

Community OUTREACH

News to the Neighborhoods from Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division

May/June 2024

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MLGW celebrates 85 years of service and counting

Memphis Light, Gas and Water celebrates 85 years of service to the Memphis and Shelby County residents. MLGW began operating as the city's first utility company in 1939. Eighty-five years later, MLGW is the nation's largest three-service municipal utility with some of the country's lowest combined bills.

MLGW began as a dream of prominent Memphians, such as the legendary Shelby County political leader and former Memphis Mayor E.H. Crump, to have all the utilities in the city owned and operated by the city government and free of interference from far-off companies and non-local interest.

When the Tennessee Valley Authority was formed in 1933, many felt the opportunity had arrived for Memphis to obtain cheap electric power. The unified Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division was formed in 1935 to oversee power and water systems and a contract with TVA was also signed that year. After three years of litigation and negotiations, a sale

agreement for the purchase of Memphis Power and Light was reached. On March 9, 1939, the governor of Tennessee signed an amendment to the Memphis charter creating Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division. Since 1939, the Division has strived to meet its mission to improve the quality of life of Memphis and Shelby County customers through efficient and safe delivery of electricity, natural gas and water. The slogan found on the first MLGW logo still resonates with the Division today: "Public Service – Publicly Owned."



City of Memphis Utility Assistance Fund offers help to residents

Memphians facing utility cutoff notices may qualify for up to a \$700 credit on their MLGW utility bills. Mayor Paul Young and the Memphis City Council set aside \$1 million for the program, now in its fifteenth year.

You will qualify if:

- Your household income does not exceed 130% of Federal Poverty Guidelines and/or
 - You are an existing client of the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) and/or
 - You have experienced financial, health or military deployment-related hardship within the last six months
- In addition, you must also live in Memphis, have the utilities



in your or your spouse's name, have a combined household income that does not exceed 130% of the established federal poverty income level, and have a current MLGW cut-off notice. DHS clients must show proof of a disconnect notice via DHS' office drop box, by mail or online via the DHS portal. No additional application is needed. For non-DHS customers, go online at the Neighborhood Christian Center (NCC) at ncclife.org or pick up an application at NCC, 223 Scott St. during business hours of 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. Call the NCC utility assistance hotline at 901-881-6013.

Hardship examples include 100% medically disabled, job loss, hospitalization within the last six months or if your spouse is on active military deployment. If you receive help through DHS, you're ineligible for additional help through the NCC. For more details, visit MLGW's website at mlgw.com/utilityassistance.

Update: billing challenges

Around six percent of the more than 570,000 gas and water meters in MLGW's system are malfunctioning and causing billing issues. Some customers have received estimates for gas or water use for nearly a year. "Getting these meters fixed and bills corrected is a top priority," President and CEO Doug McGowen told members of the MLGW Board of Commissioners during a recent Board meeting. A solution for water meter registers seems to be working, but the fix for gas meters is not. The gas meter manufacturer believes replacing part of the meter that measures usage will fix the issue. MLGW is working with Utility Partners of America (UPA) to repair meters. The Division has asked for additional UPA technicians to expedite the process.

Billing challenges:

- MLGW only estimates usage for the malfunctioning meter. The customer's entire bill is not estimated.
- Usage is estimated based on the previous 12 months of use, or the past 12 months of reliable data.
- 98% of customers are being charged exactly what their meters say. Customers with billing issues can visit mlgw.com/delayedbills2023 for information.



MLGW employees contribute more than \$680,000

Thanks to our employees' 2023 contributions, MLGW was able to give the United Way of the Mid-South \$682,141.60. Alexandria Dean, MLGW Water Quality Control, presented the check to Dr. Kenneth Robinson, President and CEO of the United Way of the Mid-South during a recent Board of Commissioners meeting. "You're not just an organization serving the community," said Dr. Robinson, "you are the community." All contributions from MLGW to United Way of the Mid-South come from employees.

MLGW trains first responders

Fighting fires is dangerous. Downed electrical lines and broken/leaking gas lines increase the threat level in an already hazardous situation. Safety specialists from MLGW are helping local firefighters mitigate the risks utilities pose. Layne Mendius, Gaspo Dixon, Josh Lepard, Henry Smith and John Holland from Corporate Safety and Randy Steele from MLGW's Electric Meter Shop held the first of six, hands-on training classes for Bartlett firefighters in March. Firefighters learned how to identify different types of overhead equipment, how to dismantle an electric meter in an emergency, how to shut off gas at the meter and much, much more. Corporate Safety Specialists trained firefighters in Collierville recently and will hold training classes for first responders in Germantown later this year.



Randy Steele, John Holland, Josh Lepard, Gaspo Dixon, Layne Mendius.

MLGW helps with MFD training

More and more alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs) are on the road and posing new challenges for first responders. Recently, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation hosted a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) safety course at the Memphis Fire Department training facility. MLGW was asked to help by bringing AFVs from the utility's fleet. MLGW was happy to oblige and took a Nissan Leaf, a dual-fuel CNG (compressed natural gas) pickup truck and a hybrid bucket truck to the training facility. Firefighters got a chance to examine each vehicle up close, giving them a better understanding of how to respond to incidents involving AFVs.

MLGW honors natural gas utility workers

Recently, Memphis Light, Gas and Water and other natural gas utilities observed national Natural Gas Utility Workers' Day. It's a day when communities such as Memphis and Shelby County offer recognition and gratitude to employees who work to provide natural gas service safely and reliably to area homes and businesses. MLGW would like to thank and honor our natural gas workers for their hard work and their dedication to safety and our customers.

