



NEXTZERO

EXPERIENCE WHAT'S NEXT

Connected Homes Implements Preheating, Precooling Policy

In an effort to make HVAC adjustments more comfortable for its participating customers, the NextZero Connected Homes program is now offering preheating and precooling measures before each adjustment.

Connected Homes allows customers of the participating light departments to leverage the technology of smart appliances and devices into energy and cost savings for the light department and its customers. By voluntarily enrolling a smart device in the Connected Homes program, customers agree to allow Connected Homes to make brief, limited adjustments to their devices during times of peak electric demand. Customers are informed of possible adjustments in advance and earn monthly rewards.

For customers who enroll Wi-Fi thermostats and mini-split controllers, during peak events, those devices are adjusted by three degrees. Homes will now be preheated or precooled by three degrees, depending on the season, one hour prior to peak events to keep the ambient temperature of the home more comfortable during peak events. Peak events last between one and four hours.

For example, if a three-hour peak is called during the summer at 5 p.m. to a home that is set to 70 degrees, the HVAC device will be set to 67 degrees from 4-5 p.m. and 73 degrees from 5-8 p.m., returning to its original temperature of 70 degrees at the end of the peak at 8 p.m.

"Energy reduction during peak demand times are critical to keeping rates low, but we also know that those changes can have an effect on customer comfort," says MMWEC Sustainable Energy Program & Policy Senior Manager Zoe Eckert. "This change to Connected Homes allows us to keep customer homes cool or warm, while shifting the energy usage to do so to off peak times."



IRA Clean Energy Tax Credits Ending

Trying to encourage your customers to implement clean energy measures? We recommend encouraging customers to schedule the work now to take advantage of federal tax credits that will be expiring soon.

Included in this year's Trump "megalaw" was the elimination of certain tax credits for building envelope improvements, as well as the installation of heat pumps, electric water heaters, rooftop solar and EV chargers. Under the new law, the Energy Efficient Home Improvement Credit expires for projects placed in service/completed after December 31, 2025, and the Residential Clean Energy Credit expires for expenditures made after December 31, 2025.

EV Tax Credits

The \$7,500 federal tax credit for new electric vehicle purchases and leases and the \$4,000 credit for used EVs (or 30% of the sales price for used EVs purchased through a dealer and under \$25,000) will both be eliminated, effective September 30, 2025. The tax credit for installing home EV charging equipment (up to \$1,000) will be eliminated by June 30, 2026.

Home Efficiency

The Energy Efficient Home Improvement Credit, which provides 30% of the cost of eligible home improvements up to an annual maximum of \$3,200, will be eliminated by December 31, 2025. Covered measures include heat pumps, weatherization, electric panels, biomass stoves, audits, and exterior doors.

Residential Clean Energy

The Residential Clean Energy Credit, which provides 30% of the cost to install qualifying systems with no cap, will be eliminated by December 31, 2025. Covered measures include solar panels and solar water heating, geothermal heat pumps, and battery storage technology.

NextZero Announces Three MLP Award Winners

MMWEC's NextZero decarbonization and electrification program has recognized several participating municipal light plants for outstanding work over the past year.

Annually, NextZero gives out three awards, recognizing superior efforts in marketing, impactful work, and innovative ideas at its annual meeting held in July.

Marketing Award – Hingham Municipal Lighting Plant

As the Commonwealth approaches its clean energy goals by encouraging electrification, demand response programs, like Connected Homes, will become paramount in the equation. Hingham Municipal Lighting Plant (HMLP) is proactive in its approach to marketing the Connected Homes program through its social media platforms, encouraging customers to be a part of the clean energy solution. The program has been a resounding success for the light department. In its first year of participation in the program, HMLP had 60 customers enroll 112 devices into Connected Homes.

