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# ILLINOIS ENERGY FORUM

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## **Nicor Gas Meter Modernization Reaches 1 Million Installation Milestone**

**In July**, Nicor Gas celebrated the installation of the one millionth two-way communication device as part of the Meter Modernization program. Nicor Gas' Meter Modernization program is one of several investments the company is making to improve customer communication and experience, and the reliability of meter reading and billing, ensuring every customer's energy needs are met safely and reliably now and well into the future.

Meter Modernization involves installing small, two-way communication devices on existing natural gas meters throughout Nicor Gas' service territory. These two-way communication devices feature state-of-the-art technology that will automate the meter reading process and securely send it to Nicor Gas.

This automation will enhance the customer experience by helping to eliminate estimated meter reads and providing more timely and accurate data about their energy usage, enabling energy- and cost-savings decisions. The ability to read meters without the need for a field visit will also simplify the process of moving properties and reduce

## **DOE Selects 73 Scientists for Early Career Research Program Funding**

**The** Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Science has selected 73 scientists from across the nation – including 27 from DOE's national laboratories and 46 from U.S. universities – to receive significant funding for research as part of DOE's Early Career Research Program. The effort, now in its tenth year, is designed to bolster the nation's scientific workforce by providing support to exceptional researchers during the crucial early career years, when many scientists do their most formative work.

"Supporting our nation's most talented and creative researchers in their early career years is crucial to building America's scientific workforce and sustaining America's culture of innovation," said Secretary of Energy Rick Perry. "We congratulate these young researchers on their significant accomplishments to date and look forward

to their achievements in the years ahead."

Under the program, university-based researchers will receive about \$150,000 per year to cover summer salary and research expenses. For researchers based at DOE national laboratories, where DOE typically covers full salary and expenses of laboratory employees, grants will be about \$500,000 per year to cover year-round salary plus research expenses. The research grants are planned for five years.

To be eligible for the DOE award, a researcher must be an untenured, tenure-track assistant or associate professor at a U.S. academic institution or a full-time employee at a DOE national laboratory, who received a Ph.D. within the past 10 years. Research topics are required to fall within one of the Department's Office of

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## FROM THE STAFF

**Well** we've almost made it thru the heart of Summer. We know that because of all the "Back to School" sales underway at local retailers. Doesn't it seem like school starts sooner every year? We're now starting school in mid-August in many places in Illinois. So, if Summer is about to end that must mean that Veto Session is going to be upon us soon. In fact, this year it's sooner than usual: first day of Veto Session is scheduled for October 28th. We'll have to be ready for action when that bell rings. Have a good remainder of the Summer. **IEF**

*(Continued from Page 1)*

## Nicor Gas

**The** expense and environmental impact of service vehicles on the road.

"We're committed to delivering clean, safe, reliable, affordable natural gas for our customers, our neighbors and our communities," said Pat Whiteside, vice president of business support at Nicor Gas. "Continued deployment of the advanced metering infrastructure technologies across the Nicor Gas system is a key step toward building a state-of-the-art natural gas delivery system for northern Illinois."

The Meter Modernization program began in 2018 and installation of the two-way communication devices to all 2.2 million customers served by Nicor Gas is expected by 2020. **IEF**

*(Continued from Page 1)*

## DOE

Science's six major program offices:

- Advanced Scientific Computing Research
- Basic Energy Sciences
- Biological and Environmental Research
- Fusion Energy Sciences
- High Energy Physics
- Nuclear Physics

Awardees were selected from a large pool of university- and national laboratory-based applicants. Selection was based on peer review by outside scientific experts. Projects announced are selections for negotiation of financial award. The final details for each project award are subject to final grant and contract negotiations between DOE and the awardees.

A list of the 73 awardees, their institutions, and titles of research projects is available on the Early Career Research Program webpage <https://science.osti.gov/early-career>. **IEF**

## Ameren Illinois Fortifying Power Grid in Williamson County

**Ameren** Illinois is installing 40 new power poles and 5.5-miles of power lines in Williamson County to enhance electric service reliability for customers. Construction is underway to build a new power source that will tie the company's Herrin

South substation to its Cambria substation. The tie will provide alternate pathways to deliver power in the event of an outage for nearly 600 customers. In addition, power lines are being upgraded to 12-kV along Sycamore Road, Cruise Road and Vermont Street in Carterville to add more capacity to the local grid. This added capacity is similar to expanding a two-lane highway to a four-lane highway to meet customers' future energy needs.

Road closures are planned for Vermont Street in Cambria and lanes closures for Sycamore Road in Carterville. Weather permitting, this \$880,000 project should be completed in early October.

With work taking place on along the highway, Ameren Illinois asks motorists to slow down in the work zone and be mindful of utility work.

"This project is another key step in our long-range plans to construct a more robust electric grid to meet our customers growing needs," said Jason Klein, Division Director. "We're excited to bring these enhancements to our customers in Williamson County."

