

# ***IMEA***

---

INDIANA MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

A hand is shown on the right side of the image, pointing towards a central digital interface. The interface features a glowing orange and blue background with various icons: a mail envelope, a speech bubble, a globe, a person, a gear, and a power plug. The word "SUPPORT" is prominently displayed in the center in a glowing, white, sans-serif font. The overall aesthetic is futuristic and high-tech.

**SUPPORT**

***Power Connection***

# Contents

## POWER CONNECTION



Customer Satisfaction in an Outage Experience  
(Continued to page 3)



Q&A – Mishawaka Utility Leadership & Management  
(Continued to page 7, 9)



How to Build a Fun, Positive Municipal Utility in Six Easy Steps



INDIANA MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION  
Meet our 2020 Board of Directors!



## Customer Satisfaction in an Outage Experience

Indiana Municipal Electric Association

ISSUE 4 2019

When the power goes out, a local municipal utility springs into action to find a solution. But when the outage experience ends four hours later, powers on her computer, opens Facebook and broadcasts to all her friends, "My electric company has lousy customer service."

Most customers have a difficult time describing good customer service, but they can tell when they've had a bad experience. It's all about feelings. That's right. Even in the highly regulated utility industry, emotions and feelings still carry weight.

When surveyed, many customers' assessment of a utility's customer service is directly tied to reliability. If the power goes out, every aspect of the business seems less favorable.

But reliability is not the same as customer service. Consumers may confuse the terms, but both are independent pieces of the customer experience. Exceptional customer service is the key to improving customer satisfaction scores and attracting loyal, satisfied customers for life.

*With the right messaging, even an outage experience can be a positive one.*

When reliability fails, utilities may face penalties and bad press, but with the right messaging, even an outage experience can be a positive one. Customers don't know what you're doing behind the scenes, so it's your job to tell them. Here's how utilities can communicate during an outage experience to avoid those poor social media reviews and improve customer satisfaction:

***STAYING  
CONNECTED WITH  
YOUR  
NEIGHBORING  
UTILITIES!***

**Interested in sharing  
your success stories  
in an outage  
experience at your  
utility?**

Contact Janel Sparks at:  
[janel@imea.com](mailto:janel@imea.com)



**Gallagher**

Insurance | Risk Management | Consulting

[www.agj.com](http://www.agj.com)



*Continued on page 3*



## A tailored approach to risk management.

Risk management is all about you. At Gallagher we tailor risk management solutions and insurance coverage to the changing needs of your business. You have enough on your mind without having to worry about your insurance coverage. With Gallagher, you don't have to. Our commitment to the highest service standards makes it easy for you to do business with us.

To learn more:

Robert E. Christman, CLCS  
317.860.0348  
rob\_christman@ajg.com

[ajg.com](http://ajg.com)

© 2018 American International Group, Inc.  
AIG-18-001



# Gallagher

Insurance | Risk Management | Consulting

# Customer Satisfaction in an Outage Experience

(Continued from Page 1)

## The right info at the right time... NOW.

With the advent of the internet and social media, consumers are accustomed to receiving information about virtually everything the instant they want it. While past customers may have waited out the outage in the dark, expectations have changed for modern-day utility providers.

Consider your outage practices. Ask yourself, "Do my customers feel we care about them?" One step toward turning that answer into a "yes" is to communicate with them before they call you.

This requires consistent series of messaging that keeps customers informed from the outage onset. This could be a single text message, stating: "Bad weather has caused outages in your area. Utility Crews are working to resolve the issue, and we expect your power to be restored at approximately 7:00 p.m. Thank you for your patience, and please keep watch for continuous updates."

A simple text or email message like this tells a customer what's being accomplished to get the lights back on and speaks to their specific outage. It creates a more personalized experience and decreases inbound calls to your call center, which saves money and lets your utility staff focus on more urgent matters.

## Be ready to answer every call.

Make sure to always be consistent with updates. Your customers want personal, by the minute information, so they can plan their lives according to the situation. They want the media to be of their choice not yours.

