

Currents & Waves

Spring 2022



Public Power in Wisconsin Rapids


Wisconsin Rapids Water Works and Lighting Commission (WW&LC) is one of 81 municipally owned utilities in the state of Wisconsin (and one of 2,000 in the country). A public power utility serves one in every seven Americans. You may wonder why this is good for you and the community.

First, customers of municipal electric utilities pay, on average, about **11%** less than customers of investor-owned utilities. For an average household in the United States, this means about **\$15.00 per month** in energy cost savings. WW&LC has set its goal to be in the lowest one-third of residential electric rates in Wisconsin. We have been able to meet this goal for several years. In 2021, our average electric residential customer had the 27th lowest residential rate in the state (out of 92 that reported rate information to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission). The American Public Power Association also publishes a report on annual electric utility rates throughout the country. The most recent report (2020) shows the average WW&LC residential customer paid **10.6 cents** per kWh of electricity used. This rate is much lower than our neighboring utilities, Adams-Columbia Electric Cooperative (**15.9 cents**), WPS (**13.8 cents**), and Alliant Energy (**15.6 cents**).

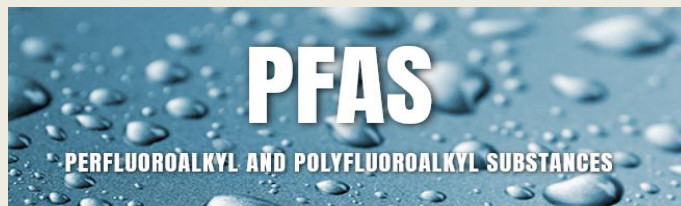
Public power also takes pride in delivering reliable electric service. Outside of storms and other major adverse events beyond the utility's control, public power utilities are able to keep the lights on. In 2021, a WW&LC customer, on average, did not have power for 135 minutes throughout the year. This figure includes the December 15th windstorm outage. If this outage is removed, the average customer was without power for only **48 minutes** of the year. The 48-minute average means our customers had power available 99.96% of the year. Employees living locally can respond to outages quickly and restore power sooner.

Public power utilities also provide support to local government in the form of payments in lieu of taxes, or PILOT. For example, in 2021, WW&LC paid nearly \$2,000,000 to the City of Wisconsin Rapids in PILOT, which is used to run the City's government and provide services to the city's residents. Without this payment, local property taxes would likely increase.

While one outage seems like too many and electric rates seem high regardless of the cost, it is important to remember that WW&LC is working for you to deliver safe and reliable power to all our customers at an affordable rate. Our customers should take pride in knowing a municipally owned public utility serves them.



Electric disconnection for non-payment will begin on Monday, April 18th. If you are unable to remit payment for your past due charges, we encourage you call our office at 715-423-6300 to set up a payment arrangement. To apply for Energy Assistance, call 715-421-8654 or submit your application online at: <https://energybenefit.wi.gov>.



What are PFAS?

PFAS are considered emerging contaminants. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, PFAS are a group of manufactured chemicals that have been used in industry and consumer products since the 1940s. There are thousands of different PFAS. Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS) are two of the most widely used and studied chemicals in the PFAS group. PFAS are found in non-stick cookware, water-repellent clothing, stain resistant fabrics and carpets, some cosmetics, some firefighting foams, and products that resist grease, water, and oil.

PFAS Testing Information

In 2021 Wisconsin Rapids Water Works and Lighting Commission worked with Northern Lake Service, Inc. to voluntarily test our city well water for per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances, also known as PFAS. The well water tested contained PFAS levels considerably lower than the EPA Health Advisory level of 70 parts per trillion. Wisconsin Rapids Water Works and Lighting Commission is not in violation of any drinking water standards or regulations and has taken actions proactively to inform and protect the health of its customers.

Who do you contact if you have questions?

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has a list of specialists to contact if anyone has questions concerning PFAS. Additional information is available on our website [https://www.wrwwlc.com/water/pdf/PFAS Information.pdf](https://www.wrwwlc.com/water/pdf/PFAS%20Information.pdf).

Reality Check at Lincoln High School

On March 8th, three Water Works and Lighting Commission employees participated in Lincoln High School's 10th annual Reality Check Financial Simulation. The Reality Check is a fun yet effective way for students to learn about budgeting, personal accounting, financial responsibility, and life choices all while interacting with business and community members.

Over 300 students participated in the simulation moving between 20 booths making financial decisions to pay for life's necessities and wants. The goal of the simulation was to have between \$5 and \$200 left in their monthly check register after entering expenses, investing, and savings. Many students ended up having a net loss at the end of the month and had to reevaluate their financial decisions.



Utility Booth Simulation



With spring right around the corner, you may be planning a project that involves digging. State law requires you to notify Diggers Hotline at least three business days in advance. Call 811 or visit diggershotline.com to schedule your free appointment. For hearing impaired (TDD) call 800-542-2289.



**Water Works &
Lighting Commission**

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