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Customer relations at the ball park

Customer service and communications professionals from around New England gathered in Rhode Island on April 10 -11 for the 2008 NEPPA Customer Relations Conference. The event began with a minor league baseball game at McCoy Stadium

in Pawtucket. Participants experienced first-hand top-flight customer service while Pawtucket Red Sox General Sales Manager, Cookie Rojas, gave tips on diffusing difficult customer situations and shared anecdotes drawn on the successful development of the popular stadium.

"Usually you expect to bring home one or two useful bits of information from a successful event," said Braintree's Energy Advisor Ruth Slater, "but I collected at least two before the first pitch!"

The second day of the conference was held at the Renaissance Hotel in downtown Providence. The art deco luxury hotel offered the perfect ambience for a full day of speakers and presenters who offered expertise on dealing with the media, communicating with non-English speaking customers, and communicating technical and difficult information to customers.



"Cookie" Rojas talks to conference participants about how McCoy Stadium and the Pawtucket Red Sox organization value customer service.

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Customer service excellence recognized at NEPPA Conference

An individual and a team were the recipients of the Carol Tracey Award for excellence in customer service in 2008. The awards were presented at the NEPPA Customer Relations Conference on April 11 at the Renaissance Hotel in Providence, R.I. The recipients were recognized for their contributions to outstanding customer service in their utilities in a variety of different areas.

The recipients were Brigit Lambert of the Templeton Municipal Light and Water Plant and the Information Technology Team at New Hampshire Electric Cooperative.

Brigit Lambert has worked at the Templeton Municipal Light & Water Plant for nearly 20 years, and according to General Manager Sean Hamilton, she has

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NEPPA members provide input for study of RTOs and ISOs

At the invitation of the Government Accountability Office (GAO), a group of NEPPA members met in mid-April to provide first-hand information on their working relationship with ISO-New England, as part of a national study of RTOs and ISOs. The study, which has been commissioned by the GAO as a result of a Congressional request from the offices of Senator Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), is expected to take approximately 6 months to complete.

The NEPPA group included the chairmen and members of the NEPPA Regional Power Supply Committee and the chairman of the NEPPA Legislative Committee, along with NEPPA staff. GAO was represented by members of their Dallas field staff.

The GAO representatives described the three major goals of the study as (1) reviewing the costs of RTOs; (2) reviewing how RTOs and FERC budget and manage RTO costs; and (3) examining how FERC and others have estimated the benefits of RTOs. The study will consider all RTOs

and ISOs in the country, but will focus on the New England and Midwest ISOs in greater depth.

The NEPPA members responded to a number of specific questions concerning ISO-New England, including:

- How stakeholder input is incorporated into the decision-making process?
- How effective is the ISO-NE stakeholder process?
- How effectively does ISO-NE monitor and minimize its operating and capital costs?
- How effective is FERC oversight of ISO decisions, markets and costs?

The NEPPA representatives described their own experiences working with ISO-NE and the other stakeholder groups, and responded to all questions based on their involvement with ISO committees and working groups. Additional requested information on specific topics was provided to the study team following the meeting.

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NEPPA News Line is published once a month, 12 times a year by the Northeast Public Power Association, Suite 201, 100 Medway Road, Milford, MA 01757.

*tel: 508.482.5906
fax: 508.482.0932
website: www.neppa.org*

*Annual subscription rates:
NEPPA member utilities, \$35 (first 20 subscriptions included in dues), non-members, \$53. Extra subscriptions available to utilities for \$17.50 and associate members for \$35.*



The Northeast Public Power Association is an organization representing and serving consumer-owned electric utilities in New England.

Executive Director's Report

Strategic Plan Update: Progress on several fronts



by Patrick Hyland

We are now four months into our 2008 budget year and I am pleased to report that progress is being made on several fronts in the implementation of NEPPA's strategic plan. Member support (through increased dues) and the hard work of staff and committees are showing positive results in achieving some of the first-year goals contained in the plan. Let me briefly highlight some of these developments.

Training and Education

We have retained the services of Dr. Rockie Blunt as our training consultant and he is hard at work developing several of the new training programs planned for later this year (Customer Service Certificate and Supervisory Skills). He is also working on a "Train the Trainer" program which will enable us to tap into NEPPA's membership for future trainers in a wide variety of areas.

