

COVID-19 Impacts and Responses in the Midwest Energy Efficiency Industry

MEEA Staff
April 15, 2020



Agenda

State of the
Midwest

Policy
Responses

Program
Impacts

Post-COVID
Preparation



**State of the
Midwest**

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Responses

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State of the Midwest

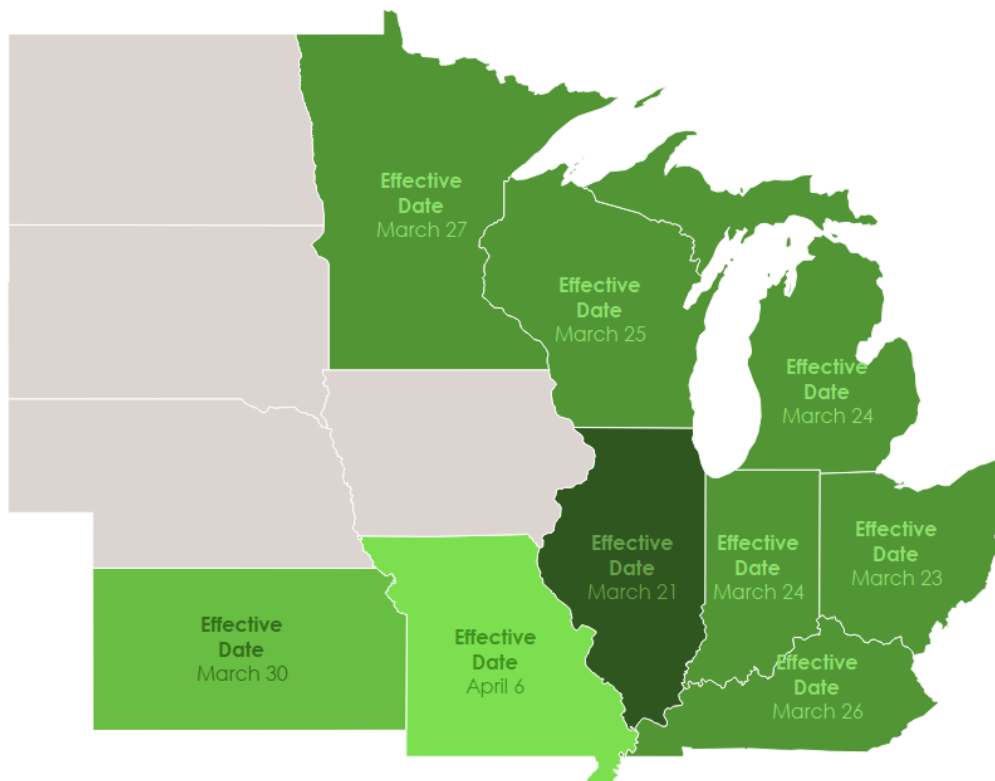
Stay-at-home orders

Widespread customer protection actions

Utility program suspensions

Stay-at-Home Orders in the Midwest

9 of 13 States with an Order



Order Effective Date

- Week 12, 2020
- Week 13, 2020
- Week 14, 2020
- Week 15, 2020
- No order yet as of beginning of Week 16

Utility Program Suspensions

Most of the Midwest's utilities have suspended at least some EE programs as a result of the COVID virus

Focus on
worker &
customer safety

In accordance
with state stay-
at-home orders

Suspension of
customer-
contact
programs

Some
continuation of
no-contact
programs

Midwest State-Level Customer Protection Actions

State	Description	Type	Utility Types
IA	Suspend utility shut-offs	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Water
IL	Suspend utility shut-offs & late fees	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Sewer, Water
IN	Suspend utility shut-offs	Executive Order	Electric, Gas, Sewer, Water, Communications
KS	Suspend utility shut-offs	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Water, Communications
KY	Suspend utility shut-offs	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Water, Sewer, Communications
MI	Order for water reconnects	Executive Order	Water
MN	Request utilities take customer protection actions	Commission Request	Electric, Gas, Communications
MO	Approve utility reconnect & late fee tariff variances	Commission Order	Electric, Gas
	Utilities voluntarily suspend utility shut-offs, late fees	Voluntary	Electric, Gas
ND	<i>No specific actions</i>		
NE	Allow reimbursement for low-income broadband services	Commission Order	Communications
OH	Extend winter disconnect order	Commission Order	Electric, Gas
	Orders utility review disconnect policies	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Sewer, Water
	Orders water reconnects, suspend shut-offs & disconnects	Legislation	Water
SD	<i>No specific actions</i>		
WI	Commission investigation to ensure services	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Water
	Suspend shut-offs & require reconnects	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Water

Source: [NARUC State Response Tracker](#)



