

## Consumers Energy Proposes New Program to Explore Burying Power Lines

*Expanded Effort Builds on Other Approaches to Reduce Power Outages*

JACKSON, Mich., July 5, 2023 – Consumers Energy today announced it is proposing a targeted undergrounding pilot program pending approval from the Michigan Public Service Commission. The program is meant to help the company better understand how to bury power lines in a cost-effective way to strengthen Michigan's electric grid and reduce outages.

The pilot will study real-world resiliency improvements that result from burying power lines, and how those improvements compare with other approaches to improving electric service for nearly 2 million Michigan homes and businesses.

Buried power lines are protected from common outage causes, including lightning, high winds, tornadoes, heavy snow, ice and falling tree limbs. Buried lines also reduce or eliminate downed wire electrocutions, fire hazards, vehicle collisions, and falling poles, improving public safety.

Based on results from other states and energy providers that have moved overhead lines underground, Consumers Energy estimates it can improve resiliency 90 percent along circuits where lines are buried.

“We know burying power lines will help make the grid stronger, especially during violent storms that are hitting Michigan more frequently,” **said Greg Salisbury, Consumers Energy’s vice president of electric distribution engineering.** “Historically the costs to bury lines have been too expensive, but we have driven down the cost per mile to be equivalent to above-ground hardening costs. This pilot will help us learn even more about how to bury lines in ways that keep costs as low as possible, allowing us to bury additional lines in the future.”

“We can't control the weather, but we can control how we prepare for more extreme storms,” **said Chris Laird, Consumers Energy’s vice president of electric operations.** “Burying the lines is just one tool we can use in our growing toolbox to prevent outages from impacting our customers. We are committed to delivering more reliable, resilient energy for every customer.”

The pilot program will target circuits in Genesee, Livingston, Allegan, Ottawa, Montcalm, and Iosco counties that have frequent, lengthy outages and are in areas with dense trees, which are often responsible for the outages.

In the future, Consumers Energy aims to underground about 400 miles of line annually. Today, about 15 percent of Consumers Energy lines are underground, and most are located in subdivisions and areas with high population density.

"It is important to remember burying our lines might be the right solution for some areas but not others. We will use a strategic approach and do it in the most cost-effective way for our customers. And by using a few different strategies to strengthen the grid, we will be able to deliver a brighter future for all the communities we serve," **Salisbury said.**

The energy provider's overall \$5.4 billion electric reliability plan is a blueprint for serving Michigan today while investing and innovating to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Investments are being made [to install new technology and automation](#), trim trees, replace aging equipment and upgrade key equipment such as substations.

Consumers Energy knows job number one is to keep the lights on for customers. The energy provider is committed to delivering reliable, clean, and affordable energy to its customers 24/7.

Consumers Energy is Michigan's largest energy provider, providing natural gas and/or electricity to 6.7 million of the state's 10 million residents in all 68 Lower Peninsula counties.

###

*Media Contacts: Josh Paciorek, 517-243-9036, or Brian Wheeler, 517-740-1545*

*For more information about Consumers Energy, go to [ConsumersEnergy.com](http://ConsumersEnergy.com).*

*This news release contains "forward-looking statements." The forward-looking statements are subject to risks and uncertainties that could cause Consumers Energy's results to differ materially. All forward-looking statements should be considered in the context of the risk and other factors detailed from time to time in Consumers Energy's Securities and Exchange Commission filings.*

**Check out Consumers Energy on Social Media**

