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One lightning storm at Gila Substation in Yuma, Arizona, led to a monthslong process of implementing a permanent fix and keeping the power flowing in the meantime.

Lightning strike in DSW leads to fast collaboration

On July 30, 2021, a lightning storm caused damage to Gila Substation in Yuma, Arizona, spurring not only immediate collaboration for a solution, but also a lengthy process of replacement and repair that lasted through early this year.

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The Gila electrician crew responded quickly after they saw the trouble report, and they immediately saw what had happened.

“There are two transformers in the Gila yard, and one of them was hit by the lightning,” said Regional Substation Maintenance Supervisor Miguel Rodriguez. “There’s no way to really know if it were a direct hit, unless there were video or a camera, but one of the lightning arrestors did what it was designed to do: It absorbed the lightning and took it to ground.”

The lightning arrester functioned as intended, but then it caused problems of its own.

“It essentially just exploded the lightning arrester from one of the transformers,” Rodriguez explained. “It sent debris all over the place.”

Modern lightning arrestors are often made of polymer, but this one was older, made of glass with a porcelain skirt.

“There was broken glass and damage to the bushings,” said Rodriguez. “Both sides of the transformer took damage. So then the next step was to assess that damage.”

Substation Maintenance Manager Mike Simonton was involved from the start. As soon as the assessment was made, he scheduled meetings with stakeholders and customers to let them know of the situation. He also arranged internal WAPA meetings to keep others abreast of developments and solicit solutions.

A few things were immediately clear from the assessment, such as the fact that the bushings would need to be replaced and the further fact that the age of the equipment would make doing so difficult.

“The transformer was a 1957 vintage, from an Italian manufacturer that has been out of business for quite a while,” he continued. “Same scenario for the bushings. They were a little bit newer than the transformer, from 1974, but they were from another Italian brand that’s also gone out of business.”

Dealing with equipment that old can be difficult. Materials and specifications evolve over time as technology changes and design improves. Finding something from several decades ago from a defunct manufacturer can prove to be a serious roadblock.

Rodriguez reached out to the other regions in the hopes that he would find compatible bushings. He worked with Foreman III Electrician Orry Lesh and Foreman III Electrician Jim Higgins, among others. He reached out to Rocky Mountain, Sierra Nevada and Upper Great Plains, but was unable to find replacements.

“Bushings in particular are kind of tricky, because certain dimensions have to be correct in order to fit into and work with the transformer,” said Rodriguez. “Sometimes they’re built so tight that you may not have any more room. You may not even have an inch of clearance. These dimensions are critical, and finding bushings that fit became pretty much impossible. We were not finding any.”

Delaying repair was not an option.

“The Yuma area is an important part of our system with special priority use power customers, such as the Yuma County Water Users’ Association,” said Simonton.

“These two transformers are critical to the area,” Rodriguez agreed. “They’re about seven megavolt amperes each. They’re pretty essential to Desert Southwest for all of the loads and the customer needs for the region. This is an irrigation region, meaning that there are a lot of pumps pumping water throughout, and all of this water flow has to stay on schedule.”

The system was returned to service by backfeeding it through another line, but that was not a permanent solution and the service it provided would be far less reliable. The clock was ticking.

Solving the problem could not be accomplished in a vacuum and would require significant collaboration. Rodriguez and other staff began reaching out in the hopes that they could find replacement bushings, and quickly.

“At that point in time, we were reaching out to other entities in the area, the customers, everybody that we had contacts for, to try to get replacement bushings,” he said. “We reached out to bushing manufacturers. We got responses, but they were saying that they couldn’t find them, either.”

One of the customers who was contacted suggested reaching out to Transformer Network, based on positive experiences in the past.

“We reached out, and one of the things we heard back was that they had a transformer that was available, sitting at the dock somewhere, and they could easily bring that and rent it to us,” said Rodriguez. “Unfortunately, after looking at the specs for that transformer, it was determined that it wouldn’t be compatible with our system or our needs.”