Impact Award – Peabody Municipal Light Plant

Peabody Municipal Light Plant (PMLP) offers a full set of energy efficiency and decarbonation efforts for its residents. Their staff is extremely knowledgeable and attentive to program activities and customer interactions, making sure that their customers have the best service experience possible. PMLP goes above and beyond in making sure their customers stay informed on the latest offerings with efforts like their Energy Awareness Forum and Latest Updates Newsletter.

Innovation Award – Wakefield Municipal Gas and Light Department

All MLPs have innovative ideas, but Wakefield Municipal Gas and Light Department (WMGLD) has brought theirs to life with the Wakefield Energy Park, currently under construction. This endeavor will provide cost savings to WMGLD customers, environmental benefits, and educational opportunities for local high school students.



NextZero Commercial Programs

Commercial and industrial (C&I) customers are eligible for rebates on energy efficiency and electrification projects from installing efficient lighting to upgrading an HVAC system. The NextZero team will work with customers in every capacity whether they have a specific project in mind or are just interested in cost savings. NextZero offers four commercial rebate programs:

Prescriptive Lighting Program: a fast track process for reviewing and implementing lighting projects where lighting fixtures have been identified by licensed electricians with cost quotations.

Prescriptive HVAC: a streamlined process for reviewing and implementing HVAC projects for customers who have procured cost quotations from licensed installers.

Custom Retrofit: an ideal fit for C&I customers who are interested in general energy efficiency upgrades, but do not have a specific project in mind.

New Construction and Major Renovations: C&I customers may qualify for co-funding of technical services, custom incentives, or prescriptive rebates to help maximize the efficiency of their construction or renovation project.

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Templeton Municipal Light & Water Plant Joins Commercial Programs

Templeton Municipal Light & Water Plant (TMLWP), the not-for-profit, public power utility serving the communities of Templeton, East Templeton, Baldwinville and Otter River, has joined the NextZero program's commercial and industrial energy efficiency and decarbonization programs.

TMLWP has been a longtime participant in MMWEC's NextZero residential energy efficiency and decarbonization programs. TMLWP joined the NextZero commercial and industrial programs on August 1, 2025.

TMLWP commercial and industrial customers now have access to all four commercial and industrial programs offered under NextZero: Prescriptive Lighting, Prescriptive HVAC, New Construction and Major Renovations, and Custom Retrofit.

The NextZero Prescriptive Lighting and HVAC programs are fast-track processes for reviewing and implementing lighting and HVAC projects. The programs are ideal for customers who have identified lighting or HVAC improvement projects and have procured cost quotations from licensed installers.

The NextZero Custom Retrofit Program is intended for commercial and industrial customers interested in exploring options for energy efficiency measures but aren't sure where to start. Once enrolled, the NextZero team works with the customer and their preferred contractors to define work scopes for recommended projects, and produces a cost-effectiveness evaluation based on estimated annual energy savings.

Under the New Construction and Major Renovation Program, the NextZero team works with applicants to develop a customized plan that may consist of co-funded technical services, custom or prescriptive rebates, or both.

"We are pleased that our commercial and industrial customer will now be able to benefit from MMWEC's multi-tiered approach to energy conservation and efficiency via their NextZero program," says John Driscoll, TMLWP General Manager.

Customer Case Study: Ventilation Upgrades at a Restaurant

A 5,800 square foot restaurant in Chicopee recently installed a Melink Intelli-Hood demand kitchen control ventilation system to reduce energy costs. The new system utilizes temperature and optical sensors to monitor cooking activity through the restaurant's cooking ventilation hoods and adjusts fan motor speeds accordingly.

Exhaust fan and make-up air unit speed slows down during times of low cooking activity, saving energy and power. Previously, restaurant personnel operated the kitchen hood using a manual on/off switch that operated continuously regardless of activity. Additional savings also result from reduced heating and cooling loads for the building.

Project Benefits

- 4.09 kW demand reduction
- 15,957 kWh annual electric savings
- \$2,702 annual cost savings

Chicopee Electric Light was able to issue the project a \$2,713 rebate. The project was completed in May 2025.



Kitchen Control Ventilation System