In addition to these programs, work continues through the American Public Power Association on efforts to develop national standards for apprentice lineworker training programs. Once developed, we plan to have NEPPA's program reviewed and - hopefully - certified as meeting these standards in full.

Information and Member Support

We have completed most of the work on the new Lineworker recruitment video, which will be made available to all NEPPA members (and other public power systems around the country) to assist them in their recruitment of potential future lineworkers. (Sandy Richter of Middleborough Gas & Electric and Kevin Kelly of Groton Electric Light deserve the lion's share of credit for this accomplishment). We have already had the opportunity to show it to several classes of students studying at Massachusetts community colleges and it has received very positive feedback. In

addition, NEPPA is collaborating with these same community colleges in their electric utility technology program, and helping to make these students aware of career opportunities in public power.

Legislative Leadership

As reported in previous newsletters, the NEPPA Legislative Committee played a major role in getting legislation introduced in the U.S. Congress (the Consumer Protection and Cost Accountability Act), which will require more cost accountability in the design and administration of wholesale power markets. The legislation has received significant attention in both regional and national publications, and we are working hard to gain more Congressional co-sponsors. (Major credit for this accomplishment should be given to Sharon Staz, our Legislative Committee chair, and Lori Pickford, NEPPA's Washington lobbyist).

In addition, NEPPA is actively involved in the APPA Campaign for Fair Electric Rates, which is focusing on problems associated with wholesale electric markets around the country. NEPPA members are raising these issues to a higher level of public attention throughout the region.

Regional Collaboration

One of the important goals of the strategic plan was to strengthen collaboration between public power organizations on regional issues. In addition to the legislative activities described above, the NEPPA Regional Power Supply Committee implemented a new ISO monitoring and reporting program in 2007 through the voluntary donations of 6 public power systems, including the 3 joint action agencies in New England. The program has been very successful during its first year, and in March

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Safety & Training Update

Allow Me To Introduce Myself



*Rockie Blunt
training consultant*

Hello. As the “new kid on the block” - NEPPA’s new training consultant - I thought it might be a good idea to introduce you to my background, some of my thoughts about workforce education, and my training goals for the next few months. I am already familiar with the organization, having delivered several Public Utility Management Program seminars in New Hampshire, and have always enjoyed my interaction with the participants in those sessions. Now I am looking forward to interacting with you more frequently.

I have been a college teacher for thirty-five years, specializing in adult and continuing education, and for the past twenty years have also operated my own training and consulting company, working with corporations, nonprofits, educational institutions, municipalities and public-sector agencies, helping their employees expand their knowledge and develop skills in order to perform their jobs better and more confidently.

Developing confidence, in fact, defines my approach in the classroom. I believe people learn best when they are relaxed and open to new information, and when they feel confident about adding their own perspective and asking questions. Teaching, to me, is more coaching and guiding than dictating and lecturing. My seminars are “learner-centered,” not “teacher-centered,” which means I welcome you to participate actively by stating your ideas, asking questions, and sharing your experiences, rather than sitting passively in class and listening to me talk.

Nor do I believe that learning takes place only in classrooms. In future columns, I will discuss topics like “knowledge management,” “intellectual capital,” and “communities of practice,” which make the point that learning takes place

all around you, every day, wherever you work. You are constantly learning on the job, and constantly sharing with others what you learn. Part of my responsibility will be to help you recognize, and be open to, these “teachable moments.”

In terms of my immediate plans, Pat Hyland has asked me to begin work on three projects: 1) develop new training programs in customer service and managerial skills; 2) initiate a “Train the Trainer” program that will recruit willing volunteers from within the NEPPA membership, and then train these individuals to participate as teachers in future NEPPA programs; and 3) design a method of evaluating all courses and instructors to make certain you get the most out of your educational experiences. This organization already has an experienced group of technical and safety trainers. I am looking forward to working with them, learning from them, and giving them whatever assistance they need.

As “the new kid on the block,” I realize you know more about the public power industry than I do. My job is to help you continue to learn, enjoy that learning, and share it with others. Please help me by sharing your ideas and suggestions. And wish me luck.

Apprentice Lineworker Skills Assessment Rodeo

NEPPA Training Facility
Pascoag, R.I., June 4-5

General managers, crew leaders and superintendents are invited to this mandatory event for all apprentices in the Lineworker Development Program.

Come and offer your support!