That may have seemed, at first, like another dead end, but the vendor was actually able to provide some help after all; it just required a little bit of creativity.

“After talking to them and explaining what had happened and what our needs were, they pretty much told us that they were able to basically retrofit the existing transformers,” Rodriguez continued. “They took care of our needs by allowing us to use bushings that we could actually find replacements for.”
Unfortunately, by the time this potential resolution to the problem was found, it was Aug. 28, with only around one month remaining in the fiscal year.

“It became an urgent need to process a contract for this repair work,” said Rodriguez.

Collaboration and coordination between departments was necessary to ensure funding, complete the contract and meet all related administrative responsibilities, not to mention the importance of keeping the permanent repair on track.

So began a long process that had an estimated completion time of 14 weeks.

Transformer Network agreed to repair and refurbish both existing transformers, as well as perform a further inspection on internal components. That required the transportation of both units, which itself was not easy.

“The vendor is based in Florida, but they have shops in South Dakota,” said Rodriguez. “So we got the agreement in place and the contract set up, but then we had to set up transport. We arranged for two trucks to come pick these up, then we had to coordinate a crane service so that the transformers could be loaded onto the trailers.”

That took care of a few of the outstanding considerations, but it left one question open: How could Gila Substation keep providing reliable service in the meantime?

Rodriguez and others began looking into any available mobile transformers that might suit their immediate needs.

“DSW and Sierra Nevada do not have any mobile transformers,” he said. “For WAPA, all the mobile transformers are either at RM or UGP. So then we needed to start looking at what was available and where it was. Did we have a mobile transformer that was the right fit and configuration and voltage to cover both the primary and secondary side?”

It was a lot to consider and a tall order, but he found two of them: One was in Montana and the other was in Nebraska.

“The one in Montana wouldn’t work due to its configuration, which left just the one in Gering,” explained Rodriguez. “We had to coordinate transport for that, as well. We worked with Orry and the foreman for that area. We had a couple of their electricians and a couple of our electricians hit the road and they met halfway, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and they swapped drivers and finished the delivery that way.”

Upon arrival in Yuma, the mobile transformer was tested, commissioned and installed, keeping service reliable for the customers who depended on it.

“That was a lot to happen in just a little over a month,” Rodriguez emphasized. “It really speaks to the great coordination by all of the regions and departments involved. It moved really fast.”

“The whole experience highlights excellent customer service, communication and collaboration,” Simonton agreed. “It highlights the way DSW was able to coordinate both internally and across regions. It also highlights the amazing crews we have, and how they were able to mobilize and get things done. This cross-germinated with so many groups and organizations, and involved so many different subject matter experts, that it was a great reminder of just how responsive WAPA is and how seriously it takes reliability.”

The refurbished transformers were returned, with the second arriving Jan. 21. In the days that followed, it was set on its concrete pad, tested and installed. Both transformers were back in service by Jan. 31.

“I would like to thank our partners in Procurement, Engineering, System Protection, Communications and our transmission-line and substation employees,” said Rodriguez. “Our support staff and our customers who provided valuable information were also very helpful in the success of this project.”
In December, Compliance Manager Mark Buchholz received the Midwest Reliability Organization’s Highly Effective Reliability Organizations Award. He earned the honor alongside Sharon Koller of the American Transmission Company.
“Both Mark and Sharon exemplify the qualifications of the HERO Award and have made significant contributions to assuring a highly reliable and secure North American bulk power system,” MRO Organizational Group Oversight Committee Chair Keri Glitch said in the group’s announcement of the awards.

The award is intended to recognize individuals for exemplary initiative and commitment to advancing the concept and principles of Highly Effective Reliability Organizations throughout the MRO region and in support of MRO’s vision and mission.

The group cited Buchholz’s ability to serve as a conduit between MRO and others within the industry, including the Southwest Power Pool and the North American Electric Reliability Corporation.

