

PSC to award Refueling Readiness Grant Program funding

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The state Public Service Commission will be awarding up to \$215,000 in December through Refueling Readiness Grants.

The program helps fueling facilities stay open during power outages and weather emergencies.

Fourteen applicants are requesting a total of around \$275,000, a release from the agency shows. Funds will go toward the creation of fueling points of distribution or designated disaster fueling facilities, which are meant to improve the resilience of the state's fuel infrastructure. This round of grants will focus on county and tribal land without existing generator capability.

Grant funds can be used to pay for electrician labor, electrical panels and various accessories that support access to fueling during power outages.

"These grants will not only provide peace-of-mind to residents but also offer support to our first responders and utility line trucks during an emergency," said PSC Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq. "It is important that we continue to invest in facilities that provide essential services during power outages."

The PSC has awarded \$195,000 for 22 grants through the program since 2016, the release shows. Funding for the program comes from the U.S. Department of Energy through the State Energy Program Formula Grant.

Facilities that can dispense fuel directly into motor vehicles as well as those that can dispense it into larger transport vehicles are eligible for the grant program. That includes convenience stores providing both unleaded and diesel fuel, and bulk petroleum storage facilities with capacity for less than 50,000 barrels that get shipments by rail, barge or truck.

The concept for fueling points of distribution comes from emergency energy planning efforts conducted in Oregon, according to Megan Levy, resilience strategist and energy assurance coordinator for the Wisconsin Office of Energy Innovation. She spoke about the program during a recent webinar, explaining that Oregon officials used the concept in planning for the possibility of a major tsunami that could damage coastal infrastructure and threaten fuel availability.

While Wisconsin faces different weather events and causes for potential power outages, state officials tested a similar concept in 2018 through a three-day exercise called Dark Sky.

“That simulation really showed that these fueling locations would be critical to being able to bounce back, and bounce back quickly,” Levy said.

See more details on the grant program
here: <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/OEI/RequestForProposals.aspx>

-By Alex Moe