



NEWS RELEASE

MASSACHUSETTS MUNICIPAL WHOLESALE ELECTRIC COMPANY

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MMWEC Named Finalist in NECEC Back to Work Challenge

LUDLOW, Mass. – December 3, 2020 – Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC), the joint action agency for municipal utilities in Massachusetts, was named a finalist in the Northeast Clean Energy Council (NECEC) Back to Work Challenge, an initiative launched to highlight innovative projects from clean energy organizations that successfully adapted their business practices amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

MMWEC was named a finalist for the “Innovating Remote Work & Technology Solutions” award. It was recognized for its ability to swiftly shift gears when shutdowns began last spring, quickly transitioning from the standard in-person home energy audits to remote home energy audits in less than two weeks.

MMWEC partnered with its energy audit provider, the Center for EcoTechnology (CET), to shift its home energy audit program to a virtual model as the pandemic picked up speed in March. In-person audits were suspended on March 17, and on March 27, MMWEC announced it would begin offering virtual audits to the 19 municipal utilities that participate in its residential energy efficiency program, known as the Home Energy Loss Prevention Services (HELPS) program. CET had never before offered virtual energy audits, but immediately put processes in motion to ensure audits could continue during this unprecedented time. Auditors were trained, processes were put in place and MMWEC gathered its member MLPs to explain this innovative new service.

CET reached out to customers interested in an audit to determine their comfort level and whether their home was a good candidate for a virtual audit. Auditors were able to work with homeowners through various technologies, including voice, picture and video chatting apps. Auditors determined if those without smart phones could use a landline phone and submit photos and other documentation.

With the virtual audit, the auditor virtually walks the customer through the same process as they would during an in-person visit. The customer receives the same standard, detailed report that they would with an in-home audit, along with information on rebates they are eligible for. CET mails the customers their free LED lightbulbs they would have received with a conventional audit.

While audit and energy efficient appliance rebate activity slowed down during the initial COVID-19 shutdown, it has since rebounded, and was similar to pre-pandemic levels by August.

Feedback on the virtual audit process has been overwhelmingly positive. Even during a pandemic, homeowners want to improve their energy efficiency and save money, and they still benefit from guidance on weatherization recommendations, offers and rebates available to them from their light departments. Indeed, as people were spending more time at home, many became more aware of their energy costs and desired to improve the comfort levels of their homes.

Due to the success of the program, MMWEC and CET plan to make virtual home energy audits a part of their regular offerings, at least for the foreseeable future.

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“The unique joint action ability of MMWEC and MMWEC’s flexibility in getting programs off the ground were an asset, and facilitated the success of this innovative program,” said MMWEC Energy Efficiency Program Manager Joe Coles. “This program is a reflection of the MLPs’ commitment to making energy efficiency programs more accessible, despite the challenging times we are living in.”

MMWEC is a non-profit, public corporation and political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, created by an Act of the General Assembly in 1975 and authorized to issue debt to finance a wide range of energy facilities. MMWEC provides a variety of power supply, financial, risk management and other services to the state’s consumer-owned municipal utilities. It has 20 municipal utility members and 28 project participants. As one of 83 public power joint action agencies in the United States, MMWEC uses the strengths of working together, greater efficiency and economies of scale to help its members provide superior service at the lowest cost.

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