Embracing technology
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### TLine Asset Description

- AIRPORT - COTTONWOOD, 230 KV, AIR-CW  
- AIRPORT - WHITNEY (ARP-WNY), (WIT-WND), 115 KV, ARP-WNY  
- ALCOVA - CASPER NORTH, 115 KV, A-CAS-N  
- ALCOVA - CASPER SOUTH, 115 KV, A-CAS-S  
- ALCOVA - COPPER MOUNTAIN (A-RV-COP), 115 KV, A-COP  
- ALCOVA - FREMONT CANYON, 115 KV, A-FC  
- ALCOVA - MIRACLE MILE WEST, 115 KV, A-MM-W  
- ALCOVA - MIRACLE MILE EAST, 115 KV, A-MM-E  
- APPELDORN - GRANITE FALLS, 230 KV, APD-GF  

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### Health Index Score

- 40 FOOT, GLA-WML, 0-3  
- 40 FOOT, GLA-WML, 7-1  
- 40 FOOT, GLA-WML, 7-4  
- 40 FOOT, GLA-WML, 8-1  
- 40 FOOT, GLA-WML, 8-3  
- 40 FOOT, GLA-WML, 9-3  
- 45 FOOT, GLA-WML, 6-8  
- 45 FOOT, GLA-WML, 7-3  
- 50 FOOT, GLA-WML, 7-2  
- 50 FOOT, GLA-WML, 8-2  

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### Sub Factor Score Description

- A-GOOD  
- B-MINOR  
- C-MODERATE  
- D-SERIOUS  
- E-RISK  

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- 53  
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- 5669  
- 344  
- 2  

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### Sub Factor Score Description

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- 60  
- 5856  
- 266  
- 4765  
- 221  
- 2  

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### Sub Factor Score Description

- 9  
- 1  
- 4  
- 107  
- 148  
- 700  
- 14  
- 15  

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### Sub Factor Score Description

- 2  
- 2  
- 4  
- 2  
- 1  
- 9  
- 12  
- 3  

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### Sub Factor Score Description

- 508 corner
WAPA has massive repositories of data about its assets and operations. Most of it is housed in secure systems. Much of it lives in spreadsheets on employees’ computers. Some departments may not know what data other departments have. Not all of WAPA’s systems talk to one another.

continued on Page 2
You might be asking yourself, “Why does any of that matter?” It matters because all the data in the world is useless if you don’t have a means to put context around it or analyze it. Additionally, any analysis you conduct is only as good as the quality, accuracy and reliability of the data you are using.

Knowing how to leverage data is important, but it doesn’t happen in your head, on a piece of paper or in a spreadsheet. You need a tool. A “business intelligence” tool, specifically. On March 1, Information Technology made Microsoft Power BI available.

**The right tool for the job**

Over the past few years, employees across WAPA have asked for such tools. In many cases, they requested them by name and Information Technology obtained licenses to use them.

However, the Microsoft Office 365 suite – the engine behind WAPA’s Modern Workplace efforts – includes the Power BI platform, which is more accessible, cost effective and efficient to use WAPA-wide. The “BI” even stands for business intelligence. What might business intelligence really look like at WAPA, though?

“The more data an organization has, the more complicated it becomes to perform analytics, meaningful or otherwise,” said Information Technology Specialist Dawn Spear. “When data is siloed, it’s exponentially more difficult.”

Power BI’s interactive visualizations, combined with its immense reporting capabilities, provide endless analytical opportunities.

“These visualizations allow us to see trends and relationships we likely wouldn’t have seen in a table or spreadsheet,” said Systems Program Analyst Rebecca Afsar. “BI tools allow us to overlay different types of information to see patterns, correlations and anomalies.”

“Power BI can combine multiple data sets, ones that don’t organically talk to one another,” said Enterprise Architect David Tucker. “For example, we could overlay temperature and wind-speed data and transmission system asset work orders to understand possible repeated failures of assets. Analyzing that scenario could lead to a decision to use more durable assets to prevent repeated failures. Power BI offers real-time interactive dashboarding capabilities, which WAPA has never had before.”

Not only can you drill down into the data, but Power BI allows you to change or isolate variables to see what could happen if certain factors were different.

Without business intelligence capabilities, getting data like this would require someone to run a report – a static document – and if the report prompted a question, another would have to be run to get to the answer, which would create yet another static document.

“Across WAPA, this way of operating has led to enormous amounts of data and documents being stored electronically with no way to discern the differences from report to report,” said Vice President of IT - Enterprise Applications Joe Fast. “This leads to inefficiency by way of duplicative work and errors due to not having the full story accompanying a specific report.”

“Not having to support and troubleshoot thousands of reports saves significant time and money,” said IT Specialist Tom Howard.

