeast Water Treatment Plant Improvement Project

The upgrade to the Northeast Water Treatment Plant is nearing completion with operational testing set to begin this winter and full operation expected by spring. Construction started in late summer of 2022 and despite distribution and manufacturing delays, significant progress has been made both inside and out. We are excited to see the project taking shape.

College Water Tower Gets a Fresh Look

This year the College Water Tower received a fresh coat of paint. The tower was taken out of service in mid-July and was back in service in August. Thanks to favorable weather and the hard work of the crew, the project was completed ahead of schedule with no delays.



New Bulk Water Filling Station Coming in 2025

Looking ahead to 2025 WMU is planning on installing a new bulk water fill station north of the 700 Litchfield Avenue office location. The station will use an existing well to provide water, allowing for convenient drive off street access. The station will feature software for improved tracking and billing of the water usage with on demand operation via credit card on site. More details to come.

Street Lighting Project



The WMU Line Department installed new streetlights on East Hwy 12. The lights provide a brighter, cleaner illumination, giving the highway a refreshed and modern look. The project has been in the works for a long time, with the original lights removed in 2014 during road construction. With the growing number of businesses and increase in traffic, WMU partnered with MNDOT to complete the project.

We encourage residents to help us keep the streetlights shining bright throughout the city. If you notice a streetlight outage, you can report it by calling our office and we will get them repaired. Our crews work hard to keep the lights on!

Business and Housing Growth

We're excited to power up the new growth in both business and housing developments giving the Willmar community an array of new options for living and commerce.

Engineering Department Unveils New Software Systems in Development

The WMU Engineering Department is excited to announce the development of two new software systems aimed at enhancing our services and operations.

The first system, the Meter Data Management (MDM) system, will provide more detailed and accessible energy usage reports, empowering you to make informed decisions about your consumption. MDM will also deliver more reliable and comprehensive data for planning and operations, allowing WMU to respond quickly to service requests, identify potential issues, and make informed decisions to improve our utility services.

In addition, we are transitioning our electric and water maps to a more dynamic and interactive Geographic Information System (GIS). These new maps will offer improved accuracy and easier access to crucial information about our electric and water networks.

These advancements represent a significant step forward in our ongoing commitment to better serve you and enhance our operational efficiency.



Wind Turbines

You may have noticed that our wind turbines have been idle for some time. Earlier this year, Turbine 4 (the South turbine) began experiencing control system communication failures that have prevented it from operating. In addition, Turbine 3 (the North turbine) experienced a blade pitch failure, which led to the discovery of significant structural issues within the nacelle housing.

As some of you may know, the original turbine manufacturer, DeWind Co., is no longer in business, making it difficult to obtain certain repair parts and support. WMU staff is currently exploring options for both wind turbines, and we will keep the community informed as we move forward.

New Facilities

While we had hoped to have land purchased by now, we have not yet been successful in securing the right property. We are continuing to explore options that meet our criteria to serve the community.



BRIGHTEN UP YOUR BUSINESS!

Take advantage of this limited-time offer to **DOUBLE** your rebates by switching to LEDs!

Until Dec. 31, 2024, we're **DOUBLING THE INCENTIVE** for replacing old T8 and T12 fluorescents with qualifying LEDs.

- Businesses can earn up to **\$1,000 in BONUS rebates**
- Qualifying LEDs must be **purchased and installed during promo dates**
- Perfect for **small and medium-sized businesses** looking to save

Installing high-efficiency lighting is one of the most cost-effective steps businesses can take. Act now to brighten up your business and your bottom line! Call us today at **320-235-4422**, or visit brightenergysolutions.com/resources/business.



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



SCAN ME

ERP Pro 10 Software Conversion is Complete!

In April 2024, WMU successfully transitioned to ERP Pro 10 by Tyler Technologies. This new software enhances our services with several features:

- **New Online Payment Portal:** Visit our website at www.wmu.willmar.mn.us and click New Online Payment Website with Municipal Online Payments to set up your account, view statements, and schedule or make payments.
- **Billing Cycle Update:** Starting soon, all accounts will be billed from the first to the last day of each month. Due dates will remain unchanged, but the arrival of your bill may vary.
- **Credit Card Payment Fee:** In the future, a fee will be charged for credit card payments due to processing costs. We encourage customers to sign up for auto bank pay, which is easy and free.
- **Auto Bank Pay:** Automatic Bank Pay lets you pay your bill automatically without writing a check. You won't have to worry about missing a payment, and you'll save time and money on checks and postage. You will continue to receive a bill each month showing your consumption, and the total amount due will be withdrawn from your bank account on the due date. Complete the form below and return to WMU to sign up for auto bank pay.

Automatic Bank Pay Saves Time. It's Convenient. It's Easy. And It's FREE!

Willmar Municipal Utilities Automatic Bank Pay lets you pay your bill automatically without writing a check. You won't have to worry about missing a payment, you will save time and money on checks and postage. You will continue to receive a bill each month showing your consumption and the total amount due will be withdrawn from your bank account on the due date.

