



INSIDE

Page 1 - Trends: Data Centers and their Impact on Public Power

Page 5 - Words Worth Reading Twice

Page 6 - HCI Owner NCPA's Randy Howard

Page 9 - HCI Marketing Affiliate TMEPA's Brian Solsbee

Page 10 - Upcoming Conferences

Page 11 - HCI Blog

TRENDS: Data Centers and their Impact on Public Power

What are Data Centers?

Think of them as digital warehouses storing and processing the information that powers modern life - everything from online banking to video calls, from traffic systems to medical records. Data is everywhere - streaming, storing, syncing - and data centers are the digital engines behind it all. But with great data comes great power demand.



Source: iStock

Average Size of a Data Center:

- **Typical Range:** Most data centers fall between 10,000 and 100,000 square feet of raised-floor space for IT equipment.
- **Hyperscale Data Centers:** The largest data centers built by major cloud providers like Amazon, Google, Microsoft often exceed 500,000 to over 1 million+ square feet (~23 acres). These massive campuses house tens of thousands of servers and huge power and cooling infrastructure.



Source: iStock

What Kind of Data Do They Handle?

Type of Data

- Customer Data
- Financial Transactions
- Medical Records
- Business Apps
- Communications
- Media and Web Hosting
- Big Data and AI
- IoT and Smart Devices
- Security Logs

Examples

Names, behavior, preferences used for CRM and personalization
Banking records, credit card payments, payroll
EHRs, lab results, insurance data (regulated - e.g. HIPAA)
ERP systems, HR tools, supply chain platforms
Email servers, VoIP data, video conferencing
Websites, streaming platforms, digital libraries
Real-time analytics, predictive modeling, machine learning
Smart grids, home sensors, industrial monitoring
Access records, cybersecurity data

Who's Plugged In?

Industry

- Finance and Banking
- Healthcare
- Retail and Commerce
- Telecom
- Tech & SaaS (Software as a Service)
- Government and Defense
- Education
- Manufacturing
- Media and Entertainment
- **Energy & Utilities**

Why They Use Data Centers

Transactions, Fraud Detections, Customer Data
Patient Records, Imaging, Telemedicine
Inventory, Sales, Consumer Behavior
Call/Data Services, Customer Management
Cloud Apps, Development Platforms
Secure Citizen Data, Public Safety Systems
Online Learning, Research Databases
IoT, Production Monitoring, Logistics
Streaming content, Personalization Engines
Smart Grids, Environmental Sensors, Energy Analytics

Why This Matters to Public Power

Data centers require constant, high-volume power and they operate 24/7. As a result, data centers are driving demand for clean, reliable energy. Public power utilities must adapt to meet this rising demand, ensuring grid reliability while attracting data-driven industries.



Source: iStock

Data Centers and the US Power Demand: Rising Fast

In 2023, Data centers consumed approximately 4.4% of all US electricity, according to estimates from the US Department of Energy and the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab.

By 2028, electricity use by Data centers is projected to rise to between 6.7% and 12%, depending on the pace of AI expansion, cooling technology, and infrastructure development.

By 2030, usage could stabilize around 12% of the national demand - triple today's share - according to multiple energy policy sources. Visual Capitalist projects the demand will be 606 TWh annually.

Data centers are already a major force in US energy consumption, and they are continuing to grow fast. The explosive use of AI, cloud services and machine learning mean power providers must prepare for higher loads, grid stress, and new infrastructure. Now is the time for Public Power to take the opportunity to:

- expand load capacity,
- offer renewable energy options,
- build partnerships with tech firms, and
- innovate grid resilience and energy storage.

Beyond the Public Power grid, there are several broader community impacts such as:

- **Water Use.** Data centers use significant amounts of water for cooling, especially in dry or hot regions. Efficient cooling strategies are key to operation.
- **City Finances.** Local governments benefit from property taxes, land use fees, and infrastructure investment ties to data center growth.
- **Environmental Footprint.** Energy-intensive operations raise concerns, but many centers are pushing for net-zero emissions through renewables and offsets.
- **Jobs and Economic Boost.** While not labor-intensive, a typical data center creates 30-50 permanent high-skill jobs and hundreds more during construction.

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, Uptime Institute, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Environmental Protection Agency, International Data Corporation, Economic Development Council, McKinsey & Company, Deloitte, PwC, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Data Center Coalition, and The Green Grid and International.

NOTE: There have been two recent PBS News Hour video segments on AI data centers.

- **"AI Data Center Boom"**, PBS News Hour, August 17, 2025, (5:03)
<https://www.pbs.org/video/ai-data-center-boom-1755461002/>
- **"The Growing Environmental Impact of AI..."** PBS News Hour, May 25, 2025 (4:58)
<https://www.pbs.org/video/ai-the-grid-1748201430/>

"Northern Virginia is the world's largest data center market, accounting for 13% of the total reported data center operational capacity worldwide." - Virginia Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission.