“His unique perspective helped avoid duplication of efforts during the development of various MRO initiatives,” the announcement continued. “Buchholz was also essential in spearheading the coordination of multiple registered entities’ event analysis programs, resulting in a more effective and efficient means of understanding power system events in a portion of MRO’s footprint that has multiple owners and operators.”

“With over 30 years of experience within UGP’s Maintenance, Operations and Compliance offices, Mark has left an indelible mark on not only UGP, but all entities within the MRO footprint!” said Senior Vice President and UGP Regional Manager Lloyd Linke. “He brings together experts from the relevant business lines when investigating an issue or developing recommended solutions, and he asks the questions which lead to positive change. He never hesitates to reach out to neighboring entities to discuss an operational event or compliance concern, and is widely regarded outside of WAPA as a trusted expert when investigating operational events.”

The HERO Award is part of MRO’s Volunteer Recognition Program, which was implemented in 2010 to acknowledge industry volunteers for their hard work and contributions to the success of MRO.

“Mark is well known for his calm demeanor and engaging personality, which put others at ease when faced with complex discussions or bad news,” Linke concluded. “Mark’s consistent demonstration of HERO behaviors and his efforts to promote these practices both within and outside of WAPA make him a fantastic candidate for MRO’s HERO Award.”

Closed Circuit sat down with Buchholz recently to discuss the accomplishment.

Tell us a little bit about your background.

I graduated in 1988 from South Dakota State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering. I joined WAPA in 1983 as part of the Junior Fellowship Program and since May 2010, I have served as a compliance manager for Upper Great Plains.

I am presently a member of the NERC Compliance Certification Committee, the MRO Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Advisory Committee, the MRO Performance Risk Oversight Subcommittee, the Mid-Continent Compliance Forum, the Western Interconnection Compliance Forum, and the SPP Reliability Compliance Advisory Group. I am active in North American Transmission Forum activities.

I am also a former member of the MRO Compliance Committee, the MRO Standards Committee and the SPP Reliability Compliance Workgroup.

Can you explain your role at WAPA?

My primary responsibility is to work with staff within UGP to maintain compliance to the applicable NERC Reliability Standards. I am also responsible for providing oversight for the system operator trainers at Watertown, South Dakota, and facility management for the Watertown Office Complex.

How does it feel to be recognized this way by MRO?

It is quite an honor. It’s awarded based upon your work and interaction with your industry peers in promoting and implementing MRO’s principles of highly effective reliability organizations, which align very closely with WAPA’s core values.

What has been your experience with MRO?

I’ve worked closely with MRO staff since I began working in NERC compliance in 2010. I’ve had opportunities to work with MRO staff in compliance audits, NERC compliance violation investigations, event analysis and self-reporting and mitigation of compliance violations.

As a member of the MRO Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Advisory Committee, I work with MRO staff to provide advice to the board of directors and the Organizational Group Oversight Committee on NERC Reliability Standards, risk assessment, compliance monitoring and enforcement issues. I also assist in MRO member outreach and awareness in these areas.

They are a great group of professionals dedicated to ensuring power system reliability.

You serve on a number of councils and committees. What can you tell us about them?

Having the opportunity to serve on these committees allows me to provide a UGP perspective on various issues as they are discussed, and it also provides an opportunity to gain a better understanding of other member representatives’ positions on issues. In addition, it provides a great opportunity to network and develop professional relationships with our regulators and member representatives from other companies, many of which are WAPA customers.

What else would you like to share with WAPA employees?

If the opportunity presents itself to serve on a council or committee, either internally or externally, seriously consider participation. It is a great way to gain a better understanding of the different business lines within our organization. It also provides an opportunity to meet your counterparts in other organizations to discuss and develop solutions for common issues and concerns.
What to understand during WAPA’s re-entry

By Sarah P.

It’s an arduous process, moving a heavily remote workforce back into the building, and it is a move that will affect all employees, regardless of telework status. Employees have questions. “Where will I sit when I come back?” “Am I allowed to take my mask off if I’m physically distancing?” “How much equipment will I need to travel with when coming into the office?”
In short, it’s an adjustment. There are many considerations to make.

