



NEWS RELEASE

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Alaska electric industry honors Meera Kohler with its highest level award

Meera Kohler, Alaska Village Electric Cooperative President and CEO, received the Mason Lazelle Achievement Award at the Alaska Power Association (APA) 57th annual membership meeting August 14 in Barrow, Alaska. The award is presented to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to electrification efforts in Alaska.

The award was presented to Kohler by Brad Reeve, President of the APA Board of Directors, and Marilyn Leland, APA Executive Director, at the trade association's awards banquet.

Reeve said, "After coming to work for Cordova Electric in 1979, Meera Kohler has worked hard to advance the issues of importance to Alaska electric consumers. Her unique combination of experience of holding utility management positions in rural Alaska and the Railbelt gives her a keen statewide perspective. She is a sought-after expert by lawmakers, regulators and the media on a wide range of utility issues, especially the Power Cost Equalization program that helps keep the lights on in Bush Alaska."

Reeve added, "She is well regarded as a tireless advocate for rural energy issues. Her effective lobbying efforts have channeled state and federal dollars to improving the quality of life for AVEC members in 53 Alaska villages and for the many other communities that are part of the Power Cost Equalization program."

Originally from India, Kohler immigrated to the United States in 1976. She lived in Cordova until 1990, which is where she began her career in the electric utility industry. She joined Cordova Electric Cooperative in 1979 and was appointed Manager of Administration and Finance in 1983.

In 1990, Kohler became General Manager of Naknek Electric Association, a cooperative serving the communities of Naknek, King Salmon and South Naknek in Southwest Alaska. In late 1997, she was appointed by the Mayor of Anchorage to the position of General Manager of Municipal Light & Power, the largest municipal electric utility in Alaska.

Since May 2000, Kohler has been the President & CEO of Alaska Village Electric Cooperative, headquartered in Anchorage. The cooperative serves more than 7,000 consumers in 53 villages scattered throughout Alaska, encompassing one third of Alaska's rural population.

Alaska Power Association, formerly known as the Alaska Rural Electric Cooperative Association, is the 57-year old statewide trade association for urban and rural electric utilities. It provides advocacy and program services to help member utilities in their efforts to provide Alaskans with affordable and reliable electric power.

Mason Lazelle, for whom the APA award is named, was General Manager of Matanuska Electric Association in the 1960s, a time when cooperatives were helping communities establish central station service. Lazelle was very active in this effort. Under his leadership, the utility built generation and distribution facilities for villagers in Stony River and Unalakleet, and provided consultation for the community of Tyonek.

Lazelle disappeared Feb. 27, 1968 piloting a Cessna 185 on the way to Nulato and Unalakleet with fellow MEA employees Phil McRae and Alex Fuller. Four months later, a Bush pilot spotted the wreckage. It was determined that Lazelle, McRae and Fuller perished during their journey to help residents of remote Alaska villages have access to safe, reliable electric power.

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