As extensive as your proactive notifications media are, the fact is some people won't receive a text or may feel more comfortable getting information over the phone. For those customers, consider sending a proactive voice message, set by a caller program structured for incoming call traffic, in which provides important information and keeps local lines open.

## Be human....

As the final note, remember to acknowledge the outage in human terms. Your customers are people. Not pieces of power grid. In the feelings-driven outage experience, empathy is your strongest asset. Show that you understand how they feel and how their situation is changing.

With the right communication, everything can go right even when things go wrong. Be proactive, helpful and caring, and your customers can find satisfaction in every outage experience.



**ALPHA ENGINEERING, INC.**  
CONSULTING ENGINEERS

- SYSTEM PLANNING AND STUDIES
- CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT
- MAPPING AND CAD SERVICES
- ARC FLASH EVALUATION
- GIS/FIELD INVENTORY
- SUBSTATION DESIGN
- POWER QUALITY
- LINE DESIGN
- SMART GRID

**ALPHA**  
ENGINEERING, INC

Call 317.273.9841 email us at [info@alphaeng.us](mailto:info@alphaeng.us)  
visit us on the web at [alphaeng.us](http://alphaeng.us) to get started today.



# Skilled.

DECADES OF EXPERIENCE  
DEVOTED TO YOUR SAFETY.

## ABOUT THE IMEA

IMEA has operated as the statewide service association representing the issues and concerns of municipally owned and operated electric utilities while promoting the benefits and public power business model since 1941.





## ***Utility Leadership & Management***

---

*A LOOK INSIDE IMEA's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest member, Mishawaka Utilities!*

We visited with the Mishawaka Utilities leadership team for a brief Q & A on their day to day operations. Jim Schrader/ General Manager, Rick Springman / Electric Division Manager and Kevin McGann / Electric Superintendent make up the leadership team for the Electric Utility and have over 60 years combined Public Power Experience.

Mishawaka Utilities is owned and operated by the City of Mishawaka, Indiana for the sole purpose of providing quality electric, water and wastewater treatment services for our citizens.

The water works and electric departments were formed in 1890. On April 1, 1903 the Mishawaka Public Utility Company was formed with the issuance of \$100,000 of public bonds. This issue paid off old debt, extended electric and water lines and built Mishawaka's first City Hall. Wastewater Treatment didn't arrive in Mishawaka until 1952.

### **Q: What are your responsibilities as a Utility Manager?**

#### **A: Jim Schrader - Electric, Water and Waste – Water Departments**

Electric being the largest and highest revenue \$60,000,000 to \$75,000,000  
75% are purchased power. Water treatment facilities (2), Well fields (2),  
Waste - Water Treatments.

Mishawaka has over 28,000 metered customers and the population for Mishawaka is approximately 52,000. Economic Development is on the upswing. New park Development. A lot of senior development centers are being built in the area as well as other economic development taking place.

### **Q: How do you begin your day to day operations?**

A: **Jim Schrader** – Reviewing situations that might have occurred in the evening prior. Issues with water, wastewater, testing that is a concern. Appointments to date, scheduled meetings, 2020 budget that has to be approved before the end of the year and structural changes.



*Continued on page 7*



# Hometown Connections<sup>®</sup>

DELIVERING VALUE TO PUBLIC POWER

*Integrated Solutions for Public Power*



## SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

*For expert guidance on what works best for public power, turn to Hometown Connections and its partners for consulting support in organizational assessment, strategic planning, governance, staffing, property & cyber liability insurance, and energy trading.*

*partners*



Hometown Connections<sup>®</sup>  
DELIVERING VALUE TO PUBLIC POWER

KTI

MFP Connect™

TEA  
Energy Authority

Worham  
PowerGen

970.682.4217 + [www.hometownconnections.com](http://www.hometownconnections.com)



### **Q & A**

(Continued from Page 5)

**A: Kevin McGann** – Engineering projects, make sure that projects from the night before have been completed or in the process of completion. At this time, we have on staff; (4) line crews and (3) of Mishawaka's and Kevin makes sure that the foreman of those crews have their job orders placed for each day. Mishawaka has seen a few transitions in the past year adding (6) new first year apprentices, and (3) 2<sup>nd</sup> year Apprentices and (2) 3<sup>rd</sup> year apprentices. (1) Topped out apprentice this year and (7) journeyman. We build a local Community. Quite a few of the new apprentices were previously employed by the City. Having the advantage of already working and established with the City of Mishawaka. In support of hiring local to try to maintain our working staff.

