

Fall 2025

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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



To the Willmar Community,

I'm thankful for the opportunity to serve you in my first year as General Manager of Willmar Municipal Utilities. I am honored to continue the strong legacy of leadership established by my predecessor, John Harren, whose years of dedicated service set a high standard for excellence.

With a passion for serving both this community and the dedicated employees who keep our utility running, I am committed to strengthening our focus on safety, reliability, quality and cost-effective service. The decisions we make are guided by the goal of exceeding your expectations.

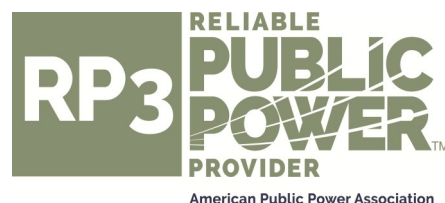
I'm proud of the significant progress our team has made over the past year, including:

- *Construction of a new water treatment plant featuring biological filtration*
- *Reforming local power generation to deliver reliable and cost-effective emergency power*
- *Advancing technology to better assess data, maintain equipment, and improve service*

Our existing facilities continue to present significant challenges. Despite diligent efforts by our staff, repair costs and operational inefficiencies are growing. WMU is actively exploring the most strategic location for a future facility to serve the community effectively—both now and for generations to come.

The Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission has set a goal to enhance service through community presence. I'm excited about the opportunity to build on their momentum and engage more closely with the community. To start, I want to highlight the tremendous value our customers receive through WMU's municipal structure. Because we are community-owned, WMU is empowered to deliver award-winning service while maintaining cost-effective rates. To learn more, be sure to read the Municipal Power Advantage section of this newsletter.

I look forward to a refreshing 💧 and bright 💡 2026.



Employee Service Recognition

10 Years of Dedicated Service

- Matt Kaderlik - Waterworks Operator Foreman
- Kevin Marti - Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor
- Kim Wesbur - Customer Service Representative
- Ed Zurn - Line Distribution Supervisor

15 Years of Dedicated Service

- Jeron Smith - General Manager

25 Years of Dedicated Service

- Dave Andrist - Engineering Technician III
- Tom Leenstra - Water Works Operator

New Employees

- Abby Ahrendt - Executive Secretary

Employee Retirements

- Beth Mattheisen - 43 Years of Service



2025 WMU Awards

- APPA Safety Award of Excellence
- APPA Excellence in Reliable Electric Service

Water

Water Service Line Inventories

The Environmental Protection Agency updated Lead and Copper Rule (2021) and requires more rigorous testing and faster action to protect consumers from lead exposure. While Willmar's source water wells are free of lead and copper, contamination can occur from underground service lines and household plumbing over time.

WMU submitted its required service material inventory to Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) in 2024. Further testing and inspections will be conducted to identify remaining unknown underground materials in the future. A replacement program will begin to remove any lead or galvanized piping found. Until replacements are complete, the simplest precaution to protect your household is to run your cold water tap for a couple of minutes before using it for drinking or cooking.



Below are helpful resources with information where you can view your service materials and information on removing lead and copper from your home water.

Visit https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/factsheet/home_treatment.html to learn more about water treatment options. Individuals can find information on service line material and addresses located in Minnesota at MDH Service Line Material Tool (<https://maps.umn.edu/LSL/>).

A big thank you to residents who assisted the water department in completing and submitting the inventory. Your assistance with pictures, emails and text messages or cooperation allowing us to inspect the home plumbing was critical in identifying many unknown materials.

Northeast (NE) Water Treatment Plant

We are excited to report that the NE Water Treatment Plant has been in service since February 2025. We continue to work with the plant designer, Carollo Engineering, to optimize the filtration process.



Bulk Water Filling Station

The Bulk Water filling station is in its final stages of planning and awarding bids. The station will connect to the existing distribution system. Software will be implemented that allows for pin code tracking to streamline the billing of the bulk water used. We are excited to get this project into a reality for our bulk water users.

Electric



It has been another busy and productive year for the Line Department. We've continued to see growth and upgrades across WMU's electrical system, including new commercial and residential developments. We have noted increased installations of EV chargers, solar panels and local generation systems. This balanced growth has allowed us to maintain and improve a highly reliable and dependable electrical system throughout our service territory.

Streetlights are vital to our community's safety and visibility. Help us keep them shining bright throughout the city by either calling the office at 320-235-4422 or visiting our website at www.wmu.willmar.mn.us to report a streetlight outage.

We appreciate your continued support and trust as we serve your electric needs. Looking forward to another great year ahead.

Facilities Management

Wind Turbines

In 2024, the Commission made the decision to decommission the wind turbines. Staff have been working with an engineering firm to prepare a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the project. We anticipate the wind turbines to be taken down in late 2025, with site restoration being completed in the Spring of 2026. This marks the end of an era in Willmar's on-site energy strategy; however, we are recipients of wind energy through our partnership with Missouri River Energy Services (MRES), our power supplier. Stay tuned for more strategic group projects by MRES that serve a large number of populations beyond WMU that we are proudly a partner in.

New Facilities

WMU continues to explore potential properties that meet both our operational and efficiency needs. As our facilities continue to age and demand more expensive repairs, we keep our focus on a new facility that could house all municipal utility departments, in order to provide our customers with the best possible service. We are committed to providing safe, reliable and quality utility services at competitive rates for our customers.

Diesel Generation

Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU), in partnership with Missouri River Energy Services (MRES), is investing in the future of energy reliability with the installation of four new diesel standby generators. This strategic expansion will bring WMU's total standby generation capacity to approximately 22.9 megawatts, reinforcing the community's energy resilience and supporting regional grid stability.