State of the
Midwest

**Policy
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How have our legislatures
and regulators responded?

Policy Responses

Midwest legislative sessions

Midwest regulatory procedures

Federal stimulus legislation

Midwest State Legislative Sessions

State	Notes
IA	Session suspended for 30 days on 3/15; voted on 4/9 to extend suspension until at least 4/30
IL	Session suspended on 3/16 until the call of the chair
IN	Session adjourned sine die on 3/12
KS	Session ended. Scheduled veto session pushed back to 4/27
KY	Session convened less often than scheduled; met on 4/1 to vote on budget and 4/14-15 for veto override
MI	Session convening less often than scheduled; meeting sporadically to address COVID-related legislation
MN	Session suspended on 3/16 until the call of the chair; has been experimenting with legislating virtually
MO	Session not suspended formally, but session has convened less often than scheduled. Last met on 4/7 for COVID legislation.
ND	No session dates were scheduled for 2020.
NE	Session suspended on 3/16 until the call of the chair; did meet on 3/23-25 for COVID response
OH	Session suspended on 3/16 until 4/22; met on 3/25 for COVID response
SD	No changes to session; session wrapped up on previously scheduled day 3/30
WI	Session adjourned in late February; any dates on calendar in March have been postponed, extraordinary session will likely occur in April

Midwest State Executive Responses

State Executive Orders

Many governors have acted through executive orders

- State of emergency declarations, school closures, shelter in place orders
- Quicker to respond through executive action due to extremely fluid nature of crisis

Some legislator pushback

- Complaints about the amount of executive orders certain governors have made

Virtually no executive orders have dealt with energy

- IN and KS have issued utility shutoff moratoria via EOs

Midwest State Legislative Responses

State Emergency Bills

State legislative actions thus far have not focused on energy

- Moving funds to COVID response
- Unlocking state funds through the CARES Act

Little to no movement on energy-related COVID legislation

- Focus on has been around utility shutoffs and payment plan structures
- Possibility that MN and IL will act
- MEEA will watch for the inclusion of EE in any future legislation

Additional state aid for small businesses and workforce

- Would apply to many EE businesses

What about pending energy legislation?

Illinois / Clean Energy Jobs Act

- Unlikely to be picked up in spring session
- Chance that certain elements of legislation can be added to COVID relief and stimulus bills

Kansas / Independent Commission & State Energy Plan Executive Order

- Under Kansas rules, only one chamber needs to vote to veto any executive order
- House voted down this executive order prior to COVID-related suspension

Minnesota / Clean Energy First Act

- Senate and House are experimenting with virtual committee meetings
- Aside from COVID-related legislation, seems to be willingness to pass bills that have wide and bipartisan support
- CEFA and others (e.g. ECO) would likely not fall under this category due to assumption that they would require a conference committee

Midwest Regulatory Procedures Changes

State	Commission	Best COVID Info Page	Description of Changes	Office Open to Public	Staff Remote
IA	IUB	news page	streaming meetings, encourage electronic docket commenting	yes	unclear
IL	ICC	COVID info page	streaming meetings	no	yes
IN	IURC	homepage	waive paper filing requirements, waive notarized signature requirements, streaming meetings & conferences, extended timelines	no	yes
KS	KCC	COVID info page	streaming meetings	no	yes
KY	KY PSC	homepage	suspend paper filings, encourage converting non-electronic cases, delay routine reporting, extend filing deadlines, streaming meetings & conferences	no	yes
MI	MPSC	COVID info page	streaming meetings & hearings, postpone smaller meetings, public comments by email	no	yes
MN	MN PUC	news page	suspend all public meetings, encourage electronic commenting on open comment periods	unclear	yes
MO	MO PSC	COVID info page	streaming meetings & hearings	no	unclear
ND	ND PSC	homepage	streaming meetings, limited size in-person meetings	by appt	unclear
NE	NE PSC	COVID info page	streaming meetings; allow some approvals without quorum	no	unclear
OH	PUCO	homepage	minimal staffing levels, online contact form	unclear	unclear
SD	SD PUC	homepage	dial-in for meetings	no	yes
WI	PSC of WI	homepage	extend some filing deadlines	unclear	unclear

New information
post-webinar

EE in the Regulatory Response

Michigan 3/15 COVID order includes EE

Order in Cause U-20757

- Broad order on operation and continuity of service issues from COVID-19
- **First COVID-related order in the Midwest to directly address EE programs**
- Directs Staff to develop a plan and workgroup to investigate how to mitigate impacts on savings targets and continue serving low- to moderate-income households
- Staff will file an update by July 15 on efforts

Midwest Regulatory Issues

MO Office of Public Counsel Request

- Rate case request to remove ratepayer charge for EE to reduce cost to customers
- OPC has since withdrawn request

