

MEA Announces Wes Ashton as Chair of the 2024-25 MEA Board of Directors

MEA appoints Wes Ashton of Black Hills Energy as board chair and announces the 2024-25 Board of Directors.

BLOOMINGTON, MINNESOTA, UNITED STATES, March 19, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- MEA Energy Association (MEA) is excited to announce the appointment of Wes Ashton as the new chair of the



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Wes Ashton

Board of Directors. We would also like to extend a warm welcome to all officers and directors of the 2024-25 MEA board. During the board meeting held today, in Las Vegas, the outgoing board chair, Jim Lorenz of Madison Gas and Electric Company, officially passed the gavel to Ashton.

“It is a great honor to take on the role of the 2024-25 Chair of MEA, and I am humbled at the opportunity to serve with our distinguished Board of Directors, working along with the exceptionally talented team at MEA as we continue our long tradition and responsibility of serving the energy

industry through the lens of a rapidly changing landscape,” remarked Ashton, who began working for Black Hills Energy in 2006.

Ashton is the vice president for Black Hills Energy’s South Dakota & Wyoming Utilities. He has served in this role since 2023 and is based primarily in Rapid City, S.D.. Ashton and his team are charged with providing safe, reliable electric and natural gas services to more than 250,000 customers across nearly 100 communities in South Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana.

“For nearly 120 years, the MEA has been a strong partner and a leader within the energy sphere, supporting our members through growth, development and connections within the field,” said Ashton. “MEA sets the standards for providing educational opportunities, creating industry connections, and helping leaders grow at all levels within their organizations. By hosting events like the Energetic Women Conference, our online courses and webinars, a number of in-person events and summits, and the MEA EnergyU OQ and training platform, we continue to build the foundations today that will shape our industry and our country tomorrow.”

Leigh Larson, as the president and CEO of MEA, expressed his pleasure in welcoming the new board members and is excited about Wes' leadership. Larson believes that under the his

guidance, MEA will continue to fulfill its mission and make progress towards becoming the leading association that connects, educates, and inspires the energy industry.

MEA is pleased to introduce the 2024 board of directors, who will serve from March 2024 to March 2025.

Officers (listed by role):

- Chair, Wes Ashton | Vice President of South Dakota & Wyoming Utilities | Black Hills Corporation – Rapid City, S.D.
- 1st Vice Chair, Rich Asiyanbi | Vice President, Operations | Nicor Gas – Southern Company Gas – Naperville, Ill.
- 2nd Vice Chair, Eric Martuscelli | Vice President of Field Operations | MDU Utilities Group - Kennewick, Wash.
- Treasurer, Steven Karolewski | Vice President Operations | GROEBNER – Rogers, Minn.
- Secretary, Leigh Larson | President & CEO | MEA Energy Association – Bloomington, Minn.
- Past Chair, Jim Lorenz | Vice President – Energy Operations | Madison Gas and Electric Company – Madison, Wis.
- Appointed Director, Nancy Conder | Director of Utility Quality | CenterPoint Energy - Evansville, Ind.

Directors (listed by surname):

- Chuck Allen | Director of Customer Field Operations | Duke Energy – Cincinnati, Ohio
- Salvador Arana | Vice President Operations | WEC Energy Group - Chicago, Ill.
- Mike Beatty | President, Central Region - Natural Gas | Liberty Utilities - Joplin, Mo.
- Alicia Berger | Regional Vice President, Gas Operations | Xcel Energy - St. Paul, Minn.
- Arthur Cheatham | VP & General Manager | Spire - St. Louis, Mo.
- Mayuri Farlinger | Vice President - Customer and Community Engagement | Alliant Energy - Cedar Rapids, Iowa
- Carla Friehe | Vice President of Transmission & Substation Engineering | ComEd - Oak Brook Terrace, Ill.



Wes Ashton, Chair, MEA Board of Directors



- John Guy | Vice President, Electric Delivery | MidAmerican Energy Company - Urbandale, Iowa
- Karima Hasan Bey | Vice President - Gas Construction, Maintenance & Service | NiSource, Inc. - Merrillville, Ind.
- Ted Hastings | Vice President of Midwest Operations | Henkels & McCoy Shared Services - Aurora, Ill.
- Erin Inman | President/CEO | Primera Engineers - Chicago, Ill.
- Keith Johnson | Executive Vice President, Business Unit Leader - Utilities | ENTRUST Solutions Group - Linthicum Heights, Md.
- Jack Kelley | Director, Customer Engagement | Centuri Group, Inc. - Phoenix, Ariz.
- Eric Kozak | Vice President, Gas Operations | Ameren Illinois Company - Collinsville, Ill.
- Mike Nelson | President | Nelson Technologies, Inc. - Eden Prairie, Minn.
- Don Scacco | Vice President of Electric Operations | Eversource - Southbury, Conn.
- Chris Shellberg | Executive Director of Shared Services Field Operations | Consumers Energy - Jackson, Mich.
- Christe Singleton | Vice President, Minnesota Gas Operations | CenterPoint Energy - Minneapolis, Minn.

For more information about MEA, the board of directors, or our committees, [please visit MEAenergy.org](https://www.meaenergy.org).

About MEA

MEA serves the people that deliver electricity and natural gas to homes and businesses. We were founded as a trade association in 1905 by distribution utilities whose vision was to improve safety and efficiency. Today, we fulfill the same purpose through education, leadership development, and industry connections. Energy delivery companies, contractors, and suppliers around the country benefit from our summits, roundtables, and webinars, 400+ online technical courses, safety assessments, evaluator training, operator qualification compliance tools, and leadership courses for field personnel.

Leigh Larson

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