For example, craft employees learned where and when to reach individuals in the office after an adjustment was made to remote work. Some WAPA employees have grown accustomed to multitasking during the virtual meetings that became more prevalent during COVID-19. Some employees would prefer to stay 100% remote, and some would prefer to be in the office more. How can one organization respond to the preferences of all its employees?

The answer is simple: It can’t. It can, however, strive for flexibility and allow its employees to find a happy medium that empowers them to work together to get things done. WAPA’s answer to a flexible workplace is the Future of Work Pilot.

The Future of Work

The Future of Work Pilot is a six-month workplace pilot program, which defines the most flexible workplace option as 80% telework. It is WAPA’s response to realized capabilities with remote work – increased productivity, for example – as well as employee preferences for flexible workplaces and the desire to have tangible relationships throughout the organization.

WAPA has put together a team to identify the maximum-possible telework posture for each position, as well as policies, procedures and training to support a larger hybrid workforce.

This pilot is meant to assess gaps; recommend systems, training and practices; propose policy updates as the need arises; develop a communication and change management plan; and develop metrics to assess the pilot in terms of telework use, performance, culture and more.

Perhaps the most important part of this pilot is that it is meant to assess how this new posture works for the organization and make recommendations based on what it finds.

Future of Work will be sending pulse surveys to the organization on a regular basis. Make your opinions and experiences known during these surveys, as it’s one of the most crucial ways to contribute to future policies and procedures at WAPA.
WAPA has a lot to consider. The organization must be prepared for productivity to be temporarily disrupted as employees adjust to the new normal.

Instigating change

As with any major organizational change, there will be resistance, doubt and a lot of adjustment. Many people have found they enjoy remote work. Some will be hesitant to go into the office and others will be extremely excited.

That being said, WAPA has a lot to consider. The organization must be prepared for productivity to be temporarily disrupted as employees adjust to the new normal. The Change Management Curve illustrates what most organizations can expect when implementing something new. Individuals, teams and organizations can be in the middle of the exact same change but find themselves somewhere different on this spectrum, and that’s okay.

It’s understandable and even predicted that we may be saying things like, “I don’t see this happening.” When people say things like that, it often means, “I don’t see this happening without significant struggle.” They’d be right. It may also mean, “...and I don’t want to do it.” That’s understandable. Why fix what’s broken?

But that’s not necessarily the point of change. If we never tried anything new, we’d still have regular flip phones.

Seamless re-entry?

WAPA’s re-entry is not expected to be seamless. We know that everyone will have different comfort zones when it comes to social distancing and other concerns.

Communicating and enforcing boundaries will take some getting used to. Each employee has different social needs, productivity capabilities and processes that they feel comfortable with when it comes to hybrid work.

The Future of Work pilot will be taking note of these adjustments and making recommendations for the future. Be sure to make your thoughts and experiences known when Future of Work sends its pulse surveys to WAPA employees.

All we can expect to do is our best.

Note: The author is a leadership development specialist.

Employees can find the most up-to-date information about the Future of Work Pilot at my.wapa.int/employee-resources/initiatives/Pages/future-work-pilot.aspx
WAPA’s first All-Employee Meeting of 2022 was held Feb. 3. It was hosted by then-Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Kevin Howard, who was attending his final AEM. He retired later that month.

The event opened with Administrator and CEO Tracey LeBeau, who spoke about the State of WAPA. She also discussed the organization’s theme for 2022: Reflect, Recharge, Resolve. Additionally, she briefly addressed a potential return to the workplace.

“First, I want to address the elephant in the room, and that is workplace re-entry,” she said. “I know most of you have questions, especially as we adjust to continuous change. Just as I stated at the last All-Employee Meeting, we all want the same thing: to be safe, be healthy, provide for our families and perform meaningful work.”