Willmar Municipal Utilities Authorization for Automatic Bank Pay

Name _____ WMU Account # _____

Service Address _____

Mailing Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number _____ Email Address _____

Name of Bank _____ Location of Bank (town/city, state) _____

Routing # _____ Checking Acct # _____ OR Savings Acct # _____

You are hereby authorized, until such time as I may cancel this agreement, to pay Willmar Municipal Utilities the total amount of my utility bill each month from the account listed from the financial institution designated. I understand if at any time I decide to change or discontinue this payment service, I will contact Willmar Municipal Utilities.

Signature _____ Date: _____

For assistance, please contact our Customer Service Team. They are here to help !

Residential and Business Rebates available!

For information about
WMU's rebate programs,
contact our Energy
Services Representative
at 320-235-4422 or visit

<https://>

[www.willmar.mn.us/
energy-programs/
rebates/](https://www.willmar.mn.us/energy-programs/rebates/)



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
with (or access on the
WMU website).

For more information, visit

<https://>

[www.willmar.mn.us/
energy-programs/
conservation/](https://www.willmar.mn.us/energy-programs/conservation/)

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. 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.

Where can you receive financial assistance?

If you need help paying your gas or electric utility bills, you may qualify for state or federal fuel assistance. For complete qualifications and application information, contact your local county human services office or Community/Citizens' Action Council (CAC). These organizations may also provide budget assistance counseling. Examples of a CAC include:

Local Energy and Utility Assistance Options

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

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

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

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.

For additional information or to inquire about rebates, please contact your local municipal utility or email info@brightenergysolutions.com.

To find participating utilities or download rebate forms, please visit brightenergysolutions.com. Rebates are subject to change without notice.

Bright Energy Solutions

3724 W Avera Dr
PO Box 88920
Sioux Falls, SD 57109
605-338-4042

www.brightenergysolutions.com

REBATES FOR YOUR HOME

brightenergysolutions.com



January 2024

ENERGY STAR® APPLIANCES

Air Cleaner: \$25

Room air cleaners 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.

Dishwasher: \$25

A standard-sized ENERGY STAR dishwasher costs about \$55 per year to run and can save about 3,850 gallons of water over its lifetime.

Heat-Pump Water Heater: \$150

ENERGY STAR 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 Recessed Downlights: \$2

Certified recessed downlights produce far less heat and last at least 10 times longer than incandescents.

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 – \$300

Air-Source Heat Pump (gas/propane backup): \$600 – \$1,000

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.

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.

ECM Recirculating Pumps: \$75 – \$900

ECM recirculating pumps help ensure hot water is readily available at faucets without waiting for it to travel from the water heater. ECM pumps modulate their speed, saving energy and money.

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.

Mini-Split Heat Pump: \$250 – \$400 per outdoor unit

Mini-Split Air Conditioner: \$150 – \$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.

ENERGY STAR Smart Thermostat: \$25

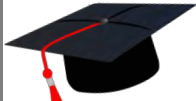
ENERGY STAR smart thermostats automatically adjust to save energy when you are asleep or away. They can be controlled remotely using a smartphone, tablet or computer.



ELECTRIC VEHICLES (EVs)

ChargePoint® Home Charger or Level 2 Charger: \$150 – \$500

Connect a Wi-Fi-enabled ChargePoint Home Flex charger to your local utility and receive a \$500 rebate. Receive a \$150 rebate by purchasing a qualifying Level 2 charger of your choice.



Willmar Municipal Utilities 2025 Post-Secondary Scholarship Information

Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU) will be offering scholarship opportunities to 2025 graduating seniors who plan to enter post-secondary education. There will be three \$1,000 winners selected. Application materials for our 2025 graduates will be available in December 2024. Please watch our website at www.wmu.willmar.mn.us, email us at energyseries@wmu.willmar.mn.us for more information or follow us on Facebook to learn about the scholarship information. The information will also be distributed to the schools. We strongly encourage any graduating senior to apply for this scholarship opportunity. The student or their parent/legal guardian must be a customer of WMU and immediate relatives (children/grandchildren) of WMU staff are ineligible.

2024 WMU Scholarship Winners

Maycee Gustafson and Brendan Pappenfus - Congratulations!



Up to \$3,100 back on Heat Pumps

Air-source heat pumps offer exceptional efficiency for both heating and cooling your home all year long. We offer rebates of up to \$1,100 to help you install a heat pump. Combined that with up to \$2,000 in federal tax credits, and now is a great time to make the switch and save.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to save money and energy, all while reducing your carbon footprint. Switch today and save!

To learn more, ask us about our rebates or visit www.brightenergysolutions.com.

Willmar Municipal Utilities
PO Box 937
Willmar, MN 56201
www.wmu.willmar.mn.us



Follow us on
Facebook



Willmar Municipal Utilities
PO Box 937
Willmar, MN 56201

Valued Willmar Municipal Utilities Customer