Awards

Continued from page 1

*Needless to say,
the customers
love Brigit.*

Sean Hamilton

*[The IT Team] is
always in the back-
ground providing
critical services to
front office staff to
help serve the mem-
bers.*

Dena DeLucca

always shown outstanding compassion and understanding to utility customers, particularly the elderly.

"She goes beyond her call of duty to assist them," he said. "She has that special knack to know how to read each customer and always seems to know what approach to take with them."

Lambert often works on her own time to accomplish projects, such as going door-to-door on a Saturday to help the Water Department survey residents for a much needed grant for a new water line and infrastructure. She also arranged for all new water meters to be installed in each customer's home, calling each home sometimes after working hours, so this could be accomplished.

"Needless to say, the customers love Brigit," said Hamilton, "and many ask for her when they call."

The New Hampshire Electric Cooperative Information Technology Team is an integral part of the Cooperative's member and customer service programs. The team consists of 16 highly dedicated and capable individuals who support member/customer service activities throughout the organization. Their dedication and assistance makes it possible for the Coop to meet and exceed their members' expectations. They often go beyond the call of duty (nights and weekends) to ensure that NHEC's operations remain fully functional for the members.

Customer Service is a priority for NHEC's IT Team as they ensure that critical systems are operating on a daily basis. They are the unsung heroes of the organization, because when the systems/applications work as intended, no one knows they're there. Yet, they are always in the background providing critical services to front office staff to help serve the members. Among the many accomplishments of the IT team in the past year are maintaining a help desk to resolve over 4,000 system and facility inquiries/issues; installing and training personnel on a new phone system (automated to assist members with outage reporting); and advancing ePay options (credit and web payments) for members.



Templeton General Manager Sean Hamilton presents Brigit Lambert with the Carol Tracey Award for excellent customer service.

NHEC's Norman Brien accepts the Carol Tracey Award from Corporate Services VP Dena DeLucca on behalf of his IT team.



Ball park customer relations

Continued from page 1

Jim Taricani, Janine Saunders of Norwich, Ct. and Rockie Blunt and Pat Hyland of NEPPA. (Hyland's presentation is available on the NEPPA website www.neppa.org.)

This annual event provides an opportunity for public power professionals that are responsible for serving and communicating with their customers to share information, ideas and inspiration. Adequate networking time was allowed so these professionals could learn from each other's experience and expertise.

Time was also set aside to gather information from participants as to their wants and needs for a Customer Service Training Certification Program that NEPPA is developing to help customer service personnel

expand their skills as they serve their customers knowledgeably and confidently.

"The feedback we received is extremely valuable to us in the planning this program," said NEPPA Training Consultant Rockie Blunt. "The participants had some powerful suggestions about both the content and the format of the program, which demonstrates how important customer service is to our members."

Blunt is putting together a tentative outline of sessions which he will present to the Customer Service Committee for input. Members with additional thoughts and suggestions, can contact Rockie at NEPPA, 508-482-5906 or rblunt@neppa.org.

The program is scheduled for Fall 2008. More information will be forthcoming.

Customer Service professionals enjoyed Minor League Baseball -Pawtucket Red Sox vs Lehigh Valley Iron Pigs - as a prelude to last week's conference.



(left) Jim Taricani, investigative reporter, NBC 10 News, and Janine Saunders of Norwich Utilities make presentations at the customer Relations Workshop.

NHEC and Clean Air - Cool Planet form alliance

In a landmark initiative for a utility, the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative (NHEC) has announced a partnership with Portsmouth-based Clean Air - Cool Planet (CA-CP) to quantify and reduce the company's greenhouse gas emissions.

Clean Air - Cool Planet will provide its expertise in the area of greenhouse gas (GHG) calculation, and then assist NHEC in preparing a plan to reduce or eliminate emissions from its use of electricity and other fuels in the direct operations of the company.

"We have worked in various capacities with utilities in the past, but this is the first time we've helped a power company tackle emissions from its operations," said Adam Markham, CEO of Clean Air - Cool Planet, the leading nonprofit finding and promoting solutions to global warming.

"NHEC is to be congratulated on taking pioneering steps in this area," Markham said.

He noted that the Coop, which is a member-owned and-controlled electric distribution company serving 116 cities and towns, intends to use what it learns in the process with CA-CP to help other utilities.