Site preparation for the new generators is scheduled to begin in late 2025, with full commissioning expected by early 2027. The generators will be located on Benson Avenue and will join WMU's existing fleet of six diesel generators strategically placed throughout the community.

The \$17 million project is being supported by MRES through a \$5 million cash contribution toward construction costs, along with annual capacity payments for providing standby generation services.

"This project is a win-win for Willmar and the region," said Jeron Smith, General Manager. "By investing in local generation, we're not only improving reliability for our customers, but also contributing to a more stable and cost-effective energy grid."

While WMU remains committed to expanding clean energy sources such as wind and solar, the utility recognizes the importance of a diversified and balanced energy portfolio. Diesel standby generation plays a critical role in ensuring power availability during peak demand periods or unexpected outages, including transmission line failures.

This initiative underscores WMU's dedication to providing dependable, affordable electricity to the Willmar community, while continuing to support the transition to cleaner energy solutions.

**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**



#CleanEnergy

Customer Satisfaction Survey

Your voice matters to us! Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU) is currently conducting a survey of our customers. This survey gathers customer feedback on the electric services provided to homes and businesses in our community, helping us identify opportunities to enhance future programs and improve service. Please scan this QR code or visit our website for an opportunity to complete the survey.



Automatic Payment Options

WMU encourages our customers to sign up on the online payment portal to receive your statement via email or give us a call and we can help you over the phone. We continue to encourage our customers to sign up for Auto Bank Pay for seamless utility payments each month. It is FREE and creates no extra credit card fees or bank charges.

- **Online Payment Portal:** Visit our website at www.wmu.willmar.mn.us and click on Customer Service, Online Payment Accounts Login to set up your account, view statements, and schedule or make payments.
- **Credit Card Payment Fee:** In the future, a fee will be charged for credit card payments due to high 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 it to WMU to sign up for auto bank pay.

Willmar Municipal Utilities Authorization for Automatic Bank Pay (No Additional Fees)

Name _____
 Service Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
 Willmar Municipal Utilities Account Number # _____
 Name of Bank _____ Location of Bank (city/state) _____
 Routing # _____
 Checking Account # _____ **OR** Savings Account # _____
 Phone Number _____ Email Address _____

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.

Print Name _____
 Signature _____ Date _____



#PublicPower

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





Municipal Power Advantage - The Benefits of a Municipally Owned Utility

The Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU) Municipal Power Advantage® (MPA) report, which can be found on our website at www.wmu.willmar.mn.us, outlines the benefits of operating a municipally owned electric utility. The electric utility provides customer benefits and supports the community in ways beyond providing reliable electricity. Some benefits have positive financial impacts while others, less easily measured, still add value to the community. The WMU business model exemplifies public power benefits that demonstrate the value of WMU as an outstanding asset to the community. These benefits include:

MORE AFFORDABLE: Customers of WMU enjoy electric rates up to 19% lower than the average rates of rural electric cooperatives (RECs) and investor-owned utilities (IOUs), depending on their customer class. This cost advantage is due to lower wholesale power costs, tax-exempt financing, and the utility's not-for-profit status, which is reinvested into the local system. In 2023, the WMU Electric Division shared over \$2.9 million, or 8.4% of electric revenues, by transferring \$2.1 million to the City of Willmar's general fund along with other financial benefits to the community that would likely result in an increase of other local taxes or service fees.

MORE RELIABLE: WMU consistently provides a high level of reliability to its customers. Based on nationally recognized measurements, WMU's customers can expect power 99.995% of the time. In recognition of Willmar's reliable electric service, the American Public Power Association (APPA) awarded WMU the Certificate of Excellence in Reliability for its exceptional reliability from 2018-2024.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC IMPACT: WMU offers economic development discounts, provides energy efficiency rebates, and extends utility services for potential development.

LOCAL CONTROL AND SERVICE: WMU is a community-owned utility governed by a local utility commission, and the customers are its owners. The staff serve customers who are also family, friends and neighbors. Willmar is part of a mutual-aid network of public power communities in Minnesota and nationwide. If a major storm causes widespread power outages, these communities work together to restore power quickly and efficiently.



#EmpoweringOurCommunity

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.

Ceiling Fan: \$25

ENERGY STAR ceiling fans are 20% more efficient than standard models.

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: \$200

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: \$4

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

Room Air Conditioner: \$75

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 – \$350**

Air-Source Heat Pump

(gas/propane backup): **\$600 – \$1,050**

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: \$250 – \$350

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: \$40

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.

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.

Get your rebate today!





Willmar Municipal Utilities

2026 Post-Secondary Scholarship Information

Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU) will be offering scholarship opportunities to 2026 graduating seniors who plan to enter post-secondary education. There will be three \$1,000 winners selected. Application materials for our 2026 graduates will be available in December 2025. Please watch our website at www.wmu.willmar.mn.us, email us at energyservices@wmu.willmar.mn.us, follow us on Facebook or check with your schools guidance counselors office to learn about the scholarship information. We strongly encourage graduating seniors to apply for this scholarship opportunity. The student or their parent/legal guardian must be a customer of WMU; immediate relatives (children/grandchildren) of WMU staff are ineligible.

Congratulations to our 2025 WMU and MRES Scholarship Winners!

2025 WMU Scholarship Winners

Braeden Fagerlie, Evan Wallestad, and Morghan Lorensen

2025 MRES Scholarship Winners

Braeden Fagerlie and Evan Wallestad



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