**Q: **How do you look at mentoring your new Apprentices / Lineman?****

**A: Kevin McGann** -On the Shop floor. We monitor their training. Kevin is the leader of the apprenticeship committee. We try to mentor the Crew Leaders to connect and show leadership to all Apprentices and Lineman.

**Q: **How do you rate your utility on safety practices?****

**A: Jim Schrader** - First Class. The Training we have given our guys through the instruction of Don Beck along with continuing education programs offered.

**A: Kevin McGann** - replies that being a chair member of the IMEA Safety & Training Committee has provided him knowledge and experience of new and improved ways of training the Mishawaka Utility Staff.

**A: Rick Springman** - states that he is in support of offering a budget for purchasing Safety Equipment. They go above and Beyond for FR Clothing to make sure that their Crews are safe on the job.

**Q: **As a seasoned utility expert, how have you seen the industry change?****

**A: Kevin McGann** - The Industry has become a lot safer. The mental attitude towards the awareness with social media for the results of conducting business. Re-evaluate how each utility does things through the awareness of social media as well. Finding ways to keep and maintain their employees through rate cases and competitive compensation packages for employees. Asking ourselves, how do we manage this?

**A: Jim Schrader** - Finding a better source of purchase power. We now have a new purchase power contract with Wolverine Cooperative out of Michigan with a more favorable rate. This also helps to build a better status with their customers as well.

*Continued on page 9*

# WILL EXACTER TECHNOLOGY BENEFIT YOUR COMMUNITY?

## Here's What Exacter Users Are Saying:

"Outages at the locations Exacter found would have cost the city over \$135,000 over the next three to five years. We received more than 300% ROI on the project."

Midwest Municipal Utility

"Exacter found a 69-kV transition from overhead to underground that serves 5 of Westerville's 6 substations. Had they not found it, it would have taken out 80% of the city's electrical systems and resulted in a significant rebuild."

City of Westerville, Ohio

"Exacter found a problem on a 69kV line to the substation that had it failed would have taken out the majority of the community. It's literally the best tool in our toolbox!"

Village of Jackson Center, Ohio

"Exacter found over 30 failed lightning arresters in 180 miles in areas already patrolled & investigated."

CoServ Electric, Denton, Texas

"The Davey-Exacter program exceeded its SAIDI reduction estimate of 1.1 minutes to a remarkable 4.5 minutes! Outages were down 21% compared to the year before."

Southern Rural Cooperative Utility



*"As a former AMP member with the Village of Versailles, Ohio, I would love to start a conversation with you about some innovative ways Exacter could help you improve reliability."*

Dane Nagel

www.exacterinc.com | Dane Nagel | 937-570-3374 | dnagel@exacterinc.com

**Exacter**

# Mishawaka Utility Leadership & Management

## Q & A

(Continued from page 7)

**Q: What would you say are the most challenging / rewarding parts of your job?**

**Mission Statement:** Providing a positive impact in the Community for providing electric, water, and wastewater. World Class service to the Citizens of Mishawaka.

- A: Kevin McGann**- "Reliability & Immediate Response Times" mean everything to our customers. Kevin believes that reliability is everything to our electric customers... He takes the fact that their outage time is the least in the State of Indiana. Responding immediately to the outages to get electricity back on.
- A: Rick Springman** - Rick believes that the efforts being placed into the substations and the metering departments and keeping up to date with new technologies is the biggest challenge. The staff are the primary reason for our limited response time reducing overall outage times. New Technologies have made it a lot more efficient and safer for all involved.