"We see this partnership with Clean Air - Cool Planet as a reflection of our social and environmental responsibilities," said NHEC President/CEO Fred Anderson. "This program, which focuses on our internal business operations, is part of our strategic actions to reduce our carbon footprint across the three major segments of our organization: energy procurement, internal business operations and members' energy usage. This initiative

will complement our nationally recognized energy efficiency programs that are now enabling our member-owners to reduce their carbon footprints."

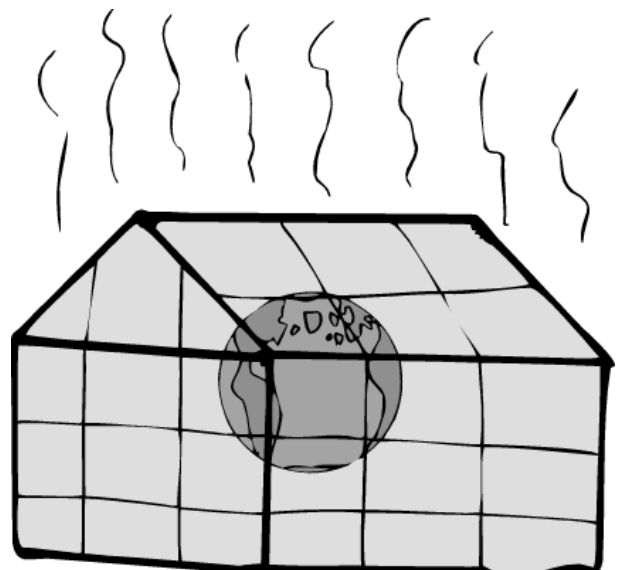
The New Hampshire Electric Cooperative serves approximately 80,000 members and maintains more than 5,400 miles of energized line that traverse nine of the 10 counties in New Hampshire.

The first step in the process will be to collect data on the company's use of electricity, fuels for space and water heating, fuel used in its fleet of line trucks and other vehicles, and employee travel.

Ultimately, the process will give NHEC tools to examine and reduce its energy use, according to CA-CP COO Bob Sheppard.

"More and more corporations are realizing that in order to control costs and stay competitive, managing energy costs is a key," Sheppard said. "The truth is, you can't manage what you don't measure, so this is a critical step."

The inventory, planning, and implementation process will take the company through the summer.



Around New England

New transformer installed in South Hadley

The South Hadley Electric Light Department recently took delivery of a new \$1.3 million, 65-ton transformer. that measures 18 feet 9 inches tall, 15 feet wide and 13 feet 10 inches long. It came on a 114-foot-long flatbed truck from Lynchburg, Va. and was accompanied by state police cruisers in each state it passed through. It was lowered into place at the Pine Shed Substation by an 80 foot-high, 350-ton hydraulic crane.

“That’s \$3 million bucks worth of crane,” Wayne D. Doerpholz, the utility department’s manager, said. He added that the approximately \$22,000 shipping cost is being paid for by Delta Star. The new transformer is part of the commission’s plan to rebuild the substation. It replaces a transformer that has a much lower capacity, and that was put in service in 1975.



Around New England

BELD breaks ground for new power plant

Ground has been broken at the 150 Potter Rd. site of the new power plant that will be known as the Thomas A. Watson Generating Station in honor of the founder of Braintree Electric Light Department (BELD).

Due to limited space and public safety concerns near the construction site, attendance at the April 12 ground breaking ceremony was by invitation only.

Among those present were state Sen. Michael Morrissey, state Rep. Joseph Driscoll, Mayor Joseph Sullivan, the three members of the municipal lighting board (Thomas Reynolds, Anthony Agnitti, and James Regan), Town Council President Leland Dingee, Town Councilor Harold Randolph, and Town Councilor Thomas Bowes.

"It was an exciting day," BELD General Manager William Bottiggi said. "It kicked off the final stage of the project, which is the actual construction of the power plant.

We anticipate that the construction will take about a year, and we hope to begin start-up testing in the first quarter of 2009. The gas turbines will be delivered this summer by Rolls-Royce."

Bottiggi feels that building a new plant is a good idea because energy prices have been rising steadily, and BELD is looking for ways to protect customers from the effects of market fluctuation.

Although the existing plant, known as Potter II, continues to serve Braintree, Bottiggi points out that a 30-plus-year-old plant is not up to current efficiency standards.