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel Request

- Request to redirect ratepayer funding for two EE funds to bill payment assistance
- Low-income weatherization programs would be impacted
- OCC also proposed eliminating all EE programs for non-low-income customers

Prioritizing vulnerable customers

- Conversations around the Midwest looking at reassessing energy savings strategies, portfolio budgets and customers in need of energy efficiency and energy assistance

Federal COVID-19 Emergency Legislation

Three Stimulus Packages So Far

Supplemental appropriations

- Focused mostly on medical response

Families First

- Increased FMLA, emergency sick leave, expanded unemployment

CARES Act

- \$900M for increased LIHEAP through 2021
- Cash payments for taxpayers
- Disaster relief funding
- No other substantial energy provisions, but some of the business & tax provisions do apply to our industry
 - Some eligibility under SBA Paycheck Protection Program depending on company size and NAICS code

CARES Act – Small Business Relief

SBA Paycheck Protection Program (Section 1102)

Paycheck Protection Program

- \$349 billion allocated
 - Individual loans of lesser of \$10 million or 2.5 months of payroll
- Eligibility based on size and NAICS code
 - Generally 500 or fewer employees for most NAICS codes
 - Electric Power Distribution and Gas Distribution up to 1000 employees
 - Up to \$10 million per company available as forgivable small business loans
 - 501(c)(3) non-profits are eligible for PPP loans
- Eight weeks of assistance for qualifying employers, must retain employees on payroll through **June 30, 2020**
- Allowable uses of the loan include payroll support, salaries, mortgage payments, rent, utilities and any other debt obligations incurred before the covered period.

Federal Legislation

The Next Stimulus

There *will* be additional stimulus/relief (there has to be)

- Despite advocacy, major energy provisions were not included in relief programs so far
- There will be more stimulus, and we need to be in it

Advocacy opportunities to support our industry

- *Calls for Action* slide at the end of the presentation
- Several proposals for major EE stimulus programs
- Individual companies are important right now for policymaker outreach – numbers overall & key districts

Federal Legislation

The Next Stimulus

BPA

- [HOPE4HOMES sign-on letter](#)

ASE

- [Small business retrofit grant proposal](#)
- [RIGHT proposal for mission critical facilities](#)
- [Transportation/infrastructure priorities](#)
- [Tax proposal](#)

Policy Response in Non-MEEA States

Notable Regulatory Actions in Other Regions

California PUC

- March 23 [executive director letter](#) to utilities requesting advance payment of 30 days to Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) program contractors
- [April 7 follow-up](#): of 78 contractors, 51% accepted offers, 34% declined, and 15% suggested alternative proposals

Connecticut PURA

- Expanded scope of [energy affordability investigation](#) to include C&I customers

Policy Responses Q&A

Please use the question box



State of the
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Policy
Responses

**Program
Impacts**

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What is happening with
utility EE programs?

Program Impacts

Statewide EE collaboratives

General/widespread responses

Changes to programs that are still running

Impacts on MEEA members

Statewide EE Collaboratives

Peer Information Sharing About EE Program Responses



Utility Energy Efficiency Programs

General/Common Responses by Midwest Utilities Under First Weeks of Stay-at-Home

Suspend customer-contact programs

- Audit & direct install
- Appliance recycling
- Outreach events
- Field inspection, QA/QC
- Some C&I installs continuing depending on state/utility

Continue no-contact programs

- Rebate processing
- Online marketplace
- Home energy reports & behavior programs
- Multifamily common areas/equipment room

Program Changes for Continued Operation

In Places Where Field Programs are Still Operating

Some utilities are still operating C&I install programs

- Most residential field programs have been suspended, however
- Call volumes & project pipelines still seeing steady rates right now, though some of the projects are wrapping up and new ones are being scheduled for later in the year so there may be a gap
- Many of the installs are happening at contractor discretion and may be tapering off as health & safety concerns grow

Good practices being used to reduce risks in field

- PPE & safe contact procedures for operating field crews
- Allow for virtual inspection/proof of installation

Question:

In what ways has COVID-19 impacted your organization's delivery/evaluation of energy efficiency programs?

Please use the question box and MEEA staff will share your resources and comments in the chat box

Workforce Impacts at MEEA Members

What We Have Heard About Program Staff in Stay-at-Home States

Job Changes

- Remote work
- Furloughs
- Layoffs
- Salary reductions
- Staff reassignment

- Hard to quantify how much of each yet
- Likely some correlation to size of company for layoffs
- C&I implementation contractors not as hard hit as residential side

Program Impacts Q&A

Please use the question box

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Responses

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**Post-COVID
Preparation**

What do we need to get
our industry back to work?