She emphasized that updates would be provided as they become available.

Other topics included the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, better known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and the organizational realignment of several functions that were previously under the Office of the Administrator.

Chief Public Affairs Officer Teresa Waugh then spoke about the rapid pace of change in communications and the upcoming 45th anniversary of WAPA’s founding. She was followed by Chief Strategy Officer Kerry Whitford, who discussed the approach and anticipated schedule of the new strategic plan.

Vice President of Information Technology Enterprise Applications Joe Fast then provided an overview of recent IT accomplishments and Chief of Staff Melissa Ardis facilitated a typically robust employee Q&A session.

“WAPA and customers started this incredible journey to serve the West with federal hydropower,” said LeBeau at the end of her presentation, “and we will continue to travel this road together into the future through a new strategic plan and refocused priorities.”

View a full recording of the meeting as well as supplemental materials at myWAPA, More News, Feb. 3 AEM materials available.
Aviation manager recognized with safety award

The Department of Energy’s Office of Aviation Management hosts an annual aviation safety award program, intended to promote safe operations and to recognize the top performers in each program. On Jan. 5, they announced that Aviation Manager Rich Westra was recognized with their Management Professional Award.

“I am honored to be nominated and selected,” said Westra. “Federal agencies were encouraged to share their aviation programs’ best practices that have made their programs safer, more efficient and effective during the past year.”

“The judging was conducted by an external panel selected from industry and other federal agencies,” said Office of Aviation Management Director Glen Wattman in his announcement. “Each of the winners should be extremely proud of the recognition, as the competition from aviation programs was highly competitive and impressive.”

Other categories evaluated included the Small Unit Award, Unmanned Aircraft System Unit Award, Management Professional Award, Aviation Safety Manager Award, Top Pilot Award, Top Maintainer Award, Top Administrative Professional Award and Top Operations Support Professional Award.

“WAPA has many outstanding achievements in aircraft management and administration, flight operations, maintenance, training and safety,” Westra said. “I was a small part of the WAPA Aviation team, which includes Deb Rock, Todd Slade, Rory Kirkendall, Scott Hauge, Logan Schuck and my supervisor, Steve Yexley. Each individual’s work ethics, accomplishments and professionalism contributed in an outstanding manner to improve the safety, efficiency and effectiveness in all the aspects of WAPA’s federal flight program.”
WAPA turns 45 this year. On Dec. 21, to be exact. To kick off the festivities, Public Affairs is pleased to announce the 45th Anniversary Photo Contest. The contest is open to all employees in the organization and their family members.
This is an opportunity to join in the 45th anniversary fun, while showing off your photography skills and sharing the great pictures you take at and around WAPA.

It will also be a chance to tell a brief story about something that happened to inspire your photo, what the image says about working at WAPA or what belonging at WAPA means to you. Some of your words may be used to describe and highlight the published photo.

In the months leading up to the anniversary, 45 photos and snippets from their accompanying stories will be featured on WAPA’s social media channels and website and highlighted in Closed Circuit.

The theme of the photo contest echoes WAPA’s theme for 2022: “Reflect, Recharge, Resolve.” We encourage you to submit photos that fall into these three categories.

Acceptable photos include anything showing WAPA employees or facilities in action, transmission lines, waterways and anything else relevant to WAPA, its mission or its customers.

For example, photos in the Reflect category may be images with historical meaning or then-versus-now comparisons of technologies, places or people. Snapshots in this category might show how WAPA has evolved since its inception in the 1970s or capture a moment of reflection or beauty.

Photos in the Recharge category might include action shots of WAPA employees back in the office after working from home or resuming projects deferred by the pandemic. They could also capture your coworkers rebuilding connections, working in a new way this year or doing something they would have never done before.

Images in the Resolve category may showcase the mission-critical work that has continued throughout the pandemic by our employees in the field and control centers. Images in this category might showcase the challenges met, and the workers who resolved to overcome them in an inspiring or creative way.

