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South Hadley Customers Can Benefit from Emergency Broadband Program

Certain customers of South Hadley Electric Light Department (SHELD) can now take



South Hadley Electric Light DEPARTMENT

advantage of a new program to help reduce the costs of SHELD's fiber internet service.

SHELD is now participating in the federal Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, aimed at reducing COVID impacts on those who may be struggling financially. The program, administered through the Federal Communications Commission, allows qualified SHELD customers to receive a \$50 credit on their monthly bill for Fibersonic, the light department's own GIG speed internet service. The regular price for Fibersonic is \$74.99 per month.

Those qualified for reduced costs for Fibersonic must meet specific criteria set by the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. The criteria include income thresholds, participation in certain assistance programs, or substantial loss of income due to job loss or furlough during the pandemic.

Customers apply directly through the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, and SHELD is notified of qualified customers.

Customers enrolled in the program saw their first bill credits in July. The program will be available until the funding runs out, or until six months after the Health and Human Services Department ends the current COVID public health emergency declaration.

The program aligns with the light department's desire to improve accessibility of its programs for underserved and low income customers.

SHELD's Fibersonic program has seen high interest and is expected to be about 60% built out by the end of 2021. There are currently about 1,100 customers in the program. For more information on the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, and to apply, visit fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit, or click on the link on the SHELD Fibersonic website, www.fibersonic.com.

MMWEC, SELCO Promote Vehicle Electrification with Ride and Drive Event

MMWEC Members which are interested in increasing efficiency within their fleet vehicles had the chance to learn about vehicle electrification options and test drive a modified vehicle at a recent event in Shrewsbury.



PMLD manager Sean McKeon drives the retrofitted truck.

MMWEC and Shrewsbury Electric and Cable Operations (SELCO) partnered up to hold a vehicle electrification demonstration and ride and drive event featuring XL Fleet, a vehicle electrification company.

XL Fleet is a vehicle electrification company that specializes in fleet electrification

solutions for Class 2-6 commercial and municipal vehicles designed to increase their fuel efficiency and reduce emissions. The company has designed a technology that converts standard gas-powered commercial vehicles, such as pickup trucks, cargo and passenger vans, buses and shuttles, box trucks, and delivery vans, into hybrid and plug-in hybrid versions of those vehicles.

Municipal employees from the MMWEC Member towns of Holyoke, Hull, Paxton, Princeton, Shrewsbury, Sterling, and

Wakefield attended the XL Fleet event to learn more about the electrification technology, ask questions about prospective vehicle conversions, and test drive a truck that has been retrofitted with plug-in hybrid technology. The event featured a 2021 GMC Sierra 3500 HD pickup truck equipped with an XLP plug-in



Patrick Collins (SELCO), Bill Bullock (MMWEC) and Ben Hartford (XL Fleet) at the XL Fleet event.

hybrid electric drive system featuring regenerative braking and a high efficiency lithium-ion battery pack. The plug-in hybrid system can increase the fuel economy of the truck by up to 50%, while reducing fuel consumption and carbon emissions by up to 33%.

The event served as a stepping stone for MMWEC Members to further their electrification and emissions-reductions efforts to help meet the carbon-reduction goals detailed in the Commonwealth's Decarbonization Roadmap, which outlines steps to take for Massachusetts to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

SMLD's Sean Hamilton and CEL's Jeff Cady Retire From Public Power

Longtime public power managers Sean Hamilton and Jeff Cady recently hung up their hardhats. Hamilton, general manager of Sterling Municipal Light Department (SMLD), retired in May 2021 and Cady, general manager of Chicopee Electric Light (CEL) retired in June 2021.



Sean Hamilton

Hamilton began his career in public power at Templeton Municipal Light and Water Plant (TMLWP) in 1979 as a linesman. In 1992 he joined SMLD, working his way up to the position of line superintendent. In 1999, he left SMLD to take a job at Verizon, but remained as light commissioner at TMLWP.

“Public power - it’s a way of life,” Hamilton said. “I missed watching the weather 24/7 and being able to collaborate with other utilities. It was nice to have a community to return to.”