“With Power BI, data is synced with source data and refreshed as needed or determined by program offices,” Spear explained. “There will no longer be a need to run new reports because we know data has changed. Users can be confident that the data they’re using is reliable and accurate.”

**Bringing power to employees**

Since WAPA launched its Asset Management program nearly a decade ago, there has been interest in increasing the organization’s ability to make data-driven decisions. “Power BI is not just another shiny tool; its rollout is the next logical step in a strategic effort and culture change that has been in motion for years,” said Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer Mike Montoya. “There has been a significant effort to get us where we are today, to move in this direction and keep pace with where business is heading.”

When correctly implemented, Power BI will increase productivity through self-service opportunities. In many cases, historically at WAPA, there have been “keepers” of the data.
“If you needed something, you had to work through them to get what you needed,” said Tucker. “You’d find yourself at the mercy of their schedule, availability, workload and priorities. Also, the data might not have been set up exactly as you needed it.”

Eventually with Power BI, employees will have direct access to data, it will be in a usable format and they will be able to filter it, streamlining the time it takes to get answers.

“Part of our vision for Power BI at WAPA is that users will begin to feel more engaged and empowered to ask questions and to seek answers using data,” said Spear.

**Technology, processes, people**

To maximize WAPA’s success with the rollout of new capabilities and a new tool while undergoing an organizational culture shift, the Power BI team has developed a strategic launch.

“WAPA’s data strategy team understood the importance of and advocated for a strategic business intelligence rollout,” added Tucker. “Planning focused on three areas that had to be addressed before implementation: technology, processes and people. Each of these areas will advance BI capabilities over the coming years and this advancement will lead to automated BI tasks via machine learning and artificial intelligence.”

The Power BI team initiated pilot projects to work through the WAPA-wide implementation. They partnered with Asset Management to highlight transmission line structures with poor health and with Finance to track budget execution.

“Both pilots were successful in determining how to structure data, identifying potential hiccups, addressing how to make reports available to users and overcoming challenges along the way,” said Tucker.

The pilot projects underscored the importance of data governance as well as the need to have defined roles and responsibilities for BI projects. Specifically, it will become increasingly important to understand the roles of data modelers, data scientists, data analysts and report developers as well as what work is performed or supported by business units as opposed to IT.

“WAPA programs hold the expertise about their data,” said Afzar. “IT can advise on how to make data more useful and user friendly, and we can support reporting and visualization capabilities. We’ll be relying on each other to move this effort forward successfully.”

To ensure consistent use of data and technologies, which will ultimately lead to increased accessibility, reliability and security of data, governance will be established for WAPA’s business intelligence initiative.

Though reporting and analysis of data will be accomplished via Microsoft Power BI, several technologies will be used to support business intelligence.

“Behind the scenes is TIBCO Data Virtualization, which brings together all data sources into a single ‘data platform,’ enabling data accessibility across the organization,” explained Tucker.

“TDV really simplifies and streamlines data access and forces people to use the right data,” added Howard.

“This new tool along with these enhanced capabilities will not only exponentially mature our ability to make data-driven decisions, but will increase our confidence in those decisions,” said Montoya. “This is one of those scenarios in which all the right variables are coming together at the right time to give us an advantage as we operate amid the industry’s changing circumstances.”

**Getting started**

On March 1, Information Technology began accepting requests to create Power BI datasets. As they are developed, they will be made available to everyone in the organization, allowing employees to perform cross-functional analysis.

“WAPA employees are about to shine a light on their desire and ability to be curious, learn more and do better through use of Power BI,” concluded Montoya. “I can’t wait to see what insights they discover and the stories they’ll be able to tell with our data.”

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**WAPA invests in Data Science**

In 2020, the Office of Management and Budget hosted a Federal Data Science Training Program to teach government employees data science skills, such as coding, graph analytics, data visualization and data ethics. Around 60 employees representing 20 agencies participated.

The seven-month government program was held in a virtual format and focused on data visualization and machine learning. The Department of Energy sent three participants, including Information Technology Specialist Steve Wolterstorff and then-acting director of Artificial Intelligence and Technology Office Pam Isom.

The DOE team completed a capstone project to support the Justice40 Initiative. Their project – “Energy Justice: What are the best fit clean energy sources for disadvantaged communities?” – used supervised machine learning to identify disadvantaged communities across the country, along with clean energy potential for those communities. They examined population demographics, environmental and health hazards, temperature extremes, power outages and clean energy potential.

“The course really opened my eyes to the importance of having clean, structured data, and how much effort is involved in cleaning up and preparing data so it can be useful,” said Wolterstorff. “I would encourage anyone who works with or is interested in data to look into this or similar opportunities. It’s not just for IT professionals.”

For trainings and other information, use Teams to join the “Power BI user group” channel under the Learning Community Team.

