



SOUTHERN MINNESOTA  
MUNICIPAL POWER AGENCY

*Bringing power to your life.*

---

**NEWS RELEASE**

---

For Immediate Release  
February 1, 2019

**SMMPA Member Generation Units Work Overtime During Polar Vortex**

ROCHESTER, MN – Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA)'s member municipal utilities' local generation units played an important role in keeping the lights on during the recent cold weather brought on by the Polar Vortex. With natural gas in short supply in certain areas of the state, these diesel or dual-fuel units operated nearly nonstop for 30 hours beginning early Wednesday morning.

"These are smaller units that generally don't run that often, but when they do, they play an important role in contributing to both local and regional electric reliability," said David Geschwind, Executive Director and CEO of SMMPA. "Our member utilities and their employees are to be commended for being able to quickly respond to the need and working some long hours to operate these units in adverse conditions."

SMMPA members Blooming Prairie, Grand Marais, Litchfield, Mora, New Prague, North Branch, Preston, Princeton, Redwood Falls, Saint Peter, Spring Valley and Wells have local generation that responded to the request from the electric grid operator, the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), to generate electricity as many power plants that use natural gas to produce electricity were unable to operate due to natural gas curtailments because of the high demand for natural gas for heating. Collectively, SMMPA members ran 43 local generators on diesel fuel to help keep the electric grid operating reliably.

"It's more common for the generating units at our members' power plants to be called upon on the hottest of days in the summer, but clearly they are as valuable in the coldest days of the winter," says Geschwind. "In either condition, human health can be at risk, so the professionalism of those power plant operators in a time of need is very much appreciated."

**About SMMPA**

SMMPA provides electricity and related services to 18 municipally operated utilities, mostly in south-central and southeastern Minnesota. For more information about SMMPA, please visit [www.smmpa.com](http://www.smmpa.com).

**Media Contact:**

Chris Schoenherr, Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency  
Office: (507) 292-6440  
[cp.schoenherr@smmpa.org](mailto:cp.schoenherr@smmpa.org)

####