In 2004, Gerry Skelton, the general manager of TMLWP, retired and Hamilton returned to work in the public power field to become the new manager. He worked in the sector for the remainder of his career, and served as the general manager of SMLD from 2010 through 2021.

Hamilton said Skelton left the department in very good standing, so while at TMLWP, he was able to keep operations running smoothly. One of his biggest accomplishments as manager was facilitating the construction of a 1.65 megawatt wind turbine in the town, a project that spanned seven years.

During his time at SMLD, Hamilton worked to stabilize the town’s electric rates and complete the installation of the advanced metering infrastructure (AMI). He also implemented a Fiber optic network and oversaw the installation of three solar projects and two energy storage projects: a two-megawatt utility-scale battery project installed in 2016 and a one-megawatt community plus solar battery project in 2018. SMLD’s two-megawatt battery was the first of its kind in Massachusetts and has served as an example project for energy storage, having been visited by energy professionals from around the globe.

Hamilton’s dedication to the public power sector extended past his positions. He served on the MMWEC Board of Directors from 2007 through 2021, was chairman of the Risk Oversight Committee, served on the New England Public Power Association (NEPPA) Board of Directors, and was president of the Municipal Electric Association of Massachusetts (MEAM).

Nancy Forgione, SMLD office manager, worked with Hamilton for 11 years and said he was pivotal to SMLD’s successful operation.

“Sean was an amazing, strong manager who earned his respect both inside and outside the department,” Forgione said. “His hard work, dedication, and integrity was a significant factor in the success of the SMLD under his management.”

Hamilton maintains that his career accomplishments were the culmination of collaborating within his department, working with his board of commissioners, other light departments, and MMWEC.

“I’ve been blessed with the team and people I worked with,” Hamilton said. “The people around me helped these projects come to fruition.”

Hamilton said that he plans to enjoy the simple things in life in his retirement and that Darren Borge, the new general manager of SMLD, has his full support.

Jeff Cady worked at CEL throughout his entire public power career. He was hired in 1989 as a power resource analyst and was promoted to power resource manager and then assistant general manager. In 2005, he became CEL’s general manager, a position he held until his retirement in 2021.



Jeff Cady

During his tenure as general manager, he oversaw a number of important initiatives. He negotiated power supply agreements with solar developers that allowed construction of five large-scale, utility-grade solar projects in the town of Chicopee. Cady also oversaw the construction of Crossroads Fiber, a fiber optic network CEL established to offer faster internet service to Chicopee residents. Due to Cady’s strategic decision-making, he ensured that CEL maintained stable, low electric rates for all customer classes.

In 2009, he led CEL in the decision to become a Member of MMWEC to increase his department’s energy efficiency and rebate offerings for both residential and commercial and industrial customers of CEL through the MMWEC Home Energy and Loss Prevention Services (HELPS) program and the Green Opportunities (GO) program.

Cady was also an active member in the broader public power community. He previously served as president of MEAM and NEPPA, on the MMWEC Board of Directors from 2010 through 2019, and the MMWEC Risk Oversight Committee from 2015 through 2019.

As CEL general manager, Cady said he was especially proud of the way CEL managed the October 2011 snowstorm and restored power in just a few days.

“Our employees, along with mutual aid crews, were able to restore service quickly,” Cady says. “Every employee at CEL played a role in helping out whether it was restoring service, answering customer calls, assessing conditions, or whatever else needed to get done.”

CEL’s new general manager, Jim Lisowski, said Cady’s strong leadership led to the success of the department.

“Jeff trusted his staff and let them do what they were hired to do,” Lisowski said. “However, he was always there to bounce ideas off of and to get his opinion and guidance.”

Lisowski added that Cady left the department in excellent shape and he is happy that Cady is still available for consult during the leadership transition.

“The financial position of the company is strong and we have skilled personnel in key positions,” Lisowski said. “I am fortunate that Jeff will remain a resource for me and staff for some time to come.”

Cady said the best advice he could give Lisowski in his new role is to “always be ready for change.” He added that the department is in good hands.