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*Note: The author is a management and program analyst.*
Get to know WAPA’s CIO

In 2019, Michael Montoya was selected as senior vice president and chief information officer. In this role, he leads more than 200 technology team members managing both traditional and operational technology programs across WAPA’s footprint. He serves as an advisor on information technology issues, business procedures, cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection.
What brought you to WAPA initially? What is your history with the organization?

After spending 24 years in the military and then deciding to retire, my wife, Patricia, and I wanted to come home to Colorado to be near family. We had kids who were very young and we wanted them to be able to know their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

I had several opportunities to stay in Washington, D.C., but I instead focused my search efforts on a technology leader position in the Colorado Springs or Denver area. I was fortunate to see an announcement for an IT supervisor at WAPA that read exactly like what I had been doing in the military.

After a couple of interviews, I was offered the position and was asked to start immediately. The Human Resources and IT departments were great and made my transition seamless. I’ve now been at WAPA for almost 14 years, and it’s been the best career move I could have ever made.

Serving like your lights depend on it and being a student of the business are not just hollow statements. It is truly a part of the culture at WAPA.

What has been your most rewarding experience at WAPA so far?

It would be that of IT Evolution. For those who aren’t aware, IT Evolution was the reorganization of all IT staff, planning and resources under the CIO.

When I arrived at WAPA in 2008, the IT department was siloed. Every region had its own regional information officer, and it was not uncommon for regions to have diverse ways of meeting similar objectives, which often created inconsistencies, inefficiencies and complexity. As an example, we had four email systems, five separate websites, five IT contractor support contracts and six data centers.

In 2015, WAPA undertook the groundbreaking effort to make IT Evolution a reality. It was not easy. What I personally find so rewarding was that I was part of the leadership team that had to change the hearts and minds of people inside and outside WAPA, convincing them that this was the right thing to do and showing them the tangible benefits.

After 18 months of difficult work, we were able to consolidate the IT budget, realign more than 225 staff and integrate many disparate processes, operations, funding mechanisms, contracts and technology systems into one organization aligned under one leader. This was a clear innovative change opportunity that vastly improved WAPA’s management and operation of the IT program. In the seven years since, it has not only been a huge success, but it has also served as a model for similar WAPA efforts.

What is something most people do not know about you?

I played baseball when I was growing up and, naturally, when I had kids, I decided to get involved in coaching. I no longer do any of the head coaching since my kids are mostly grown, but I am still involved as an assistant coach. I work with many kids who want to play competitively beyond high school to help prepare them fundamentally, as well as assist with the recruiting process.

Over the years, I’ve had several players go on to play in college, including two of my own kids. It makes me smile inside when I see these young adults achieve their goals.

I still have one daughter at home and she wants to play in college, so she is working toward that.

I’m a huge proponent of youth sports because of the skills these young athletes develop. They learn what it means to be dedicated to something bigger than they are, to be responsible and understand the value and rewards of hard work. They also learn the importance of teamwork, how to have fun, how to learn from failure and, most of all, how to challenge themselves to reach their full potential.

What are you reading right now? Do you have a favorite author?

It’s not uncommon for me to pick up my tablet and read for hours about anything from sports to personal finance to technology and everything in between. I have found it interesting that, in today’s technological age, information is ubiquitous and it has dramatically altered the way we consume it.

I don’t know if that is a good or bad thing, but what I do know is that, for me, I rarely get my information from just books, television or newspapers. It’s fair to say that technology has shortened my attention span and, if I don’t like something, I just move on to the next interesting subject, topic or article.

That being said, I have read one book recently from cover to cover. It is called The Truth About Money by Ric Edelman.

What are your communication and leadership styles?

If this were a job interview, I would say that I am a situational leader. I say this because I don’t think one specific leadership style can be effective for all situations so, as a leader, you must be flexible.

In my role, there are situations that allow me to delegate because the leaders below me are talented, experienced and lead their areas superbly. In these cases, I just check in periodically. I believe it builds their trust in me, allowing them to do their job without me hovering over them. On the
Information is power and when all information has been communicated appropriately, others have the power to make informed decisions.

opposite end of the spectrum, I can assert a more authoritative leadership style for situations in which I feel something is drifting or needs more direction.

Some people view the authoritative style as a bad thing. For me, I really see it more as a coaching-style of leadership. I believe there are times when new leaders or even very capable leaders need help understanding the objectives, removing obstacles or defining scope.

My communication style is more expressive and participative. I’ve been told that I am a storyteller. Both professionally and personally, when it comes to making decisions or understanding an issue, I like to ask a lot of questions and feel it is important to get everyone’s input before I make an informed decision. Also, I like to tell those affected the backstory of why I made a particular decision.

