Memphis leads on lowest utility bills

For the third consecutive year, Memphis Light, Gas and Water topped the list of having the lowest winter residential bill among 30 metropolitan areas. The survey looked at what a typical home would use in terms of electricity, natural gas, water and wastewater services. MLGW provides services for light, gas and water while the City of Memphis Public Works Department supplies services for wastewater treatment.

Mayor AC Wharton Jr. wasn’t surprised at the news of the city’s continued success in keeping utility rates low. He believes local officials should tout our rock-bottom utility rates as a way to lure businesses to locate here.

Since the utility company started tracking its rates in 1991, Memphis has consistently scored among the lowest in selected markets. A Memphis resident would pay $251.06 a month for the four services compared to someone living in Boston who would fork out a whopping $603.23 a month. Boston came in last among the metro areas which responded to the survey. In 2014, a typical Memphis winter residential bill was $278.25. But for 2015, the bill dropped about $27 to $251.06.

The savings resulted largely in how MLGW buys its gas and reflects the dropping gas prices in the market place. When the cost of gas drops, MLGW passes along those savings to the customer.
Governor Haslam awards MLGW for contributions to clean air

Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam and Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Commissioner Bob Martineau announced MLGW as one of 11 winners of the 2015 Governor’s Environmental Stewardship Awards (GESAs). MLGW received a GESA in the Clean Air category. MLGW was awarded for reducing area diesel emissions and improving air quality in Memphis and on state highways by building and assisting in the development of natural gas fueling stations.

Providing alternative fuel helps to reduce air pollution and addresses poor air quality. MLGW is currently operating the only two public access compressed natural gas stations in Memphis with plans to construct a third one. MLGW has 93 compressed natural gas powered vehicles and four tank trailers allowing us to save more than 12,000 gallons of gasoline and more than 100 tons of greenhouse gas. Last year, the CNG stations sold more than 250,000 units of compressed natural gas which resulted in reductions of greenhouse gas emissions, NOx and NOCs, particulate matter and other tailpipe air pollutants.

A-Blazing Solar Car Race

The MLGW/SCS PowerSave Schools 2015 Solar Car Race, sponsored by Memphis Light, Gas and Water and Shelby County Schools’ Project Green Schools, was held recently at Colonial Middle School. Student “green teams” from four County Schools’ Project Green Schools, was held recently at Colonial Middle School. Student “green teams” from four County Schools’ Project Green Schools, was held recently at Colonial Middle School. Student “green teams” from four County Schools’ Project Green Schools, was held recently at Colonial Middle School. Student “green teams” from four County Schools’ Project Green Schools, was held recently at Colonial Middle School. Student “green teams” from four schools – Treadwell, Clarksdale, Cordova and Sherwood – participated. The race was the culminating event of a several-weeks-long project during which eighth grade students designed and built solar-powered cars.

Activities such as these are not only fun, but also prepare students for high school, college and lucrative career opportunities. “We want to expose students to different engineering careers,” said Tracy Leaks, Green Schools Project Leader. “Students are getting hands-on experience with the same work that engineers do, and they’re learning how to use the engineering design process.”

The students attended an initial workshop, “A-Blazing Race Training Day,” to learn how they could possibly design the car. The workshop gave the participants an overview of the rules as well taught the scientific basics of energy and physics of the car so they could design and build the best car possible. MLGW engineers spoke to students about the engineering design process and then provided each team with a solar panel and motor.

The rest of the car’s design was up to the teams. Sherwood’s team, which consisted of all girls, spent weeks working on the perfect car using a variety of materials. Sherwood’s teamwork and diligence paid off. The Big Mac, won the solar power race. The students’ excitement was evident as they posed for pictures with their trophies.

MLGW Community Relations Lead Beverly Perkins knows activities like these are a win-win for students, MLGW and, ultimately, the city of Memphis. “We’re looking to build a diverse pool of future engineers who can work for MLGW,” said Perkins. “We also want to do whatever we can to help make a better community, and this is one of our many different programs that help us to do so. We want to educate the community on energy conservation and renewable energy while they’re young. That way we won’t have to try to change behavior in the future.”

MLGW will hold another A-Blazing Race in the fall for all schools in Shelby County.

MLGW receives national recognition for reliable electric operations

For the fifth time, Memphis Light, Gas and Water has earned the American Public Power Association’s (APPA) Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) recognition for providing customers with the highest degree of reliable and safe electric service. However, 2015 marks the first time ever that MLGW earned the highest honor given, the Diamond award. MLGW joins 26 other utilities nationwide who received the Diamond award in 2015.

The RP3 designation recognizes public power utilities that demonstrate proficiency in four areas: reliability, safety, workforce development and system improvement. Criteria within each category are based on sound business practices and represent a utility-wide commitment to safe and reliable delivery of electricity. MLGW will have the RP3 designation for three years.

“We’re honored to receive the RP3 designation,” said Jerry Collins Jr., MLGW President and CEO. “MLGW employees put in a lot of hard work to serve our community, and RP3 represents a much appreciated recognition of this hard work.”

This is the tenth year that RP3 recognition has been offered. APPA is the national organization representing more than 2,000 not-for-profit, community- and state-owned electric utilities.

Smart Talk: Cybersecurity

Smart meters use secure wireless communications to send daily meter readings to MLGW, eliminating the need for employees to drive to every customer site and manually obtain meter readings each billing period. By adopting this smart meter technology, MLGW is virtually eliminating estimates, lowering operational costs and improving services—all while keeping smart meter data safe.

Smart meters are secure. Meter manufacturers use proprietary meter and radio frequency transmission protocols to defend against the unauthorized access of the customer’s meter readings. Encryption is used at each step of the data transmission process: at the meter, during transit from the meter to MLGW, and then again at MLGW. Your encrypted meter readings are received through secure gateways and associated with your account for billing.

The data contains read times, consumption values and communication module numbers, not customer-identifying information like addresses or names. It is virtually impossible to associate transmitted meter readings to an individual customer prior to matching the data in our secure Customer Information System. Like many U.S. electric utilities, MLGW is mandated by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) to comply with cybersecurity standards, which require protecting the confidentiality, integrity and availability of customer and utility data. MLGW customers “Play it Cool” with free air-conditioning units

A Memphis summer without air conditioning is hard to survive, and for many MLGW customers without air, sitting outside can be cooler than inside the house. To help, MLGW teamed up again with the Neighborhood Christian Center for the annual Play It Cool program to provide 200 window air-conditioning units to qualified income seniors and disabled residents of Shelby County.

The Neighborhood Christian Center hosted a screening and application process for the units furnished by MLGW. Utility workers inspected the homes of those who were eligible, and installations began shortly thereafter. Frances Hawkins, 64, who has been using window box fans since her air conditioner recently quit working, arrived early on the first day of the screenings, and was eligible for one of the units. “This is a really good thing because I need an air conditioner,” she said.

MLGW customers “Play it Cool” with free air-conditioning units

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