

LIGHT LINES

Newsletter of the Sterling Municipal Light Department

Summer 2021 Edition

General Manager: Darren Borge Light Board: Chairman: Joe Curtin; Vice Chairman: Brian Pierce; Clerk: Eric Darlington

Darren Borge, General Manager

I would like to introduce myself, Darren Borge, the new SMLD General Manager. I grew up in Sterling and my parents have lived in Sterling since 1987. I attended the Chocksett Middle and Houghton Elementary Schools back when they were two separate buildings separated by a trail through a small patch of pine trees. Today, I still have many friends and family in Sterling and take pride in the services that we provide to the community that I am from. After graduating from Quinsigamond Community College, Energy Utility Technologies Program, in May 2008, I started my public power career with the SMLD in August 2008. I began my role as General Manager following the retirement of Sean Hamilton, our former General Manager. I would like to start by thanking Sean Hamilton for his 42 years of public power service. Sean has been a huge inspiration and leader at the SMLD for the last 11 years. He brought many positive changes to the town of Sterling and many projects typically the first of their kind in this area, such as the first utility scale sized Battery Storage Project and the First Community Solar Array with Battery Storage. To say I have big shoes to fill would be an understatement but, working with and learning from Sean for most of my career at the SMLD, it is easy to say I have learned from the best manager, employer, and friend. I would also like to thank the SMLD Board for giving me this opportunity to continue the path and direction set forth for this department. I plan to continue to keep Sterling at the forefront of technology and advancements in electrical infrastructure and broadband services and to maintain the standard and quality of service that we have all come to know.

From Our Operation Department - In 2021 the Operations staff set 38 new poles and pulled 14 double poles. We installed 7,175' of new overhead covered primary and secondary and removed 6,825' of #4 solid bare copper primary. The benefits to covered tree-wire to bare copper is to eliminate outages due to incidental contacts from trees, branches, or wildlife on poles. Over the past few years, we have replaced 92% of all overhead porcelain cutouts with new polymer cutouts and polymer squirrel guards. We plan to be 100% converted to polymer cutouts with covers by late fall 2021.

From The L.A.M.B - Our New High Speed Fiber Internet Service

In case you haven't heard, the SMLD is now in the **Broadband Internet Business**. Within the SMLD we have created a new department, the **Local Area Municipal Broadband**, or the **L.A.M.B.** As a result of state grants and over 4 years of conversations and planning with our Board, the town of Sterling and other local municipal light departments, we were able to bring fiber internet from Shrewsbury to the SMLD main office building at 50 Main Street. In partnership with the town of Sterling, we deployed an INET system to our key town facilities. Subsequently, during the hardships of the 2020 pandemic, everyone and everything was relying on using the internet like they never had before, only experiencing difficulties with their current internet provider. Since the SMLD already had fiber internet in our building, we did much consideration, studying and planning to see how we could get it to our customers. As a department we decided to move on the project, and we are now in our second phase of deployment. This will give our customers along our existing phase 1 fiber route the ability to have **Fiber to The Home or FTTH**. We chose to give a smaller scale of customers the ability to subscribe to this service, as like your parents always said, "you have one chance to make a first impression" and we wanted to make sure that ours was a good one. Now that it is here, we will begin scheduling installation appointments within the month. We ask for your patience as this is a brand-new system and there are many steps and coordination necessary to make sure our customers get the best possible service at competitive prices. We will reach out to you as soon as service becomes available in your area. The next question you will have to ask yourself is "are you on the **L.A.M.B.?**"



Municipal Fiber INET - The installation of the fiber ring to the municipal buildings has been completed as well as the transfer of the buildings onto the new fiber system. The first phase of this project connected 11 different town facilities. This project will eventually tie together communications for all municipal buildings and provide fiber internet service to 26 of the town's municipal buildings and assets, adding other key benefits to these facilities such as security systems, camera monitoring and key card access.

American Rescue Plan Project - With federal funds coming to all cities and towns throughout the United States, the SMLD and the town of Sterling have teamed up to use 14% of the town of Sterling's allocated funds to expand ***Sterling's INET System*** and expand the ***Local Area Municipal Broadband System (L.A.M.B.)***. This expansion project that the ***SMLD/L.A.M.B. partnered with the town of Sterling*** will not only create more savings to other town departments by eliminating an internet service bill each month, but it will also give 42% of all Sterling businesses and residents the availability to a lower cost, high speed fiber internet service with ***NO DEBT to the ratepayers of Sterling.***

More From Our Operations Department

Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI) replacement

With the exceptional work from the ***SMLD Line Crew*** we have fully deployed our second-generation ***AMI Meter System***. With the new metering system and the advancements of the multi-speak ability and functionality, we can tie the meter outage alert responses to ***Outage Management System (OMS)*** inside our bucket trucks on iPads. The system will give us faster outage detection and response capabilities. The detection abilities will give us outage prediction capabilities based on electrical flow on the system to an upstream protection device. This will reduce our time for troubleshooting and outage location identification and will restore your power faster and safer and will maintain a more reliable electrical distribution system for Sterling.

Energy Storage Project and Community Solar Plus Storage Projects - The combined savings of the solar and the two battery storage projects in Sterling reached ***over \$2,064,000 in savings*** by reducing our transmission costs.

The Solar Projects in Sterling have produced over 42,001,209 kWhrs of non-emitting energy that is enough to power every average home in Sterling for a year and a half.

New Website - New advancements in technology and immediate access to information has directed us to rebuild our website. The website is currently under development, and we plan to go live within the next month. The web address will remain at www.energysterling.com. The new website will be easier to navigate and more informative. We welcome your input on the new website for functions and features that you think would be helpful.

New SMLD APP

The SMLD is in the process of developing a new ***phone APP and web-based usage/payment portal***. This new APP or web portal will give all our customers who use this service, the ability to view their usage down to a fifteen-minute interval. You can link multiple meters and accounts to a single login for the same feature. This APP will allow you to view your usage during any billing cycle, view your E-bill or make payments to one or multiple different accounts associated with your login. By using this APP you can sign up for usage, outage and restoration alerts, discount date reminders to avoid missing out on the 10% monthly early discount, recurring or auto-pay features. These payments will post to your account on the ***next business day***, so even if you can't make it to the office or make a bank payment in time to catch that final day of discount, you can log into your account either by phone APP or web portal and catch that savings. We plan to join with the Sterling Water Department with their new water meter AMI System deployment scheduled to start late 2021 or beginning 2022. Our APP will allow you to link to your water meter account that will allow you all the same alert and payment options that you have with electric.

I look forward to continuing to provide the best possible service to the ratepayers of Sterling.

Darren Borge
General Manager

From all of us at the SMLD, please stay safe and hope to see you soon.

“Public Power Owned by the People We Serve”