Information is power and when all information has been communicated appropriately, others have the power to make informed decisions. This is especially important in the IT program, because if one small change is made and it hasn’t been communicated, and it causes a problem, it could have serious effects on the reliability of our operations. Those who know me are aware that I am always telling my staff that they should never be the last one holding the information; it should be communicated up, down and sideways for full transparency. Transparency is one of IT’s core operating principles.

Would you tell us about your coworkers at home?

I have three coworkers at home. I have Patricia, who has been teleworking for the past two years, our dog, Bailey, and a horse named Stinker. However, I still feel like I am alone most of the time. My wife tends to start work a little later than I do, so once she gets up and gets ready, she goes into our home office, and following right behind her is Bailey. We take turns making each other lunch and we socialize a bit and then we go right back to the phone calls, video meetings, email and whatever tasks we have on our to-do lists.

Occasionally, my wife will text me, from about 25 feet away, to ask me to grab the dog and take her out. Usually those are the snowiest or coldest days. Before my workday starts and at the end of my workday, I will feed and water my daughter’s horse and give him some attention. Stinker loves to run around when he sees me and then run over and rub up against me or nibble at my face. Sometimes he just stares deep into my eyes for few minutes with his ears perked. I think that’s to clue me in to the fact that he’s waiting for his horse treat.

During this period of maximum telework, what do you think is the most valuable lesson you’ve learned as a leader?

I believe telework has fundamentally changed the way we think about accomplishing work. As a leader, I have witnessed firsthand that critical work can be done successfully and with quality for many remote workers, and I don’t have to have my eyes on them or be right there in the office with them to ensure this. Many staff members have proven that they can get more work done without the distractions of the commute and interruptions in the office. Plus, I sense that there is better work-life balance.

Secondly, I have learned that staff can and do become distracted or disconnected from the mission, our culture or from coworkers in other functions if they don’t remain connected. Leaders must model the behaviors and set expectations that employees must remain connected beyond their normal set of coworkers so that there is collaboration across all functional areas. This is especially true for new staff members.

Lastly, I’ve learned that not all work can be done through telework. Granted, for most office workers this is indeed the case, but there is still some work that cannot be accomplished remotely. There are also people who may be more extroverted, and they get their energy from working around others and would prefer to be in the office.

I believe this new normal will be a combination of workers in the office, others teleworking and some on travel. The defining factor for success will be the tools we use, which will be a combination of policies, processes, technology and expectations.
Reinvigorating WAPA’s I&D Program

By Peggy Wooten

WAPA has been pursuing a diverse workforce and an inclusive culture for many years. We have provided leadership and opportunities for our current workforce to serve on the Inclusion and Diversity Committee, engaged in discussions about societal issues and offered training on topics such as unconscious bias and how to mitigate it.

As employees are being asked to adjust to new changes in how we work, leadership has recognized that the behaviors found in an inclusive culture are more important than ever. Behaviors such as respecting others, working for a common good and consciously connecting with people who are not the same as you or not in the same situation as you are reflected in WAPA’s core values.

Helping leadership and the workforce practice inclusive behaviors and create a culture in which everyone is welcomed, valued, respected and heard is the primary focus of the Inclusion and Diversity Program. Where diversity exists and inclusion is practiced, innovation can thrive and ideas can be transformed into solid achievements that support WAPA’s mission.

Just like learning to play an instrument or a sport, achieving a truly inclusive culture means starting with the basics. Over the next few months, employees will see more and more D&I concepts introduced through leadership communications, Closed Circuit articles, the D&I Update and the Office of Economic Impact and Diversity website.

The purpose of these micro-learning opportunities is to help employees come to a common understanding about basic D&I concepts so that we can begin to work on strengthening the inclusive behaviors each of us possesses but aren’t able to practice as often as we should.

OEID staff will be collaborating with senior leadership, the Inclusion & Diversity Committee, our Human Resources partners, the Leadership Development Program and every department at WAPA to deliver quality products to employees.

What’s in it for you?

Inclusion with integrity includes everybody. Everyone wins because diversity and inclusion are not just about physically identifiable attributes. Every individual possesses more than 30 dimensions of identity. Any mix of these dimensions can trigger a judgement or an unconscious bias in someone we interact with.

We are looking forward to guiding WAPA on this journey and we encourage you to keep an open mind and come along with us. It will mean stepping out of your comfort zone, but we have been doing that for the past three years, so let’s keep going!

Note: The author is an equal employment specialist.
On April 29, 2021, WAPA welcomed Equal Employment Manager Charles Montañez to lead its Office of Economic Impact and Diversity. In the past year, Montañez has been involved in a number of initiatives to help the office move forward and evolve, as well as those on a wider scale within the organization.

His life so far has taken him on a journey of diversity and inclusion, topics which have long been his passion. That is ultimately what drew him to WAPA.

