



# BMU News

Bryan Municipal Utilities

Winter 2012

## Q & A



*Meter Reader  
Julie Smith*

**Q:** How do you like the job of meter reading?

**A:** I really like it. I enjoy being in

the public and talking with people and helping out when I can. I like to ask people how they are doing while I make my rounds. I also like the fringe benefits of exercise. I've lost weight and gotten in better shape since I started the job.

**Q:** How are you coping with the cold weather?

**A:** I've always hunted and fished and camped, so it doesn't bother me. I'm used to being outdoors.

**Q:** Have you had any troubles?

**A:** I've had a couple of run-ins with dogs where I had to react fast. For the most part, I try to befriend the dogs and they are nice.

**Q:** What do you do when you read the meters?

**A:** Each month, I go in and read the numbers on the electric and water meters, and then enter them into my handheld computer. The device alarms me if the usage is higher than average, and I can check to see if there is a problem. I can talk with the residents and ask them if there is a reason such as a leaky toilet tank. From a series of questions, we can try to determine the cause. People are thankful when it helps them find a water leak.



Bryan's new solar array, located just west of Bryan on State Route 34, supplies power directly to the city's electrical grid.

## Bryan's solar array is generating electricity

Bryan's new solar array is now generating electricity. This means WBNO, just up the road on State Route 34, is running on solar power for the first time since the days when General Manager Luke Thaman installed photovoltaic cells and made WBNO-AM America's first solar powered radio station.

Bryan Municipal Utilities broke ground for the 12-acre solar array in early December. By mid-January, all 23,530 solar modules were in place, and a portion were generating power on to Bryan's electrical grid. The entire 2 MW solar array is scheduled for completion by mid-February.

"The project has gone very well," said Steve Casebere, BMU director of utilities. "Despite the cold, wet weather we had at the end of the year, the crews from Rudolph Libbe and AP Alternatives continued to work diligently and stayed on schedule."

Primarily Ohio materials, contractors and labor were used on the project.

Rudolph Libbe Inc. of Walbridge, Ohio, designed and built the facility and will operate and maintain it for the first two years. AP Alternatives of Ridgeville Corners made and installed the steel ground-mounted racks for the fixed axis array. Bryan electric department constructed power lines to the site and installed switches for the power interconnection.

First Solar of Toledo manufactured the solar panels, and Nextronex, of Toledo, manufactured the inverters. In all, the project created about 60 construction jobs and sustained another 300 manufacturing jobs in Ohio.

The solar field will produce 2,650,000-kilowatt hours of renewable energy annually or enough to power 260 average homes.

The system uses the distributed architecture approach, in which all inverters are linked to track at maximum efficiency and extend the life of the equipment. The solar array uses thin-

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## Energy-efficient laundry tips can help shrink your energy bill

Clothes washers and dryers account for more than six percent of your annual home energy bill, and for the average household that's about \$150 a year.

Since almost 90 percent of the energy consumed by a washing machine goes to heating water, switching from hot or warm water to cold water saves that energy. Washing clothes in cold water with cold-water detergents will also preserve fabric colors.

New cold-water specific detergents are chemically formulated for cold water, and according to Consumer Reports, they perform the same as or better than traditional detergents.

Additional no-cost or low-cost laundry tips listed below can add up to big savings throughout the year.

- **Do full loads of laundry.** Filling up your washing machine with water requires energy, and it's a waste if done for a partial load.
- **Do not over-wash clothes.** Delicate and gently worn clothes don't need as long of a wash cycle as soiled, sturdy clothes.
- **Clean the dryer lint filter after every load.** A lint-free filter improves air circulation and quickens drying, whereas a clogged filter and vent can cause a home fire.
- **Separate light and heavy items before drying.** Lightweight items take less drying time, so don't waste dryer time by throwing your undergarments and t-shirts in with your towels and rugs.
- **Don't over-dry clothes.** Take clothes out while they are still slightly damp to reduce the need for ironing — another energy user. If your dryer has an auto-dry feature, use that instead of the timer.

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film Cadmium/Telluride modules that produce more electricity and allow harvesting energy even during low-light hours and cloudy days.

Financing was arranged through Key Government Finance, which is leasing the solar array to Bryan Municipal Utilities for 10 years. Key is eligible for a grant that covers 30 percent of the \$7.42 million project cost. BMU has the option to purchase the solar equipment at the end of the lease period.

"The solar project fits with our power supply strategy," said Casebere. "It supplies power during the day when demand for electricity peaks. It also supports the Board of Public Affairs goal for renewable energy."

In 2007, the Bryan Board of Public Affairs set a goal of deriving 20 percent of the city's power from renewable sources by 2015. The utility is on target to meet that goal.



## New gadgets and services increase demand for Internet bandwidth

Along with smartphones and large flat screen TVs, new tablet sales have been hot. These gadgets with services such as streaming Netflix, Hulu, and You Tube are increasing the demand for Internet bandwidth. This has created an ongoing challenge for all Internet service and cable providers throughout the U.S.

To meet the ever-increasing demand, BMU is actively upgrading and increasing the available bandwidth for its customers.

"We have taken steps over the last three months to make our Internet service more efficient. We divided the traffic that leaves the communications headend and continues through the substations to our customers' modems," said Joe Ferrell, BMU communications superintendent. "As a result, we have seen dramatic improvements on our Internet utilization."

In the next few months, BMU plans to almost double its existing bandwidth. BMU cable customers currently have 4 megabits per second download speed — plenty to service and support all the new iPads, Kindles, Androids, movies, TV shows, and videos customers love — and at a price of only \$38 per month. For more information, call 419-633-6130.