Words Worth Reading Twice

"The struggle doesn't mean you're failing, it means you're still in the game."

-Attributed to Joseph Delle Fave, posted on Facebook 08/08/25



Source: Stock Image

"Be like water, adapt, and overcome. Water doesn't fight obstacles. It flows around them. When it meets a rock, it doesn't stop. It finds a way forward. Over time, it carves through the hardest stone. Life will throw obstacles your way, but instead of resisting, learn to adapt. Keep moving, keep evolving, and let nothing stop your progress."

-Attributed to Bruce Lee

Correction: We apologize for a typo in the August Issue of the Hometown Connections Newsletter. The two-page article on Lisa Miller said Lisa had 365 years of experience. It should have said 36 years.



HCI Owner Northern California Power Agency (NCPA) Randy Howard



Randy Howard is retiring! After more than 40 years of dedicated service to the public power industry and nearly a decade as CEO (General Manager) of the Northern California Power Agency (NCPA), Randy Howard announced on August 15th that he will retire in March 2026. Randy has served as the Chairman of Hometown Connections, Inc. for seven years. He will leave big shoes to fill and above all, he will be deeply missed! All of us at Hometown Connections, Inc. (HCI) are honored to celebrate his many accomplishments and express our deep appreciation for his steady leadership, collaborative spirit, and unwavering dedication to public power.

A Steady, Thoughtful Voice for Public Power

Randy's career has included leadership roles across the western United States:

- He served many years with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), rising to Senior Assistant General Manager of the Power System.
- Since 2014, he has served as General Manager of NCPA, steering the agency through transformation and expansion. His quiet strength of character, strategic thinking, and deep commitment to local communities made him a trusted leader not only within NCPA but across the entire public power sector.

A Lifetime of Dedication and Sacrifice

A career like Randy Howard's is not built overnight. It is the result of decades of focus, perseverance, and deep commitment to a higher purpose. Achieving this level of leadership in the public power sector comes not only with professional milestones, but with personal sacrifices: early mornings, long nights, time away from family, and setting aside hobbies and personal pursuits in service of something larger. Along the way, there are trade-offs for every leader - but they are made in pursuit of a vision: creating a stronger, more reliable, and more equitable energy future for communities across the West. Randy's journey reflects what one person can accomplish over a lifetime when guided by principle, passion, and purpose.

- **Broad impact:** Oversaw service to 16 NCPA members and more than 700,000 electric customers. Also provided contractual power management support for three community choice aggregators and three water agencies across Northern California.
- **Regional energy leadership:** Represented publicly owned utilities (POUs) on the Western Energy Imbalance Market (EIM) Nominating Committee and served on the launch committee for the West-Wide Governance Pathways Initiative, aiming for a regional transmission organization in the West.
- **Board and chair positions:**
 - Board Member, California Municipal Utilities Association (CMUA)
 - Board Chair, Hometown Connections Inc.
 - Chair, Central Valley Project Corporation
 - Co-Chair, Electricity Sub-Sector Coordinating Council (ESCC) Wildfire Working Group
 - Past Board Member, Transmission Agency of Northern California (TANC)
 - Frequent subject-matter expert testifying on Capitol Hill, before FERC, and in the California Legislature
- **Clean energy initiative:** Initiated the transition of the Lodi Energy Center (LEC) from natural gas to green hydrogen, securing federal funding to reduce carbon emissions and help NCPA members navigate the plant's future.
- **Long-term legacy:** His operational knowledge and policy foresight positioned NCPA to thrive amid a rapidly evolving, complex energy landscape—both in California and nationally.

A Valued Partner to Hometown Connections

"Over the years, Randy has been more than a colleague - he's been a true partner and a steady friend to Hometown Connections. His collaborative approach and thoughtful leadership enriched our work together, and his support of shared services and innovation helped strengthen the network of public power agencies we all serve. "What I've always admired most about Randy - both as Chair of HCI and as a person - is his integrity, his quiet wisdom, and his genuine care for people. He leads with humility and listens with intention, which made working with him not just productive, but truly enjoyable."

--Marc Gerken, CEO of HCI

"Working with Randy was not only productive - it was personally meaningful. He embodies the quiet leadership that makes people and public power better. He's a true lover of great food, fine wine, and excellent restaurants - and was the mastermind behind one of the most memorable and enjoyable HCI Gatherings we've ever had! Randy's passion for bringing people together made the event not just successful, but genuinely fun. His creativity, insights, and encouragement to reach a higher level of performance helped HCI and our Team. He will be very much missed."