“I knew WAPA’s OEID was going through some changes,” he said. “I wanted to be a part of it and help reshape and build the Diversity and Inclusion program.”

Montañez was born in La Junta, Colorado, and was raised in the farming town of Ordway.

“I am the fourth child of six,” he said. “I have three older brothers and two younger sisters. My youngest sister died when she was only three months old.”

His town was so small that he attended a county school, made up of students from five towns.

“From kindergarten to graduation, I had basically the same 55 classmates!” he said.

Growing up in such a small area, Montañez knew that he wanted to experience much more of the world.

“I wanted to travel and see as much of the world as I could, and so for high school graduation, I asked my parents for luggage,” he said.

Montañez began a life of travel and exposure to other cultures and perspectives. He participated with doctors and dentists on missions to Africa, Guatemala and Haiti, and has visited many different countries across five continents. He’s been to every state in the U.S., as well as Puerto Rico and Guam. He’s traveled cross-country twice, lived in many major cities and he didn’t stop there.

“In one of my ‘adventures,’ I literally flew around the world in two weeks!” he said.

His passion for travel ended up giving him a professional opportunity to share that love with many others.

“While working in Germany, I went on a United Service Organizations tour that ended up not being a very good experience,” he explained. “I wrote to the director and he asked to speak with me in person. Two weeks later, I became a volunteer tour guide for them, and then ended up also as their travel lead. I created many tours and trained their staff of volunteer guides. The tour program included seven countries and about 30 cities throughout Europe.”

In addition to travel, one other very important thing to Montañez is his family.
WAPA has a great reputation, and this opportunity allows me to get back into the EEO and diversity and inclusion world again.

“My family always comes first, and I count my siblings as great friends as well,” he said. “We often travel together. This past November, we spent a few days in Las Vegas and checked off another bucket list item for each of us as we took a day trip by helicopter through the Grand Canyon. From Las Vegas, we all met for three days in Santa Fe, which led up to a family fiesta and pig roast. In September, we will attend a once-in-10-years event in Oberammergau, Germany, and plans are now under way for a tropical holiday in either Hawaii or Mexico!”

Montañez’s professional journey was also – less literally – all over the map.

“I went to college to become a teacher and counselor but had a medical emergency that took me out of college my sophomore year,” he said, referring to everything that followed as “diverse, interesting and exciting.” Montañez has worked in banking, as a personal shopper, as a stylist and as a hospital administrator for nearly 10 years.

“To this day,” he said of the latter, “it remains one of the most satisfying jobs I have ever had.”

At one point, a friend of Montañez invited him to a training session at Spelman University in Atlanta, Georgia, on the subject of diversity.

That friend and two others later created a management consulting firm, and Montañez, still working for the hospital, became a partner. Within two years, they won a multiyear contract with the United States Postal Service.

“My mother passed away during that time, and the hospital was going through a merger, so I left Atlanta and served as lead consultant for our client in San Juan, Puerto Rico,” he said. “I lived and worked in San Juan, as well as Chicago, and helped fulfill another contract in New York City all at the same time.”

In keeping with Montañez’s globe-trotting tendencies, his federal career actually began in Germany.

“After just a few weeks in that country, I ended up working at the Department of Defense, Education Activity, or DoDEA,” he said. “I started out as a GS-05, just so I wouldn’t have to return to the U.S. every three months to get my passport validated, or so I thought!”

His job with the DoDEA quickly became a career.

“Within my first year, I became the assistant to the chief of staff, and then for both the deputy director and director as well,” he said. “I also worked as an IT specialist, contracting officer representative, Equal Employment Opportunity counselor, EEO manager and, finally, due to time restrictions one is allowed to work overseas as a federal employee, I had to return to the states.”

Soon afterward, Montañez took another job with DoD, this time at their headquarters in Washington, D.C.

“I got the EEO specialist job, which combined duties as an EEO counselor, diversity manager, disability program manager and special emphasis program manager all in one job,” he explained. “By the end of my time with the Department, eight years later, I was the acting deputy director of the EEO and Diversity Office.”

From there, he drove across the country and worked in California as the EEO director for the Navy SEALs.

“I was the EEO director for a few years,” said Montañez. “Then I was approached by the inspector general to help on some inspections and with focus groups. When a position came open in their office, I got the job as the internal controls and risk manager and also became a certified inspector and investigator.”

Prior to joining WAPA, he managed the SEALs’ Internal Controls and Risk Management Program and served as the acting deputy inspector general.

His vast personal experience of the world, various organizations and numerous responsibilities have provided him with the valuable perspective that he brings to WAPA today.

“WAPA has a great reputation, and this opportunity allows me to get back into the EEO and diversity and inclusion world again,” he said. “Also, my whole family lives in Colorado, and since I have been away for many years, it was time to move back and be closer to all of them.”

Montañez is one year into his WAPA career, but he is already convinced that he made the right choice.

