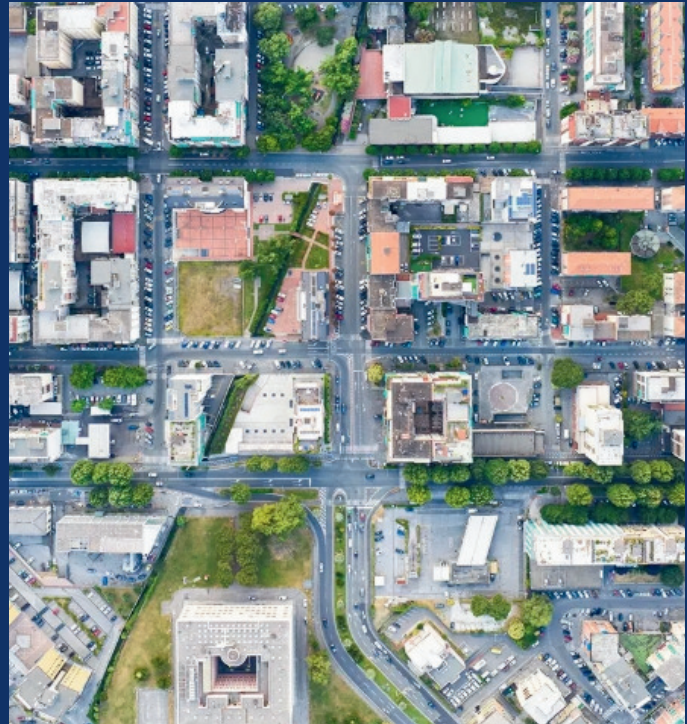


# INSIDER NEWSLETTER

## ELECTRIC INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

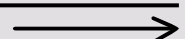
**A decade of demand is arriving all at once**

A decade of demand is arriving all at once" refers to a projected, rapid surge in global energy consumption—spanning both fossil fuels and electricity—that is testing infrastructure limits and driving a new era of "energy realism" in early 2026. (Continued, page 2)



## CYBER RISK, AI ADOPTION, AND WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION ARE PEAKING

The convergence of rapid AI integration, sophisticated cyber threats, and a severe, evolving talent shortage in 2026 has created a "perfect storm" for the utility sector, requiring immediate, simultaneous action on defense, workforce, and modernization strategies. By 2026, more than a third of global energy and utility infrastructure is expected to experience cyber pre-positioning activity, with attackers prioritizing operational disruption (ransomware) over simple data theft. These attacks increasingly use AI to automate reconnaissance and exploit vulnerabilities in OT (Operational Technology) and third-party vendor systems. (Continued, page 2)



(Continued from page 1)

- **The "Demand Decade" (Oil & Gas):** The American Petroleum Institute (API) has declared the start of a "demand decade" for oil and gas, with projections that global demand could rise significantly, challenging previous expectations of a quick transition away from fossil fuels.
- **Surging Electricity Demand:** U.S. electricity consumption is rising for the first time in two decades, driven by data centers, AI, and industrial expansion, with demand expected to grow at an average rate of 1.7% per year from 2020 through 2026.
- **Infrastructure Strain:** The rapid, simultaneous increase in demand for both traditional energy and new power sources is placing immense pressure on infrastructure, leading to a need for urgent investment in grid capacity and pipelines.

- **Shift in Perspective:** The energy sector is experiencing a, "move toward abundance, affordability, and growth," with a renewed focus on energy security and reliability.
- **Conflicting Forecasts:** While the API sees a demand boom for oil and gas, other organizations like the International Energy Agency (IEA) have projected that global fossil fuel demand will peak before the end of the decade.

This "demand decade" is characterized by a mix of high-production, rapid infrastructure development, and a re-evaluation of how to meet the world's growing energy needs. \_\_\_\_\_



(Continued from page 1)

- **AI as a Double-Edged Sword:** While AI-driven security tools are necessary for real-time, automated threat detection across complex IT/OT networks, they also introduce new risks. Attackers are utilizing AI to create deepfakes for social engineering and to autonomously map network surfaces.