“I am confident that he will do an excellent job,” Cady said.

Cady said in his retirement, he is looking forward to enjoying snow and thunderstorms without worrying about outages. ∞

Three MMWEC Members Offer Solar Rebates After State Program Ends

The Municipal Light Plant Solar Rebate Program came to a close this summer, but three MMWEC Members plan to keep offering solar rebates. Ipswich Electric Light Department (IELD), Shrewsbury Electric and Cable Operations (SELCO), and Wakefield Municipal Gas & Light Department (WMGLD) have created new solar incentives to encourage their customers to continue to install solar panels to increase clean, solar power in their territories.

MMWEC assisted the Municipal Electric Association of Massachusetts (MEAM) and the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) in creating the MLP Solar Rebate Program, which allowed customers of participating municipal light plants (MLPs) an incentive off the cost of solar installations. The DOER and the MLP each contributed an equal amount toward the rebate. The program was successful in generating renewable energy for MMWEC's Member MLPs. Through the program, 204 projects have been approved or pre-approved in MMWEC Member MLP territories, totaling 1,538 kilowatts (kW). More than \$1.9 million has been awarded in solar rebates.

IELD is offering a \$0.30/watt rebate for residential and commercial solar projects. Eligible commercial solar installations must be 25 kW or less, with a 10 kW limit for residential, with less than 20% shading, and facing between 90 degrees east and 270 degrees west. Customers can apply online on IELD's official website after they have scheduled a home energy audit, found a solar installer, and read IELD's distributed generation policy to confirm that their installation is eligible.

"IELD recognizes the long-term value of increasing distributed generation in the Town of Ipswich," said IELD customer services manager Dylan Lewellyn. "Facilitating local power sources will improve price stability, enhance system

resiliency, and increase local control while supporting the best interest of IELD's engineering, economic, and environmental requirements."

The SELCO Solar Rebate Program allows residential and commercial customers to apply for a rebate for the purchase, installation, and usage of PV solar panels. The program includes a rebate of \$1.20 per watt up to 10kW AC of installed capacity and 50% of the installed cost, with a maximum rebate of \$12,000. Eligible solar installations must have less than 20% shading, and face between 90 degrees east and 270 degrees west. An additional meter fee applies. SELCO's program is accepting applications until December 31, 2021, or until funding has been exhausted, but Director of Integrated Resources and Communications Jackie Pratt said additional funding will be available next year.

"Once MLP Solar Rebate funding was depleted, SELCO decided it was important to continue offering solar incentives to meet the customer demand," said Pratt. "We plan to allocate additional funding for extension of the program into 2022. We are hopeful that DOER will provide further funding for the MLP Solar Rebate Program in the future."

WMGLD is offering solar rebates of \$1.20/watt, capped at 50 percent of total installed costs for both residential and commercial customers. Eligible solar installations must be 10 kW DC or less, with less than 20% shading, and facing between 90 and 270 degrees. The rebates will be available until the allocated funding runs out, but Senior System Engineer Vincent McMahon said the WMGLD Board will likely approve additional funding.

Customers can apply for WMGLD's solar rebate on munihelps.org. IELD customers can apply on <https://www.ipswichma.gov/369/Electric> and SELCO customers can apply on <https://www.selco.shrewsburyma.gov/>. ∞

MMWEC Awards \$4,000 in Scholarships to Local High School Students

Four high school students from Ludlow High School and Minnechaug Regional High School classes of 2021 have received \$1,000 scholarships to help pay for their college education, thanks to Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company's (MMWEC) scholarship program.

The scholarships are awarded to high school graduates pursuing a college education in engineering, environmental sciences, business, finance, accounting, or a related field.

This year's scholarship recipients are John Chen and Paulo Cesar Mendonca from Minnechaug Regional High School, and Jacob Belden and Catarina Pires from Ludlow High School.

Chen will attend UMass Amherst and study civil engineering. During high school, he participated in band and served on the Diversity Club, Above the Influence Club, and the Key Club.