According to Bottiggi, while Potter II runs approximately 10 percent of the time, the new plant will run an estimated 55 to 85 percent of the time, which will help maintain Braintree's low rates and put BELD in a strong market position as the demand for power continues to grow.

Pictured at the ground-breaking for the Thomas A. Watson Generating Station are (l to r): Tony Agnitti, Municipal Light Board, State Senator Michael Morrissey, Mayor Joseph Sullivan, BELD GM Bill Bottiggi, State Representative Joseph Driscoll, Tom Reynolds and Jim Regan, both of the Municipal Light Board.



The biggest losers to speak at Safety & Operations conference

Mark and Jay Kruger of long-time NEPPA member and supporter, Altec



Industries, will be dinner speakers at NEPPA's Safety & Operations Conference planned for June 10-11. However, the two brothers will not be talking about bucket trucks. The topic will be the value of a healthy life style.

The brothers were recently featured on "The Biggest Loser", the popular TV weight loss series.



Contestants on the show work out under the supervision of professional trainers who challenge and encourage overweight participants to undergo physical make overs, without any kind of surgery, in a safe

and recommended manner through comprehensive diet and exercise as they compete for a grand prize of \$250,000.

The series has become a worldwide hit airing in over 90 countries and produced in 25 countries. It has produced a New York Times best-selling book series and recently released four additional titles. The show also has produced four best-selling fitness DVDs as well as a burgeoning online lifestyle club www.thebiggestloserclub.com.

Jay was eliminated after competing for 14 weeks

and losing 103 lbs. Mark was a semi-finalist lasting 15 weeks and losing 129 lbs. Both brothers are continuing a healthy life style and are anxious to share how this experience affected their lives.

"Taking the first step is the hardest," said Mark. "Once you do it everyday, it gets a little bit easier. Also, change will not come without pain."

Tuesday, June 10

Keynote Address

Safety Leadership: Whose job is it?

Danny Raines, *President*
Raines Utility Safety Solutions

Concurrent Roundtables

- Accident Investigation / Root Cause Analysis
Led by Danny Raines
- Crew Leader Responsibilities
Led by Wyn Braun

Lunch in Exhibit Hall

Concurrent Roundtables

- Using Automated External Defibrillators
Led by Dennis Vetrano,
Phillips Medical Systems
- New APPA Safety Manual
Led by Bob Henriksen

Dinner with Guest Speaker

The Value of a Healthy Life Style

Mark & Jay Kruger, *Altec Industries*

Wednesday, June 11

NEPPA Safety Forum

SAFETY & OPERATIONS CONFERENCE AND EXPO

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Holiday Inn Boxborough Woods
Boxborough, MA
June 10 - 11, 2008

Make everyone a recruiter



By Rick Dacri, Dacri & Associates, LLC

Rick Dacri is a management consultant, executive coach, and expert in human resources. Rick helps organizations improve individual and organizational performance. He connects with people in a positive and challenging way to offer practical solutions. Dacri & Associates is a NEPPA member and consults to many members. Rick can be reached at 800-892-9828, rick@dacri.com or www.dacri.com.

It gets pretty tiring to be constantly looking for linemen, engineers and supervisors. Placing ads - hoping, praying that someone - anyone will apply. The persistent pressure of running short. The steady questions from employees, from trustees, as to when you're getting some help on board. Unless you're the human resource manager, you're dealing with this on top of your regular job. You're probably thinking, "I never signed up for this!" But as much as you lament your wretched plight, finding good people has to be done and you're the only one who can do it.

Unfortunately, I don't have a silver bullet that will solve this predicament. You can't run your business without people and you don't need to hear any more reminders about how the availability of people is going to get worse before it gets better. What you need is relief. You need help - now.

Step back from your recruitment role and ask why are you doing this? Consider this: when it comes to finding linemen, who knows more about where linemen "hang out" than other linemen? Same for engineers, customer service reps and yes, even general managers. Take engineers. They belong to the same associations, go to the same meetings, read the same professional journals, and probably frequent the same taverns. So why aren't you asking your engineer to help recruit engineers for you - engineers that he already knows.

Your existing people can be your best recruiters. In fact, studies show that employee referrals generate the best candidates at a fraction of the cost of traditional recruitment methods. Your employees will do much of the screening, providing the candidate with the low down on

your organization—both the good and the bad. Either way, when the candidate becomes an employee, he'll come in with his eyes wide open, already knowing your culture, without any surprises. So, it only makes sense to start an Employee Referral Program today.