**Q: What does the organization (IMEA) mean to you & how do you feel about the resources & services offered to its members of the State?**

- A: Jim Schrader** - I have been involved in the IMEA Board for over 12 years. I had asked to become part of the board. I feel that the IMEA has a special place for all Utilities. Making sure that all needs are met in the Municipal Communities. IMEA provides invaluable resources that we would be remised if we didn't have them. This is what makes for successful Communities.
- A: Rick Springman** - Networking it provides to all Utilities. The Comradery. Collectively benchmark other utilities to reach out with availability of Mutual Aid, Rate Cases, Pay Issues, Safety & Training and the Apprenticeship program.
- A: Kevin McGann**- I've served on the Safety and Training Committee for over five years now. To me it is being able to feed off other Communities in the way they do things. To be compliant with the Safety Meetings that they really help out with awareness and compliant to document information. This way, instructors facilitate information to other Communities.



Enjoy A Holiday Recipe!



## Sausage and Herb Stuffing

### Ingredients:

16 cups 1-inch bread cubes, white or sourdough (1 ½ pound loaf)  
8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter  
2 cups medium-diced celery (2 stalks)  
2 Granny Smith apples, unpeeled, cored and large-diced  
2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley  
1 tablespoon kosher salt  
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
¾ pound sweet or spicy Italian sausage, casings removed  
1 cup chicken stock  
1 cup diced cranberries

### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F.
2. Place the bread cubes in a single layer on a sheet pan and bake for 7 minutes. Raise the oven temperature to 350 degrees F. Remove the bread cubes to a very large bowl.
3. Meanwhile, in a large sauté pan, melt the butter and add the onions, celery, apples, parsley, salt and pepper. Sauté over medium heat for 10 minutes, until the vegetables are softened. Add to the bread cubes.
4. In the same sauté pan, cook the sausage over medium heat for about 10 minutes, until browned and cooked through, breaking up the sausage with a fork while cooking. Add to the bread cubes and vegetable.
5. Add the chicken stock and cranberries to the mixture, mix well, and pour into a 9 by 12 inch baking dish. Bake for 30 minutes, until browned on top and hot in the middle. Serve warm.

# SUNBELT-SOLOMON SOLUTIONS



## ▶ NEED A QUICK SHIP SOLUTION? WE SAY **YES!**

We specialize in fast turn around on refurbished and new transformers, regulators and reclosers.

Our engineering and field service staffs offer custom solutions for unique circumstances.

Call 24/7/365!

Bryan Kroeker | Territory Manager | [bkroeker@solomoncorp.com](mailto:bkroeker@solomoncorp.com) | 800-234-3867 Ext. 2654

# How to Build a Fun, Positive Municipal Utility in Six Easy Steps

I enjoy to see businesses that encourage time for both hard work and play. This helps people to do their best work. Employees love to work hard when they also get to play hard.

From celebrating the big things to enjoying the little things, building a strong utility culture that inspires both teamwork and friendly competition isn't rocket science and needn't deplete work productivity. Here are six easy steps to create a successful and productive team environment.

## 1. Recognize milestones and achievements.

Letting people know they are important is one of the biggest components to a thriving, concierge – style culture. When employees feel like meaningless cogs, their work is unlikely to matter to them and they soon look for a job that's interesting and fulfilling.

## 2. Meetings employees look forward to.

Consider a scoreboard meeting every week or bi-monthly to praise wins, discuss ideas and explore ways to keep improving services. Make sure your communication is transparent to empower employees to participate in discussions that help the utility be safe and productive.

**3. Make social media social again.** Lots of social media accounts are crowded with business-only updates and industry articles. Though you do use social accounts to provide awareness of your utility, you also want to make it about your employees to better connect with your customers.

**4. Play to win.** Lots of employees are sports fans. Instead of crushing the impulse to check scores,



TEL 612.349.6868  
FAX 612.349.6108  
Info@AvantEnergy.com



For over 30 years, Avant Energy has supported municipal utilities and power agencies in their effort to deliver economic and reliable power. Avant works with its clients to develop innovative, yet practical solutions based on a simple, overarching belief that, "better is possible."