“I have met a lot of great, dedicated and professional people at WAPA, and so the move has already proven to be a great decision for me both professionally and personally!” he said.

“I look forward to meeting so many others, and in person one day, but I am proud to serve in such a great and important organization.”

March 2022
Upgrade reveals value of mobile transformers

In September 2021, Rocky Mountain employees placed a mobile transformer into service at Kimball Substation in Kimball County, Nebraska. This month, they plan to take it out of service. During that seven-month period, the substation underwent a significant construction stage addition, with the mobile transformer ensuring minimal interruption of service.

“A mobile transformer was required because we needed to keep providing High West Energy customers with power,” said Electrical Engineer Greg Johnson, who managed the project. “There were upgrades that we needed to make to Kimball Substation and other upgrades that we wanted to make. But that’s not something you can just do when you have customers relying on the service that the substation provides.”

WAPA has access to several mobile transformers, which the organization retains for this exact purpose. Upgrades can only go so far while a substation is energized, and de-energizing a substation can leave customers without power. Mobile transformers can be placed into service to bridge that gap.
“WAPA prides itself on providing reliable service,” Johnson continued. “Mobile transformers allow us to do that while also increasing the quality of that service.”

Kimball serves as a tap substation on the Archer-to-Sidney 115-kilovolt transmission line, which provides power to High West Energy and the City of Kimball. A new connection to Kimball Wind necessitated the upgrades.

“Adding a 30-megawatt windfarm to the end of the six-mile-long City of Kimball 115-kV feed required the sectionalization of the Archer-to-Sidney line,” explained Johnson. “Thus, the upgrade project involved replacing the 115-kV taps with a four-breaker ring bus, providing greatly improved protection for the customers on the transmission line.”

Placing the mobile transformer into service allowed the power to stay flowing while replacing the taps and realigning the existing transformer to its own breaker bay in the substation’s new 115-kV yard. It also allowed for some additional upgrades to happen concurrently.

“The existing control building could only hold three control panels, and it was already full, so we included a new control building in the scope of the work,” said Johnson. “This required rewiring and recommissioning the existing transformer and 34.5-kV breakers.”

Maintenance employees took the opportunity to replace breakers that were nearing the end of their expected service life, something that was made both easier and less disruptive thanks to the mobile transformer.

“It involved several customers and quite a bit of coordination by our dispatchers in getting all the pieces together,” said Electrical Engineer Brian Bucks.

The team made sure that the coordination would be as thorough and the project as non-disruptive as possible.

“We’ve held meetings every three weeks with High West Energy for the past year,” Johnson explained. “We worked with the City of Kimball and Kimball Wind through the typical outage request process, as well.”

The mobile transformer seemed like it could have been a perfect solution, but there was one complication.

“We moved the mobile transformer to the site, but during initial testing, one 115-kV bushing tested bad,” said Bucks. “That’s why we test things ahead of time, though. It’s all part of the process.”

The mobile transformer was moved to the field office in Gering to replace the bushing and then a reclaimer was used to vacuum fill the transformer. Upon its return to Kimball Substation, the crew performed another complete battery of tests to ensure that it was ready. Electricians made sure to test all other relevant equipment as well.

“We then energized the mobile transformer a week before load was placed on it,” Bucks explained. “That allows it to ‘soak,’ allowing any problems to be identified and corrected before placing customer load on the mobile transformer.”

Connecting load to the mobile transformer required an eight-hour outage to High West Energy, the City of Kimball and Kimball Windfarm. This was necessary for the upgrade to proceed safely, and the significant communication of the outage beforehand helped to minimize disruption.

“Thanks to some excellent coordination, we had what can be called a ‘mutually beneficial outage,’” said Johnson. “Service was interrupted only briefly, and we were able to implement a number of necessary and helpful upgrades.”

The overall upgrade work took place across several years – design began in 2019 – and the mobile transformer allowed the vast majority of it to be completed without significant service interruption.
New mobile device policy in effect

APA-issued Apple iOS devices are required to remain updated so that they are no more than one minor version behind the most current available version. On March 1, Information Technology implemented more specific control actions. Now, employees who do not keep their devices compliant will begin to lose functionality until the issue is resolved.
“Many devices are out of compliance right now,” said Vice President of IT - Cyber Security Kevin Schulz in his announcement. “The clock will reset for all mobile devices on March 1, which will serve as the new Day 1. Out-of-compliance users will begin receiving notifications immediately and, unless the update is installed, Office 365 applications on the device will not be accessible beginning March 15.”

Moving forward, any WAPA employee who does not keep their relevant mobile devices updated will face loss of functionality on a similar timeline.

After 14 days of non-compliance, employees’ devices will lose access to cloud services, such as the Microsoft Office 365 applications.