Mendonca plans to attend Gordon College in Wenham, Mass. and major in environmental science. At Minnechaug, he participated in the school's football, rowing, and wrestling teams and served on the Above the Influence Club, which promotes awareness of social issues.

Pires will attend Western New England University and major in accounting. At Ludlow High School, she participated in basketball, soccer, and track and field, and was a member of the National Honor Society and Portuguese Club.

Belden plans to attend Western New England University and major in mechanical engineering. While in high school, he was on the Honor Roll and was a member of the basketball, cross country, and skiing teams.

"The students selected for MMWEC's 2021 scholarships embody leadership and determination both inside and outside of the classroom," said MMWEC Chief Executive Officer Ron DeCurzio. "We wish them continued success during their collegiate journeys."

MMWEC's scholarship program was created in 1998. Since its inception, MMWEC has awarded \$54,000 in scholarships to help students defray the cost of higher education as part of its commitment to the Ludlow, Hampden, and Wilbraham communities. ∞

MMWEC, CET Promote Electrification with Heat Pump Assessment Program

Customers of select MMWEC Member municipal utilities now have the chance to learn more about heat pump technology and receive a free comprehensive heat pump assessment in their homes. The MMWEC Home Energy Loss Prevention Services (HELPS) Program is collaborating with the Center for EcoTechnology (CET) to offer a free heat pump assessment to select HELPS customers through its new Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) Assessment Program. Currently, HELPS customers of the municipal light plants (MLPs) in Holden, Ipswich, Paxton, Princeton, Shrewsbury, South Hadley, and West Boylston are eligible for the free assessment.

Customers in eligible MLP territories who are considering purchasing or upgrading their current system can schedule a no-cost, no-obligation consultation with an independent heat pump expert. During the assessment, customers will learn how heat pumps work and receive guidance on using heat pumps for home heating and cooling.

Bill Bullock, Sustainable Energy Policy & Program Senior Manager at MMWEC, said the program is timely, as Massachusetts recently released its Decarbonization Roadmap which outlines the goal of reaching net zero emissions in the Commonwealth by 2050.

“Electrification of heating through the application of air source heat pumps is expected to play an increasing role in helping Massachusetts meet net zero emissions goals,” Bullock said. “Ensuring the proper application of heat pumps is critical to successful outcomes. We’re pleased that MLPs are offering enhanced audit services with heat pump consultations to help customers make the best choices. These MLPs are solidifying their role as trusted energy advisors in their communities.”

CET is offering MMWEC Members two different tiers of service options through the ASHP Assessment Program: the

Silver Standard ASHP Assessment Program and the

Gold Standard ASHP Assessment Program.



The Silver Standard program begins with the initial heat pump consultation, at which CET heat pump experts explain the technology to customers, discuss the customers’ heating and cooling goals, and evaluate the living space for a heat pump. Customers who want to move forward are then connected with potential contractors. After the customer meets with contractors, CET consultants will review up to three different heat pump contractor designs and assure the design assumptions and equipment sizes are optimal for the customer’s home. After a design is approved and the heat pump has been installed, CET conducts a post-installation inspection to ensure the system installed matches the design reviewed and instructs the customer on how to apply for a heat pump rebate.

The Gold Standard program offers all the features of the silver program, as well as additional features, such as an expanded home energy audit and energy load calculations based on Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA) Manual J guidelines. The Gold Standard program also includes an additional consultation for customers who need help comparing contractor quotes or have additional questions before deciding on a heat pump installation. All the services provided in each program are paid for by the light department and free to customers. ∞

Berkshire Wind Power Cooperative Donates to Hancock Veterans Memorial Committee

The Hancock (MA) Veterans Memorial Committee was able to purchase a picnic table for the town’s new veteran’s memorial, thanks to a donation by the Berkshire Wind Power Cooperative.

The memorial is located on the north side of Hancock Town Hall. The Berkshire Wind Power Project is located in the towns of Hancock and Lanesborough. BWPCC’s donation is recognized through an inscription on the pavers.∞



Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company

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Joint Action and economies of scale for Massachusetts municipal utilities

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