The enhancements are part of Ameren Illinois' multi-year initiative to modernize its energy delivery system. Since 2012, the company has implemented hundreds of projects, adding new technology and strengthening poles, wires and distribution equipment. As a result, reliability has improved by an average of 17 percent and the time of an outage has been reduced by 19 percent. **IEF**

## **IUBDC Awards Advanced Management Education Scholarships to Minority Businesses**

**The** Illinois Utilities Business Diversity Council (IUBDC) awarded corporate-sponsored scholarships to two Illinois minority business leaders to attend the Advanced Management Education Program (AMEP) at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. AMEP is a custom executive education program created by the National Minority Supplier Development Council to provide CEOs of certified minority-owned business enterprises (MBEs) with the tools and skills they need to achieve and sustain accelerated growth.

"The IUBDC is committed to supplier diversity and investing in minority business owners to help accelerate their growth through education," said Bruce Hauk, chairman of the IUBDC board of directors, and president of Illinois American Water. "Doing business with minority-owned companies is vital to our culture and supply chain, which is why the IUBDC provides access to the tools, resources and networking opportunities to help business owners succeed.

The 2019 scholarship recipients are:

- **Regine Jeune, president, DB Sterlin Consultants, Inc.**

DB Sterlin Consultants, Inc. is an engineering and consulting firm comprised of professional civil and structural engineers, planners and surveyors. DB Sterlin Consultants, Inc. is a certified MBE and women-owned business enterprise (WBE).

"It's not how to grow your business but to be prepared for the growth," said Jeune, who attended the five-day program in June. She said the conversation among program participants of shared challenges and solutions was beneficial, and believes every minority entrepreneur should attend the program.

- **Joshua Davis, president, Lyons View Manufacturing & Supply, A Will Group Company**

Lyons View Manufacturing & Supply is an electrical product assembler and supplier that specializes in LED lighting. Lyons View Manufacturing & Supply, A Will Group Company, is a certified MBE and certified disadvantaged business enterprise.

"The instructors offered expert advice on issues we deal with every day and provided a helpful framework for envisioning the future of our organizations. I appreciate the prior efforts of these trailblazers who came before us and have given so much to see other minorities live out their entrepreneurial dreams," said Davis. **IEF**

## **Illinois Nuclear Plants Operate at Full Power During Extreme Heat**

**While** the sun beat down on Illinois in mid-July, sending temperatures and energy demand soaring, Exelon Generation's six Illinois nuclear plants operated at full power, producing enough carbon-free electricity to keep 11 million homes and businesses safe and cool. That predictable, sustained energy production helped keep prices stable throughout the heatwave.

"Our zero-carbon nuclear energy facilities remain online when customers need us most, during extreme weather," said Exelon Generation Chief Nuclear Officer Bryan Hanson. "I want to thank the thousands of men and women working at our plants who kept our fleet operating during this period of high electricity demand. Our nuclear facilities are among the safest and most reliable in the country because of our dedicated, highly trained employees."

Carbon-free nuclear energy not only provides the electricity needed for air conditioning during extreme heat, it does so without releasing the harmful carbon emissions like those from fossil fuel plants. The release of harmful carbon emissions makes the already poor air quality in Illinois even worse for seniors and others at risk of health problems related to air pollution. Always-on nuclear energy reduces the need for carbon-emitting peaker plants to come online during periods of high demand, which can increase market prices for electricity.

More than half of Illinois' electricity is generated by nuclear energy, which was online more than 94 percent of the time in Illinois in 2018, including during extreme weather events. In fact, nearly 90 percent of Illinois' carbon-free power is produced by nuclear energy facilities, preventing the average annual equivalent of 15 million cars' worth of carbon dioxide from entering earth's atmosphere. There are only 10.4 million vehicles currently registered in Illinois.

Summer resiliency and reliability requires year-long planning, preparation and maintenance. Exelon Generation workers spend months ensuring that backup generators and spare equipment is ready for extreme weather. This spring, operators and maintenance personnel inspected mechanical systems, tested electrical equipment, and properly aligned plant systems to prepare all Exelon Generation-operated facilities for extreme temperatures. These efforts are in addition to the many equipment upgrades and "summer readiness" maintenance activities performed during refueling outages. **IEF**

## Taxpayers' Federation Presents Annual Tax Conference

**The** 20th Annual Illinois State & Local Tax Conference will be presented by the Taxpayers' Federation of Illinois on Tuesday, September 17 at the Meridian Conference Center in Rolling Meadows, Illinois. The Conference will last from 8:00a.m. to 4:50p.m. The conference will focus on technical tax and policy developments in Illinois, plus provide updates to changes occurring in other states. Speakers are some of the leading Illinois experts on state and local tax issues. Registration information for the conference can be obtained from the Taxpayers' Federation at 217-522-6818 or [www.taxpayfedil.org](http://www.taxpayfedil.org). **IEF**

## NARUC Annual Convention in San Antonio

**The** National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) will hold its Annual Convention in San Antonio, Texas, from November 17-20, 2019. State Commissioners and staff members from around the country will meet in various committees and subcommittees with an eye toward developing NARUC policy on several important issues of interest to the regulatory community.

Members of the Illinois Commerce Commission serve on key NARUC policy committees. An Illinois Night Reception will be held on Monday, November 18. **IEF**

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