After 28 days of non-compliance, their devices will be locked. At this point, all functionality will be disallowed, other than the ability to call into the WAPA IT Call Center to unlock the device and update the software.

“Over the past year, WAPA has been improving its mobile device management and processes for all WAPA-managed mobile devices,” Schulz continued. “Mobile phones have evolved. They are no longer simply used to make calls. They are computing devices. They can access, store and transmit WAPA information that must be secured in ways similar to how we secure our computers, data and assets.”

He explained that the prolonged maximum telework posture has resulted in an increase in requests for employees to have WAPA-issued mobile devices.

“Additionally, with the current geopolitical landscape and potential for an increase in cybersecurity threats,” he said, “it is especially imperative to ensure appropriate security on all mobile devices, including tablets, that touch WAPA information.”

What employees can do

Mobile devices will alert users that updates are available via pop-up notifications. Employees are expected to pay attention to these and install the relevant update as soon as possible. Operating system upgrades are typically completed in 30 minutes or less.

Employees whose mobile devices fall out of compliance will receive multiple automated email notifications prompting them to update their mobile device. This notification will include instructions regarding how to install the update.

If a mobile device is locked due to non-compliance, the employee must follow the notification on their lock screen to call WITCC, which will be required to unlock the device and update the software.

“Your questions are welcomed and valued,” Schulz concluded. “Please do not hesitate to contact me or your local information systems security officer with questions about this policy or any other cybersecurity concerns. Thank you for your support in maintaining a secure mobile computing environment.”

Note: This article is adapted from information presented in a WAPA-wide email sent Feb. 28.

To install an operating system update on your iOS device:

1. Plug the device in to a charger.
2. Connect to a secure Wi-Fi network.
3. Go to Settings, General, Software Update.
4. Click “Download and Install.”
5. Enter your passcode and follow any prompts.

If you have trouble running an update, contact witcc@wapa.gov or at 720.962.7111.
Chemicals can enter the body through inhalation or breathing, absorption through the eyes or skin, ingestion by mouth or injection through a cut, wound or puncture. With so many different chemicals and scenarios, how can we know how to use a specific compound safely? Fortunately, there is a standardized process that can help.

Hazard Communication, also known as HazCom, can reduce exposure to chemical hazards by informing users of data and practices related to safe use and proper handling of hazardous chemicals. The following information explains some basics for the workplace; however, most can also be used in the home.

A key part of Hazard Communication is presenting clear information about complex compounds that we can all understand and use to protect ourselves, others and the environment. This is accomplished through accessible, user-friendly warning labels and Safety Data Sheets.

**Warning labels**

Proper warning labels on chemical containers should follow the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals, or GHS. Employees should make sure that hazardous chemical containers are properly labeled with the identity of the chemical and appropriate hazard warnings. If you see one with no label or a damaged label, take it out of use and report it to your supervisor.
Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals includes:

- One of nine standard pictograms that visually identify specific hazards, including carcinogens, flammability, irritants and health hazards.
- Signal words that emphasize hazards and severity, such as “warning” and “danger.”
- Hazard statements that are standard to the hazard class; “Toxic if ingested,” for example.
- Precautionary statements that identify measures to prevent or minimize adverse effects of the chemical.
- Product identifiers that contain names or numbers of hazardous products or ingredients.
- Supplier identification, contact information and any other supplemental data.

Safety Data Sheets

Another helpful information tool is the standardized Safety Data Sheet. It must be available to employees for all hazardous substances used in the workplace.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, “The SDS includes information such as the properties of each chemical; the physical, health, and environmental health hazards; protective measures; and safety precautions for handling, storing, and transporting the chemical.”

An SDS is required to be provided by manufacturers, distributors and suppliers of hazardous chemicals when they are purchased. If a chemical shipment arrives without an SDS, contact the manufacturer or supplier and request a copy.

Controls

Hazard Communication also involves several strategies that proactively protect people and the environment from chemical exposure.

Engineering controls are designed mechanisms built into a process that protect employees, such as ventilation and exhaust systems, use of barriers to prevent entry into an area and eliminating or substituting hazardous chemicals used in a process.

Administrative controls are policies, procedures, rules and schedules aimed at protecting employees and minimizing exposure levels. These types of controls can be found in the "Power System Safety Manual" and Order 440 – Occupational Safety and Health Program.

Work practice controls reduce chemical exposure by changing how work is performed. These include changing existing practices, inspection and maintenance of process control equipment, good housekeeping and proper supervision. Another important control is proper personal hygiene to prevent ingestion of chemicals. This includes not drinking, eating, using tobacco products or chewing gum in regulated areas and washing hands after leaving one.

The last line of defense against chemical exposure is using proper personal protective equipment, or PPE, such as safety glasses or goggles, protective clothing and respirators.

