

Municipal Utilities: Good For All of Us

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The turn of a handle, the flip of a switch. We plug things in and walk away, press a button and let an appliance do the work for us. It's nice to be able to just go home and "recharge" as it were; we never really think about what makes our way of life possible. But the fact of the matter is, without the services municipal utilities provide, our world would look quite different.

Think about the way your day begins. The rude awakening from an alarm's clanging, followed by light flooding your eyes. You stumble about, searching for some much-needed caffeine. The coffee pot warms as you watch the morning news. When you really break it down, energy is at work everywhere. While we may rely on 3 (or 4, or 5... hey, I'm not judging!) cups of coffee, our local homes run on Alexandria Light and Power.

ALP is one of the 125 municipal utilities in Minnesota whose goal is to "improve service to their customers and community." The effects of these municipal utilities are experienced daily by all--customers or not--yet people are mostly unaware of the important role these utilities play in our community.

Alexandria residents have been incredibly fortunate when it comes to paying for our power needs because of the intelligence, experience, and foresight of ALP staff through the years. In the 1970's-- before the oil embargo act--the Alexandria Board of Public Works signed a long term contract for purchasing hydroelectric power. Consequently, ALP saved millions because they did not have to burn fossil fuels to generate power when fuel prices went through the roof. In general, those that use a public power service pay on average about 30% less for electricity (Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association).

The savings continue today. The ALP website promotes bulbs that use 75% less energy and also offers various rebate opportunities for the consumer. Alexandria Light and Power

partners with a local company to offer a free well-sealing program to protect Alexandria's groundwater. As ALP uses various sources of alternative energy they're looking out for both the customer's wallet AND the environment. By buying locally and investing in our local economy, ALP helps keep property taxes down and brings more jobs to our area. According to *Public Power: An American Tradition That Works*, "All public power systems have in common their purpose to provide adequate, reliable, not for profit electricity at a reasonable price with proper protection of the environment." Alexandria Light and Power is indeed living up to its mandate to be "all about the community."

ALP commitment goes beyond money-saving strategies. ALP employees are actively involved in the community, donating their time and expertise to many area agencies and events. These include judging at school science fairs and working at the annual STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Mathematics) Expo. In this way, the company is investing in our children-- the true future of their industry.

Due to the nature of power supply, many ALP employees engage in hazardous work. We can take comfort knowing that these dangerous jobs are taken seriously by both the company and its employees. In 2014, ALP Utilities achieved first place in the American Public Power Association's Safety Award of Excellence for safe operating practices. "We at ALP Utilities are grateful to be able to serve our customers," stated Al Crowser, General Manager of ALP. "But above all else, we are grateful that ALP Utilities' employees take safety seriously and return home to their families each and every night."

Municipal utilities like ALP provide the driving force that makes our community work. They provide us with water (over 1.4 million gallons a day), internet connections, and heat. They

allow us to cool off in the summer and stay connected to those we love most. It is no secret that most people don't know (or even care) how energy works. When we reach for the light switch, we assume it will work and think no more about it. Power is one of those things we take for granted when it's there, but notice immediately when it's not. I'm incredibly grateful to ALP and all they do, as the work they do for the community and environment truly affects us all.