BETTER  
IS POSSIBLE

STRATEGIC PLANNING  
RATE DESIGN  
UTILITY ASSESSMENT

WWW.AVANTENERGY.COM  
220 South Sixth Street, Suite 1300, Minneapolis, MN 55402

embrace the love of the game as something to make work extra fun! Have two fantasy football teams that huddle up at the end of every summer to form teams and make picks. This encourages team spirit that's contagious throughout the workplace and gives people something to look forward to.

**5. Spotlight your Community.** The Utility relies on customer relations, so spending some time visiting your city / town, schools, and businesses is a great way to make a connection. When you make these connections you not only learn new ways to improve your utility by their example but it's a great advantage to build camaraderie amongst your team and your Community.

## 6. Get out of the office – together.

Everyone needs an escape now and then. Planning company events gives the team something to look forward to. Sponsor a local golf tournament, root for the home team at your community school football games and hit the pavement in charity runs.

The golden rule of building a happy culture with an "at your service" attitude from day one is simple: If this wasn't your utility, would you want to work here?



**ELECTRIC POWER ENGINEERING**  
**TELECOMMUNICATIONS ENGINEERING**  
**BUSINESS CONSULTING SERVICES**



5524 North County Line Rd. E., Auburn, IN 46704  
 PH: 260.627.8888 / FX: 260.627.8102  
[www.SpectrumEng.com](http://www.SpectrumEng.com)

**INDUSTRIES WE SERVE**

Our client base is broad. Wherever you fit in, you can be sure, when you call for a solution, we'll provide one that's industry-specific and uniquely geared toward your success.

- MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS
- ARCHITECTURAL & ENGINEERING FIRMS
- RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES
- INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL
- UNIVERSITIES
- UTILITIES
- CONTRACTORS
- TELECOMMUNICATION

# INDIANA MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

## MEET OUR 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Ron Fritz  
President  
Flora  
Utility Manager



Bob Dunderman  
Vice President  
Logansport  
Distribution Manager



Bill Ley  
Past President /  
Secretary Treasurer  
Avilla  
Town Manager



Lenny Larson  
Director  
Rensselaer  
Line Supervisor



Jim Schrader  
Director  
Mishawaka  
General Manager



Jim Binkley  
Director  
Scottsburg  
Electric Superintendent



Jeff Greeno  
Director  
Lebanon  
Operations Manager



Randy Ennis  
Director  
Washington  
Operations Manager



Brian Chapman  
Director  
Gas City  
Lead Lineman

"We (IMEA) are a non-for-profit organization functioning as the statewide service association representing the issues and concerns of municipally owned and operated electric utilities. We provide value to your ability to meet your municipal utility needs toward your associates and/or customers. We are committed to providing the latest training in all facets of safety as well as keeping you abreast of cutting-edge technology and resources including leadership development, certified Journeyman / Apprentice training directed toward continuous improvement and exceeding way beyond our Members' expectations. We have a Board of Directors comprised of the municipalities' own members that are committed to growing the membership and service to our association. "We invite you to be a part of this governance and we are committed to the advancement and protection of municipally-owned electric utilities believing the local municipalities and their citizens have the right to keep control and provide services that meet their own needs."

**Consistent / Weekly deliveries**

*WAREHOUSE*  
**Wabash, Indiana**



**DEPENDABLE**  
**24/7/365**  
Storm response

*Dedicated professional*  
**Inside/Outside Support**

**On-site**  
*Construction*  
**Trailers**

INVENTORY  
MANAGEMENT  
SOLUTIONS

Technical Services Division

**TWO**  
**Local**  
**WAREHOUSES**



*HEADQUARTERS*  
**Brownstown, Indiana**

**BROWNSTOWN**  
**Electric Supply Co.**



**WHATEVER IT TAKES.**

**An Indiana company serving Indiana since 1970**