Your photo and its associated story may be the one that sparks a deeper understanding of our critical role to the nation we serve. Be creative and show us your best.

**How to enter**

Submit your photos in .jpg or .png format via the entry form. Within the form, you will be asked to provide a few sentences telling a brief story related to the photo or describing what the photo means to you. Many of the questions are optional, so you can respond to the ones that most resonate with you.

**Guidelines**

- Federal employees, contractors and their families are eligible.
- For printing purposes, preference will be given to large, high-resolution photos. For this reason, do not crop or resize your images before sending.
- Safety is far more important than a good photo. Always be conscious of your environment and follow all appropriate safety and security protocols when taking your pictures.
Deadline

Photos will be accepted now through Sept. 30.

Winners

Winning photos will be featured in a special All-Employee Meeting in December. The top 45 photos will be shared on WAPA’s social media channels and website and highlighted in Closed Circuit.

Judging and announcement

Public Affairs staff will serve as judges for the contest. Public Affairs staff is not eligible for this contest.

Disclaimer

Submitted photos may also be used for other WAPA publications and on social media. By submitting a photo, you agree to its usage in other WAPA-sanctioned outlets. Each photo will be credited to its photographer.

Note: The author is a public affairs specialist.

Pro Tips

We encourage all employees to get creative and submit their favorite shots. After years of evaluating entries, we are even able to offer some additional guidance to help your submissions stand out.

Frame your shots well. Did you manage to snap a once-in-a-lifetime photo of a herd of bison strolling calmly through the parking lot in Salt Lake City? Great! Hopefully, though, you can actually see them in the image. Many entries have put their main points of interest at the margins, or far in the distance. Doing this makes it easy for the judges to overlook the most important part of your entry. An entry with a clearly identifiable subject, even if that subject is mundane, is likely to do better than an entry with an amazing subject that the judges can’t see or identify.

Sunrise, sunset. We receive a lot of sunrise and sunset photos. In many cases they are difficult to tell apart, and as the judging goes on a bit of “sunset fatigue” can set in. The judges do their absolute best to evaluate each image on its own merits, but it’s very difficult for images of sunsets to stand out now that they’ve seen so many of them. We are still happy to receive them, but if you are submitting a sunset photo, make sure it’s a truly great one or risk getting lost in the crowd.

Variety is the spice of life. As you might expect, we receive a lot of photos of transmission lines and structures. These are great, but some previous entries that won over judges took different approaches. This includes photos of animals at or near job sites, photos of WAPA employees working together (not lined up and smiling for the camera, but actually working), photos taken from unexpected angles and more.

Submit your photos via the entry form at bit.ly/34IKdRE
As we return to the workplace and re-establish routines and practices, take time to familiarize yourself with your workspace, possible hazards and related solutions that will keep you and others safe. The following safety reminders will help as you transition from the home office to the workplace.

Commuting

Many of us will be spending more time behind the wheel with our new work schedules. The National Safety Council reports that 90% of accidents are caused by human error such as distracted driving, not seeing road hazards or choosing the wrong defensive driving response.

Distraction is a big risk. Would you ever drive more than the length of a football field on a busy highway at 55 mph with your eyes closed? That’s what it is like when you are distracted behind the wheel for five seconds. This includes anything that takes your mind or eyes off the road, including phone calls, texting, emails, social media, eating or talking to others. Pay attention to the road and put your phone in do-not-disturb mode.

Sometimes the little things can save lives. Plan ahead and give yourself extra time, be aware of road conditions, practice defensive driving and slow down. Be cautious of road rage; restrain your temper and be aware of others who don't. Always wear a seatbelt and make sure your passengers do the same. Also, take advantage of flexible scheduling during re-entry if needed. If you wake up to a blizzard or other unsafe road conditions, alternate your schedule and choose to go to the office on a different day.