--Annette DuPont-Ewing and Marc McCain of the HCI Leadership Team



Randy Howard with NCPA members on Capital Hill.



Randy Howard at USDOE with NCPA Executive Committee members.

Congratulations, Randy — and Thank You!

While we'll greatly miss his leadership, we're excited for Randy as he moves into this well-deserved new chapter. His legacy will continue through the countless professionals and agencies he's impacted - and through the stronger, more resilient public power system he helped shape.

Congratulations, Randy! May your retirement be filled with freedom, new adventures, and countless moments of joy with Lisa and your children and grandchildren. Thank you and warmest wishes in your retirement from your HCI Team.



HCI Marketing Affiliate Tennessee Municipal Electric Power Association (TMEPA) Brian Solsbee

Brian Solsbee, Executive Director at the Tennessee Municipal Electric Power Association (TMEPA). Brian's leadership at the helm of TMEPA has been nothing short of transformative. His deep understanding of the challenges facing public power in Tennessee, paired with his strategic vision and collaborative approach, has strengthened the voice of municipal utilities across the state. Under his guidance, TMEPA continues to be a driving force for innovation, reliability, and advocacy in the public power sector. Brian Solsbee has been the executive director of Tennessee Municipal Electric Power for over 8 years. He is a graduate of the US Air Force Academy, and he enjoys attending concerts/sporting events and hiking in his personal time. His biggest challenge at work is the constantly changing federal policies and their impact on TVA and public power. He sees load growth in the Tennessee Valley as TVA builds additional generation creating pressure on rates as a challenge for the utilities who buy power from TVA. Brian can be reached by email at bsolsbee@tmepa.org.

TMEPA is a membership association of 60 municipal and county electric power providers that serve over 2.4 million homes and businesses across Tennessee. TMEPA's members serve two-thirds of the electric customers in Tennessee and distribute three-quarters of the power sold in the state. TMEPA is proud to be community owned and customer focused. TMEPA's Members' Services include electricity, natural gas, water, wastewater and broadband. In total, TMEPA's Members serve over 4 million ratepayers, employ almost 10,000 local citizens, and have \$17.2 billion in utility total assets. Sixteen of TMEPA's members have been level reliability, safety, workforce and system improvement.

Tennessee Leads the Nation in Public Power!

- 1st in Public Power MWh sales,
- 2nd In Public Power Revenue,
- 2nd in Public Power Customers
- 12th ranked State for the Number of Public Power Utilities, and
- 13 of the Nation's 100 Largest Public Power Utilities reside in the state.

TMEPA Contact Information:

Address: 212 Overlook Circle, Suite 205, Brentwood, TN 37027

Phone: 615-373-5738

Email: info@tmepa.org

Website: <https://www.sprypoint.com/>

Upcoming Conferences

- Sept 7-10** **APPA Business & Financial Conference 2025, Raleigh, NC**
<https://www.publicpower.org/2025-business-financial-conference-information-sponsors>
- Sept 7-10** **APPA Cybersecurity & Technology Conference, Raleigh, NC**
<https://my.publicpower.org/s/community-event?id=a1YUT0000039s2f2AA>
- Sept 8-11** **RE+, Las Vegas, NV**
<https://www.re-plus.com/>
- Sept 16-17** **CEATI Strategy & Innovation Conference, Fort Lauderdale, FL**
<https://www.ceati.com/event/strategy-innovation-conference-2025>
NOTE: Loreto Sarraconi, President of HCI Partner Acumen will be presenting
- Sept 22-24** **American Municipal Power's Annual Conference, Columbus, OH**
<https://www.amppartners.org/services/annual-conference/>
- Sept 23-24** **Michigan Municipal Electric Association (MMEA) Annual Conference, Muskegon, MI**
Contact MMEA at 517-323-8346
- Sept 23-25** **T & D World Live, Phoenix, AZ**
<https://events.tdworld.com/2025>
- Sept 24-25** **Northern California Power Agency (NCPA) Annual Conference, Monterey, CA**
<https://www.ncpa.com/meetings/events/ncpa-annual-conference>
- Oct 1-3** **MPUA Annual Conference, Osage Beach, MO**
<https://mpua.org/page/annualconference>
- Oct 7-9** **The Utility Expo, Louisville, KY**
<https://www.theutilityexpo.com/>
- Oct 28-29** **2025 FMEA Energy Connections Conference & Trade Show, Jacksonville, FL** <https://www.flpublicpower.com/events/2025-fmea-energy-connections-conference>
- Nov 11-12** **CEATI Transmission & Distribution Conference, Orlando, FL**
<https://www.ceati.com/event/transmission-distribution-conference-2025>
- Jan 11-13** **APPA Joint Action Conference, Destin, FL**
<https://www.publicpower.org/event/joint-action-conference>
- Jan 20-22** **2026 POWERGEN International, San Antonio, TX**
<https://www.powergen.com/>
- Feb 8-11** **2026 NARUC Winter Policy Summit, Washington, D.C.**
<https://www.naruc.org/events/all-events/2026-naruc-winter-policy-summit/>