- **The Talent "Cliff" & Skills Gap:** The cybersecurity workforce shortage is projected to reach 4.8 million unfilled roles globally by 2026. In the utility sector, this is compounded by a "hollowing out" of junior positions due to AI automation, making it harder to train future senior specialists.
- **Simultaneous Modernization Needed:** To combat these threats, utilities must adopt a "built in, not bolted on" security approach. Key actions include:
- **Adopting Zero-Trust Models:** Implementing least-privilege access and multi-factor authentication (MFA) to secure critical assets.
- **Converging IT/OT Security:** Breaking down silos to ensure unified visibility across control systems, smart meters, and cloud applications.
- **Upskilling Staff:** Developing in-house talent to manage AI-driven security tools, as 90% of security teams report skills gaps beyond mere staffing shortages.

This high-risk, high-demand environment requires that utilities shift from passive, annual compliance to continuous, AI-powered, and proactive security, notes West Monroe. \_\_\_\_\_

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The \$1,000 scholarship, which is non-renewable, is made available in the spring of each year. The award notification will be presented to the student prior to graduation by a representative of the Indiana Municipal Electric Association. The scholarship will be issued at the end of the first year of college or completion of tech school as long as the student maintains a passing grade.

**To learn more on eligibility requirements please click the link to register!**

**[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER!](#)**





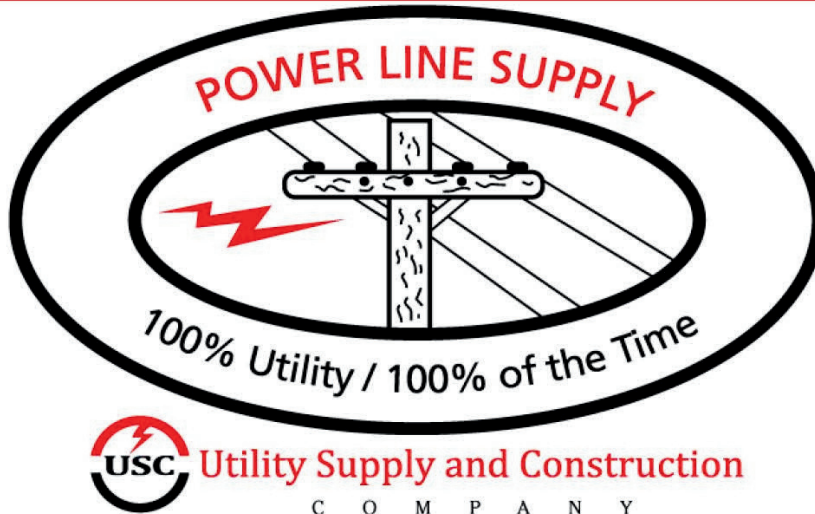
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- Job placement services and career planning services.
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*Enrollment packages  
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INDIANA MUNICIPAL  
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Our lineman school program will allow you to begin your career ahead of all the rest. Our students have experience performing the jobs of a lineworker, as well as obtaining professional knowledge of the industry while they proceed through our program. Our students are well equipped to stand out from the interview to the actual job. Our program will provide an outlet for electric companies to search for new qualified applicants.

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The lineman school instructors at IMEA Lineman Training Institute have extensive real-world experience in power generation, transmission and distribution. Their exceptional understanding of the industry and what companies are looking for makes our program a cut above other school. Our students will have hands-on experience in the trade and be coached in problem-solving skills in order to help them excel in their work. Do you want to be able to graduate and have the opportunities for immediate positions anywhere? Then this trade is the right career for you. IMEA Lineman Training Institute provides its lineman school graduates with a listing of municipalities that will be useful in your search. Our instructor's connections with the leaders of the trade will also give the students of IMEA Lineman Training Institute the upper hand at finding a career. Our students will be trained, not only to look for the job, but to find jobs. A career planning class is required to help our students create a resume and learn to find their own jobs.

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### **Indiana Municipal Electric Association IMEA Lineman Training Institute**

Duane Richardson

765.366.5506

Mailing Address

176 West Logan St. #225

Noblesville, IN. 46060

Our Location

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