See the signs

There will be signs and other information in WAPA facilities that remind employees of COVID-19 protocols and
Dealing with the Pandemic

1. The Pandemic and Workplace
2. Worksite Safety
3. Remote Work Safety
4. Personal Health
5. Mental Health

The author is a technical writer who works under the Cherokee Nation Strategic Programs contract.

**Review the PSSM**

Refresh your memory on the safety basics. All employees are urged to review Sections Two and Three of the 2022 Power System Safety Manual.

**Section 2: Basic Responsibilities**

Includes a review for all employee, supervisor and foreman responsibilities. It covers a variety of topics, including incident and near-miss reporting, pre-job inspection and avoiding direction. It also covers worksite supervision, onsite tailgate and job briefings, Job Hazard Analysis and enforcement of safety rules.

**Section 3: Office Building and Warehouse Safety**

Is a quick refresher of safety practices in WAPA facilities, including basic housekeeping, correcting unsafe conditions, electrical issues, first aid, chemical use and Safety Data Sheets.
OAM project officially closes

The Organizational Approach to Markets project officially closed Jan. 12, having successfully met the needs of the day in Phase 1 and been superseded by other events in the markets arena for Phase 2.

The OAM project was a tactical action plan initiative developed by the Power Marketing Management Council and Power System Operations Council as part of the Strategic Roadmap 2024 refresh effort conducted in 2016.

The project took an internal look at the areas likely to be impacted if WAPA decides to participate in regional transmission organizations or energy imbalance markets, or if WAPA maintains its current approach. Twenty-four recommendations were selected for implementation. The 12 OAM recommendations without market requirements were completed in December 2019, and the decision factors leading to the remaining recommendations are no longer applicable.

View the post-OAM strategy with control plan and other information at my.wapa.int/employee-resources/initiatives/Pages/organizational-approach-markets.aspx

508 Corner

By Nathan Alarid

Every month, WAPA’s Section 508 team will provide tips and tricks to help employees ensure that their documents and web content are successfully compliant and accessible for those with disabilities. Remember: Before any content can be made public, it must be Section 508 compliant.

March’s tips

To help ensure that your Office files are 508 compliant, use the Accessibility Checker, a free tool available in Word, Excel, Outlook, OneNote and PowerPoint. It finds most accessibility issues and explains why each might be a potential problem for someone with a disability. It also offers suggestions on how to resolve each issue.

This tool should be accessible through your existing Office products. For instance, in Word, it is located by clicking the Review ribbon and then Check Accessibility.

Although the Accessibility Checker catches most types of accessibility issues, there are some issues it is not able to detect. That’s why it’s important to always review your work thoroughly, though the Accessibility Checker can serve as a helpful guide.

WAPA’s Section 508 team

Launched by the Department of Energy, Public Affairs created a Section 508 team. This team identifies, establishes and provides guidance in Section 508 program management. The mandate under Section 508 enables the team to guide employees to conform electronic content to current Section 508 standards.

Note: The author is a webmaster who works under the Wyandotte Services contract.

Visit myWAPA, Departments, Public Affairs, Section 508 for resources to help you create, test and remedy the content you share online in compliance with Section 508 requirements. If you still have questions, contact section508@wapa.gov
Workplace re-entry plans available

As WAPA continues to plan for a full and safe re-entry to the workplace, employees may view the current Workplace Safety and Re-entry Plan on myWAPA. The plan is based on the Department of Energy’s COVID-19 re-entry plans, with adjustments to meet WAPA’s unique mission needs where possible.

This plan will continue to change and evolve as guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force and the DOE changes to match the best information and guidance from our nation’s public health experts and scientists.

The re-entry document serves as the primary resource for WAPA employees as we navigate re-entry. Protocols around masking, contact tracing, reasonable accommodation requests and other elements may continue to change. This document will be updated periodically to reflect new information.

View the most recent plan at myWAPA, COVID-19 updates, WAPA Workplace Safety and Re-entry Plan

Refresh your badge before office return

Employees who previously used their badge to access their office or worksite but have not done so for the past year must refresh their badge prior to re-entry.