This is the ninth year in which Natural Gas Utility Workers' Day has been officially celebrated across the country. The annual nationwide event is intended to build public awareness about the hard work done by the employees of natural gas utilities. March 18 is the date of the New London, Texas school explosion in 1937 that led to the widespread odorization of natural gas with the odorant mercaptan and an increased emphasis on gas safety. Safety is a vital aspect to natural gas distribution and the employees of distribution companies endeavor to make natural gas delivery as safe as possible.

"MLGW and our customers depend on our natural gas workers to deliver reliable, affordable, and most importantly, safe natural gas service," said Doug



McGowen, MLGW President and CEO. "Safety is a vital aspect of our work, and our gas employees put safety first every day. They deserve a day to be recognized for their hard work, dedication and accomplishments. Thank you, MLGW natural gas workers!"

Learn about the benefits of natural gas and how your public natural gas system works on the American Public Gas Association website at apga.org/aboutus/facts. Find out more about natural gas safety in your home on our website at mlgw.com/residential/safety.



Lead service lines

MLGW, along with other water systems in the U.S., are working to comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR). The lead and copper rule is meant to help reduce exposure to lead in drinking water. All water systems must have an inventory of lead service lines and a plan to replace them by October 2024. "From 2012 to 2023 we inspected, removed or replaced 8,000 lead service lines," President and CEO Doug McGowen told the Memphis City Council recently. Inventory is ongoing. MLGW is working with engineering firm HDR to round out its replacement plan.

What MLGW customers should know about lead service lines:

- MLGW stopped using lead in service lines in the 1950s.
- Customers can check their address for known lead service lines using the interactive map at webgisr.mlgw.org/mlgwwaterservices/.
- Customers may request a free water testing kit from the MLGW Water Lab by calling 320-3962 or emailing waterlab@mlgw.org.
- The Tennessee Health Department and the Tennessee Department of Education are responsible for water samples at schools and daycares.

Prepare your system and yourself for the summer

Feeling comfortable during a hot and humid Memphis summer can be challenging, but it does not have to be costly. Here are some of the easiest ways to stay cool and save:

- Have a professional, reputable contractor clean and inspect your air conditioner. This should be done every year, whether you have window or central units.
- Check your air conditioner's filter every time you receive your utility bill. Look for a dust build-up that can restrict the airflow and place stress on the system. This added stress causes wear and tear on the unit and increases operation costs.
- Always replace the filter cover. By creating a tight seal around the filter opening, you can block any unconditioned air that is being pulled into the unit.
- Use fans to move the air inside your home. This gives the sensation that it is five degrees cooler than the actual temperature.
- Shade windows on the sunny side of your home. Keep drapes closed or add room-darkening shades to block out the heat from the sun.
- Do not set your thermostat at a colder setting than normal when you turn on your air conditioner. It will not cool your home any faster and could result



in excessive cooling and, therefore, unnecessary expenses.

- Set the thermostat at 78° degrees or higher for the most energy efficient operation. Each degree below this setting can add up to six percent to your cooling costs.
- Use a programmable thermostat to allow the inside temperature to rise while you are away from home for four hours or longer. Pre-set the thermostat to adjust back to your normal comfort range one half hour before returning home.
- Use your programmable thermostat setting to automatically allow the temperature to increase at bedtime. Sleep under lightweight bedding and use fans during sleep.
- Do not place lamps near your thermostat. The thermostat senses the heat produced from the lamp and causes the air conditioner to run longer than necessary.
- Plant trees or shrubs to shade air-conditioning units but not to block the airflow. A unit operating in the shade uses as much as 10 percent less electricity than the same one operating under the sun.

The outside portion of a central air conditioner is the condensing unit. Keep it clear from dried mud, debris and grass clippings, because it needs to breathe.

Speaker requests

Memphis Light, Gas and Water's Public Education Program (PEP) allows MLGW the opportunity to educate adults and children on the utility industry through a variety of forums such as community and classroom presentations. To request a speaker from MLGW, fill out the online speaker request form at mlgw.com/speaker. By utilizing the online request form we are also better equipped to track the number of requests we


receive on a monthly basis for reporting purposes. This will help ensure that we're not missing out on any opportunities to support the community as well as promote our messaging through ads, banners, video/audio messages, etc. For more information on any of these programs, please contact MLGW's Corporate Social Responsibility department at 528-4820 or email commrelations@mlgw.org

MLGW and the Community

- May 31** – Memphis Public Library Frayser Branch, Community Resource Expo, 3712 Argonne St., 2–5 p.m.
- June 1** – LF Mobile LifeSaving Raleigh Community Health Wellness and Safety Resource, Raleigh Springs Civic Center, 3384 Austin Peay Hwy, 11 a.m.–2 p.m.
- June 19** – St. Andrew AME Church, The Good Life Senior Ministry, 867 South Pkwy East, 11 a.m.–1 p.m.

June 27 – East Memphis Health and Home Expo, Memphis Botanic Garden, 750 Cherry Rd., 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Community outreach and volunteer programs are always part of MLGW's schedule. If you would like MLGW to participate in your meeting, fair or festival, please complete the form at www.mlgw.com/speaker.



Community Outreach is produced by MLGW's Corporate Communications department. If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions about *Community Outreach*, please call (901) 528-4820 or (901) 528-4557.

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