But many of you may be thinking "we can't do this. We work in municipalities and this will never be allowed." Not necessarily. More and more municipalities are recognizing that there is a need to do things differently. They understand that referral programs are an important and effective recruitment tool. They save money; payouts are only made with a guaranteed hire; and they promote good will among your employees and foster employee retention. You may have to "sell" the concept to your HR department, your trustees, and even your town council or selectmen. But when they see the benefits, they may be able to approve the plan. A referral bonus of a couple hundred dollars is not going to turn heads. When it comes to referrals, money talks. Consider this: a two-inch display ad in the Sunday Boston Globe will cost \$2,000, and there is no guarantee anyone will see it, never mind send a resume to you.

Promote the program big time, and make it worth it. Pay well, all at once. and make it a big deal. Never include the payout as part of a regular pay.

Make all your employees recruiters with an Employee Referral Program. You will get better candidates and more candidates. The program will save you money. And you can finally focus on running your business. It doesn't get any better than that.

Employment

For complete descriptions of the employment opportunities listed below, go to www.neppa.org and click on Employment on the navigation bar. Deadline for listings in the May News Line is **May 19**.

MMWEC

Controller

East Norwalk Electric Department

Journeyman Lineworker

Hendrix Wire & Cable

Applications Engineer

Hudson Light and Power Department

Electrical Engineer

Eastern Maine Electric Cooperative

Chief Financial Officer

Kennebunk Light and Power District
Electric Line Worker

Wakefield Municipal Gas and Light
First Class Lineworker

Assist. Manager of Information Systems
Financial Assistant

Peabody Municipal Light Plant

First Class Lineworker/Troubleman
Senior Electrical Engineer

Member Notes

Direct Energy, LP

Direct Energy is a subsidiary of Centrica plc (LSE: CNA). It is located at 12 Greenway Plaza, Suite 600, Houston, Tex. 77046. It is one of North America's largest energy and energy-related services providers with over 5 million residential and commercial customer relationships. Direct Energy provides customers with choice and support in managing their energy costs through a portfolio of innovative products and services. The contact person is Jeff Boling, director, and he can be reached at (713) 877-4020.

Evergreen Electric

Evergreen Electric of 3 Juniper Lane in Hampton Beach, N.H., has joined NEPPA as an associate member. The main contact is Martin Greco, general manager. He may be reached at (603) 929-0033. Evergreen Electric is an industrial electrical contractor located in Casco, Maine and Hampton, New Hampshire. Fully equipped for overhead and underground electrical construction, they offer ten years of successful experience in construction, maintenance and troubleshooting of electric distribution systems.

Keep up to date on-line

NEPPA's Safety & Training Calendar is on-line at www.neppa.org.

Click on Training and Education and then click on calendar to get a

complete, up-to-date schedule of NEPPA training programs.



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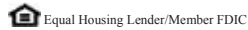
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NEPPA Calendar

May 7
Regional Power Supply Committee Meeting
Highlander Conference Center
Manchester, N.H.

May 7
Human Resources Roundtable
Chocksett Inn
Sterling, Mass.

May 9
Public Communications Committee Meeting
NEPPA Office
Milford, Mass.

May 13-15
Substation Program
Pascoag, RI

May 20-22
Advanced Lineworker
Pascoag, RI

May 27-30
Apprentice Lineworker III
Pascoag, RI

June 4-5
Apprentice Lineworker Skills Assessment Rodeo
Pascoag, R.I.

June 10
Board of Directors Meeting
Holiday Inn
Boxboro, Mass.

June 10 – 11
Safety & Operations Conference
Holiday Inn Boxborough Woods
Boxboro, Mass.

August 10 – 13
Annual Conference
Mt. Washington Resort
Bretton Woods, N.H.

September 11
GF/Crew Leader Roundtable
TBA

October 3
Annual Membership Meeting
Chocksett Inn
Sterling, Mass.

October 28 – 30
Crew Leadership
Stowe, Vt.

November 19 – 21
Public Utility Management Program
Durham, N.H.

Coming Up!

June 10 – 11
Safety & Operations Conference
Holiday Inn
Boxborough Woods
Boxboro, Mass.