Badges that have not been used for physical access for more than one year have been automatically changed to an inactive status. If the badge is inactive, it will not allow physical access to a facility or office.

The Office of Security and Emergency Management advises all Headquarters, Rocky Mountain and Upper Great Plains employees to contact the Security Operations Center at 970.461.7300 to reactivate their badges before the first day back at their facility.

Employees who have been routinely visiting a facility or office and using their badge to enter should not experience any issues or need to contact the SOC.

CISA issues “Shields Up” advisory

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency has issued a “Shields Up” advisory to every U.S. organization, including federal agencies, due to increasing geopolitical tensions.

As the situation in Ukraine continues to evolve, it is important to understand there is a high likelihood that malicious actors will attempt to use these activities as an opportunity for phishing campaigns and are likely to attempt spoofing legitimate domains and users.

Employees are advised to exercise particular caution when handling email communications from any of the areas involved in the conflict or where a subject line may be related to the ongoing situation.

Forward suspicious emails to spam@wapa.gov for analysis. Read the advisory at cisa.gov/shields-up

State of WAPA’s Assets Released

The 2022 State of WAPA’s Assets is now available. Since 2014, this forward-looking document has provided customers with an outline of WAPA’s upcoming capital investments and key initiatives for managing the multi-billion-dollar asset base entrusted to the organization.

The document details upcoming construction, repair projects, regional updates, Asset Management initiatives and much more.

The State of WAPA’s Assets is published the first quarter of every calendar year to clearly explain WAPA’s direction and focus for the year.

Read the document at wapa.gov, Newsroom, Closed Circuit, State of the Assets
WAPA’s transparency site updated with FY 2021 data

On Jan. 31, WAPA updated The Source with financial and operational information for the past fiscal year, which included returning $298.1 million to the U.S. Treasury. WAPA has returned a total of $4.2 billion in the past 14 years. The narrative provides context on WAPA’s fiscal year 2021 reported data and describes the primary drivers and variances between FY 2021 and FY 2020 costs.

The site now contains 14 years of information from Oct. 1, 2007-Sept. 30, 2021. The Source website went live in 2016 and offers a one-stop shop for financial and operational information. WAPA partnered with customers to determine data elements and information that would best help them to understand cost drivers and expenditures.

View the narrative and information by visiting wapa.gov, The Source, Financial Transparency

IT rolls out Power BI

On March 1, Information Technology made Microsoft Power BI available. This is a collection of tools used to analyze and visualize data, even if it comes from unrelated sources. The “BI” stands for Business Intelligence.

To start using Power BI, download it from the Software Center, which you can access via the Start button on the bottom left corner of your screen.

To learn about Power BI and how it might help you, visit the “Power BI user group” channel under “The Learning Community” team in Teams. The channel hosts biweekly meetings to discuss Power BI features.

More information will be provided about how Power BI can leverage data in your workgroup to uncover trends, create rich visualizations and support data-driven decisions.

Incident Reporting, Investigation order updated

WAPA Order 232.1G, Incident Reporting and Investigation, has been updated. The order went through substantial changes to update incident response times, processes and contacts.

A diverse team of WAPA personnel collaborated to review the order and determine necessary changes. All changes reflect the most recent regulations and internal programs that impact incident reporting.

The order was identified as a milestone under the Human Performance Improvement and Just Culture Tactical Action Plan Goal. For questions, reach out to the points of contact specified in the order’s appendices.

To view this and all other WAPA Orders, visit myWAPA, Programs, Directives, Current Directives

CPI White Belt training available

A two-hour Continuous Process Improvement White Belt virtual course is now available in Learning Nucleus. Visit the Course Catalog and search for “CPI White Belt.”

Two sessions are available: March 31 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and April 27 from 12 to 2 p.m. Attendees will learn to look at their work differently and contribute to a culture of continuous improvement.

If you would like to schedule a separate session for your staff, contact Laura Dawson at ldawson@wapa.gov