To have your conference listed, please send information to acdupont-ewing@hometownconections.com

HCI Blog

HCI Blog: A Platform for Collaboration and Innovation

<https://blog.hometownconnections.com/>

HCI warmly invites all its Partners and Affiliates to actively contribute to the blog. Whether it's sharing a recent project, providing commentary on industry trends, or offering advice based on your experiences, your input is highly valued. This collaborative effort will not only highlight the incredible work being done across the network but also provide a valuable resource for continuous learning and development.

How to Contribute

Contributing to the HCI blog is straightforward. Interested Partners and Affiliates need to follow these simple steps:

- **Write your article:** Focus on topics that you are enthusiastic about and that would benefit the HCI community or public power in general.
- **Submit your article:** Send your completed article to acdupont-ewing@hometownconnections.com.

Want to
STAND OUT
in a Crowd?



Stock photo

Advertise on the HCI Blog and/or in the HCI Newsletter!

Reach a targeted and engaged audience by advertising in our professionally rebranded newsletter, distributed by HCI Affiliate members (Joint Action Agencies) to their utility customers. This is a great opportunity to promote your company and services directly to decision-makers and create business opportunities across multiple communities.

Ad rates:

- Half-page, full-color ad: \$250
- Full-page, full-color ad: \$400

Space is limited, so reserve your spot today and get your business in front of the right audience.



Hometown Connections, Inc. is a national, non-profit utility services organization specializing in the unique challenges of community-owned utilities. Our team of consultants and vendor partners will help you streamline your business processes, enhance customer service, improve security, develop plans for the future, and much more. Since our founding 25 years ago, HCI has been dedicated to connecting Public Power with trusted, high-value products, services, and expert knowledge. HCI actively seeks out and collaborates with top-tier third-party partners who bring patented technologies, innovative services, and industry-leading expertise. These partnerships empower utilities of all sizes to drive long-term improvements, optimize operations, and enhance service reliability for their communities.

Celebrating 25 Years of Empowering Public Power!

Owners

American Municipal Power, Inc.
Energy Southeast
Missouri Public Utility Alliance
Northern California Power Agency
Vermont Public Power Supply Authority

Marketing Affiliates

Energy Northwest
Florida Municipal Electric Association
Illinois Municipal Electric Agency
Indiana Municipal Utilities Agency
Michigan Municipal Electric Association
Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association Missouri
River Energy Services
Municipal Electric Systems of Oklahoma Nebraska
Municipal Power Pool
Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency
Tennessee Municipal Electric Power Association
Texas Public Power Association

Sales Affiliates

American Municipal Power, Inc.
ElectriCities of North Carolina
Energy Southeast
Municipal Power Agency
Missouri Public Utility Alliance
Oklahoma Municipal Power Authority Piedmont
Municipal Power Agency

Partners

Acumen
Energy Southeast, A Cooperative District
Exacter
Great Blue
Hometown Connections
Katama Technologies, Inc.
Leverage Leadership
Marsh USA
MFP Connect
PowerSecure
Questline Digital
SpryPoint
Stem
The Energy Authority
Utility Financial Solutions

HCI Board of Directors:

Randy S. Howard, Chair
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Ken Nolan, Treasurer
Jeff Haas, Secretary
Mark Ennis, Member
Brannndon Kelley, Member

HCI Team

Marc Gerken, P.E., President and CEO
Nilaksh Kothari, P.E., Executive Consultant
Mark McCain, Exec. Consultant for Strategic Planning
Annette DuPont-Ewing, Director of Marketing

Battery storage, simplified

Helping Public Power Unlock the Value of Storage

Battery storage is complex — but you don't have to navigate it alone. Stem supports public power utilities at every stage, from feasibility and procurement to commissioning, operations, and optimization. Whether it's your first project or a growing fleet, we help you capture lasting value from storage.

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The background of the right half of the page features a photograph of several large, white, rectangular battery storage containers in an outdoor setting. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter and a pattern of small yellow dots. The Stem logo is positioned in the bottom right corner of this section.

stem

The Hometown Connections Advantage

25 Years of Empowering and Educating Public Power Utilities



We're a nonprofit services organization specializing in the unique challenges of community-owned utilities.

Solutions for Public Power

- Advanced Metering Infrastructure
- Business Strategy
- Customer Care
- Cybersecurity
- Finance
- Operations
- Strategic Planning
- Technology
- Workforce

Learn more at www.hometownconnections.com.