Post-COVID-19

Official guidance

Workforce readiness

Program innovation

Official Guidance

What do we need from **governors & state/federal agencies?**



The green light

- Lifted stay-at-home orders
- Determination of services that could be provided under “essential” status



Health & safety protocols for workforce

- From CDC and/or OSHA, state health departments
- Uniform, statewide or nationwide standards & training materials



Address liability issues

- How can utilities/contractors be protected from the risks associated with worker or customers becoming infected?

What else?

Official Guidance

What do we need from **regulators**?



Approval of program changes

- Altered field protocols like virtual inspections & verifications
- Updated EM&V plans



Guidance on programs & portfolios

- Reallocation or roll-over of unspent budgets
- Reporting missed targets
- Performance incentives & LRAM reconciliation



Timelines & requirements

- Alterations to filing deadlines for reports & plans
- Guidance on meeting public participation requirements

What else?

Workforce Readiness

What do we need to get **back into homes & businesses?**



Develop new protocols for field staff

Necessary PPE, along with training & safety protocols

Talking to homeowners about safety

Virtual inspection / verification methods

Protocols for no-contact installs



Retain skilled workforce

Shift staff to planning & analysis tasks

Online training to increase skills (e.g. building performance, use of equipment, installation practices, certifications, even defensive driving...)



Get ready for onboarding

Develop fast-boot trainings to bring new hires up to readiness for field operations rapidly

What else?

Question:

What other issues need to be addressed?
What resources would be helpful?

Please use the question box and MEEA staff will share your resource ideas and comments in the chat box

Program Innovation in a Time of Isolation

What are utilities & implementers doing right now?

Emphasize no-touch programs

Behavior programs
Online marketplaces
Online self-audits
“Virtual Treasure Hunt” in SEM program (ComEd)

Support self-installation

“Handyman hotline” through community partner (Ameren Illinois)
Bulk delivery of measures to property managers
Photo verification of installs
How-to videos

Marketing changes

Recommend EE tips that don't require trips to the store or having someone into the home
Customer segment-specific webinars

Community support

Low-income & other vulnerable populations

What else?

Program Innovation in a Time of Isolation

Expanding Our Efforts to Bring Back Programs



Find opportunities for lower risk installs and retrofits

Empty commercial buildings & schools
No-contact exterior installs
Would need clearance to work, safety procedures, PPE first



Shift more activities online

Training & education programs that have traditionally been offered in-person
Expand/launch marketplaces
Develop & approve procedures for virtual inspections, QA/QC



Demonstrate the value for community recovery

Position EE as an economic recovery tool
Target program funding & outreach to low-income programs
Target hiring efforts from hardest hit communities

What else?

Question:

What other adjustments have you made to your delivery/evaluation of programs?

Please use the question box and MEEA staff will share your resources and comments in the chat box

Post-COVID Q&A

Please use the question box



Wrap-Up

Trackers, info pages
& calls to action

National Energy Sector COVID Information

Some Useful Trackers We Have Found

NARUC

- [State Response Tracker](#)

ASE

- [COVID response info](#)

AEE

- [PowerSuite COVID Response Tracker](#) (paywall)
- [Public interactive map](#)

ESource

- [Shared utility response tracker \(google docs\)](#)

NEUAC

- [COVID-19 Resources](#)

UtilityDive

- [US power sector coronavirus news tracker](#)

NGA

- [State actions tracker](#)

State Regulator COVID Info Pages

State	Commission	Best COVID-related Info Page
IA	IUB	news page
IL	ICC	COVID info page
IN	IURC	homepage
KS	KCC	COVID info page
KY	KY PSC	homepage
MI	MPSC	COVID info page
MN	MN PUC	news page
MO	MO PSC	COVID info page
ND	ND PSC	homepage
NE	NE PSC	COVID info page
OH	PUCO	homepage
SD	SD PUC	homepage
WI	PSC of WI	homepage

Calls For Action

Efforts You Can Support to Help Our Industry Recover

E4TheFuture /
Faces of EE

- [Tell your COVID story](#)

BPA

- [HOPE4HOMES sign-on letter](#)

ASE

- [Small business retrofit grant proposal](#)
- [RIGHT proposal for mission critical facilities](#)
- [Transportation/infrastructure priorities](#)
- [Tax proposal](#)

ACEEE

- [Call to Action blog post](#)

Upcoming Events

Save the Date

MEEA Annual Meeting

*Tues.,
June 30*

*Milwaukee, WI
or Virtual*

On the Agenda

Electrification &
EE Workshop –
Mon., June 29

COVID-19
impact and
response

State clean
energy update

What Are Your Responses?

We Need Information to Help Support Our Industry

Please share your business & program impacts

- Interested in impacts at utility, implementation contractor, evaluator & other businesses
 - Workforce changes
 - Suspended programs
 - Remaining active programs
 - Program changes

Email us

covidimpacts@mwalliance.org



Thank you!

Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance

Email us: covidimpacts@mwalliance.org