PPE should only be relied on when engineering, administrative and work practice controls have been implemented or while engineering controls are being used. Proper PPE usage for a specific chemical is identified in an SDS.

Training

Specialized training is designed to inform employees about the OSHA Hazard Communication Standard, container labeling, SDSes and workplace operations where hazards are present. It also covers physical and health risks associated with the chemicals used in a work area, chemical detection methods, exposure controls and emergency procedures.

Chemical exposure is a hazard that comes in many forms. Hazard Communication can help inform us of how to prevent or mitigate such risks.

Note: The author is a technical writer who works under the Cherokee Nation Strategic Programs contract. Information in this article is adapted from that provided by the National Institutes of Health, Division of Occupational Health and Safety and Occupational Safety and Health Administration.
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.

April’s tips

If you are posting PDF documents online, whether internally or externally, you will need to ensure that they are 508 compliant. Here are some easy steps to follow that will help you check and fix accessibility issues when using Adobe Acrobat Pro 2017.

1. If Accessibility is listed in your tools pane, click that and go to Step 4. If Accessibility is not listed in your tools pane, click More Tools.

2. Scroll down to Accessibility. Beneath it, click the arrow pointing down and choose Add Shortcut.

3. Confirm that Accessibility is now listed in your tools pane. Click it.


5. Click Full Check.

6. Click Start Checking.

7. The Accessibility Checker will show its results on the left side of the screen. Scroll through the results and focus on problems indicated by red X marks. Right click those problems. If you are given the option to Fix them, click that and follow the instructions that appear.

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

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.

New feature for requesting IT support

On March 10, Information Technology launched a new Service Portal capability. When employees are back in the office, it is recommended that they refrain from physically visiting the Desktop Support areas for help. Instead, and for faster service, use the new Request On-site IT Support feature.

This feature allows employees to request IT “touch services,” such as asking someone to set up a workstation or replace malfunctioning or broken equipment, including monitors, laptops, docking stations, keyboards, mice and webcams. The new feature allows employees to request IT help and propose a day and time that is convenient for them.

For different types of IT support, continue using WAPA IT Call Center Chat or other Service Portal features.
Fitness reimbursement deadline update

WAPA’s Fitness Program allows federal employees to receive partial reimbursement for focusing on their physical health. Employees may claim 50% for qualified expenses up to $1,000 for a maximum reimbursement of $500.

The deadline for reimbursement submission is now Dec. 1. Employees must submit all fiscal year 2022 reimbursement requests to their regional processing point of contact no later than this date.

Reimbursement is available only to federal employees and it does not include family members. For joint memberships, employees must demonstrate the individual participant cost or expenditure. Term limits are capped at 12 months, meaning that receipts must reflect a 12-month period or less for program participation.

This is a taxable benefit and reimbursement will be reflected on the annual W-2, Wage and Tax Statement. Additionally, it will be subject to quarterly payroll tax deduction based on the amount.

For more information, visit myWAPA, Employee Resources, Fitness Program.

COVID-19 self-reporting flow chart updated

WAPA has updated its COVID-19 self-reporting flow chart. This resource guides employees in terms of what to do if they are experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms, have tested positive for COVID-19 or have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

The flow chart should be used to determine when to self-report to your supervisor or case manager, regardless of work status or vaccination status.

The updated version is easier to read with clickable links to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, which includes the list of recently updated COVID-19 symptoms.

View the updated flow chart at myWAPA, COVID-19 Updates, WAPA COVID updates, Flow chart: when to report your COVID case.

Asset Management releases 2021 program summary

WAPA has published Data Driving Decisions, the Project and Asset Services summary for fiscal year 2021. Project and Asset Services is responsible for executing four specific lines of business: Asset Management, Asset Maintenance, Geospatial Information Systems and Project Management.

The document provides an overview of WAPA assets by region and type of network equipment, asset condition data on critical transmission equipment and 10-year projections on asset investment, health and risk.

Read Data Driving Decisions to learn how Asset Management collects, analyzes and reports data to provide WAPA with a comprehensive picture of asset condition and potential risk.

View the complete document by visiting wapa.gov, About, Asset Management.

2022 Safety Incentive Program is live

The 2022 Safety Incentive Program Award is now accepting submissions. The program encourages integrated safety practices, continuous safety improvement and a healthful workforce across WAPA. It rewards employees who document their safe practices and safety trainings.

The task year is July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022. If employees complete or have completed qualifying activities within that time period, they can earn the point this year.

Employees must submit their forms via the appropriate SharePoint link to their first-level supervisor by June 30 and supervisors must have all forms approved by July 15. Employees will receive an email that their award was submitted successfully. PDF forms are not accepted.

For instructions and to complete the form, visit myWAPA, Departments, Human Resources Shared Service Center, Awards, Safety Incentive Program.